

## Characteristic of the Council of Nobles in Silla, and Its Transformation

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This article examined the transformation of the characteristic or function of the Council of Nobles depending on the times. Such transformation was closely related to the political system or the attributes of the organization in those days. For instance, the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall or Chongsa-dang in the early ancient period is considered to have had a very close correlation with the system of the Six Boards, which was the political system in those days. In other words, the stages of the system of the Six Boards' method of administering the affairs of state were reflected in the Council of Southern Hall or Chongsa-dang. Similarly, the method of centralized political system centered on sovereign power was, of course, projected onto operating the Council of Southern Hall or Chongsa-dang in administering the affairs of state in stages after the middle of the ancient period. The content or structure of centralized political system focused on sovereign power changed slightly depending on the fluctuation in the inverse relationship between the sovereign and the vassals, and the transformation in the characteristic or function of these two councils was functionally related to this.

*Keywords: the Council of Nobles, the political system in Silla, the Council of Southern Hall, Chongsa-dang, the sovereign, the vassals*

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### I. Introduction

Matters of national importance in Silla dynasty were determined by a meeting of the aristocracy called the Council of Nobles.<sup>1</sup> Many arguments about its characteristic and function have been presented up to now, and great advance-

1. In this article, the body of conference where national affairs in Silla were discussed will be comprehensively defined as the Council of Nobles, and related issues will be discussed accord-

ment was made in understanding its transformation process especially after finding Naengsuri Silla's Stele in Yeongil (hereinafter referred to as Naengsuri Stele) and Bongpyeong Silla's Stele in Uljin (hereinafter referred to as Bongpyeong Stele). An in-depth discussion about this will be abbreviated in this article, because history of research on this issue has already been organized in detail.<sup>2</sup> However, past research has hitherto overlooked an important fact in that the characteristic and function of the Councils were examined without making a clear distinction between those supervised by the sovereign and those led by administrators, including *Sangdaedeung* (top official government ranks).

The Council of Nobles was held at Southern Hall (the supreme conference developed from the council of tribal representatives), Jeongsa-dang (the place where various national matters were discussed), and the four spiritual places near the capital (Mt. Cheongsong, Pijeon, Uji-am, Mt. Keumgang). The Council of Nobles was broadly divided into two types: the sovereign presided over the Council, or administrators including *Sangdaedeung* presided over the Council.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the sovereign always attended the conferences held at Southern Hall can be confirmed through data. On the other hand, data passed on down the years contain descriptions about *Sangdaedeung* conducting meetings at Jeongsa-dang; the location where these meetings took place was not the Royal Palace but Keumseong Palace. This suggests that the sovereign did not attend the conferences held at Jeongsa-dang as a rule. This article defines the Council of Southern Hall as meetings presided over by the sovereign and the Council of Jeongsa-dang as the ones presided over by administrators. The Council of Southern Hall and the Council of Jeongsa-dang were named thusly, because the former was mostly held at Southern Hall and the latter at Jeongsa-dang. And, of course, the meetings held at the four spiritual places near the capital can be explained as an aspect of these two meeting types.

Matters of national importance in Silla were probably discussed in the two

ingly. In addition, the tradition of unanimous voting was one of the methods of running the Council of Nobles; thus, that in itself is not mentioned or explained much here.

2. A recent study that represents the organization of the history of research on the Council of Nobles is Shin Hyeong-seok's "A Study on the Conference of the Nobles in Silla during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century," *Guksagwannonchong*, Vol. 98, 2002.
3. The administrator was the *Sangdaedeung* in the Middle ancient period, and the administrators in the Early ancient period were government officials commissioned to handle affairs of state. *Sangjaesang* (first-rate Prime Minister) was the administrator in the Unified Silla period. This will be demonstrated in detail in this article.

meetings mentioned above. By examining the Naengsuri Stele and Bongpyeong Stele, we can see that matters of national importance were discussed at the Council of Southern Hall, which was presided over by the sovereign in the Early ancient period. Through an examination of how the resolutions passed in the Council were promulgated as instructions under the joint names of the members of the Council, it can be inferred that the Council of Southern Hall functioned as the highest decision-making device in affairs of state during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. According to what the records reveal, matters of national importance were discussed at the Council of Jeongsa-dang, with administrators including *Sangdaedeung* presiding over the meetings after the position of *Sangdaedeung* was created in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Beopheung (531). It would seem that the method of administering affairs of state was for administrators to report the resolutions reached by the Council of Jeongsa-dang to the throne, and the sovereign would approve or distribute them as royal commands in the Middle ancient period and thereafter as the sovereign's political position increased one level. Of course, it is not as if the Council of Southern Hall where the sovereign discussed affairs of state with his subjects was not held in the Middle ancient period and thereafter, but its characteristic was not too different from that of the Council of Jeongsa-dang. In other words, this means both Councils had the characteristic of advising or consulting the sovereign in making the final decisions in administering affairs of state in those days. However, it has been confirmed that the *Sangdaedeung* in the Middle ancient period and the *Sangjaesang* (first-rate Prime Minister) in the Unified Silla period ran the conferences; this is a view that suggests a change in the function of the Council of Jeongsa-dang during these two periods. On the one hand, the Council of Jeongsa-dang was held even in the Early ancient period. Whereas the Council of Southern Hall functioned as the highest legislative system in those days, the attributes of the Council of Jeongsa-dang in those days should be distinguished from those of later periods.

The gist of purport to be revealed in this article is as stated above. The characteristic and attendant transformation in each Council's method of administering affairs of state in Silla can be easily explained by broadly dividing the Council of Nobles into the Council of Southern Hall and the Council of Jeongsa-dang and by examining the characteristic and attendant transformation of each Council. Furthermore, this is expected to lead to a clue on the outlook of the political system of Silla or the transformation of its structure. As insufficient as it is, I hope this article will henceforth assist in shedding more light on the Council

of Nobles and Silla's method of administering affairs of state. Constructive criticism will be appreciated.

## II. Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang

Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang were the two buildings presumed to be the government offices during the Silla dynasty. Samguk-sagi(*Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*) states that Southern Hall (aka the Privy Council) was built in July of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Cheomhae Isageum (Isageum was used at the beginning of the Silla dynasty to refer to the monarch) on the south side of the Royal Palace. In March of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Jinpyeong (585), the latest records on Southern Hall were of the monarch going to Southern Hall and personally interrogating the offenses of the prisoners. However, it would be difficult to say that records did not exist just because they cannot be seen. Thus, Southern Hall must have been built at Weol Castle (the Royal Palace in present-day Kyeongju) due to the fact that it was supposedly built at a location south of the palace. It can be considered as a type of government office, because it was named Bukcheong (the Northern Government Office).<sup>4</sup> The sovereign appeared in the accounts on Southern Hall.<sup>5</sup> It was the same in Paekche's case.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that the place was a government office wherein the king handled state affairs (Lee Byong-do 1976: 624; Park Nam-su 2003: 211).

An interesting fact, however, is related to the architectural structure of Southern Hall. Southern Hall originated from a primitive meeting hall, and we

4. "Another book states that Silla kept the skull of King Myeong (King Seong) but sent the balance of the bones to Paekche with proper decorum. The sovereign of Silla buried the skull beneath the steps of Bukcheong and called it Dodang." *Nihonshogi*, Vol. 19, December of the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Kinmei Tennou.
5. "National affairs were conducted at the Southern Hall for the first time." Records on Silla in Samguk-sagi, Vol. 2, January of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Cheomhae Isageum. "The monarch gathered many vassals and personally questioned the rights and wrongs in politics and punishment." Article above, seventh year of the reign of Michu Isageum. Other records from the reign of King Jinpyeong also state that the sovereign personally interrogated the prisoners.
6. "(He) conducted affairs of state while at Southern Hall." Records on Paekche in Samguk-sagi, Vol. 2, January of the 28<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Koi. "Many vassals were invited to a feast held at Southern Hall." Document mentioned above, Vol. 4, November of the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Dong-seong.

can infer that its internal structure was similar to the seating arrangement of government officials in the royal audience chamber at the palace in later periods by examining the etymology of Maripkhan (another title denoting “king” or “ruler”), i.e., the throne was placed one step above all other seats, and the seats for the vassals were arranged according to rank one step immediately below the throne (Lee Byong-do 1976).

Based on this, Southern Hall can be called a government office where the monarch and his/her subjects would sit to discuss national affairs. Corroborating facts in records demonstrate that the sovereign gathered the vassals at Southern Hall and “the sovereign personally questioned the rights and wrongs of enforcing politics and punishments.” A record states that in the third year of the reign of King Heondeog, the sovereign went to Pyeonguijeon for the first time to supervise national politics. The fact that Pyeonguijeon was renovated in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of King Munseong can also be found. Pyeonguijeon was interpreted as a place where pending issues were discussed (*Ibid.*: 641), which lends credence to the assumption that it was also a government office wherein the monarch and his vassals sat down to discuss affairs of state. Southern Hall was demolished during the reign of King Heondeog, and Pyeonguijeon, whose functionality was the same, was newly established.

