

Transformation of Official Rank and Salary System in the Late Koryŏ Period

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Introduction

The Mongols regarded virtually the whole known world as their legitimate domain and they demanded from conquered people a complete and total submission. Among the states in Northeast Asia, Koryŏ was the only state that was able to retain its own kingship and to exercise some degree of autonomy in the conduct of its internal affairs. Mongols regarded it as fortunate to have secured the submission of a nation that had persisted in a stubborn resistance against them for more than thirty years.¹ However, Koryŏ was still forced to demonstrate its symbolic subordination to the Mongols by making changes in its official languages, rites, and institutions. In 1301, the Koryŏ court restructured its government institutions and renamed all agencies that shared same names with Yüan imperial agencies.²

Previous studies on the late Koryŏ political history have focused mainly on institutional aspects such as the changes in the official rank system and the emergence of the Personnel Authority (Chŏngbang) as the center of power. While these studies have shown that the power structure and political process in late Koryŏ were clearly different from those of the early Koryŏ period, we still

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know very little about the actual operation and management of the late Koryŏ government personnel management. Although the early Koryŏ official rank system had been modeled on the Chinese T'ang and Sung dynasties, there were significant differences as the system was adjusted to the actual political conditions of Korea. One major difference was that the Koryŏ system was based strictly on actual assignments. The government salaries and prebendal rights, and distinctions within the officialdom were all based on the actual assignments (as opposed to the official rank), and the system of honorary civil official titles did not seem to have functioned.³

The article will attempt to clarify the late Koryŏ institutional changes in the management of personnel in the officialdom. It will first describe the official rank system during the reign of King Munjong and then compare it to that of the late Koryŏ period, when the official rank system became closer to the T'ang and Sung models not only in name but also in actual operation. It is hoped that this study of the institutional changes in the officialdom will offer some insights into the late Koryŏ period.

Features of Government Personnel Administration under King Munjong

Official Rank-Grade and Salary Systems of Koryŏ

Chönsikwa(田柴科: the Field and Woodland Rank System) and Munmu pannok(文武班祿: the Stipend System for Civil and Military Officials) both indicate that the Koryŏ official rank system was assignment-based. Both systems specified each and all officials' government assignments eligible for government salaries. The Field and Woodland Rank Systems of 998 (first year of King Mokchong's reign) and 1076 (30th year of King Munjong's reign) provided lands for all officials based on actual assignments.⁴

Salaries were also based on actual assignments, and there was no direct connection between the official rank grade, salary rank, and the amount of salaries.⁵

Kwajŏn pŏp(科田法: the Rank Land Law) of 1391 granted government lands to officials according to their assignments,⁶ but the revision of 1431 determined the official salary based on one's official rank grade. We find the same rank grade based system in the Chikchŏn pŏp(職田法: the Office Land Law) of 1466 as well.⁷ As salaries were based on one's rank grade, those who were "doing their duty" (行職: haengjik) [assignment lower than the rank grade] were paid according to the actual assignments, whereas those who were "guarding their duty" (守職: sujik) [assignment higher than rank grade] could not receive salaries greater than the corresponding to the official rank grades.⁸

Unlike the Chosŏn period system when the amount of salary was fixed to the official rank grade of government assignments, for the Koryŏ period, we must examine each and every case of government assignment to get the corresponding salary. In other words, Koryŏ government compensations for the officials were based on actual assignments not the official rank grade. To find out why the system was made this complex, let us examine the regulations of the Field and Woodland Rank system and salary system of Koryŏ.

According to the Revised Field and Woodland Rank System as recorded in chapter 78 of the *Koryŏsa*, government assignments as eligible for the tenth grade (50 *gyŏl* of farmland and 15 *gyŏl* of woodland) included various posts that carried the rank grades from the junior fifth to the junior seventh grade.⁹ Furthermore, it appears that the list of these government posts did not follow any particular order here. In the salary regulation for the civil and military officials as of the *Koryŏsa* also recorded that the salary for the senior seventh grade post of Audience Usher (Kangmun chihu) was 63 *sŏk* and 5 *du*, for the junior fifth grade posts of a director of

Royal Tomb (Che Nŭngyŏng) and director of Royal Ancestral Temple (T'aemyoryŏng) 60 *sŏk*, for the junior sixth grade posts of assistant in the Palace Library (Pisŏrang), aide in the Directorate of Education (Kukchasŭng), aide in the Directorate of Royal Treasury, and the junior fifth rank posts of acting directors of Royal Tombs and Acting Director of Royal Ancestral Temple, 53 *sŏk* and 5 *du*.¹⁰ Thus, the assignment to the senior seventh grade post received higher salaries than the posts of the junior fifth and junior sixth grades. There are many examples like this in the Field and Woodland Rank System.

