

Special Feature

Changes in the Logic and System behind the Succession of the Koryŏ Throne under Mongol Subjugation

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Introduction

From mid 13th to mid 14th century, the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, who gained control of the Chinese continent as well as Eurasia, intervened in Koryŏ affairs in order to address the status of the Koryŏ kings numerous times. This was what made Koryŏ's relationship with the Mongol Empire different from its prior relationships with previous Chinese dynasties. These differences brought changes to the traditional Koryŏ political environment and structure surrounding the king's authority. Koryŏ's power structure changed. The Yüan emperor was newly placed at the top of the Koryŏ hierarchy, while dynamics between the Koryŏ king and the vassals below him were altered.¹ These shifts not only caused some significant changes in the king's status, but also brought on other political and structural changes.

Mongol's Intervention in the succession of the Koryŏ throne involved official practices of "installment" (of kings and lords in the perimeter states), performed as a formality within East Asian international relations. This was usually how Koryŏ formed a relationship with China. On the other hand, the Mongol emperor's intervention in the succession of the Koryŏ throne is generally understood to have actually taken place forcefully, with the Mongol emperor's exerting its own power. This explanation is valid in its own right, but it may also lead to an incorrect assumption that the Mongol emperor "decided the Koryŏ king's status as he pleased," based on given situations, and by using force. However, these "interventions" did not occur solely by the emperor's own mood, without any context but with sheer force, nor can it be understood only within the context of the traditional East Asian (Chinese) practice of "installment." The "right to install" is a practical issue regulated by political power, and there are no previous cases (for the Koryŏ people) in which this right was "actually" used and also on a regular basis. This process had to abide by the general practice in which Mongol emperors (Great Khans) formed relationships with lords of political units (and controlled their subjects). This process most likely proceeded within a hierarchy that placed the Mongol emperor at the top, and also through related systems. This new hierarchy and relevant systems replaced some Koryŏ principles and practices concerning the

throne, and not to mention directly affected the authority of the Koryŏ king.

Three points will be addressed in this paper. First will be the "change in logic" behind the succession of the Koryŏ throne, which occurred through the Mongol emperors' installment of Koryŏ kings. Second would be the results of those changes, in terms of the succession of the throne and other related systems. And lastly, changes and effects the above-mentioned factors and the Koryŏ-Mongol relationship brought to the political environment surrounding the Koryŏ throne will be investigated.

Changes in the Logic behind the Succession of the Koryŏ Throne

"Even though the country is generally passed down to a 'legitimate successor' 嫡子, if the eldest son is foolish or lacking in talent, it may be passed to the next son. If that son too is unworthy, it will be passed down to the most highly recommended among the brothers, and he will succeed the throne."²

This is a clause in relation to the succession of the throne from 10 admonitions that Taejo (the founder and first king of the dynasty), Wang Kŏn, left for his descendants before he died. The throne is passed down from father to son, particularly the eldest son, but Wang Kŏn was open to the possibility of a different successor, depending on the situation. The criteria of an "unworthy son" which may cause the eldest son or younger sons who are priority successors to lose their succession, is not specified. However, based on several cases, the most important criterion seems to be age. Talent and qualification as well as recommendation from those with power are also taken into consideration during the discussion of the successor's worthiness.

Several examples show that age, which is directly related to the ability to manage state affairs, was considered in determining the successor of the throne: the successions of the throne in the beginning of the state and the case of Sukjong 肅宗, who seized the throne from his young nephew Hŏnjong 獻宗 (Seo 1993). However, Injong 仁宗, who was only 12 when Yejong 睿宗 died, was able to ascend to the throne with the help of his maternal grandfather

1. For more information on the Koryŏ-Mongol relationship and the changes in Koryŏ's power structure it caused, please refer to Lee 2016.

2. For this, please see *Koryŏ History 2* (T'aejo 26, April).

Lee Cha-kyŏm 李資謙. This shows that recommendation from those with power and maternal relatives were instrumental in Injong's succession to the throne.³ In comparison, maternal relatives can have a negative influence on the succession of the throne as well. During the Wŏnjong 元宗 era, in the process of installing Wang Sim 王謹 (who later became King Ch'ungrŏl), son of the Queen Dowager Sun'gyŏng Kim and the grandchild of Choi-Ih 崔怡, a military ruler, as T'eja (crown prince), Wŏnjong's second wife, Kungju 宮主 (title of nobility given to queens and princesses from the Koryŏ era to Chosŏn era) Kyŏngch'ang, was against it because Wang Sim was the grandchild of an influential vassal.⁴ The case of Uijong 毅宗 shows that talent and qualifications also played a part in the succession. In the process of installing Uijong as T'eja and having him succeed the throne, his mother Queen Dowager Kong'ye Lim tried to make her second son Dae'nyŏng Lord Wang Kyŏng the T'eja instead of her eldest son Uijong. Uijong's father was also worried that Uijong may not be able to handle the stress of being T'eja.⁵ Uijong was later dethroned by a military coup.

