

Courtiers and Warriors: A Search for Equilibrium in Koryô Society

Edward J. SHULTZ

University of Hawai'i

The role of the warrior and armed force is integral to most functioning societies. Sometimes the warrior's role is transparent, and at other times it is hidden or contained within governing institutions. Every governing authority must seek to find balance between both the warrior and the courtier, between those who ultimately must provide for law and order and those who seek to govern without relying on overt force. Korea during much of its last dynasty, Chosôn (1392-1910), accepted the notion of civil supremacy, that the courtier should rule. And yet even in the 20th century Korea grappled with the issue of warrior vs. courtier, military vs. civil as for nearly three decades (1961-1993) the country cast off the mantle of civil rule and generals controlled policy.

During the growth of Korea's first states, the so-called Three Kingdoms era (?-661), men who bore arms and governed through strategic military alliances commanded these societies. Warrior aristocrats also dominated Korea's first unified state, Silla (661-935). And although its leaders introduced Chinese governing institutions and sought to govern through orderly administrative agencies, the warrior remained the hero of the age, and armed might remained the arbiter. When Silla collapsed, Korea fell into numerous warring regions where local warriors once again controlled the future.

Koryô (918-1392) is very much a transitional period between the age of the warrior aristocrat who epitomized Silla and the era of the yangban civil official of Chosôn. Within the five centuries that mark Koryô, the tensions that separated the warrior and courtier emerged starkly as Koryô grappled with issues of governance. In Koryô, initially founded by a general, civil leadership quickly took over and subordinated the warriors. By the middle of the 12th century the warriors struck back and took control of the kingdom for a century. In the final years of the dynasty (1270-1392) a reckoning between these rival forces emerged that set the stage for the reassertion of civil supremacy in Chosôn. This paper will investigate the tensions that divided the warrior and the courtier, the military and civil authorities, in Koryô and how Koryô searched for equilibrium between the warrior and courtier,

resolving this major tension that had fractured the country. The paper will also make comparisons as appropriate with contemporary developments in China and Japan.

The Rise of Koryô

When Silla's centralized command withered in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, warriors quickly filled the power vacuum. By the start of the tenth century the Korean peninsula fell under the command of three competing powers. Silla still exercised the last vestiges of authority in the southeast. A new commander, Kyônhwôn, emerged in the southwest, and toward the north in the center of the peninsula first a warrior named Kûngye and then ultimately Koryô's dynastic founder, Wang Kôn, appeared. Through strategic alliances that often were decided on the battlefield, these men consolidated their power. But Kyônhwôn and Wang Kôn emerged as the generals who struggled to reunify Korea.

Wang Kôn grew up beside the Imjin river estuary in the home of a prominent family that had prospered off maritime trade along Korea's west coast and even in China. At an early age he led troops under the local strongman, Kûngye, and showed skill in leadership and tactics. He quickly emerged as a prominent warrior and challenged Kûngye for leadership in 918 when he founded the Koryô dynasty. Wang Kôn was successful in part because Kûngye became increasingly tyrannical, allegedly committing a number of aberrant deeds. He also was successful because he gained the confidence of other warriors who were seeking to augment their own authority and security through alliances. After becoming king in 918, Wang Kôn had to confront Kyônhwôn directly for control of the peninsula. By using his skill as a tactician on land as well as his knowledge of maritime warfare, Wang Kôn, struggling through more than a decade of warfare, defeated Kyônhwôn and unified the kingdom in 936.

It was his prowess as a general that enabled Wang Kôn to unite the kingdom, but to govern the new country he would have to draw on his ability to lead as a king. Wang Kôn confronted the old dilemma that beset many warriors: how to balance and satisfy the needs and expectations of the warriors who had won the battles and the demands for governance and stability. To Koryô this was especially acute given that the society had experienced nearly a century of warfare in which the warrior determined policy, and yet for the new leadership to survive, fighting would have to be contained and governance that fostered peace become the norm. Wang Kôn searched for policies that would pacify his warrior allies and convert them into courtiers.

Wang Kôn set out to co-opt his former generals into supporting his new regime. He included the armies of his generals into a central army with his own personal force at the heart of the palace guards. He gave the generals titles and official functions within the new government and also granted many of them special privileges to retain a semblance of authority in their home regions. He was constant in his search for methods to weaken the military power of his allies. To prevent his allies and other regional lords from gaining too much authority, he demanded that they send a family member to serve in his court as *kiin*. The implications of this hostage system are manifold and it did help him secure his authority. He also sought to co-opt his warriors by offering them marriage into his family with Wang Kôn himself taking 29 wives. To others he offered the Wang surname as a reward.

If Wang Kôn sought to contain the aspirations of his warrior allies, he also sought to foster the courtier. There is an ancient Chinese belief that although a country may be won by the sword, it must be governed by the pen. Wang Kôn, from the time he established his dynasty, vigorously sought to foster able administration, encouraging the appointment of talented men and urging officials to perform their duties properly¹. Before he died in 943, he issued ten injunctions to his posterity urging that attention be given to fostering Buddhism and guarding against the destruction of topography. Wang Kôn was especially concerned with good governance, which to him meant the need for good officials who could heed criticism. He recruited men with civilian abilities into his new government and, couching the ten injunctions in Confucian terms, urged his descendants to heed loyal criticism and rule with virtue and benevolence. But he also cautioned that the warrior not be forgotten, stating: "Treat soldiers kindly and take good care of them; lighten their burden of forced labor; inspect them every autumn; give honors and promotions to the brave."² Wang Kôn pursued a policy that promised rewards for both warrior and courtier.