The official rank grade associated with government post had no apparent connection to the salary amount or the relative hierarchical status in the officialdom. For example, in the fourth month of the fifth year of King Sinjong's reign(1202), it was suggested to the throne that all fifth and sixth rank officials should be allowed to wear rhinoceros belts and participate in the court audience, the king did not consent saying that such an action would be granting de-facto "promotion" to too many officials.¹¹ In the end, only six or seven officials were allowed to get this "promotion," and this episode suggests that the distinction between officials participating at the court audience and those excluded was not based solely on their official rank grades. The officials of 6th grade or higher were generally considered as the "Court Audience Participant Officials," while those holding 7th grade or lower grades were the "Non-court Audience Participant Officials". However, the Koryŏ system included some sixth grade posts as the "Non-court Audience Participant Officials" as evident here.

If the official rank grade system did not indicate one's status in the official hierarchy, what functioned in its stead? There is an entry in the *Koryŏsa chŏryo* that presents a brief summary of the system. "In the thirtieth year of King Munjong's reign, the court revised the Field and Woodland Rank system for the Two Orders

[of civil and military officials]. It [then] changed the official rank system and stipulated the hierarchy and salaries for all officials.”¹² It should be noted that the changes in the land system, institutional system, official rank system, and official salary system were almost always carried out simultaneously, and there must have been very close connections between these various government systems. The word “then” in the entry also suggests that the changes in the Field and Woodland Rank System were made a little earlier than the other three systems, and that the salary system corresponded more closely to the official rank grade system and hierarchical order in the officialdom than the Field and Woodland Rank System.

Therefore, many scholars have previously paid close attention to this record. Pyŏn, T’aesŏp employed the amount of salary and the number of assigned government servants (*kusa*) to show that the post of the vice directors of the Left and Right in the Department of State Affairs (*chwa u pogya*) were in fact lower in government ranks than commissioner of Military Affairs (*chungch’uwon sa*).¹³ A Japanese scholar, Sudo Yoshiyuki, also utilized the records regarding the official salaries from the Munjong period to indicate the relative hierarchical order of highest central government posts.¹⁴ Pak, Yongun also used the data to demonstrate that the number of assigned servants, salary amount, and government prebends show that the vice directors of the Left and Right in the Department of State Affairs were indeed among the highest ranking officials at the court.¹⁵ Kim, Kwangsu also utilized the salary amount to assess the provisional officials’ status in the government hierarchy.¹⁶

A recent study has shown us that the salary system corresponded to the official hierarchy exactly while the Field and Woodland Rank system did not. During Koryŏ, the Court Audience Participant Officials were those who received the salaries of more than 66 *sŏk* and 10 *du* (in Munjong’s time) or 53 *sŏk* and 5 *du* (in Injong’s time) regardless of the actual official rank grade

carried by the assigned official post.¹⁷ When determining the relative hierarchical status of official posts, other factors such as the “Pure and Important” posts were also considered. The name and the rank grades of these posts were adopted from the Chinese institutional system, but a distinction had to be maintained in Koryŏ where there existed a strong emphasis on one’s social background. Thus, those serving in the “Pure and Important” posts were considered to be the Court Audience Participant Officials even if their ranks were only in the seventh grade, whereas some of the nominally higher ranking sixth grade officials of less important assignments could not attend the court audience. The junior second grade post of assistant manager of affairs of Chancellery enjoyed a higher status than the senior second grade post of the vice directors of the Left and Right in the Department of State Affairs because the former participated directly in the court policy discussion while the latter did not. As the actual salary amount was more important than one’s official rank in Koryŏ’s institutional system, an official’s status had to be indicated not by the rank grade but by his actual assignment.

The officials in the junior second rank included both the *chaesin* in the Chancellery and the *ch’umil* in the Bureau of Military Affairs. Normally, the highest ranking officials were those holding the second grade or higher, but in Koryŏ the dividing line was between the *ch’umil* and minister (*sangsŏ*) of the Six Boards, even though they were all in the third grade. Furthermore, even though the right of the “protective appointment” was extended to the officials of the fifth or higher grade, there was also a regulation that limited this right to “those holding the post of director of a bureau (*nangjung*) or higher”.¹⁸ Perhaps this regulation stipulating using this post as the lower limit was necessary because the guideline of “fifth grade or higher” could possibly include other fifth grade posts that were in fact lower in official hierarchy than the junior sixth rank post of the Exhorter of the Left and Right

(chwa u chǒngǒn) in the Chancellery. A similar rule was applied to the Field and Woodland Rank system for Merit and Protection Privilege (kongŭm chǒnsi pop), and the Director of Royal Tomb were probably excluded even though they would have been eligible according to the regulation stipulating the “fifth grade or higher”.¹⁹

Main Features of the Assignment-based Personnel Management System

It does not appear that the personnel system based on actual assignments began from the earliest days of the dynasty. During the reign of King T’aejo, the court used both the official ranks and actual assignments, but the rank grade was more important. When the government system had not yet been fully organized, the rank grade-based system was quite useful in granting temporary assignments and to bestow official status to local strongmen as the court tried to place them in the Koryŏ political order. The honorary official rank grades, regardless of the actual government assignments, were given recognized social status and privilege, and there was no fixed quota.