Southern Hall as well as Jeongsa-dang existed as two separate entities in Silla. Records on Silla in *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* state that Jeongsa-dang was built at Keumseong Palace during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Ilseong Isageum. It is being confirmed that *Sangdaedeung* Chunggong screened government officials during the reign of King Heondeog. Jeongsa-dang was built around the beginning of the Silla dynasty and is considered to have existed until the latter part of the Silla dynasty. Jeongsa-dang was built at Keumseong Palace, but attention must first be paid to its location, which was different from that of Southern Hall at Weol Castle. And we must pay attention to the fact that the *Sangdaedeung* screened government officials in Jeongsa-dang. When these two aspects are taken into consideration, it is possible to surmise that direct contact with the monarch was at a minimum at Jeongsa-dang as compared to Southern Hall, and that Jeongsa-dang was a government office where administrators, including the *Sangdaedeung* who had the authority to screen government officials, oversaw affairs of state (Park Nam-su 2003: 212). However, Jeongsa-dang in the nation of Tang was a place for the Jaesang (Prime Minister) to consult on political matters. Jungseomunha (Chancellery for State Affairs) was a modified organization of Jeongsa-dang.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Jeongsa-dang was also

known to be the gathering place for the *Jaesang* to discuss political affairs during the Goryeo dynasty (Park Jae-woo 2000: 228). When the characteristic of Jeongsa-dang in the Tang and Goryeo dynasties are viewed, it would be more appropriate to say that Jeongsa-dang in Silla was not just an office of administrators but a government office wherein political affairs were discussed by the vassals under the supervision of administrators. Such an assumption can be supplemented by reviewing the characteristic of Jeongsa-am of Baekje. Southern Hall was the government office of the monarchs of Baekje as well. On the other hand, Jeongsa-am was deeply associated with the election of the *Jaesang*;<sup>8</sup> based on this, its name is assumed to have derived from the site where the *Jaesang* consulted about political affairs.

However, the vassals did not always gather at Southern Hall and/or Jeongsa-dang to discuss affairs of state. The precedence of the ministers meeting at the four spiritual places near the capital (Mt. Cheongsong to the east, Mt. Uji to the south, Pijeon to the west, and Mt. Keumgang to the north) substantiates this. Wherever the location of the government office may be, it can be broadly divided into two types: The sovereign consulted with many vassals about state affairs, or administrators including *Sangdaedeung* met with other vassals to discuss state affairs. The former would have been supervised by the monarch, and the latter by administrators; this article will define the first type as the Council of Southern Hall and the second type as the Council of Jeongsa-dang. They are named thusly because the former type of meetings were usually held at Southern Hall and the latter at Jeongsa-dang.<sup>9</sup>

7. According to the section on Baekgwanni in *Hsin-Tangshu*, Volume 46, it has been passed on through the ages that “Jungseomunha is where the Jaesang of the nation of Tang gathered to discuss national affairs. It was originally called Jeongsa-dang, but the name was changed to Jungseomunha (Chancellery for State Affairs) in the 11<sup>th</sup> year (723) of its establishment and equipped with administrative functions as well.”
8. “There was also Jeongsa-am at Hoam Temple. The names of 3 to 4 candidates would be written on an envelope and put on the rock when the nation selected a *Jaesang*. The person whose name was stamped with a seal was chosen to be the *Jaesang* after a few minutes. This was the reason why the rock was called Jeongsa-am.” Section on Nambuyeo Baekje, *Samguk-yusa*(Memorabilia of the *Three Kingdoms*), Volume 2, Ki-i 2.
9. So far, there are those who claim that both the Council of Nobles and the Council of Southern Hall existed comprised of different members (Lee Mun-ki, 1982. “An Inquiry into the Organization of Vassals during the Reign of King Jinheung,” *Daegu Sahak*, Vol. 20-21), or that various councils existed at the same time where the composition of the constituents differed, depending on the issues (Ju Bo-don, 1997. “Central Political Organization,” *Hanguksa*(*Korean History*), Vol. 7 Politics and Society of the Three Kingdoms III (Sill and Kaya), National History Compilation Committee, p. 187-188.

### III. Characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall, and Its Transformation

The Council of Southern Hall was earlier defined as a conference attended by the monarch. Documented records such as *samguk-sagi* pass on the information that the monarch and vassals discussed various topics on state affairs. The gist of the method was the monarch asking the vassals for personal ideas/thought on a particular matter, a representative of the vassals or the vassals themselves giving their recommendation, and then the monarch accepting or rejecting the recommendation.<sup>10</sup> However, documented records seem to convey that such a method continued from the beginning to the end of Silla dynasty. Was the so-called mode of operation of the Council of Southern Hall truly consistent throughout the Silla dynasty?

The monarch was the nation's ultimate ruler and the final decision-maker in matters related to affairs of state in a dynasty. In principle, it was impossible to conduct affairs of state without the monarch. The resolutions reached by the Council of Vassals, which the monarch supervised, assisted or advised the monarch's decisions when such a role of the monarch is taken into consideration. This means the monarch would listen to the vassals' suggestions and take them into consideration, but their recommendations did not restrain the decision of the monarch. Documented records such as *Samguk-sagi* assumes that the sovereign was the final decision-maker on affairs of state in the method of holding meetings. The issue here is related to whether the Council of Southern Hall in fact assisted or advised the monarch in administering affairs of state from the beginning of Silla dynasty. In association with this, it is necessary to pay attention to the type of royal command in Jeokseong Stele in Danyang (hereinafter referred to as Jeokseong Stele). The front portion of this epitaph is as follows:

*The monarch issued a royal command on the □ month of the □□ year. This royal command was issued when the Daejung (大衆) were Isabuji Ikhanji belonging to the Hwe-bu, □□□ dumiji Pajinkhanji belonging to the Sahwe-bu, Seobujilji Daeakhanji, □□□□ buji Daeakhanji, and Naeryejilji Daeakhanji belonging to the Hwe-bu. The Gunju (the Governor of Ju) in Kodurim Castle were Bichabuji Akhanji*

10. As reference for the monarch and his vassals holding council and its contents, see Lee In-chul, 1991; 1993: 88-96.

*belonging to the Hwe-bu and Muryeokji Akhanji belonging to the Sahwe-bu, the Dangju (幢主) of Chumun Village (Governor of Chumun Village) was Doseolji Geupkhanji belonging to the Sahwe-bu, and the Dangju of Mulsabeol Castle (Governor of Mulsabeol Castle) was Joheugbuji Geupkhanji (Lee Chongso, 1998).*

The content of Jeokseong Stele contained a royal command from the monarch to reward Yaicha and other natives of Jeokseong who assisted in the invasion of Jeokseong. The vassals who specifically discussed the contents of the royal command at this time were the *Daejung* (大衆), *Gunju* (軍主), and *Dangju* (幢主). They reached a decision on rewarding Yaicha and others and reported this to the monarch, who promulgated it as a form of instruction. This decision-making was in the form of the Council of Jeongsa-dang. But the case of Paekche supports the claim that this was similar to the method of operating the Council of Southern Hall.

Volume 19 of *Nihonshogi* describes that King Seongmyeong showed a royal edict (from the Tennou of Japan) to the vassals and asked, “This is the royal edict, what should be done?” in December of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Kinmei Tennou. A recommendation was submitted to the sovereign after eight vassals, including *Sangjwapyeong* (first-rate *Jwapyeong*) Sataek Kiru, *Jungjwapyeong* (second-rate *Jwapyeong*) Mok Hyeopmana, and *Hajwapyeong* (third-rate *Jwapyeong*) Mok Yunkwi, deliberated on this issue. And the monarch accepted the recommendation after saying, “yours decision is indeed the same as mine.” The location where the meeting took place was not mentioned here. The meeting was probably held at the government office where the monarch carried out state affairs, i.e., Southern Hall, because the data states that the king showed the royal edict directly to the vassals. Data mentioned above is an example of a passage denoting the operating method of the Council of Southern Hall in Baekche during the Sabi period, because the meeting took place at Southern Hall although it seems that the meeting was supervised by *Sangjwapyeong* Sataek Kiru. The operating method of the Council of Southern Hall in Baekche was that of the monarch questioning the vassals on a specific subject matter, the vassals deliberating on the matter in order to come up with a recommendation, submitting their decision to the monarch, and the monarch reaching a final decision based on their recommendation. The decision of the sovereign would be dispersed immediately in the form of instruction, and its method should not be all that different from that of Jeokseong Stele. The mode of conducting the Council



of Southern Hall in Silla in the building of Jeokseong Stele must be similar to that of Baekche.

Then the question is whether the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall in the Early ancient period was the same, and notice should be paid to Naengsuri Stele and Bongpyeong Stele in association with this. An excerpt containing the state of operation of the Council of Southern Hall is below.