Dynastic Consolidation and Civil Supremacy

In the decades that followed Wang Kôn's death, the succeeding kings charted a course that put civil institutions and the courtiers in charge of dynastic policy and forced the warrior into a subordinate role. Three sons of Wang Kôn in succession inherited the throne as Hyejong (943-945), Chôgjong (945-949), and Kwangjong (949-975). Animosity between warriors and courtiers marred all three reigns. No sooner was Hyejong in power than military strongmen tried to wrest authority from the new king³. After a short, turbulent reign of two years, his brother succeeded.

Chôngjong, eager to free himself from the power politics that swirled around the Koryô capital, Kaegyông, sought to move the capital north to modern Pyôngyang, and although this policy likewise failed, threats to the authority of the monarch did not diminish. Wang Kôn, as the founding monarch, had armed strength and legitimacy to stave off attacks from other warriors. His sons struggled to bolster royal authority.

Kwangjong, the fourth Koryô monarch, ultimately faced his challengers and firmly planted the foundations of royal authority. To check the latent power of the warrior, he pursued many policies. On a positive note, he sought to elevate the prestige of the court by claiming the title of emperor (hwang) and calling Kaegyông an imperial city (hwangdo). He also sought to recruit men with civil backgrounds and earned eternal respect for establishing the civil service examination as a means of recruitment in 958. The implications of this act were far reaching, leading to the expansion of schools, the foundation of Confucian discourse in the kingdom, and the rudiments of a bureaucratic system based on merit. Besides recruiting talented civil officials to help him govern, he also turned to China and invited able men from there to serve as court advisers.

Kwangjong's treatment of men with warrior background was much harsher. During the wars that accompanied the collapse of Silla and the rise of Koryô, many people had been enslaved by local strongmen. This enslaved population became an important element of economic power for warriors, but it threatened the economic base of the kingdom. Kwangjong initiated the Slave Review Act, which called for the manumission of people who had formerly been commoners, restoring them to a free status and thereby directly undermining the economic foundations of warrior authority. When he met resistance to these measures, Kwangjong launched a major purge of all who refused to bend to royal will. In the years that followed, the purge did not even spare the men who had fought along side of Wang Kôn. In this way Kwangjong successfully subdued the warrior and tilted Koryô authority toward favoring the courtier.

The two succeeding reigns saw the consolidation of civil authority. Kwangjong's son and successor, Kyôngjong (975-981), mindful that the system Kwangjong had initiated needed an economic foundation, pushed through the Stipend Land Law (chônshikwa), which guaranteed a fixed payment to men in the government structure. Through this new order, the military official came under dynastic fiscal control. Although there seems to have been equal rewards for warrior and courtier alike, this stipend system ultimately would be used to elevate civilian status over military status.

During Sôngjong's reign (981-991) a clear distinction between the warrior and courtier emerged. The term yangban first appeared at this time to denote the two categories or divisions of civil and military, and the first inklings of a hierarchy dividing these orders emerged. Ch'oe Sûngno (927-989), one of early Koryô's greatest thinkers, in a twenty-eight-point memorial to Sôngjong laid the foundations for this new system of governance that saw the elevation of the civilian courtier. Ch'oe sought to bring Confucian norms directly into the operation of governance and called for frugality and attention to the teachings of Confucius. He also urged the king to expand government operations to include a provincial system that would help Koryô's central authority exercise control over the countryside.⁴ In launching this reform that established the outlines of a provincial system, Sôngjong laid the foundation for the central authority to intrude into the countryside and check the latent power of regional strongmen. Then in 987 he further weakened the authority of the regional warrior by demanding all weapons be turned into the central government and then be forged into agricultural implements.

What followed was a major construction of Koryô's governance system in which the administrative structure, very much modeled on Chinese systems, developed. The civilian official figured prominently in this order. The civil service examination became a regularly administered test and one excellent means to recruit men into government. Sôngjong oversaw the establishment of schools in the capital in part to prepare scholars for this examination and also dispatched scholars to the countryside to foster learning there. The end of the tenth century saw the firm foundations of courtier rule.

At the same time, Sôngjong and his successors tried to institutionalize military power, and starting in about 995 the court established the Two Armies and Six Guards, which became the standing fighting force of the kingdom. Although these units still carried elements of the first king's warrior allies, the state brought the military under its institutional control.⁵ The generals who commanded these forces may have retained aristocratic pedigrees, but the men who soldiered in the units were drawn from a special class known as military class families, *kunban ssijok*.⁶ These were the families that provided men to serve as soldiers and in turn received special allotments from the state as salary. This system, quite distinct from the Chinese fu-ping order which saw a peasant army, brought a degree of professionalism and distinction to Koryô's standing forces. Peasants played a role as corvee laborers during regularly planned periods, and in the event of a major invasion, the state conscripted peasants to serve as a fighting force. Nevertheless the task of daily

arms-bearing remained under the control of a specially designated class.

With these reforms, the warrior gradually moved into a position of subordination to the courtier, and this became most apparent with the development in 998 of a government rank scale that divided the civil and military. Briefly, a two-tiered, nine-rank scale developed in which the civilian leadership occupied places on all nine ranks (each rank had an upper and lower category) while military officers were prohibited from moving above the third level. To advance further military officers would have to give up their military status and become a civil official, an act that went counter to the norm in the first half of the dynasty. At the same time, the state refined the stipend scale, which paid more to the civil official in the same rank. For example, a grand general, the highest military position, received a prebend of 130 *kyôl* of various lands while his civilian counterpart at the same official rank received a prebend of 140 *kyôl* of land. This inequity would not be corrected until 1076.⁷

Other ways in which the role of the warrior fell in relation to the civil officials can be seen in placing the two northern frontier defense districts under the control of a civilian Military Commissioner (*pyôngmasa*) who held the rank of upper third. The organization of the Two Armies and Six Guards likewise diffused military power by making each unit separate and independent, thereby denying any one military official the opportunity to take command of the entire military force. The military force in turn was placed under the direction of the Ministry of Military Affairs (*pyôngbu*), which was almost always run by civilian officials.