This system persisted through the reigns of Kings Kwangjong and Kyŏngjong. There was a regulation devised during the reign of King Kwangjong that specified the color of official uniform according to the rank grade,²⁰ and the first Field and Woodland Rank system devised in the first year (976) of King Kyŏngjong was based in part on this regulation on clothing of officials. This system was implemented to bring local strongmen under the control of the central government, and anyone holding the honorary sixth rank grade of “wŏnyun” or higher was given compensation even without actual assignment.²¹ The system was quite advantageous for those with honorary rank grades, but it was illogical from the perspective of the throne.

Therefore, this became the main focus of the institutional reform

during the reign of King Sŏngjong. First, the previous rank grades were replaced by the honorary civil official titles. As the court reformed the system using the Chinese model, the Koryŏ personnel system became assignment-based. The revision of the Field and Woodland Rank system was inevitable, and in the newly revised system of 998 would have to record each and every government assignments to indicate their salaries and relative status in the officialdom, with some variations among the actual, prestige, and retired posts. The prestige official titles were still eligible for government compensation but they received less amounts than those with actual assignments. Later, the Field and Woodland Rank system of 1076 would exclude the prestige official titles altogether, and the system was based solely on actual assignments.²²

In the end, reforms of the Field and Woodland Rank system were implemented to limit the total number of recipients and to decrease the salary amount. On the other hand, they directly benefited those officials who actually performed duties on behalf of the throne. In the revised Field and Woodland Rank system, only those serving in the central government, except for a few provincial posts, were given the stipend land. Moreover, in order to limit the number of recipients, the eligibility was specified not by the rank grade but by the actual assignment, and each and every government post was recorded one by one. With each revision in the land system, both the number of eligible recipients for higher grades and the amount of bestowal gradually decreased. This was obviously connected to economic condition, as the government had to distribute limited amount of land to officials in an efficient way. However, they were also attempts to limit the number of officials enjoying the special privilege of the government granted land that distinguished them from the other social strata.

The principle underlying the Field and Woodland Rank system

was also applied directly to the salary system. Unlike the Field and Woodland Rank system, however, the salary system established separate categories according to recipients and types, and the grades were further subdivided. There were forty-seven grades in the system under King Munjong and twenty-nine grades in the system under King Injong, and the system for provisional offices showed similar differentiation of grades as well. Again this must be considered as an attempt to signify the official hierarchy and to minimize the government salaries. These assignment-based systems not only decreased the amount of land and salary granted to government officials but also reduced the number of the privileged class, thereby elevating the prestige of the recipients.

Another device to limit the total number of officials with actual assignments was the system of concurrent appointments. The *chaesin* of Koryŏ held concurrent supervisory appointments as the superintendent (p'ansa) of the Six Boards.²³ The highest ranking official was given the appointment, as superintendent of the Board of Personnel, and the next ranking *chaesin* became superintendent of the Board of War, and so on. Here, the appointment to the superintendent of the Board of Personnel was given to an official not because he was the chancellor but because he held the highest ranking. In other words, the chancellor would automatically hold the concurrent post of the superintendent of the Board of Personnel, but it would not necessarily be true the other way around. Thus, if the post of the chancellor was vacant, the next highest ranking official, such as the manager of affairs (vice director) in the Chancellery, would occupy the top post. If that post was also vacant, then the officials holding the next highest posts of the vice director or assistant administrator in the Secretariat would then be considered the top official. If there were more than one official holding the highest government post, then the one with the seniority became the top-ranking official.

Thus, during the reign of King Ŭijong, Yang Wŏnjun and Pak

Sunch'ung both became the top ranking official even though they only held the lowest ranking *chaesin* post of administrator of the Chancellery. Thus, an official holding the post of the assistant administrator of the Secretariat could at one time get the concurrent appointment to the highest ranking post of the superintendent of the Board of Personnel but at other times he would only occupy the post of the superintendent of the Board of Works. This was an attempt to elevate the prestige of the *chaesin* by limiting the total number of high ranking officials. When the highest ranking posts such as the chancellor remained vacant for long periods of time, it meant that only highly qualified person would be appointed, and consequently those who were eventually appointed to the post enjoyed much higher political prestige.²⁴

Finally, other attempt to limit the total number of *chaech'u* officials involved the practice of dual appointments in the Secretariat-chancellery and in the department of State Affairs.²⁵ In addition, only those holding high ranking posts in these central government organs were considered as the *chaech'u* officials. The system of Priority of Original Assignment (*Ponp'um hangduje*) enabled an official to hold concurrent assignments in the politically crucial posts such as the "Pure and Important Posts". Therefore, the total number of officials in Koryŏ was actually much smaller than the total number of posts as recorded in the *Koryŏsa* monograph section.