① On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September in the year of *gyemi* (503), seven kings [the Galmun King Jidoro (King Jijeung) belonging to the Sahwe-bu, Sadeogji Akhanji (*Achan*), Jasukji Geobeolkhanji (*Geukchan*), Ibuji Ilkhanji (*Ichan*) belonging to the Hwe-bu, Jisimji Geobeolkhanji (*Geukchan*), Dubokji Khanji belonging to the Bonpi-bu, Mosaji Khanji belonging to the Sapi-bu sat down together for a meeting and issued a royal command to “have Jeolgeori collect all goods based on the instructions of the previous two kings.” (Naengsuri Stele)

② On the 15<sup>th</sup> of January in the year of *gapjin* (524), a royal command was issued by Maegeum King Mojeukji (King Beopheung) belonging to the Hwe-bu, Galmun King Sabuji (*Ipjong*) belonging to the Sahwe-bu, □buji Khanji belonging to the Bonpi-bu, Miheunji Khanji belonging to the Jamhwe (*Moryang*)-bu, Ijeomji Taeakhanji (*Daeachan*), Gilseonji Akhanji (*Achan*), Ildokbuji Ilgilkhanji (*Ilgilchan*) belonging to the Sahwe-bu, Mulryokji Ilgilkhanji (*Ilgilchan*), Sinyukji Geobeolkhanji (*Geukchan*), Ilbuji Taenama (*Daenama*), Iliji Taenama (*Daenama*), Mosimji Nama belonging to the Hwe-bu, and Sipbuji Nama, Siliji Nama belonging to the Sahwe-bu. (Bongpyeong Stele)

① is about Galmun King Jidoro (King Jijeung) and others discussing the problem of Jeolgeori and others in Jinima village fighting over material goods in 503, and issuing a royal proclamation that the goods are to be the possession of Jeolgeori based on the instructions of the previous two kings.

Keep in mind here that the attendees of the meeting discussed the issues together, and the royal command was issued under their joint names. This is confirmed in ② as well. Indeed, it is about issuing a royal command on some-

thing after 14 people, including Maegeum King Mojeukji (King Beopheung), reached an agreement. The meetings described in the data in ① and ② were presided over by the sovereign (Galmun King Jidoro and Maegeum King Mojeukji), and thus the meetings can be identified as being in the style of the Council of Southern Hall.

It is assumed that the resolution reached during the meeting was distributed as a royal command under joint names, because the sovereign, who presided over the meeting until the decision was made to build Bongpyeong Stele, had the same right and power to vote as other members. The Council of Southern Hall itself must be viewed as the ultimate decision-making device in deliberating and deciding on matters of state in those days.<sup>11</sup> Namely, this means that the Council of Southern Hall and not the sovereign had the ultimate decision-making power in affairs of state. The characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall is estimated to have changed between Bongpyeong Stele in 524 and Jeokseong Stele in mid-6<sup>th</sup> century. It is my understanding that the change in the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall occurred when the 6-bu system (the political system of the early Silla dynasty) was dismantled and a political system centered on sovereign power was established in the 530's (Jeon Deog-jae 1996: 140-211). It is assumed that the establishment of *Sangdaedeung* acted as an especially important crossroad for the change in the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall. This is due to the custom of discussing important state affairs at the Council of Jeongsa-dang under the supervision of the *Sangdaedeung* was firmly in place as of this period. This will be demonstrated in detail below.

The change in the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall in the 530's was probably not unrelated to the change in its members. The principal members of the Council of Southern Hall in those days can be deduced as representatives of the 6-bu (six quasi-independent political unit in Gyeongju), because the operation of national administration during the Isageum period was based on agreements reached by the representatives of the 6-bu. Therefore, another name for the Council of Southern Hall in those days could have been the Assembly of the Representatives of the 6-bu (Jeon Deog-jae 2000: 262-266; Ju Bo-don 1997:

11. The contents of the decisions reached by the Council of Nobles were distributed under the joint names of the attendees even during the reigns of King Sabuji (King Silseong) and King Naeji (King Nulji). But it is inferred that a practice of using only the name of the supervisor of the meeting evolved at a later time in order to avoid confusion when mentioning the incident; for example, it may have been expressed as "instructions of two previous kings."

74). However, the sovereign power of Hwe-bu was superior to that of Sahwe-bu at least during the reign of King Nulji. This led to an increase in the monarch's influence in administering affairs of state. Specific evidence supporting this can be found not only in the attendance of the representatives of 6-bu at the Council of Southern Hall but also in the attendance of nobles who were awarded 17 official government ranks, i.e., nobles affiliated with Hwe-bu and Sahwe-bu. Naengsuri Stele and Bongpyeong Stele were built during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, which reflects the membership change in the Council of Southern Hall immediately after the reign of King Nulji (Jeon Deog-jae 1996: 63-83).

Changes in the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall from ultimate decision-making device to assisting or advising the sovereign in making decisions after the establishment of *Sangdaedeung* as the turning point were described above. Thus, instances where the sovereign presided over the Council of Southern Hall should have decreased greatly. The reason was that the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall and that of the Council of Jeongsa-dang did not differ all that much in essence; and it is assumed that the customary administration of national politics meant that the vassals would discuss important state affairs at the Council of Jeongsa-dang and submit the decision to the monarch, who would then sanction it and distribute it in the form of instruction or royal command. But the method of administering affairs of state by having the sovereign preside over the Council of Southern Hall in order to listen to the opinions of the vassals did not completely disappear in those days. In reality, such instances can be found in historical records (See Lee In-chul 1993). Who could attend the Council of Southern Hall in those days then? First, it could be assumed that the *Sangdaedeung* and the other *Daedeung* were the core members, because it is understood that the majority of the members of the Council of Jeongsa-dang were *Daedeung* (Lee Ki-baek 1974a: 78-82).

*Daedeung* mentioned in the monument commemorating the border inspection by King Jinheung contained all 17 official ranks. In the 530's, all of the ruling class of the 6-bu received 17 official ranks from the monarch. This was an indication of the end of the existence of the representatives of the 6-bu who autonomously governed their geographical areas (Jeon Deog-jae 1996: 132-140). This was followed by the bestowal of the membership to the Council of Southern Hall on those vassals who received the 17 official ranks from the monarch. These vassals were government officials under the control and direction of the monarch, and thus, the agreement reached by the Council probably could not in principle restrain the decision of the monarch. Changes in the char-

acteristic of the Council of Southern Hall were closely related to the representatives of the 6-bu no longer being part of its membership and the sovereign choosing the new members among his vassals. This once again awakens the fact that administering affairs of state was not unrelated to the 6-bu system that the representatives of the 6-bu must reach an agreement. Anyway, such transformation was on par with the sovereign denying the autonomy of the 6-bu and building a political system around him.

Emphasis on the Council of Jaesang (Council of Premiers) during the Unified Silla period will be examined later; *Jaesang* can then be considered to be core members of the Council of Southern Hall. This was true in the Council of Jeongsa-dang as well. But the number of members could increase depending on the situation, and such an assumption is supported by Jeokseong Stele, which states that the *Daejung* as well as the *Gunju* or the *Dangju* discussed the issue of awarding Yaicha and others. Such meetings could be referred to as meetings between the sovereign and his subjects; it would be difficult to classify these meetings as representing a council system in any specific period, because these were held only when necessary from the beginning to the end of the Silla dynasty.

Did all government officials attend the Council of Southern Hall? Of course, it would be difficult to say that. There must have been some regulation restricting those government officials who could attend the Council of Southern Hall or Jeongsa-dang. Attention should be paid to the position of *Sangdang* in association with this issue. During the Unified Silla period, the position of *Sangdang* corresponded to the position of a vice-minister of a government agency in charge of managing temples or *wihwabu* (the Board of Screening government officials affairs). However, *Sangdang* could be literally interpreted as “a government official who can be raised to the hall.” This brings to mind an image of future *Dangsang* government officials (high-ranking government officials). A *Dangsang* government official was “an official who could sit at the seat of the hall(a place where various national matters were discussed) during morning meetings” in the Joseon dynasty. Volume 17 of *Nihonshogi* in early March of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Keitai Tennou shows the great restriction placed on qualifying officials to sit at the hall even during the Three Kingdoms period. This document relays the information of a High Hall(a place where national matters were discussed) erected in Alla country, but only a few great men were allowed entry to the High Hall; Baekche generals such as Kunyunkwi, Manakpbae, Maro and others attempted to obtain a seat at the High Hall sever-

al times but were not able to, and they became discontent. Through this document, we can assume that a distinction was made between those officials who could ascend the hall and those who could not, even in Baekche. It should have been the same in Silla, and the Councils of Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang would be the equivalent of the High Hall in Alla. It would be appropriate to infer that the position of *Sangdang* arose from the nomenclature of the officials who attended the Councils of Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang (Yoon Seon-tae 2000: 29-30). It seems *Sangdang* referred to those officials who were allowed to participate in the Council of Southern Hall or Jeongsa-dang prior to the Unified Silla period, but it gradually began to refer to the lowest-level officials allowed to participate in the Council; and finally, it became the name of the vice-minister of a government agency in charge of managing temples or *wihwabu* during the Unified Silla period.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV. Characteristic of the Council of Jeongsa-dang, and Its Transformation