From *Sôngjong*'s reign until the military coup of 1170, *Koryô* consciously followed a policy of civil supremacy. The courtier or civilian occupied the positions of authority. Military officials rarely ventured to China on diplomatic missions, and military officers almost never entered into the highest positions in the government or sat on the esteemed Security Council, which deliberated major policy for the kingdom. The degree to which military officials were isolated from decision making emerges with glaring poignancy in *Ūijong*'s reign (1146-1170). Ninety-six men were found to have held positions in the civil dynastic structure in that reign.⁸ The paucity of source materials remains a key hindrance in exhaustively investigating the lives of many of these men.

Civil Composition: *Ūijong*'s Reign, 1146-1170

total	96
civilian	91 (95%)

military 5 (5%)
 examination 41 (42%)

These were the men who held positions in the offices of prestige in the civil dynastic structure such as the Royal Secretariat and Chancellery, the Security Council, the Censorate, and the Six Ministries and who acted as official examiners for the state examination. Of that number, five or 5% claimed a military lineage. None of these men reached the highest decision-making organ, the State Council (Chaesang). None was in the Security Council which determined military policy nor in the bastions of civil control, the Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Rites and the Censorial organs. Instead, two found appointments in the Ministry of Military Affairs and one each in the Ministries of Punishments, Revenue, and Public Works. Three of the five also held positions in the largely honorary Department of Ministries (Sangsôdosông).⁹

Government became the responsibility of the civilian scholar, and the ruling ideology of the day was rooted in Confucian principles. Koryô increasingly adapted Chinese norms of governance during the early Koryô period and adhered to the Chinese dictum that as you do not use good iron to make nails, neither do you use good men and make them into soldiers. Civilian lineages such as the Kyôngju Kim, the Kwangsan Kim, the Kyôngwon Yi , and the Haeju Ch'oe monopolized positions of prestige for a number of consecutive generations. As in China at this time, civilians occupied positions of prestige, and civil aristocrats sat at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy.

One of the ironies of this tilt toward the civilian is that it came at a time when there was an increase in the demand for military defense. In 993 the Khitan, who occupied the land north of Koryô, sent their first invasion force into Koryô territory. Although the dynasty initially successfully countered this attack, the Khitan would launch two more invasions at the start of the tenth century, bringing serious disruptions to the kingdom. The need for a strong defense was clear, but the men who led the counterattacks were not trained warriors but rather civil officials. The state called on the standing capital armies to defend Kaegyông and the court and dispatched emergency armies under civilian leaders to march north to block the enemy. Disturbances within the court actually abetted the Khitan attacks in 1009. When Kang Cho, a military commander in the northwest and disgruntled over court policy, deposed King Mokchong in 1009, the Khitan used the incident to attack.

Once Koryô restored peace in 1018, it embarked on a century and half of stability and internal growth that saw the civil officials at the acme of authority and the warrior feeling neglected. During this long period there were moments when the

state summoned generals to rise to the kingdom's defense. At the start of the twelfth century, Jurchen invaders in the north threatened Koryŏ's borders which led to the dispatch of armies. In 1126, a civil aristocrat threatened the survival of the dynasty and again military men had to step in to remove the challenger. In 1135 a monk sought to split the kingdom and establish a new capital in the north, once demanding again a military deployment. In each of these incidents, military officials played roles of subordination to civil authorities, who charted policy. Yet military support remained crucial in the denouement of events, and generals did not forget their role in protecting the dynasty.

Socially the status of the warrior was ambiguous. Both military and civil officials who had reached rank five or above in the nine-tiered rank order were automatically accorded special privileges such as the right to name an heir to a government post, admission for their children to special schools, and certain land grants. Several men from elite military families such as the Kigye No and Ch'ungju Yang lineages placed men in exalted civil positions. In 1110 the dynasty inaugurated a military examination that established certain levels of competence for each rank. The appointment of soldiers based on skill raised the professionalism of the military.

And yet by the middle of the twelfth century, Koryŏ's generals and soldiers were so discontent that they rose in rebellion. Clearly they had grievances and these festered throughout the early decades of the twelfth century. The military examination that had been so widely lauded when started came to an abrupt end in 1133, twenty-three years after it began, because civil officials were jealous over the advances achieved by military officials¹⁰. Lower-ranked officers and common soldiers frequently found themselves performing demeaning tasks such as digging ditches or completing other public works projects.¹¹ Despite their invaluable contributions in defending the kingdom, the social, political, and economic institutions of the dynasty trapped the Koryŏ warrior. This situation is even more ironic in that the Koryŏ civilian elite modeled much of the dynastic governance on a Chinese Sung system that was failing to withstand the onslaught of the Jurchen.¹² Furthermore, the events may well have impacted the standing of the military in still another manner. As Koryŏ's northern border became stabilized in the 1140s, Koryŏ felt less pressure to defend its borders. This situation might well have "facilitated the downgrading of Koryŏ's military establishment to the advantage of the civil officialdom."¹³ For all these reasons, the military chafed under civilian dominance.

The grievances of the military exploded during the reign of Ūijong (1146-1170) and ended with the coup of 1170. Ūijong was fond of pleasure and travel.