Limitations of the System of Honorary Civil Official Titles

As the official system of Koryŏ was based on the actual assignment, the rank grade system could not fully function. After 993, the Chinese style system of the honorary civil official titles became the only official rank grade system, and all other previous honorary ranks and titles were granted only non court officials such as the *hyangni* and Jurchen chieftains, etc.²⁶ Thus, the system

of honorary civil official title rank grade of Koryŏ was very different from those of T'ang China and Chosŏn Korea. While the honorary civil title rank grades originally denoted the official status of only the civil officials, in Koryŏ they were given to both civil and military officials regardless of their actual assignments. Whereas Chosŏn had many different categories of honorary official titles, the Koryŏ system used only the honorary civil official titles. While Koryŏ also had honorary military titles, they were bestowed not to Koryŏ military officials but to Jurchen chieftains.

As the honorary civil official titles could not function to denote the status of officials, appointments to government posts were made with no apparent connection to one's grade in the honorary civil official titles. This system was designed to classify all officials into rank grades and to assign corresponding posts according to the grade. Anyone entering the officialdom was given honorary civil official titles, and those with the title of the first grade were supposed to receive the highest government posts corresponding to the first grade. Of course, it was not always possible to have the rank and post correspond perfectly, and there were ways by which one could serve at the post that were higher or lower than the grade of his honorary official title. However, in principle, the rank grades of one's honorary title and the assignment were supposed to be at the same level. In Koryŏ, this general principle was often ignored. Some officials kept their 9th grade honorary rank grade title even after they had advanced to the Court Audience Participant Posts (*ch'amsang*).²⁷ Others even held two honorary rank titles simultaneously.²⁸ While many officials held more than two posts concurrently, it was not theoretically possible to hold more than two honorary rank grade titles at the same time. These very strange cases were possible during the Koryŏ period because the honorary rank grades functioned nothing more than the honorary titles. Thus, the honorary title rank grades were rarely indicated in the records of official appointments. In many extant

tomb inscriptions from the Koryŏ period, we have lists of each official's government assignments in great detail, but there honorary title rank grades were rarely recorded, usually after they had attained high government positions.

We can find the comparatively abundant examples of the honorary civil official title rank grades in the chapter eight of the *Kao-li t'u-ching* by Hsü Ching who came to Koryŏ as a member of the official Sung embassy in the early twelfth century. Hsu recorded information on several Koryŏ officials. For some, the records contained only the government posts they had held, but for others, the record included both the title rank grades and actual assignments. However, these honorary title rank grades were not the ones that had been systemized under King Munjong but those of Sung China. Moreover, the honorary title rank grades and assignments did not even match.²⁹

There were fundamental Differences in the operation of the honorary title rank systems in Koryŏ as compared to the later period of Chosŏn. These differences can be seen most clearly when we compare the way the official rank systems were recorded in the *Koryŏsa* and the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* (the Constitution of Chosŏn). The *Koryŏsa* recorded government institutions and posts first and then attached the honorary title rank system, but the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* listed the honorary title rank system at the top. Moreover, whereas the regulation regarding the limitations on one's promotion because of low social background was found in the section called the "Restriction of Assignments [that can be bestowed]" in the *Koryŏsa*, the same regulation was listed in the section called the "Restriction of Appointment to [Certain] Rank Grade" in the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*. In other words, the Koryŏ court limited socially humble individuals from rising above the certain government post, but during the Chosŏn period, they were restricted from attaining the honorary title rank grades higher than the ones specified in the Code.

Transformation of the Official Personnel System in Late Koryŏ

Honorary Title Rank Grade System and the Hierarchical Status of Officials

It appears that the assignment-based system underwent significant changes during the military period. Previously an official first held the junior sixth grade posts of Assistant in the Palace Library (pisŏrang, 6b) (Lower [non-Participant] officials) and then rose to the post of the Audience Usher (Hammun chihu, 7a) (Court Audience Participant Officials). However, Hŏ Kong's career in the thirteenth century shows that he was an Audience Usher before being promoted to the post of an assistant in the Palace Library.³⁰ We can see a similar career pattern for Kim Sŭngyong who was active during the reign of King Ch'ungnyŏl.³¹ As a matter of fact, there appears to be no more case officials holding the fifth and sixth grade posts who were classified as the non-court audience (Ch'amoe) participant officials. We see more cases where one's status in the officialdom was indicated by his honorary title rank grade rather than his actual assignment.