##### 1. The Council of Jeongsa-dang in the Middle Ancient Period

The Council of Jeongsa-dang was defined as a council system wherein the sovereign did not attend, i.e., only the vassals sat down to discuss affairs of state. In relation to the Council of Jeongsa-dang, the article on the dynasty of Queen Jindeok in *Samguk-yusa* volume 1, Ki-i 1, states that Alcheon sat at the seat of the supervisor at the Council of Uji-am during the reign of Queen Jindeok. Alcheon's official position at that time was *Sangdaedeung*. Above data shows that the *Sangdaedeung* presided over the Council of Jeongsa-dang during the reign of Queen Jindeok. The position of *Sangdaedeung* was first established in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Beopheung (531). *Sangdaedeung* Cheolbu "was in charge of affairs of state" in those days. "Matters of the nation were del-

12. The regulation for appointment to the position of general of the six corps (*Jeong* -停) states that the candidate must be of royal nobility and hold an official position equal to or lower than that of *Sangshin* (*Sangdaedeung*) and equal to or higher than *Sangdang*. The fact that the Supreme Council of Defense Matters comprised of *Chusin* (樞臣) and *Jaesin* (宰臣) discussed on the problem of nation's borders during the Goryeo dynasty is taken into consideration, it is possible to assume that the generals of six corps, who were the source of important military power, discussed on military matters. It could be that only the royal nobility among the *Sangdang* were qualified to attend the Councils of Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang.

egated to” Geochilbu, who was appointed to the position of *Sangdaedeung* during the reign of King Jinji, and Minister Eulje, who was presumed to be a *Sangdaedeung*, “was in charge of the affairs of state” during the first year of the reign of Queen Seondeok.(Lee Ki-baek 1974b). Several other examples let us peek at the fact that the *Sangdaedeung* presided over the Council of Jeongsa-dang and was in charge of affairs of state. The principal members of these councils in those days were the *Daedeung* who appeared in King Jinheung’s Stele.

The relative importance of the Council of Southern Hall presided over by the sovereign must have decreased greatly after the *Sangdaedeung* began to preside over the Council of Jeongsa-dang. It is written that the ministers gathered at the four spiritual places to discuss matters of national importance during the reign of Queen Jindeok,<sup>13</sup> which could be taken as the customary method of administering affairs of state, i.e., the Council of Jeongsa-dang would discuss affairs of state, the *Sangdaedeung* would present the result of the discussion to the sovereign for approval, and then execute the decision once approved. However, improvement to the centralized administrative office was not sufficient until the reign of King Jinheung.<sup>14</sup> It is important to pay attention to this in relation to the political function of the Council of Jeongsa-dang. The decision reached by the Council of Jeongsa-dang would have been executed after receiving permission from the sovereign. We should turn to *Jeondaedeung*, *Sadaedeung*, *Juhaengsadaedeung*, etc. in association with the execution of a royal edict or royal command from the sovereign. *Jeondaedeung* assisted *Pumju*; the position was created in the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Jinheung. It seems as if the position of *Jeondaedeung* was created as aide-de-camp to *Pumju* when the workload of the *Pumju* increased. On the other hand, the minister of Silla’s minor capital city was *Sadaedeung*, and *Juhaengsadaedeung* was a government official who assisted the *Gunju* of Ju Province in carrying out administrative tasks (Jeon Deog-jae 2001: 86-87). The Ministers of the Board of

13. On the one hand, it is written in the section about Silla in *SuShu* (隋書) that “several government officials would gather to discuss the issue in detail before reaching a decision when there is a important problem in the nation.”

14. Among the various centralized administrative offices, Board of Military Affairs was established for the first time in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of King Beopheung. And the Inspector’s Office was established in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Jinheung to audit government officials. Furthermore, an administrative office estimated to have existed during the reign of King Jinheung is *Pumju*. *Pumju* is assumed to have been the position of the Minister as well as that of administrative office; it existed prior to this period.

Military Affairs or *Pumju* were also *Daedeung* and were probably important members of the meeting of the *Daedeung*. *Daedeung* divided regular tasks amongst themselves and carried them out during the reign of King Jinheung, and executing the royal command or edict was done after the sovereign approved the Council's recommendation in those days; the *Daedeung* who formed the Council of Jeongsa-dang under the supervision of the *Sangdaedeung* would execute the royal command or edict. In this respect, *Sangdaedeung* not only performed the role of collecting the opinions of the *Daedeung* at the Council of Jeongsa-dang and submitting its contents, but was also in charge of executing matters approved by the monarch in those days. This calls attention to the fact that the Council of Jeongsa-dang was not just a decision-making device but also functioned as the executor of the decisions that were in the form of a royal command or edict.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, *Sangdaedeung*, who was in charge of the affairs of state, had much influence in administering national politics in the Middle ancient period.

Centralized administrative office existed during the reign of King Jinpyeong and became more systematically organized during the reign of Queen Jindeok. Therefore, it is inferred that the ministers of each office became core members of the Council of Jeongsa-dang, and they were called *Daesin* (Jeon Deog-jae 2000: 254-255). It is assumed that the system of administering national politics was determined in the Council of Jeongsa-dang, its content was reported to the monarch, and his/her approval was executed directly by each office due to the structural reorganization of the centralized administrative office. In other words, this means the Council of Jeongsa-dang was only able to play the role of a decision-making device, and the *Sijung* (Minister of Jipsa-bu) of the Jipsa-bu (department in charge of administrative tasks) and ministers of the centralized office were in charge of executing the contents of the decision. The division of roles between decision-making and execution became more clear in the Unified

15. An instance where the Council of Jeongsa-dang dethroned King Jinji in the Middle ancient period can be found. And there were times when the Council of Jeongsa-dang elected a new monarch when a monarch died and the succession such as the heir apparent or brother(s) was not clear. By emphasizing these aspects, misunderstanding recently arose in thinking that the Council of Jeongsa-dang was the ultimate decision-making device in administering national politics. But instances mentioned above were exceptional cases, and it is not appropriate to generalize them in order to prescribe the characteristic of the Council of Jeongsa-dang. This article will focus on explaining the characteristic or function of the Council of Jeongsa-dang under ordinary political conditions.

Silla period.

## 2. The Council of Jeongsa-dang in the Unified Silla Period.

It is common knowledge that *Sangdaedeung* was the highest official post in the Unified Silla period. But there is no indication that the *Sangdaedeung* was in charge of national politics. Based on the data below, it has recently been made clear that the *Sangdaedeung* continued to preside over the Council of Jeongsa-dang, i.e., the Council of Nobles, even during the later period of Silla.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> year (of the reign of King Heondeog), Sujong, a younger brother born of the same mother, was made the Crown Prince and was invited to Weolji Palace due to the lack of a son to succeed the throne. Chunggong was a *Gakkhan* (first of the 17 official ranks) but promoted to *Sangdaedeung* at that time; he sat in Jeongsa-dang to screen and select internal and external government officials, and became ill after he went home. (Nokjin, A Series of Biographies 5, *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms*)

Chung-gong was the younger brother of King Heondeog and King Heungdeok. The excerpt above describes Chung-gong performing the task of a *Sangdaedeung* in screening the government officials in Jeongsa-dang. Based on this, there are those who claimed that a *Sangdaedeung* was in charge of affairs of state during the later period of Silla (Lee Ki-baek 1974b: 116-117). However, we should pay attention to the high likelihood that Chunggong was a *Sangjaesang* (first-rate Prime Minister). The section on Silla in *Hsin-Tangshu* states that a *mungeuk* (decorative sword put in front of the door of the houses of meritorious subjects or high-level officials) was awarded to *Jaesang* Eon-seung (King Heondeog) and Junggong (Chung-gong) and others in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Aejang; this indicates that Chung-gong was assigned to the position of *Jaesang* early on. Kim Sung-bin held the position of *Sang(dae)jaesang* as well as *Sangdaedeung* until the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Heondeog. After Sung-bin's death, the monarch's brother Su-jong was appointed to replace him. However, Su-jong was soon afterwards appointed as the Crown Prince, and Chung-gong was designated as *Sangdaedeung* in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Heondeog. It is highly likely that Chung-gong, who was appointed to the position of *Jaesang* early on, also held the position of *Sangjaesang* at a time when Kim Sung-bin died and Sujong was ennobled to the position of Crown



Prince. Ultimately, Chung-gong was in charge of affairs of state while he concurrently held the position of *Sangdaedeung* as well as that of *Sangjaesang*.

The issue here is the relationship between *Sangjaesang* and *Sangdaedeung*; the same person did not always hold the positions of *Sangjaesang* and *Sangdaedeung*. A representative example is Wi-hong. He was the brother of King Kyeongmun, and was put in charge of renovating the nine-story wooden tower at Hwangryong Temple as the *Sangjaesang* in 871 (11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Kyeongmun). His official government position was known to have become *Pyongburyeong* (Minister of the Board of Military Affairs), *Pyeongjangsa* in the following year; his official rank was *Ikhan*.<sup>16</sup> However, the *Sangdaedeung* at that time was Kim Jeong. He was appointed to the position of *Sangdaedeung* in the second year and died in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Kyeongmun. Wi-hong was *Sangjaesang* during the reign of King Kyeongmun but did not hold the position of *Sangdaedeung* at the same time.