On parties that went late into the night, Ūijong's military escorts stood guard and protected both the king and his courtiers as they sank into intoxication. Civil officials, becoming arrogant, on occasion urinated on the guards and ridiculed them in many other ways. In one event, according to the Koryôsa, General Chông Chungbu, a stately man of over six feet and later a leader of the 1170 revolt, had his long gray beard burnt as a practical joke by a courtier from an elite aristocratic family¹⁴. Eunuchs also played jokes on military officers, sparking acrimony. U Hagyu, a military officer, revealed a brewing discontent among the military when he recounted, "My father once warned, 'The military officials have seen injustice for too long. Is it possible for them not be indignant?'"¹⁵

Military Rule (1170-1270)

With the coup of 1170, generals took control of the kingdom, but the new leadership did not dismantle the existing dynastic civil structure. Certain civil elements were important in effecting the coup, and these civil elites worked closely with the military officials. Furthermore, to administer the kingdom, the military leaders understood the necessity of using the civil structure. It possessed the mechanisms to collect taxes and administer policy. By maintaining and even outwardly appearing to protect the dynasty and its civilian heritage, the military leaders gained legitimacy for their authority.

By the middle of Myôngjong's reign (1170-1197), despite the early efforts of the coup leaders and the support rendered by a number of civil officials, Koryô was on the brink of collapse. Generals struggled for power with generals, leaving to Yi Ūimin, a man of slave origins with the notoriety of having murdered the former king Ūijong, the opportunity to seize control. For more than ten years Yi Ūimin dominated the kingdom, which was in the process of disintegration as slave, monk, and peasant rebellions erupted throughout the land. Ultimately this degenerate social and political situation reached a nadir that was checked by the rise of yet another general, Ch'oe Ch'unghôn.¹⁶

Ch'oe Ch'unghôn and his descendants, boasting an elite military lineage, immediately set about to rebuild the kingdom and over the next sixty years launched a series of reforms and institutional innovations that brought a measure of stability and security to Koryô. Ch'oe Ch'unghôn slowly developed policies that ultimately would secure his authority and contain the forces that were tearing apart the dynasty. In the end he would rely on a dual structure that included both formal dynastic organs and his own private mechanisms of control to dominate the kingdom, but initially he attempted to achieve political stability by relying on traditional

government offices.

The men Ch'oe Ch'unghôn recruited into his government afford insight into his policies and show that although the warrior dominated society, the courtier remained significant. Examining the men who held the top positions in the new government, the following results appear:

Civil Composition: Ch'oe Ch'unghôn's rule, 1196-1219¹⁷

total	80
civilian	43 (54%)
civilian ?	10
military	16 (20%)
both	3
unclear	18
examination	20 (25%)
Ch'oe family	6

The most obvious point is the small percentage of men with military backgrounds in the civil dynastic structure. Clearly in this age of "military domination," civilians controlled a majority of the offices, accounting for at least 54% (43 men) of the people in these offices. Similarly the state examination remained an important avenue of entrance for civilians. At a minimum, twenty men (25%) passed the examination. Under Ch'oe Ch'unghôn, examinations were held at frequent intervals and the number of men passing per year shows a dramatic increase.¹⁸

Civilian families continued to hold the majority of positions in the State Council. Names from such prominent lineages as the Chôngan Im, the Ch'angwôn Ch'oe, and the Kyôngju Kim are present. Im Yu, the nephew of kings Ūijong, Myôngjong, and Sinjong (1197-1204), served in the State Council from the start of Ch'oe Ch'unghôn's rule.¹⁹ Ch'oe Tang and Ch'oe Sôn, brothers and Tongju Ch'oe clansmen, both passed the state examination and worked in the State Council.²⁰ Kim Pongmo of the Kyôngju Kim clan offers another example of a man from a prominent lineage working closely with Ch'oe Ch'unghôn.²¹ Also present are men from the Haeju Ch'oe clan and the Munhwa Yu lineage. Missing from this elite group are such lineages as the Kyôngwôn Yi and the Kwangsan Kim, families that dominated the dynasty a century earlier.

Ch'oe Ch'unghôn depended on civilian lineages and the civilian structure to sustain his power. Legitimacy was foremost in his mind once he took control of the kingdom militarily in 1196. By gaining the cooperation of the civilian elite at this crucial time, he could consolidate his authority. Possessing the administrative ability

to run the government, civilian leaders provided him with the expertise needed to govern the kingdom as they became an able arm in securing Ch'oe authority.²² He worked through the State Council and ministries and even assumed a number of positions in these offices. Ch'oe Ch'unghôn also watched with interest proceedings in the censorial offices, holding positions there too.

Ch'oe Ch'unghôn could not ignore the traditional mechanisms of dynastic governing. Although later historians clearly interpreted his rule as a corrupt usurpation,²³ Ch'oe consciously assembled the State Council to consider matters pertaining to the royal family. When confronted with Sinjong's impending death, he especially relied on the State Council to provide an aura of stability as the dynastic mandate passed from one king to another. When other matters relating to the treatment of the royal family arose, Ch'oe Ch'unghôn again summoned the State Council for deliberations.²⁴ The State Council also frequently met with Ch'oe Ch'unghôn to participate in ceremonial functions and attend state banquets.²⁵

Although civilians dominated most of the offices in the civil structure, the military tone of the age is obvious. In the Ministry of Military Affairs only half of the six men identified were clearly civilian officials. A similar ratio is seen in the Censorate. Military men, in marked contrast to Ūijong's reign, were performing important functions in key dynastic offices. Ch'oe Ch'unghôn reassembled the Council of Generals, which first played a significant role in administration after the 1170 coup, to help determine policy.²⁶ Moreover, military officials joined official missions to the Jurchen Chin state in northern China repeatedly during Ch'oe Ch'unghôn's rule.²⁷ Military men performed many civil functions, but the opposite also occurred as men trained in letters became military officers. The military period produced a new fluidity in service alignment as men with dual heritages in both the civil and military traditions moved from branch to branch.²⁸

Ch'oe Ch'unghôn devised that his son U (d. 1249) would inherit his authority, and U in turn transferred his power to his son Hang (d. 1257). During U's rule a new opponent, the Mongols, threatened Koryô. To confront this mighty foe, the Ch'oe House enlisted both dynastic forces and their own private troops. When these bodies proved unable to cut the flow of Mongols, the Ch'oe House mobilized monks and peasants and also inaugurated several new fighting forces. Despite the Ch'oe House's spirited defense of Koryô, the military officials were unable to block the Mongols. The chaos rendered by the Mongols weakened the Ch'oe authority, opening the path for a full resurgence of civil control.