As a result, many government regulations classified officials by their rank grades. In 1276, we find that the court specified tax amounts for officials based on their honorary title rank grades.³² A government regulation of 1281 classified officials from the third to the seventh grade using their honorary title rank grades.³³ In 1343 court order again used the title rank grades to assign the number of workers that each official was supposed to contribute to the construction of new palace.³⁴ The royal decree of 1376 that collected rice from officials fixed the amount according to one's post for officials holding the second grade or higher, but for all others of the 3rd grade or below, it was based on one's honorary title-rank grade.³⁵ The 1388 regulation on the protocol between officials again employed the honorary title rank grade as the basis

by stipulating that one had to “lower his head and bow” to those of two or more grades higher ranks.³⁶

The honorary civil official title rank grades gradually became the primary measure of one’s status in the officialdom in late Koryŏ. However, we can still see some remnants of the assignment-based system as in the Rank Land Law of 1391 that listed the grade, corresponding posts, and the amount of land granted, such as “the 8th grade, from supervisor of Yemun (p’an t’ong Yemun) to supervisors of various bureaus (che si p’ansa)...”.³⁷ Here the entry indicates that all officials holding posts that come between these two posts would be eligible to receive the land corresponding to the 8th grade. This way of indicating eligibility was much more concise than the earlier Koryŏ system in which every single post had to be recorded one by one. The Rank Land Law had 14 grades and offer preferential treatment for higher ranking officials (ch’amsang). The first to fourth grades were for the *chaesin*, fifth and sixth grades were for the *ch’umil*, and the seventh and eighth grades were for those holding the senior third grade. On the other hand, there were only three grades for all officials from the seventh to ninth ranks. For the posts of the seventh rank-grade and below, the grade of land grants was specified based only on the honorary title ranks. In any case, this regulation was feasible only if official hierarchy was systemized according to the honorary title rank grade system, and there appears to have been a significant change in the operation of the government official rank grade system.

Moreover, there was now a complete demarcation of the sixth and seventh rank grades, as the 14th land grade was given to those of the sixth grade and the fifteenth land grade was for the seventh grade military and civil posts. This was totally different from the Koryŏ system where various posts of different rank grades were eligible for the same land grade. Thus, we can now apply the general rule that the officials of the sixth rank or higher were the Court Audience Participant Officials. In the Rank Land Law,

officials of the sixth rank or higher was assigned a grade based on the hierarchical order of government posts, but for those of the seventh rank or lower, the regulation was based only on the honorary title rank grades. That the two different principles are found in one government regulation suggests transitional nature of the system at the time. The rule for the higher ranking officials reflects the basic framework from the King Munjong's system, but for the lower ranking posts, it reflected the changes that took place during the period of Mongol interference.

Increase in the Number of Officials and the Elevation of Honorary Title Rank Grades

The official personnel system instituted during the reign of King Munjong was transformed considerably in the late Koryŏ period. The most obvious change was the increase in the number of high ranking officials [those of the second or higher rank]. It was recorded that "while there were no more than five *chaesin* and seven *ch'umil* during the reign of King Munjong, after we have surrendered to the Yüan, there were sixty to seventy officials who participated in the deliberations of state policies at the deliberative council (Top'yŏngŭisasa)".³⁸ Unlike the earlier period when the post of the chancellor was often left vacant, the post was always occupied during the period of Mongol interference. We see frequent appointments to the post of co-commissioner of the Chancellery rarely occupied in the earlier period. Overall, we see greatly increased number of both *chaesin* and *ch'umil* officials. Frequent granting of the titles of nobility and honorary "acting" titles were enabled the court to make more appointments at the level of grand councilor (*chaesang*) beyond the fixed quota.

The increase in the number of officials was not just limited to the high ranking officials. If that was the case, there would have been more high ranking officials than the low ranking ones. In fact, the

increase in the number of *chaech'ū* occurred in the context of the overall increase at all levels of the officialdom. The early Chosŏn official system, reflecting the changes of the late Koryŏ period, showed that many functionary posts were given official grade ranks and incorporated into the regular officialdom. Moreover, other government posts were elevated in their official grade level, and the previously non-Court Audience Participant Officials of the sixth rank or above all now became the Court Audience Participant Officials. In the early Chosŏn dynasty, the rank grades of posts in many court bureaus were elevated to the junior fifth or junior sixth rank.³⁹ It appears that such elevation of official rank grades took place throughout the late Koryŏ period. As the number of high ranking officials increased, it invariably affected the prestige and power of the highest posts in the officialdom.

The changes in the system of concurrent appointments also worked to increase the total number of officials. In the early Koryŏ period, some posts such as the assistant administrator of the Chancellery [*Chŏngdang munhak*, 2b] were often appointed concurrently with the post of minister (*sangsŏ*) of the Six Boards. However, during the period of Mongol interference, they were now appointed separately, leading to the overall increase in the number of officials holding the 3rd grade or higher. Other posts such as the Recipient of Edicts (*sŭngsŏn*), Auxiliary in the Chancellery (*chik Munha*), and Left and Right Grand Masters of Remonstrance (*chwa u kanŭi taebu*) had previously been held concurrently, but they were now appointed separately. Even the previously nominal posts given at retirement of officials such as title of the supervisor (*p'ansa*) [of various court bureaus] now became a part of the regular promotion process and were placed in the between the junior 3rd and senior 3rd grades. Other posts that were sometimes appointed concurrently in the early Koryŏ period became exclusively non-concurrent appointments. The effect of these changes was the increase in the total number of officials.