It is necessary to pay attention to the inverse relationship between Kim Ju-weon and Kim Kyeong-sin during the reign of King Seondeog in order to understand the political power relationship between *Sangdaedeung* and *Sangjaesang*. The section on Ki-i in *Samguk-yusa* passes on the information that Kim Ju-weon was the *Sangjae* (*Sangjaesang*) and Kim Kyeong-sin was the *Chajae* or *Ijae* (second-rate *Jaesang*). Kim Kyeong-sin was promoted to *Sangdaedeung* after King Seondeog acceded to the throne. However, Kim Ju-weon was the *Sangjaesang* and not Kim Kyeong-sin. When King Seondeog died without a son, several vassals elected Kim Ju-weon as the new king. It is probable that the Council of Jeongsa-dang elected Kim Ju-weon to be the new king. Kim Kyeong-sin himself disclosed that the *Sangjae*, Kim Ju-weon, should first inherit the succession to the throne after the death of King Seondeok.<sup>17</sup> Data described above lends evidence to the reality of *Sangjae* having political superiority over *Sangdaedeung*.

Such reality shows that *Sangjaesang* was the administrator during the Unified Silla period, and this is substantiated by the record below:

On this day an envoy from Silla, made up of *Yebukyeong* (Vice-

16. Information on Kim Wi-hong is based on the *Record of Chalju* found in the nine-story wooden tower of Hwangryong Temple.

17. *Residual Events of the Three Kingdoms*, Volume 2, Ki-i 2 states that Kim Kyeong-sin asked Ach'an Yeosam, "Kim Ju-weon currently has precedence, how can I become higher in rank?"

Minister of the Board of National Ceremony Affairs), *Sachan* Kim Sam-hyeon and 235 others, arrived at Dazaifu...(abridged)...(Kim Sam-hyeon) replied, “when Kim Sun-jeong was the *Sangjae* in my country (Silla: author), he always traveled far in a ship to pay tribute. His grandson Ong has inherited the status and is currently in charge of affairs of state, and (he follows) the family tradition of paying respect. He is once again cultivating the amicable relationship of old and is inviting a visit from the envoy as the result of this.” [*Shokunihongi*, Vol. 33, in March of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Konin Tennou Houki, *kyeomyo* (40<sup>th</sup> of the sexagenary cycle)]

The excerpt above is part of the communication made in 774 (March of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Hyeogong) between *Yebukyeong Sachan* Kim Sam-hyeon, the Silla envoy to Japan, and a Japanese government official dispatched to Dazaifu by the Japanese Imperial Court. Kim Sam-hyeon mentions here that the administrator of Silla was Kim Ong in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Konin Tennou Houki, i.e., in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Hyeogong. At this time, there is no record mentioning the Kim Ong was the *Sangdaedeung*. As a reference, Sinyu was the *Sangdaedeung* from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Hyeogong, and Kim Yang-sang was newly elected to become the *Sangdaedeung* in September of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Hyeogong. The epitaph on the Divine Bell of the Great King Seondeok, which was built in December of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of King Hyeogong, makes it possible to make an accurate assumption about Kim Ong’s official position during his days. Those who participated in creating the Divine Bell’s epitaph were specified at the end; according to this data, Kim Ong and Kim Yang-sang were in charge of creating the Divine Bell as highest supervisor. At that time Kim Ong held the position of *Pyeongburyeong* (Minister of the Board of Military Affairs) and concurrently served as *Jeonjungryeong* (*Naeseong-sasin*: Minister of the Board of Royal Palace Affairs), *Saeburyeong* (*Seungburyeong*: Minister of Board of Vehicle Affairs), *Suseongburyeong* (*Kyeongseongjuk-jeonryeong*: Minister of the Board of Repairing Capital Affairs), *Kamsacheonwangsa-buryeong* (Minister of Government Agency in Charge of Managing Sacheonwang Temple), *Geomgyojinjidaewangsa-sa* (Bongeun-sa: Minister of Government Agency in Charge of Managing Jinjidaewang Temple), and *Sangsang Taegakkhan* (an official title above the highest rank given to merit officials). Another name for *Sangjaesang* was *Sangsang*. Judging from the fact that Kim Ong was the admin-

istrator in charge of affairs of state as the *Sangjaesang* during the 10<sup>th</sup> year of King Hyegong as well as concurrently holding many other high official positions, he was undoubtedly the administrator around the 7<sup>th</sup> year. Kim Ong's case directly corroborates the fact that a *Sangjaesang* who did not concurrently serve as *Sangdaedeung* was the administrator of affairs of state during the Unified Silla period (Suzuki Yasutami 1967).

Furthermore, an example of *Sangjaesang* as administrator during the reign of King Seongdeok can be found in Kim Ong's grandfather Kim Sun-jeong. A literal translation of the front portion of the original text from the material mentioned above says, "the period of *Sangjae* Kim Sun-jeong in the home country," which can be translated to "during the period *Sangjae* Kim Sun-jeong was administering to affairs of state in the home country." If this translation is correct, then Kim Sun-jeong was the *Sangjaesang* as well as the administrator of affairs of state. But he was not the *Sangdaedeung* at the time.<sup>18</sup> In the mean time, an article in *Shokunihongi*, Volume 18, in June of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Kouken Tennou Tenpyohousi contains a description of "the words and deeds of the previous King Seunggyeong (King Hyoseong) and *Daebu* Sagong were careless and lost to convention" in association with the situation during the reign of King Hyoseong. This record was a royal edict issued by Kouken Tennou to the envoy of Silla in 752 (11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Gyeongdeog). Just as other records describe the position as Administrator-*Daebu*,<sup>19</sup> *Daebu* shown here is the same. King Hyoseong assigned Jeongjong to the position of *Sangdaedeung* as soon as he ascended to the throne. *Sagong* was Administrator-*Daebu* but clearly not *Sangdaedeung* during the reign of King Hyoseong. This seems to be a Japanese way of describing *Sangjaesang*.

On the one hand, a record tells us that Kim Sam-gwang, the son of Kim Yu-sin, was the administrator during the reign of King Sinmun.<sup>20</sup> But there is no record of his being appointed as *Sangdaedeung*. *Sangdaedeung* at the time was

18. Article on Muja, *Shokunihongi*, Vol. 9, July of the second year of Shoumu Tennou Jinki - reports that Kim Sun-jeong passed away on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the 24<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Seongdeog. The *Sangdaedeung* in those days were Inpum (5<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Seongdeog) and Baebu (19<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Seongdeog).
19. A statement in an article in Gyemi, *Shokunihongi*, Vol. 24, February of the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Haitei Junnin Tennou Tenpyohousi states that the Tennou proclaimed, "an Administrator-*Daebu* and others must attend the Royal Court from now on if a prince cannot." From this we can infer that *Daebu* referred to Administrator-*Daebu*.
20. "Later when Yu-sin's son Sam-gwang was in charge of affairs of state, Yeolgi visited Sam-gwang to request for the position of *Taesu*, but the request was refused. Yeolgi went to

Jinbok. When we take into consideration that Sam-gwang appointed Yeolgi as *Taesu* of Samnyeonsan-gun (Governor Samnyeonsan-gun), it is safe to assume that Sam-gwang was in a position to hire personnel for various government posts. Sam-gwang was also in charge of affairs of state as was the case of Chunggong. Perhaps he was a *Sangjaesang*.

The administrators in charge of affairs of state during the Unified Silla period as examined above were examples of instances where the *Sangjaesang* did not concurrently serve the position of *Sangdaedeung*. Although Kim Yang-sang and Kim Sung-bin were cases where they were in charge of affairs of state while serving as both *Sangdaedeung* and *Sangjaesang* during the reign of King Hyeogong and King Heondeog, respectively,<sup>21</sup> this was not the case in most instances. This suggests that the *Sangjaesang* and not the *Sangdaedeung* was in charge of affairs of state during the Unified Silla period; ultimately, Chunggong was in charge of affairs of state, including selecting government officials during the reign of King Heondeog, not because he was the *Sangdaedeung* but because he was the *Sangjaesang*. Moreover, it can be deduced that the *Sangjaesang* attended to state affairs at Jeongsa-dang.<sup>22</sup> Then, it is curious to find out who discussed affairs of state with the *Sangjaesang* at Jeongsa-dang, the government office of *Sangjaesang*; in association with this, a description of *Sangjaesang* as the highest rank among the *Jaesang* draws our attention. It could be inferred that a *Sangjaesang* also presided over the Council of *Jaesang* due to the fact that the

Sunkyeong, a monk at Kiwon Temple and said, 'I rendered distinguished service but my request for a position of *Taesu*(the governor of Gun) was refused. Am I forgotten (by Sam-gwang) now that his father (Kim Yu-sin) is dead?' Sun-gyeong visited Sam-gwang and finally convinced him to make Yeolgi the *Taesu* of *Samnyeonsan-Gun*." A Series of Biographies 7, Yeolgi, in *Samguk-sagi*.