Even before the last Ch'oe leader, Ch'oe Ūi, fell in 1258, civilian leadership

had clearly reemerged. In fact, civilian domination had never been totally eliminated during the military period. Although Koryô's military officials had determined policy for nearly a century, they discovered they could govern effectively only by relying on civilian expertise. By sustaining civilian leadership, they gained added legitimacy, but they also had to foster civilian ideology, which ultimately challenged the idea of rule by military officials. Within this system, the king occupied the pinnacle of authority. Although the Ch'oe leaders manipulated the throne to suit their needs, they publicly deferred to the kings of Koryô to foster unity, and it was in this dual structure that the seeds of Ch'oe destruction germinated. In the end, both internal conditions and the external Mongol invasions destroyed military rule.

As civil leaders reemerged during the Ch'oe rule, the character of Koryô society also changed. The distinctions between military and civilian became blurred, leading to a mixing of the branches. Military officers passed the state examination, indicating a new era where officers received training in Confucian learning and were well read in the classics. Civilians, less rigid, no longer refused to assume military posts. The composition of clans mirrors these changes. During early Koryô, certain clans had separate military lines, now differences were even visible within generations. Kyôngju Kim clansman T'aesô, a civil official, had a number of sons: one became a civil official and two became military officials. Chông Sukch'ôm, a noted general of the Hadong Chông clan, had a son who passed the state examination, becoming a civil official.²⁹ Mutual trust and cooperation replaced the conflicts and antagonisms that had erupted between military and civilian elements in Ūijong's and then Myôngjong's reigns. One's service background was no longer a barrier to office holding.

Both Japan and Korea entered their era of military rule at nearly the same time, and their experiences mirrored each other in a number of ways. Disputes among the civil elites in both courts resulted in conflicts that warriors joined to settle. After a period of initial jockeying for power, Minamoto Yoritomo in Japan and Ch'oe Ch'unghôn in Korea emerged to give new direction to each country. As these generals took control, they shrouded their acts with the mantle of royal or imperial legitimacy. At the same time, they established institutions independent of the court, depending on a dual system of public and private agencies to rule. To fill these offices, they both recruited men to serve them personally, relying on a retainer system. Through these mechanisms, both introduced an efficient system of rule and strengthened their control over their respective societies.

Despite these similarities, in structure the two rules were fundamentally

different, and after 100 years, Korea reverted to a civil order while Japan's warriors established societal standards for many more centuries. The Kamakura hierarchy was always much more autonomous of the imperial court compared to the Ch'oe House's relation with the Koryô court. In Japan by late Heian a defined tradition of governance through private, personal relations had emerged that did not exist in Koryô. The Koryô state exercised strong control over the various regions of the country and remained jealous of maintaining its authority across the country. Koryô had always needed a strong central dynastic order to assure an effective defense against outside invaders. And at the pinnacle of this system sat the king, who even if rendered powerless throughout much of the military period, nevertheless embodied legitimacy. In Japan local autonomy and the culture of the warrior grew. The opposite occurred in Korea. To govern, Choe Ch'unghôn, even though he developed his own private institutions, also restored many dynastic agencies and worked closely with civil elites, thereby reaffirming the importance of civil traditions.

Late Koryô

The process that saw civilian leaders reassert ultimate control over the kingdom was slow. It commenced with the overthrow of Ch'oe Ūi in 1258. Although Yu Kyông, a civilian, and Kim Chun, a military official, joined to assassinate Ch'oe Ūi, Im Yôn, a former stable groom, changed their plans and killed Kim and then tried to depose Wônjong (1259-1274) who had just succeeded his father on the throne. Im Yôn and a number of military officials opposed a civilian call for peace with the Mongols, but by the early 1260s Mongol domination was so paramount that the military leaders could not block them. The last throes of military authority came in 1270 with the assassination of Im Yôn's son. Still unwilling to accept Mongol control, a number of military officials launched the famed Sambyôlch'ô Rebellion that combined Koryô and Mongol forces ultimately crushed in 1273. From then on, the Mongols controlled a civilian-led Koryô.

Koryô never forgot its century of military rule. Although later Confucian scholars judged the military period as an aberration from the norm of civilian rule,³⁰ the century following military control saw military leaders continuing to hold positions of responsibility. The dynasty never reverted to the harsh discrimination that military officials experienced in the years prior to the military coup of 1170. Even though under Mongol domination Koryô underwent some institutional change, military officers functioned beside civilians in the governmental structure.