The increase in the number of local magistrates and the elevation of administrative level of local districts also took place in concert with the changes in the central government administration. From the time of King Yejong to King Kongmin, 174 subordinate counties were made regular counties, and accordingly the number of officials serving at the provincial assignments increased.⁴⁰ As the local districts were elevated, qualifications for the provincial posts had to rise as well. Chǒng Dojŏn, an early Chosŏn official, stated,

In early Koryŏ period, the [provincial administrative] system worked well with three Regents, eight Governors, and four Protector-Generals. However, in the later times the court increased the number of protectorates that controlled prefectures. [It] also newly established more prefectures. Consequently the statuses of counties and districts rose day by day.⁴¹

As Koryŏ officials had been required to serve at provincial assignments in order to be eligible for promotions,⁴² this numerical increase and elevation of the status of provincial posts were merely following the changes in the central government official personnel system. In short, the rise in grades and the increase in the total number of officials meant a greater size of the officialdom. This, along with the change from the assignment-based to the title rank grade-based system, was one of the major features of the official personnel system in the Late Koryŏ period. Finally, these changes would provide necessary conditions for the full implementation of the title rank grade official personnel system.⁴³

Restoration of the Honorary Civil Official Title Rank Grade System

It has already pointed out that while the system of honorary civil

official titles were theoretically the basis for appointments to official posts, it failed to fully function as the Koryŏ system set up by the time of the King Munjong was based on actual assignments. However, the system of honorary civil official titles gradually regained its original function in the late Koryŏ period. Signs of the change are most apparent in the frequent references to honorary civil official title rank grade in the records of personal official careers found in tomb inscriptions and other historical records. This was in clear contrast to the early Koryŏ period when there was rarely any indication of honorary civil title rank grades in recording of one's official career.

However, in late Koryŏ, the honorary civil official title rank grades were bestowed in close connection to the rank grade of actual assignments. The official careers of Chŏng Ungyong (1305-1366) and Chŏng Mongju (1337-1392) show that the grade of their posts was in accordance with the grade of the honorary civil official titles they held, and they rose in tandem. This suggests that there was an effort to match the honorary civil official title rank grade and the grade of actual government assignments. As the cases of Kim Hwŏn (1234-1305) and Min Chŏk, both active during the reign of King Ch'ungnyŏl, still show two or three grade discrepancy between the honorary civil official title rank grade and the actual office grade, this institutional change in the official personnel system must have been implemented by the reform of the honorary civil official title system in the first year of the second reign of King Ch'ungsŏn. Thereafter, the Koryŏ court strictly kept the honorary civil official title rank and actual assignment at the same rank grade.⁴⁴

As the honorary civil official title rank grade system denoted the relative official hierarchy, the senior ranking officials [tangsang] of Chosŏn were defined as those holding the honorary civil official title of *t'ongjŏng taebu* or the honorary military title of *chŏlch'ung changgun*. As mentioned above, the regulation limiting of one's

promotion was also set in terms of the honorary civil official title rank grade system. Again, this is in sharp contrast to the early Koryŏ period when there was no instance of classifying officials or making official appointments based on one's honorary civil official title rank grade. It was during the period of Mongol interference when we begin to see cases where government officials were being classified not according to their actual assignments but to their honorary civil official title rank grade.

In late Koryŏ, regulations on rituals and official uniforms were now defined in term of the honorary official title rank grade system. Different rituals and official attires were specified for officials of different rank grades. That the system of honorary official title ranks was one of the main criteria in these regulations indicates that the system was actual functioning in the late Koryŏ period. While the honorary titles of *pongik taebu* and *t'onghŏn taebu* were used at different times, both basically denoted the junior second grade in the system of honorary official titles. Thus, the phrase "above (or below) the *pongik* or *t'onghŏn*" indicated whether one belonged to the ranks of the grand councilor (*chaesang*) or not.

In 1383 when the court collected rice from government officials to replenish the military provision, the amounts were set based on both the honorary office titles and regular official rank grades. Here the officials of the second to the fourth grades were classified according to their honorary official titles only, and the trend of granting privileges based on one's honorary title rank grade that first began during the reign of King Ch'ungnyŏl had been expanded in its application by the reign of King U. It appears that the system of honorary official title rank grades regained its original function during the period of Mongol interference.

The trend of expanded use of the honorary official title rank grade for central government officials also influenced appointment of provincial assignments. In 1356, the court abolished the practice of provincial officials holding concurrent appointment of central

government posts.⁴⁵ Previously, officials were given concurrent appointments to both the central court and provincial assignments, as in the case of the Regent of the Western Capital holding the concurrent post of the manager of the Board of Works. While this appears to be a case of concurrent appointments, the officials serving in the province posts could not possibly perform the duties of their central government post.

This situation is closely related to the special attributes of the provincial assignments. It was specified that one had to be “above the certain grade” to be qualified for appointment to provincial posts. Because of the difference between actual posts of officials at the time of their provincial assignments, it would have been difficult to denote their actual official status only by the provincial assignment. Therefore, officials were given the “concurrent” central government posts that could indicate their status in the government official hierarchy. Thus, the appointments to the central government posts had nothing to do with the actual duties. They were used only to denote the status of each provincial official. In other words, these “concurrent” central government posts had the same function of the honorary office title rank grades.