21. Kim Yang-sang was appointed to the position of *Sangdaedeung* on October 9 in the 10th year of the reign of King Hyeogong; there is a description of him being referred to as *Sangjaesang* in the section on Silla in *Jiu-Tangshu*. Meanwhile, King Heondeog appointed Kim Sung-bin as the *Sangdaedeung* after ascending to the throne, and other records describe Kim Sung-bin as *Dae(sang)jaesang*.
22. *Sangdaedeung* was in principle the highest government position during the Unified Silla period. There were instances where a *Sangdaedeung* also held the position of *Sangjaesang* and had much influence over administering affairs of state, but *Sangjaesang* was usually an administrator who was in charge of affairs of state but did not hold the position of *Sangdaedeung* simultaneously. This shows that the relative political importance of *Sangdaedeung* decreased greatly during the Unified Silla period. It seems that there were many instances where the elders of royal nobility were appointed to the position of *Sangdaedeung* in the Unified Silla period, which had the strong characteristic of an honorary title.

*Sangdaedeung*, the highest rank among the *Daedeung*, presided over the Council of *Daedeung* in the Middle ancient period.

Originally, *Jaesang* was not an official government post included in the list of official positions and ranks in *Samguk-sagi*. It merely states that a *Byeongburyeong* could also hold the position of *Jaesang*. The *Jaesang* system is estimated to have been adopted from the Tang. Generally, *Jaesang* referred to someone who counseled the Emperor, managed all of the government offices, and governed everything in the state of Tang.<sup>23</sup> The duties of a *Jaesang* in Goryeo was to deliberate on and establish policies on political affairs,<sup>24</sup> and this meant that a *Jaesang*'s function was to assist the ultimate decision-making power of the sovereign by freely discussing affairs of state, presenting suggestions to the monarch, and also receiving advice from the monarch to discuss affairs of state (Park Jae-woo 2000: 224). The characteristic of *Jaesang* in Silla also could not have strayed much from this. The *Jaesang* in Goryeo and Tang were known to discuss national affairs at *Jeongsa-dang*, and so it can be inferred that the *Jaesang* of Silla also discussed important affairs of state at *Jeongsa-dang* during the Unified Silla period. From this perspective, the Council of *Jeongsa-dang* in the Unified Silla period could be distinguished by being called the Council of *Jaesang*. Records indicate that there were three types of *Jaesang* during the Unified Silla period: *Sang(dae)jaesang* (first-rate *Jaesang*), *Chajaesang* (second-rate *Jaesang*), and *Samjaesang* (third-rate *Jaesang*).<sup>25</sup> There is no way to know the full number of *Samjaesang*. But there were one *Sang(dae)jaesang* and two *Chajaesang*, and so the number of *Samjaesang* is estimated to be two or more.

Important matters were conducted through general discussions in the Unified Silla period,<sup>26</sup> and so most of affairs of state were probably discussed at the Council of *Jaesang* and presided over by the *Sangjaesang*. It is believed that the

23. The article of post of *Jaesang*, *Baekgwani* in *Jiu-Tangshu*, Vol. 46 states that the *Sijung* and *Jungseoryeong* were called *Jinjaesang* (True *Jaesang*), *Dong-junseomunha-sampung*, *Pyeongjangsa*, *Ji-jeongsa*, *Chamji-gimu*, *Chamyeo-jeongsa*, *Pyeongjang-gunguk-jeongsa* were all called to *Jaesang* in the case of the state of Tang.

24. The article of Choe Chung in "A Series of Biographies 8," *Goryeo-sa(History of Koryo dynasty)*, Vol. 95.

25. In connection with information on *Jaesang*, see Kimura Makoto's "The *Jaesang* System of Silla, 1977," *Jinbun Gakuho*, Vol. 118, Tokyo Community College, pp. 18-20.

26. "When a national issue arose, several vassals got together to resolve it; that conference was called the Council of Nobles. The resolution could not be carried out if there was even one disagreeing vote." A Series of Biographies 145 on Silla, *Jiu-Tangshu*, Vol. 220.

*Sangjaesang* first reported the contents of the resolution of the Council to the sovereign, and then administered them after approval from the sovereign. Of course, depending on the matter, an individual vassal could probably report a matter directly to the sovereign in order to receive royal approval, or there may have been many instances where the sovereign would call the vassals, including the *Jaesang*, to attend the Council of Southern Hall to discuss affairs of state in the Unified Silla period. However, it is assumed that most affairs of state went through the Council of *Jaesang* first. This was probably why *Sangjaesang* who presided over the Council of *Jaesang* was referred to as administrator.

The resolutions from the Council of *Jaesang* that were approved by the monarch were probably executed by the centralized administrative office, which was completed during the reign of King Sinmun. Matters approved by the monarch must have been distributed in the form of instruction or royal command, and the centralized administrative office in charge of executing them was the Jipsa-bu (department in charge of administrative tasks).<sup>27</sup> The Jipsa-bu distinguished the instructions or royal command based on the tasks and assigned each administrative government office to execute the tasks. A premise here is that the decision-making function and the executive function were distinctly divided during the Unified Silla period; in any case, keep in mind that this characteristic clearly distinguished the function of the Council of Jeongsa-dang in the Middle ancient period. But one issue which should not be overseen here is the fact that the *Jaesang* also held high government posts. Kim Gun-gwan, Kim Ong, Kim Yang-sang, Kim Gyeong-sin, Kim Chung-gong, Kim Sung-bin, Kim Heon-jeong, Kim Kyun-jeong, Kim Wi-heun, and Kim Wi-hong, etc. were instances wherein the *Jaesang* concurrently held the positions of *Byeongburyeong*, *Sangdaedeung*, *Sijung* (Minister of Jipsa-bu), and *Naeseong-sashin* (*Jeonjungryeong*) among others (Kimura Makoto 1977). Especially Kim Ong concurrently held the position of *Sangjaesang* as well as *Byeongburyeong* and several other government posts, and Kim Heon-jeong was a *Jaesang* and *Byeongburyeong* who concurrently served as *Suseongburyeong* as well.<sup>28</sup> From

27. A passage that has “四月 一日 典大等 教事” inscribed on a wooden tablet was found among the wooden tablets with writings found at the pool at Weol Castle. This could be interpreted as “it is the instruction of the *Jeondaedeung* on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April.” The fact that *Jeondaedeung*, the vice-minister of the Jipsa-bu (department in charge of administrative tasks), gave instructions means he received a royal command and communicated the instructions to others. Therefore, this wooden tablet could be used as evidence to prove that the centralized administrative office that communicated the instructions or royal command was the Jipsa-bu.

the fact that concurrently served government posts were all important posts such as that of *Sangdaedeung*, *Byeongburyeong*, *Sijung* (Minister of Jipsa-bu), etc., it could be estimated that the rule in the Unified Silla period was to assign important high-ranking government officials to the position of *Jaesang*. What's more, key posts were monopolized by the descendents of King Weonseong, and it was normal for them to concurrently serve as *Jaesang* towards the End of the Silla period.<sup>29</sup> Such aspects can be reasonably understood when it is presumed that the relative importance of the Council of *Jaesang* in administering affairs of state in the later period of Silla increased that much.

The monarch assigned people to high-ranking government posts and/or that of *Jaesang* as a rule. Moreover, the results of the Council of *Jaesang* in principle were executed only after the sovereign's approval. Hence, it is needless to say that administration of affairs of state was focused on the sovereign who had the power to appoint someone to the position of *Jaesang* and who also had the ultimate decision-making power in national politics. On the one hand, the *Sijung* (Minister of Jipsa-bu) and *Byeongburyeong* were ministers of the centralized administrative government offices who directly executed royal commands or instructions. *Jaesang* who also held such other official posts not only conferred on and made decisions about national matters at the Council of *Jaesang* but also had the authority to execute royal commands or instructions. A system that appointed high-ranking government officials to *Jaesang* to administer affairs of state seems to be in consideration for more efficient administration of affairs of state.<sup>30</sup> The sovereign probably could not easily reject the issue(s) they decided on, because the members of the Council of *Jaesang* were all high-ranking government officials. Especially in the case of Kim Ong, who presided over the Council of *Jaesang* as the *Sangjaesang* while concurrently serving many other government posts such as *Byeongburyeong*, *Naeseong-sashin* (*Jeonjungryeong*),

28. Sinhaeng Seon Priest Stele of Dansok Temple.

29. During the reign of King Weonseong, his grandsons Kim Jun-ong (King Soseong), Eon-seung, and Chung-gong (Jung-gong) were appointed to the position of *Jaesang*; moreover, the king's uncles Eon-seung and Chung-gong were appointed to the position of *Jaesang* during the reign of King Aejang. And the king's brother Chunggong and cousins Heon-jeong and Kyun-jeong were assigned to the position of *Jaesang* during the reign of King Heondeog. It's not shown in records, but it is estimated that most of the descendents of King Weonseong were appointed to the position of *Jaesang* from the reign of King Weonseong to that of King Heungdeog.