Many factors enhanced the status of the warrior in late Koryô. To defeat the rebelling Sambyôlch'ô, Koryô depended on its own military force. Once the

suppression ended, the Mongols dispatched these same troops to aid in their planned invasions of Japan. The Mongols, who had conquered through military force, depended on the valor of the warrior and sustained respect for military traditions. The Mongols had no inhibitions about using warriors to govern.³¹

Between 1260 and 1394, John Duncan discovered, 2660 men held positions in the civil bureaucracy.³² Of 800 State Councilors from this same period, Duncan ascertained the background of 689 men. Seventy-nine or 11% of these State Councilors were of military background. This figure is certainly less than the percentage from the military period, but much more than the figures just prior to the 1170 coup. Duncan, gleaning from the biographies of 20 men who appeared in tomb stone inscriptions, attempted to reconstruct patterns of career advancement. Of these 20, seven advanced through the military into prestigious dynastic offices.³³

From this list, five of the seven became state councilors. Three—Chông Ingyông, Won Sônji, and Cho Yônsu—had fathers and/or grandfathers who had held high dynastic ranks. Duncan especially cites Cho Yônsu of the P'yôngyang Cho lineage. After entering the ranks through the protective appointment, he became a recorder (noksa) in the military. He passed the state examination at 17, held posts in both the military and civil lines, and became a state councilor by the time he was 31.³⁴ Like Cho, nearly all the other men who came from military backgrounds advanced systematically through the civil and military lines to the top positions in the kingdom.

The composition of the State Council during King Ch'ungmok's (1344-1348) and King Ch'ungjông's (1348-1351) reigns clarifies these themes. At least 78 men have been identified as holding positions in the State Council during these two reigns. Eleven of those men, or 14%, have been clearly associated with the military branch.³⁵ Although the presence of military officials in the State Council is not as large as the figures noted in the military period, the percentage is greater than those in early Koryô, when few military officials participated in the State Council.

Pyôn T'aesôp's own studies of Late Koryô have offered additional findings. Many of the officials who went to the Yuan dynasty as envoys from the Koryô court carried military ranks. Interpreters such as Cho Ingyu and the above-mentioned Chông Ingyông were of military background. These men and others of military lineage played various roles during late Koryô, acting as court advisors, envoys, and State Councilors.³⁶ Under King U (1374-1388) military officials played an especially active role. Men felt free to move across the increasingly blurred line separating military from civilian. Some held military and civil positions simultaneously, others

who had passed the state examination opted to become generals.³⁷ Socially a similar picture emerges as within some elite families brothers and cousins were literati and generals. Women from civil households married into military families and sons of scholars married daughters of generals.³⁸

The military official found himself in a much better position than in early Koryô. The trauma of the military coup of 1170 and the subsequent century of military control had done much to temper the arrogance of civil officials. Furthermore, for nearly 100 years Koryô saw the Mongols in control of their kingdom. As the Mongol leaders carried no innate bias for or against the military official, the latter were able to operate free from earlier restraints. Even though the Mongols often assumed the power of suzerain, Koryô still had to defend its borders from increasingly dogged Japanese pirate attacks in the south and Khitan incursions in the north. And by the middle of the 14th century, Koryô started to confront the chaos evolving in northern China out of the collapse of the Yuan and the rise of the Ming. All of these crises required men with military skill to protect the kingdom. With military officials maintaining a modicum of respect and responsibility, a collective leadership of both warrior and courtier, military and civil officials, joined near the conclusion of the 14th century to end Koryô and inaugurate Chosôn.

Conclusions

From the start of the dynasty, the military official carried the institutional responsibility to defend the kingdom. The dynasty accorded military officials with many of the same privileges that civil officials enjoyed and designed a system of ranks and stipends to protect their position. Those who reached the fifth rank or higher were allowed to name heirs to lower posts based on the protective appointment, and their children gain favored admission into the elite schools of the capital. Military officials possessed a modicum of financial security through land allotments, dynastic stipends, and other special grants. These privileges, institutionalized in the first century of the kingdom, continued throughout Koryô. Through these techniques, the civil establishment initially successfully tamed and coopted the warrior into supporting the dynasty.

Socially the position of the military official was much more ambivalent. Military officials, maintaining pride in their heritage, carried a confidence and sense of dignity to their traditions. Fully conscious that it was the martial arm that had to rise to the defense of the dynasty, distinct military families emerged repeatedly, providing sons to be generals. Such families can be found in all periods of the dynasty. But not all military officials could boast of distinguished lineages. In contrast to the civilian branch, it was easier for people of less exalted backgrounds to advance into government positions from the military. In this respect the military potentially provided an important social outlet by allowing men of economically impoverished origins an opportunity to enter government service. However, as the military arm included men of diverse origins who were not necessarily skilled in letters, it lacked a social standing equivalent to that held by civilians.

Military officials had to confront bias. The civil branch carried greater prestige for many reasons. To be a civil leader implied an ability to read and write. Mastering these skills was considered to be far more arduous and intellectually challenging than excelling in martial pursuits. Civil lineages also believed they were socially more esteemed and free from the taint of humble backgrounds. This attitude, most extreme in the first centuries of the dynasty, contributed to the 1170 coup. And even during the military period this partiality continued. The leading military families sustained civilian principles and sought to take on civil norms by preparing their sons or grandsons to sit for state examinations and advancing them through civil avenues.

Except for the military period, when generals forcefully commanded the dynasty, the quickest and surest path to the top offices remained through the civil

branch. When confronting major issues, the dynasty nearly always opted for non-martial solutions first. As was the case with Chinese traditions, only when appeasement, bribery, and diplomacy failed, was military might employed. Force was just one solution within the bag of statecraft. To the people of Koryô, their greatest heroes, after the dynastic founder Wang Kôn, were civilian officials who excelled in writing and diplomacy. Although the people of Silla aspired to emulate the actions of their conquering warriors, the people of Koryô esteemed the scholar. The norms of the literary elite, not the warrior, became the accepted values of all, commoner and aristocrat alike.

And yet, by mid-Koryô this esteem for the civil had been tempered. The military coup, through which the military officials finally reasserted their role in determining dynastic policy, changed the course of Koryô and momentarily shifted the balance to favor the warrior. For the last half of the dynasty, throughout both the periods of military rule and Mongol domination, the divisions separating military from civil relaxed as civil control moderated. Not only did military officials assume a more active and respected role in governance, but socially there was a blurring of distinctions between military and civilian families. Although the subordination of military to civil continued into late Koryô, the tensions separating the two lines all but disappeared.