This is confirmed by the historical records of the time. For example, the tomb inscription for Yi Chehyŏn (composed in 1376) contains records of his provincial post assignments that listed the honorary civil official titles and the actual provincial office names such as the *t'ongjīngnang* and the prefect of Tanju, and the *chobongnang* and the magistrate of Yŏhŭng. When we compared this to the records of early Koryŏ period, the honorary official titles had been inserted at the exact place where the “concurrent” central government posts used to be. This means that the “concurrent” central government posts of the early Koryŏ period functioned as honorary official titles. Moreover, the *t'ongjīngnang* here was the fifth rank honorary official title established in the thirty-fourth year of King Ch'ungnyŏl's reign, and the *chobongnang* was the junior

fifth rank grade honorary civil official title. The grade level of these honorary civil official titles matches exactly with the fifth grade official rank grade of the magistrates and prefects of provincial districts. By the late Koryŏ period, the system of honorary civil official titles not only denoted one's status in the officialdom but also functioned as the measure of qualification for official appointments.

We have seen that the early Koryŏ official personnel system was strictly based on actual assignments. However, by the time of the period of Mongol interference, the honorary civil official title rank grades came to denote one's place in the official hierarchy. The total number of government posts increased, and the ranks of the posts were elevated. More and more honorary official titles were bestowed during this period to incorporate increasing number of officials, and at the same time, there was an effort to match the honorary rank grade and the actual assignment at the same level. When the Chosŏn dynasty was established, the newly instituted official rank system would begin with the description of the system of honorary official titles. This signifies that the system of honorary civil official titles had become very important in the Chosŏn period. It was also the most obvious and fundamental change from the Koryŏ system instituted during the reign of King Munjong.

Conclusion

We have examined the major changes in official personnel system in the late Koryŏ period. The early Koryŏ system was strictly assignment-based, and both the official rank grade system and the system of honorary civil official titles did fully not function. The early Koryŏ system was a result of the court's effort to minimize the number of officials eligible to receive government salaries and land grants, and thereby to give special prestige for

holding the government posts. By the late Koryŏ, however, the system of honorary civil official titles came to denote one's status in the official hierarchy, and it was possible to classify official hierarchy only in terms of the official rank grades. Therefore, unlike the earlier periods, the Court Audience Participant officials meant all officials with the sixth or higher rank grade. The *chaesang* were defined not as officials holding the assignments of *ch'umil* or higher but simply as officials with the second or higher grade. There was an enlargement of the officialdom as the total number of officials increased and the grade levels of many government posts were raised in the late Koryŏ period.

What were the main factors for this fundamental institutional change in the late Koryŏ period? Because the system of honorary civil official titles did not have a fixed quota, the court could accommodate more people into the officialdom, and the honorary titles were routinely bestowed to many officials before they were given to actual assignments. Second, Koryŏ's rather swift adoption of these official personnel management systems was perhaps due to the peculiar political situation of the time. As an integral part of the Mongol Empire, Koryŏ directly experienced and understood the rank-based Yüan official personnel system that closely resembled those of T'ang and Sung China,⁴⁶ and there seems to have been little difficulty in implementing the rank-based system in the late Koryŏ period.

The early Koryŏ system emphasized the hierarchical order of officials, as can be seen in the practice of automatically appointing the highest ranking *chaesin* as the top official. In such a system, the king or the officials in the Board of Personnel could have only very limited influence. On the other hand, the late Koryŏ system first assigned honorary civil official title grades and then selected suitable candidates holding the appropriate grade for appointments. This facilitated development of the government personnel system and promoted the power and prestige of both

the throne and the officials in charge of personnel decisions. However, there was yet no complete transformation from the assignment-based to the rank grade-based system. Frequent bestowals of the supplementary (ch'ömsöl) and acting (kömgyo) government posts and the titles of nobility suggest that there still remained strong influence of the early Koryö system in which special privileges were invariably connected to actual assignments.

The late Koryö was the time of transition from the assignment-based system of King Munjong's time to the rank grade-based system of the *Kyöngguk taejön*. Whereas the actual assignments still remained important in the early days of the Chosön dynasty, by the time of promulgation of the *Kyöngguk taejön*, the system of honorary official titles became the most important element in the government personnel management system. The late Koryö official personnel management system began to show real similarities to those of T'ang and Sung China but this institutional transformation was completed only with the establishment of the *Kyöngguk taejön* institutional structure in the early Chosön period.