30. Several were appointed to office in the case of ministers. Through this, it can be estimated that instructions or royal commands were executed based on the agreement of the ministers.

etc. during the reign of King Hyegong, it is presumed that the monarch had no recourse but to accept the contents of the decisions made by the Council. Such an aspect reflected the change in the relative political importance of the Council of *Jaesang* insofar as this importance depended on the ability of the sovereign. In principle, the Council of *Jaesang* had the characteristic of assisting or advising the decisions of the sovereign, but the Council of *Jaesang*, on the other hand, functioned as a systematic device which limited the sovereign from exercising unilateral power due to the fact that the monarch could not totally ignore the results of the Council if there were no flaws. Thus, the Unified Silla period was an era where a system based on mutual check and balance of power between the sovereign and the *Jaesang* existed in administering affairs of state.<sup>31</sup>

Records about *Jaesang* do not show up in the Middle ancient period; they began to show up frequently as of the reigns of King Munmu and King Sinmun.<sup>32</sup> Based on this, it is possible to infer that the custom of appointing high-ranking government officials to the position of *Jaesang* or *Sangjaesang*

31. The Middle period of Silla was when the sovereign curbed the *Jaesang* by exercising his/her authority to appoint someone to the position of *Jaesang* or through his/her ultimate decision-making power in affairs of state, and the *Jaesang* were able to limit the sovereign's unilateral administering of power through the Council of *Jaesang*. In other words, this means that the power of the sovereign and the *Jaesang* reached a certain level wherein they mutually restrained and balanced each other in administering affairs of state in that period. Until the reign of King Gyeongdeok, *Sangdaedeung* concurrently held the post of *Sangjaesang*, and the fact that the existence of a person with great power in the central political world correlates to this. On the other hand, the restraining and balancing between the power of sovereign and the power of *Jaesang* began to break down as of the reign of King Hyegong. For example, Kim Ong is assumed to have been more powerful than the sovereign during the reign of King Hyegong, and Kim Yang-sang or Kim Eon-seung who were *Sangjaesang* were in a similar situation. Furthermore, a movement by the monarch to appoint close relatives to positions of *Sangjaesang* or *Jaesang* in order to take the lead in administering affairs of state was found in the Later period of Silla; King Weonseong, King Heondeog, King Kyeongmun, etc. were such. All of these monarchs ascended to the throne in unusual ways, and thus had weak foundations for political power. They usually appointed their in-laws to the post of *Jaesang* in order to have sure control over the Council of *Jaesang*, and then searched for ways to strengthen the power of the sovereign through administering affairs of state from its center. Ultimately, attention should be drawn to the frequent breakdown in the system that mutually restrained and balanced the power between the monarch and the *Jaesang* in association with routine political instability in the later period of the Silla dynasty.

32. Geodeuk-gong was the president of the Council during the reign of King Munmu, and data that referred to Jinsun as *Jaesang* was found as well; records show that Chungweongong was called *Jaesang* in the third year of the reign of King Sinmun. Further, Sam-gwang was not a *Sangdaedeung* but still held the position of administrator.



insofar as the *Jaesang* leading the Council of Jeongsa-dang was established during the reigns of King Munmu and King Sinmun. *Sangdaedeung* was the highest-ranking government post as a rule. Changing the administrator in charge of national matters from *Sangdaedeung* to *Sangjaesang* was a political reform which was possible in reality only when the sovereign's influence was very strong in administering affairs of state. The sovereign power was greatly strengthened during the reigns of King Munmu and King Sinmun as compared to the Middle ancient period, and the fact that many organizations were systematically improved in order to endorse this<sup>33</sup> was probably not unrelated to the revision of the *Jaesang* system.

### 3. The Council of Jeongsa-dang in the Early Ancient Period

Records on Silla in *Samguk-sagi* state that Jeongsa-dang was built during the reign of Ilseung Isageum. Ignoring the issue of leap year, the claim that Jeongsa-dang was built roughly during the Isageum period is acceptable. Accounts on appointing the official posts of *Ichan*, *Ibeolchan*, and *Seobulhan* to certain individuals during the Early ancient period prior to the establishment of *Sangdaedeung*, and of delegating national matters to them<sup>34</sup> can be seen frequently in the records on Silla in *Samguk-sagi*. Moreover, several instances can be found where such officials submitted their opinions to the monarch and these were accepted by the monarch during the Council of Vassals which the monarch attended.<sup>35</sup> This shows that they performed established roles in administering affairs of state.

33. People of royal nobility were not only purged but the system which granted the right of collecting taxes to government officials as salary was deleted as well; central and local government organizations as well as military organizations were reassigned during the reigns of King Munmu and King Sinmun. Such reorganization of the system was deeply related to the intent to strengthen the influence of the monarch in administering affairs of state.
34. There are many forms of this. Several examples are: "Military and state affairs were delegated," "state affairs were delegated," "was able to participate in state affairs," "was also put in charge of central and provincial military affairs," "was delegated with military affairs and state affairs," "was able to participate in national politics," "important tasks of the state were delegated," "important state affairs were delegated, and (he) was put in charge of central and provincial military affairs as well." These were lumped together and arranged using the term "...were delegated to administer affairs of state".
35. Ung-seon, Hong-geon, and Misapum were officials who were delegated with the task of administering affairs of state and who submitted their opinions to the monarch at the Council of Vassals during the reign of Ilseung Isageum, Yurye Isageum, and Ilseung Isageum, respectively.

There are those who view *Ibeolchan*, *Ichan*, etc. as having strong characteristics of a governmental post (Lee Jong-uk 1984). However, those are only official ranks and not government posts. Data in *Samguk-sagi* include references to the fact that the official rank must be at least *Ichan* in the cases of those delegated with affairs of state.<sup>36</sup> When each of the government officials who were delegated with the responsibility of political affairs is examined, some were found to have a very close relationship with the monarch.<sup>37</sup> There are few records to use to verify most of the relationship to the sovereign, but they were estimated to be very close to the sovereign. It may be that the sovereign delegated affairs of state to those close to him.

Jeongsa-dang probably had a similar structure in the beginning as in later periods in that several vassals sat down together to discuss matters. It seems that those who were delegated with political affairs supervised the Council of Jeongsa-dang; it is curious as to what attributes the Council had in the Early ancient period in comparison to that of later periods. First, the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall in those days must be observed in connection with this.<sup>38</sup> Due to the Council of Nobles being the ultimate decision-making device in the Early ancient period, important affairs of state were probably discussed there. Especially the dispute over goods in the Jinima village in 503 being discussed at the Council of Southern Hall lets us peep at the fact that even relatively small matters were handled there in those days. This paradoxically but effectively defends the opinion that the political role of the Council of Jeongsa-dang was

36. There are many questions as to the actual existence of the official ranks of *Ichan*, *Ibeolchan*, etc. during the Isageum period, because it is my understanding that the official rank of Chan was created for the first time during the *Maripkhan* period. Originally they were the official ranks of *icheok*, *Ilbeol*, etc., and it is conjectured that *khan* (or *chan*) was added at a later time. I will ignore the issue of official ranks here. I will expand my argument by understanding the record on the Early ancient period of Silla in *Samguk-sagi* as giving us information about the existence of people who were delegated to handle political affairs and were in charge of affairs of state at the Council of Jeongsa-dang in those days.
37. For example, it is known that the Ieum who was delegated with affairs of state in the Nahae Isageum period was the Crown Prince (or the grandson of the monarch); Prince Uro was concurrently in charge of military forces in the Jobun Isageum period; and the monarch's father-in-law was made to participate in the nation's politics in the Soji *Maripkhan* period.
38. *Samguk-sagi* informs us that Jeongsa-dang was established first, and then came Southern Hall. However, these two types of Council are considered to have coexisted from the period after Jeongsa-dang was built to the period when Southern Hall was built, because the monarch presided over the Council of Nobles frequently. The characteristic of the Council of Nobles prior to the building of the Council of Jeongsa-dang will be simply left as a task for the future.

very limited at the time.

Attention should be paid first to Naengsuri and Bongpyeong Steles in connection with decisions made by the Council of Southern Hall and the subjects who executed them in the Early ancient period when the centralized administrative office was not fully realized yet. Naengsuri Stele refers to government officials who specifically carried out a royal command from Galmun King Jidoro and others as *Jeonsain*. On the other hand, Bongpyeong Stele refers to government officials who specifically carried out royal commands from Maegeum King Mojeukji and others as □*sadaein*. But an interesting fact is that Bongpyeong Stele describes the killing of a brindled cow in front of the □*sadaein* and performing a sacrificial rite to heaven by the 6-bu.

When the content of the Bongpyeong Stele is examined, it contains a list of the people who received the royal command in the front, followed by another instructions, and finally an account of the names and the details of those who specifically carried out the royal command. An account of the 6-bu of Silla killing a brindled cow and performing a sacrificial rite is shown in the section executing royal commands. From this, we can see that the rite was connected to the 6-bu vowing to carry out the royal command from the monarch without fail. And it is believed that the 6-bu agreed to select □*sadaein* to directly carry out the content of the royal command at this time. If such a deduction is not stretching things too much, Bongpyeong Stele is notable in that it shows us that the 6-bu, as the executive body that carried out the contents of the royal command from the sovereign, publicly discussed the matter and reached a decision at the Council of Southern Hall in the Early ancient period.<sup>39</sup> Another material which lends credence to this is the section on Silla in A Series of Biographies 1 in Samguk-sagi in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Pasa Isageum.