A strong centralized state, which Koryô was, mandated a military authority ancillary to the civil structure. As Koryô, in its process of centralization, attempted to adapt Chinese models to its ruling apparatus, the military tradition became a focus of contention. Although the court and civil elites initially asserted their authority over the military, the problems posed by the demands for Koryô to defend its borders and maintain internal security enabled the military officials to sustain their beleaguered position. Drawing on their rich tradition of arms bearing, the military officials ultimately had to fight or face total subordination. A compromise emerged in the last century of Koryô with the reassertion of civil domination coupled with the reaffirmation of the importance of the military tradition within this structure. Koryô mirrored neither China nor Japan. The combination of civilian institutional development and the compactness of the country prevented the kingdom from breaking into battling entities as had happened in Japan. But the needs for a strong defense against invaders north and south, combined with the vision of a weakened civilian Sung state and an indigenous tradition of aristocratic warrior rule, helped bolster the role of the military official in late Koryô, in marked contrast to China.

Notes

- 1 Koryōsa (hereafter KS), Yonsei edition, Seoul: Kyonginmunhwasa, 1972, 1:9b-11a.
- 2 KS 2:14b-17a; Lee, Peter, ed., Sourcebook of Korean Civilization (hereafter, Sourcebook). New York, Columbia University Press: 1993, pp 263-266.
- 3 Hugh H.W. Kang, "The First Succession Struggle of Koryō in 945: A Reinterpretation," Journal of Asian Studies, XXXVI, 3 (May, 1977), 411-428.
- 4 KS 93:12a-22a.
- 5 If all positions were filled, these division would contain about 45,000 men. Although this could potentially be a major force, in times of foreign invasion or domestic revolt, national conscription greatly augmented Koryō's armies. See Yi Kibaek, "Koryō kyōnggun ko," in Koryō pyōngjesa yōngu (hereafter, Pyōngjesa), Seoul, Ilchokak, 1968.
- 6 See Lee, "Military Tradition," in Hugh H.W. Kang, ed., The Traditional Culture and Society of Korea: Thought and Institutions (Honolulu: Center for Korean Studies, 1975), p. 16, and "Koryō kunin ko," in Pyōngjesa, pp. 82-130. Lee points out that when a *kunban ssajok* family dies out, a new replacement could be selected from among the children of officials of the sixth rank or lower or from qualified peasants. Men from the *kunban ssajok* could advance into officer positions.
- 7 Pyōn Taesop, "Koryō muban yōngu," (hereafter "Muban") in Koryō chōngch'i chedosa yōngu, (hereafter Chōngch'i), Seoul: Ilchokak, 1971,p.345.
- 8 See Shultz, "Military Revolt in Koryō: The 1170 Coup d'Etat," (here after, "1170 Coup") Korean Studies, vol.3 (1979). Another study, Edward J. Shultz, "Twelfth Century Koryō: Merit and Birth," (here after, "Twelfth century Koryō"), Journal of Korean Studies, vol.9 (forthcoming), notes that in Yejong's reign only one man with a military lineage advanced into the top offices of the civil dynastic structure. John Duncan in The Origins of the Chosōn Dynasty (hereafter Origins), Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000, pp. 54-55, looking at the bureaucracy from 981 to 1146 finds military men in about 15% of these upper offices.
- 9 The five men were Kwōn Chōnggyun, Chi Sim, Chae In, U Pangjae, and Pang Chasu. Only limited information is available for these men, although three of them served in the suppression of Myoch'ōng's revolt in 1135. Kwōn Chōnggun had initially earned the ire of Yi Chagyōm and then joined in the suppression of Myoch'ōng. Koryōsa chōlyo (here after KSC), Hosa Bunko edition, Tokyo: Gakushuin, 1960, 9:15b, KS 96:29b. For Pang Chasu's activities against Myoch'ōng, see KS 96:29b, and for U Pangjae, see KSC 10:28b. Beyond these scant facts little additional information emerges on these men.
- 10 Pyōn "Muban, pp 366-367.
- 11 Yi Kibaek, "Koryō kunbanje hau/i kunin" in Pyōngjesa, p. 289 note 9.
- 12 I am grateful to James B. Palais for this insight in personal correspondence.
- 13 Michael C. Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryō," in Morris Rossabi, ed. China Among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th to 14th Centuries (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 162.
- 14 KSC 11:17b.
- 15 KS 100: 6a-b, KSC 12:41b.
- 16 For a fuller discussion, see Shultz, Edward J. Generals and Scholars: Military Rule in Medieval Korea (hereafter Generals), Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.
- 17 The same criteria used in determining the composition of Uijong's rule are also applied here. For a more complete analysis see Shultz, "Twelfth Century Koryō." Similar results emerge when looking at the composition of Ch'oe U's and Ch'oe Hang's rule. In Ch'oe U's period, 25% of the men holding offices in the civil dynastic structure were of military lineage and 20% in Hang's period. See Shultz, Generals, p. 84, p. 98..
- 18 See Hō Hungshik, Koryō kwagō chedosa yōngu, p. 253. The average number of men passing per year changes from 22.5 in Yejong's reign to 28.4 in Sinjong's reign (1197-1204), 27.7 for Huijong (1204-1211), and 35.5 for Kangjong's two year reign (1212-1213).
- 19 Although Im Yu held an office in the Ministry of Rites during Myōngjong's reign, he became one of the leading civilians under Ch'oe Ch'ūnghōn. Four times he managed the state examination and helped select many of the leading scholars of the day. KS 95:35a-b, 20:22b-23a, 21:11b-12a; KSC 14:31a-b.
- 20 For Ch'oe Tang see KS 99:3b-4a. For Ch'oe Sōn see KS 99:5b-6b. Although both men served during Myōngjong's reign, once Ch'oe Ch'ūnghōn came to power they advanced rapidly into the highest civilian offices. Their father, Yuch'ōng, had been spared during the military coup of 1170 and worked with the military authorities at that time. KS 99:2a-3a.