Notes :

- 1 For an account of the Mongol invasions of Korea in English, see W. E. Henthorn, *Korea: the Mongol Invasions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963).
- 2 *Koryösa* [hereafter cited as *KS*], 32:5a1-2.
- 3 For a detailed discussion on the assignment-based system of the Koryö officialdom, see Yi, Chinha, *Koryö chön'gi kwanjik kwa nokpong üi kwan'gye yön'gu* (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1999).
- 4 Kang, Chinch'öl, *Koryö t'oji chedosa yon'gu: chönsikwa ch'ejep'yön* (Seoul: Korea Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 38-53.
- 5 For a general overview of the official salary system of the Koryö dynasty, see Yi, Huidok, "Koryö nokpongje üi yön'gu", In *Yi Hongjik paksä hoegap kinyöm non'chong* (Seoul: Sin'gu munhwasa, 1969) and Ch'oe

- Chŏnghwan, *Koryŏ Chosŏn sidae nokpongje yŏn'gu* (Taegu: Kyoungbuk Univ. Press, 1991).
- 6 For the late Koryŏ debate on the Rank Land Law, see John Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000), pp. 205-11.
- 7 Kim, T'aeyŏng, *Chosŏn chon'gi t'oji chedosa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa, 1983), pp. 67-71.
- 8 Yi, Chaeryong, *Chosŏn ch'ogi sahoe kujo yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1984), pp. 76-77.
- 9 KS, 78:11b4-6.
- 10 KS, 80:3b3-5.
- 11 KS, 75:2b2-5.
- 12 *Koryŏsa chŏryo* [hereafter cited as KSC], 5:33a6-7.
- 13 Pyŏn, T'aesŏp, *Koryŏ chŏngch'i chedosa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1985), pp. 71-72.
- 14 Sudo Yoshiyuki, *Koraicho kanryosei no kenkyu* (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1980), pp. 109-114
- 15 Pak, Yongun, *Koryŏ sidae Sangsŏsŏng yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Kyŏngin munhwasa, 2000), pp. 20-23.
- 16 For a study on provisional official appointments (kwŏnmujik), see Kim, Kwangsu, "Koryŏ sidae ūi kwŏnmujik", *Han'guksa yŏn'gu* 30 (1980), pp. 349-73.
- 17 Yi, Chinha, op. cit., 177-85.
- 18 KS, 75:25b5-7, 26b4-9, 26b9-27a6, 27a6-b3.
- 19 Yi, Chinha, op.cit., pp. 245-47.
- 20 KS, 72:9b1-3.
- 21 Kang, Chinch'ol, op. cit., pp. 38-43.
- 22 Kang, Chinch'ol, Ibid., pp. 47-53.
- 23 Pyŏn, T'aesŏp(1985), op. cit., pp. 79-81.
- 24 For 183 years from 988 to 1170, the post of the chancellor was kept vacant for 84 years and 11 months (Pak, Yongun, *Koryŏ sidae Chungsŏ munhasŏng chaesin yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchisa, 2000), pp. 66-67).
- 25 Pak, Yongun, *Koryŏ sidae Chungch'uwŏn yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Institute of Korean Culture of Korea Univ., 2001), pp. 91-104.
- 26 For the early Koryŏ official rank system, see Takeda Yukio, "Korai

shoki no kankai", *Chosen gakuho* 41 (1966).

- 27 Kim, Yongsön, *Koryö myojimyöng chipsöng* (Seoul: Asia munhwa yön'guso, 1993), pp. 21, 57.
- 28 Kim, Yongsön(1993), *ibid.*, p. 133.
- 29 Kao-li t'u-ching, pp. 41-43.
- 30 Kim, Yongsön, *op.cit.*, p. 403.
- 31 Kim, Yongsön, *ibid.*, p. 465.
- 32 *KS*, 79:24b3-7.
- 33 *KS*, 84:14b5-15a2.
- 34 *KS*, 83:33a3-6.
- 35 *KS*, 79:30a6-8.
- 36 *KS*, 68:23b8-29a3.
- 37 Kim, T'aeyöng(1983), *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.
- 38 *KS*, 76:1b9-2a4. A recent study of the Secretariat-Chancellery of Koryö confirmed this above statement of the Koryösa (See Pak Yongun, *Koryö sidae Chungsö munhasöng chaesin yön'gu*).
- 39 *T'aejo sillok*, 1:45a10-49b13.
- 40 The best study of the provincial administrative structure of the period is Yi, Sugön's *Chosön sidae chibang haengjöngsa* (Seoul: Minümsa, 1989).
- 41 Chöng, Dojön, *Sambongjip* Vols. 2 (Seoul:Korea Univ. Press, 1987), 10:31b10-33a3.
- 42 Pak, Yongun, *Koryö sidae kwanjik, kwan'gye yön'gu* (Seoul: Korea Univ. Press, 1997).
- 43 For an overview of the official rank grade system and personnel management of the officialdom in Chosön, see Nam, Chidae, "Chosön ch'ogi chungang chöngch'i chedo yön'gu".
- 44 Pak, Yongun, *Koryö sidae kwan'gye kwanjik yön'gu*, pp. 96-105.
- 45 *KS*, 77:42a9-b1.
- 46 For an overview of the official personnel system in Yüan China, see David M. Farquhar, *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule: A Reference Guide*(Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), pp. 17-72.