This record tells of an episode where King Pasa directed the 6-bu to hold a feast for King Suro of Gaya who settled the land dispute between the nations of

39. When each of the *Jeonsain* or □*sadain* are examined, a common denominator was that they all belonged to the Hwe-bu or Sahwe-bu. From the reign of King Nulji, the royal authority of the Hwe-bu had command of the sovereignty of Sahwe-bu, and the monarch overpowered other Bu and increased his influence in administering affairs of state based on this. This was on par with the tendency for Hwe-bu and Sahwe-bu to attain important roles in administering affairs of state. This is deeply related to the fact that those who actually executed the orders attached too much importance to people belonging to the Hwe-bu and Sahwe-bu when executing the decisions made at the Council of Southern Hall. In contrast, it is estimated that the 6-bu participated relatively equally in the actual execution of commands in the Isageum period.

Siljilgok and Eumjeupbeol Country. Attention should be paid to the fact that King Pasa ordered the 6-bu to prepare a feast for King Suro, because this strongly shows that the body which actually executed royal commands was the 6-bu. Data below can also testify to this.

Previously when Misaheun was coming back from Japan, (King Nulji) ordered the 6-bu to go far to greet him, and they held hands and cried when they met. (A Series of Biographies 5, the article of Park Je-sang, Samguk-sagi)

*Samguk-yusa*, section on Ki-i contains something similar, but here the order was issued to the *Baekgwan* (all vassals) to meet Mihae (Misaheun) and not the 6-bu. It is clear that the 6-bu rather than all vassals more accurately reflected the historical reality of those days (Jeon Deog-jae 2000: 262-264). We can suggest that the body which executed royal commands during the reign of King Nulji was the 6-bu from the fact that King Nulji directed the 6-bu to meet Misaheun. We can also assume from the data above that the body that carried out not only the royal commands but also the contents of jointly issued royal commands of the Council of Southern Hall during the Early ancient period was the 6-bu as well.<sup>40</sup>

Government officials delegated with handling political affairs probably performed their duties primarily at Jeongsa-dang in the Early ancient period. It seems that they actively stated their own opinions at the Council of Vassals which the sovereign supervised, and they seem to have played a leading role at the Council. However, they did not preside over the Council of Vassals in those days, and further, because it was the custom to obtain consensus on issues and present the decisions through instructions in joint names, their relative political importance was correlatively insignificant when compared to that of the *Sangdaedeung* or the *Sangjaesang* of later periods. If that is the case, then it is curious as to what was specifically meant by “affairs of state were delegated” at the time, and a possible supposition of the task of executing the decisions of the

40. Decisions on important affairs of state were made at the Council of Southern Hall in the Early ancient period, and instances where the contents of the decisions were announced in the form of royal commands under joint names seem to be common. But there were instances where the monarch would directly handle small matters by issuing orders, and the cases discussed above seem to fall into this category.

Council of Southern Hall can be pointed out. This is deduced based on the assumption that affairs of state were usually discussed at the Council of Southern Hall in the Early ancient period, and further, the centralized administrative office was not yet revised as the body which executed royal commands or commands made under joint names. We have looked into the fact that the 6-bu executed the decisions made by the Council of Southern Hall in the Early ancient period. This presupposes that the government officials dispatched by the 6-bu actually executed the instructions or royal commands. Due to such reasons, there must have been a need for a leader to arbitrate their opinions, select a person to be in charge of performing actual tasks, etc. I would like to think that this person was the official who was delegated to handle affairs of state. This is because their primary task was to execute the decisions reached by the Council of Southern Hall. If it is not too far-fetched, it can be assumed that the Council of Jeongsa-dang was where the officials dispatched by the 6-bu deliberated on the actual tasks to be performed in order to execute royal commands or instructions. Note that its function was somewhat different from that of the Council of *Daedeung* and the Council of *Jaesang* of the Middle ancient period and the Unified Silla period, which performed the function of deliberating on important pending bills.

## V. Conclusion

In this article, the characteristic of the Council of Nobles in Silla and its transformation have been traced above. My intention is to summarize the contents discussed above instead of providing a conclusion.

The Council of Nobles is defined as a council system where matters of national importance were discussed; the Council can be broadly divided into the Council of Southern Hall and the Council of Jeongsa-dang, depending on where the conference took place and who presided over the meeting. The former indicates a type of meeting where the sovereign discussed matters of national importance with the vassals, and the latter refers to a type where an administrator such as *Sangdaedeung* supervised the meeting. Aside from Southern Hall and Jeongsa-dang, the Council of Nobles was also held at the four spiritual places near the capital (Mt. Cheongsong, Pijeon, Uji-am, Mt. Keumgang), but the conferences held there can once again be divided into two categories based on who presided over the meeting.

The Council of Southern Hall had the characteristic of the ultimate decision-making device in administering affairs of state in the Early ancient period. The Council of Jeongsa-dang at the time was characterized as being composed of the actual executors dispatched by the 6-bu to carry out the decisions made at the Council of Southern Hall, and a government official who was delegated to handle national affairs presided over this meeting. With the dismantling of the 6-bu system in the 530's, the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall changed to that of assisting or advising the sovereign in making the ultimate decision in administering affairs of state. Of course, there were many instances where the monarch presided over the Council of Southern Hall, but that administrative method was not that much different from that of the Council of Jeongsa-dang. The *Sangdaedeung* presided over the Council of Jeongsa-dang, and its core members were the *Daedeung* in the Middle ancient period. The number of members who attended the Council of Jeongsa-dang increased from time to time, but its lowest level was later limited to *Sangdang* of royal nobility. As of the Middle ancient period, the method of administering affairs of state was customized so that matters of national importance were discussed primarily at the Council of Jeongsa-dang, the administrator such as *Sangdaedeung* submitted the resolutions to the sovereign, and then the sovereign would accept them and have them executed in the form of instructions or royal commands. This also meant that the relative importance of the Council of Southern Hall decreased in administering affairs of state. *Daedeung*, members of the Council of Jeongsa-dang, divided the tasks and personally executed the instructions or royal commands until the reign of King Jinheung due to the fact that the reorganization of the centralized administrative office was incomplete until then. This provides counterevidence to the fact that the Council of Jeongsa-dang not only contained the characteristic of a decision-making device but also that of directly executing decisions made at the Council.

In the Unified Silla period, the *Sang(dae)jaesang* (first-rate *Jaesang*) and not *Sangdaedeung* presided over the Council of Jeongsa-dang as the administrator. The monarch appointed *Sangdaedeung*, *Byeongburyeong*, *Sijung*, *Naeseong-sashin* (*Jeonjungryeong*), etc. to the posts of *Sangjaesang* (1 person), *Chajaesang* (2 people) and *Samjaesang*, and the *Jaesang* system is estimated to have been revised during the reigns of King Munmu and King Sinmun as one of the political reforms to strengthen the sovereign power in administering affairs of state. Matters of national importance in those days were discussed at the Council of Vassals, and when the monarch approved the decisions made by the

Council, the centralized administrative office would execute them; and so it would be possible to say that the decision-making function and executive function were clearly distinguished. On the other hand, there were many ministers of the administrative office among the *Jaesang* so that affairs of state could be administered efficiently.

The sovereign was able to restrain the *Jaesang* in the Unified Silla period through his/her power to assign someone to the position of *Jaesang* and the power to make ultimate decisions in national politics. On the other hand, the monarch probably could not reject the results of the Council of Vassals as long as there were no flaws, because highest-ranking officials were appointed to the position of *Jaesang*. This indicates that a system of administering affairs of state based on the ability to restrain and balance the powers between the sovereign and the *Jaesang* existed in the Unified Silla period. Relative stability was politically achieved on the whole, because affairs of state in the middle period of Silla were administered based on restraining and balancing the power of the sovereign and the power of *Jaesang*, but this check-and-balance system broke down in the Later period, which led to political instability.

This article examined the transformation of the characteristic or function of the Council of Nobles depending on the period. Such transformation was closely related to the political system or the attributes of the organization in those days. For instance, the characteristic of the Council of Southern Hall or Jeongsa-dang in the Early ancient period is considered to have had a very close correlation with the 6-bu system, the political system in those days. In other words, various stages of the 6-bu system's method of administering affairs of state were reflected in the Council of Southern Hall or Jeongsa-dang. The method of centralized political system, which was focused around sovereign power, was similarly projected onto operating the Council of Southern Hall or Jeongsa-dang in administering affairs of state after the Middle ancient period. The content or structure of the centralized political system focused on sovereign power changed slightly depending on the fluctuation in the inverse relationship between the sovereign and the vassals, and the transformation in the characteristic or function of these two councils was functionally related to this. A more in-depth research based on this viewpoint will be left as a task for the future. It is my hope that the result of this article, which traced the transformation of the characteristic and/or function of the Council of Nobles, will be of assistance to a systematical organization of the history of Silla in future.

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