- 21 Kim entered the state bureaucracy through the protective appointment. Under Ch'oe Ch'unghŏn he was first Deputy Director of the Security Council (ch'umirwŏn pusa) and then Executive (p'yŏngjangsa). Chosen kinseki soran (hereafter, CK), Seoul: Governor General's office, 1933, vol. 1, pp 430-433, KS 101:21a, 21:16b; KSC 14:15a, 14:25b.
- 22 Civilians also proved to be a good counterweight to potential military opposition. See Shultz, "Ch'oe House," p. 116.
- 23 Commenting on events in Hŭijong's reign, the historians noted that bribery was rife and government transactions were completed on whim, KSC 14:25b-26a. Similar developments are implied in a commentary in 1218, KSC 15:13a.
- 24 When Sinjong wanted to step down, Ch'oe summoned State Councilors Ch'oe Sŏn and Ki Hongso to his house to discuss the abdication, KSC 14:15b, KS 21:17a. After Sinjong died Ch'oe Ch'unghŏn met the State Council at his house to discuss the planned period of mourning, KSC 14:16a-b. In 1206 he discussed which kings should be in the dynastic shrine, KSC 14:20a. The State Council deliberated on this issue again without agreement in 1208, KSC 14:23b.
- 25 In 1208, for example, the State Council attended a banquet after Hŭijong moved to Ch'oe U's residence, KSC 14:22a-b. Two months later the State Council watched a polo match (kyŏkku) with the king and Ch'oe Ch'unghŏn, KSC 14:22b.
- 26 In 1198 the Council of Generals was summoned to discuss policy and later presented a petition KSC14:1a, KS 20:5a-b, KSC 14:1b. Early in Kojong's reign it is again found deliberating on policy, see KS 22:2a, KSC 14:34b. And in 1216 it met with the State Council to support military maneuvers against the Khitans, KSC 14:45a. Ch'oe Ch'unghŏn met with 植之 senior military officials and the State Council on other occasions too. Twice in 1203, for example, he met with them to discuss a revolt in Kyŏngju, KSC 14:11a, 11b-12a.
- 27 For example, in the first decade of the 13th century military officials were on missions in 1202, 1204, 1209, and 1210. See KSC 14:12a-b; KSC 14:18a, KS 21:19b; KSC 14:24b-25a, KS 21:23b-24a; KSC 14:27b, KS 21:24b-25a.
- 28 Chang Yunmun, who advanced into the censorate, initially entered the civil bureaucracy through the protective appointment of his maternal grandfather, who had been a general in Injong's reign. Chang passed the state examination. See KS 101:2a-b, KSC 14:3b-4a, and HK p. 192. Chin Hwa follows a similar path, Koryŏ myŏnghyŏnjip, vol 2, pp. 14-16. Ki Hongso, who became a Councilor of State, as a youth excelled in writing and calligraphy. On reaching adulthood, he put aside these decidedly civil pursuits and followed the military. KS 101:11a, KSC 14:26a.
- 29 For Kim T'aesŏ see KS 101:21a-b; for Chŏng Sukch'ŏm's son see KS 100:28b-29a. One record notes that Im Kyŏngsuk of the prestigious Chŏngan Im lineage had "among his successful examinees more than ten persons who reached the highest official rank in a matter of years, and among them were three former generals and one junior colonel. This was previously unheard of." Ch'oe Cha, Pohan chip 1:7a-b.
- 30 Both the compilers of KS and KSC took this stance. See note 22. In commenting on Kojong's reign (1214-1259), they stated, "Domestically, powerful officials continued to seize arbitrarily the country's authority, internationally, the Jurchen and Mongols yearly sent troops." KSC 17:50a.
- 31 Pyŏn, Chŏngch' i", p. 432.
- 32 See Duncan, Origins, pp. 71-83, and "Late Koryŏ: A Buddhist Aristocracy," (here after, "Buddhist Aristocracy") Journal of Korean Studies, vol. 9 (forthcoming).
- 33 Duncan, Origins, p.82.
- 34 Duncan, Origins, pp.82-83.
- 35 This list was compiled based on information available in KS and KSC. John Duncan aided this investigation in clarifying the service background of several men I had not been able to identify.
- 36 One curious by-product of Mongol domination was the Mongol's insatiable demand for falcons. As Koryŏ officers bred fine birds, Yuan depended on them to raise and transport falcons to China. Pyŏn, "Muban," Chŏngch' i", p. 432.
- 37 See Pyŏn, "Muban," pp.431-446.
- 38 John Duncan noted the mixing of services in one family in referring to Hŏ Hŭgsik's Hanguk kŭmsok chŏnmun, Seoul, 1984, vol. 3. See: the Kosŏng Yi lineage, p. 1057-8; the Wŏnju Wŏn lineage, p. 1062; the Onyang Kim lineage, p. 1083, p. 1179; and the Andong Kim lineage, p. 1137. Examples of marriages between the services are: Wŏnju Wŏn lineage, p. 1062; Kongan Hŏ lineage, p. 1066; P'yŏnggang Ch'ae lineage, p. 1087; P'yŏngyang Cho lineage, p. 1103; and Onyang Kim lineage, p. 1179. I am grateful to John Duncan for this information.