However, aside from these cases where age was an issue, the eldest son eventually took the throne. As the number of potential successors and variables that required consideration increased, the process selecting the successor became more disorderly. In order to prevent issues other than age from interfering in the process and to achieve smooth succession to the eldest son, the T'eja system was operated to cultivate talent of the eldest son and secure a base of political relationship for him. Marriages with influential families were common as well, to strengthen and solidify in-law relations of the royal family.⁶

Succession of the throne under Mongol subjugation from Wŏnjong 元宗 (r. 1260-1275) - King Ch'ungrŏl 忠烈王 (r. 1275-1298; 1298-1308) - King Ch'unngsŏn 忠宣王 (r. 1298; 1308-1313) - King Ch'unngsuk 忠肅王 (r. 1313-1330; 1332-1339) - King Ch'unghye 忠惠王 (r. 1330-1332; 1339-

1344) - King Ch'unngmok 忠穆王 (r. 1344-1348) - King Ch'unngjŏng 忠定王 (r. 1349-1351) - King Kongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351-1374) mainly occurred from within the royal family's direct line of descent. All successions were passed down from father to son, aside from King Ch'unngmok who died at a young age with no sons, and King Ch'unngjŏng who was dethroned at a young age. King Ch'unngjŏng was Ch'unngmok's younger brother, and was succeeded by his own uncle, King Kongmin. Ch'unngjŏng and Kongmin were the closest royal descendants of the male line by blood at the time. This shows that the tradition of passing down the Koryŏ throne to figures with blood ties in the royal family was still greatly influential and was also important in both of these succession cases.

Yet there were probably several additional factors involved here as well, including the fact that the Mongol Empire in general used to divide realms to several political powers, and allowed them to repeat control of these realms over generations. The same practice was applied to the leaders of "delegated realms" 投下 and lords of various Uluses.⁷ And in those cases, as well as in cases of the succession of important public offices related to local control within the Mongol Empire, succession within a specific family was held as important. The Tan family 段氏, who initially ruled Unnan as a prefect, practiced hereditary succession.⁸ The Hong family 洪氏 in the Yo/Sim area, and the Wang Chun 王俊 family, as part of the Koryŏ royal family, all passed down their political positions, as prefects or premiers of provincial government offices hereditarily and ruled over Koryŏ residents and soldiers in the region and also in the Liaodung region (Joo 1974; Robinson 2009, 28-29). These are familiar cases. However, even in these examples, the status of the lord could change and they themselves could have been replaced based on their political relationship with the emperor or imperial family. The following cases are examples.

First is the case of the lord of Chagatai Ulus who was replaced. At the time of Emperor Monke's death, his sons were still young. His younger brothers Kubilai and Ariq Boke competed for Khan status. In this process, the two brothers each gave Abisika and Algu imperial orders and made them heads of the Chagatai Ulus in order to solidify their power. Afterwards, when Kubilai became Khan, he gave Barak of the Chagatai family who was by Kubilai's side

3. In the end, Lee Cha-kyŏm abused his power as a maternal relative to restrict royal authority, but generally the existence of maternal relatives played a role in preserving royal authority. There are some aspects in the process of Injong ascending to the throne that can be understood within this context. For more detail, please see Chae 2014.

4. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 88 (Hubi [Wife of the King 后妃] 2, Biography of Kungju 宮主 Kyŏngch'ang Yu).

5. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 98 (Biography of Chŏng Sŭb-myŏng).

6. For the representative research on marriage in the Koryŏ royal family, please refer to Jeong 1988, 1992.

7. For more information on the Mongolian state system, refer to Ri 1989.

8. For more information on Yunnan, please see Matsuda 1979; Hayashi 1996.

for a long time, an imperial order and allowed him to rule the Ulus along with Mubaraksha who already had the lord status.⁹ For an example about the lord of a delegated realm, we can look at the case of King Mukali's family of the Jalair tribe 部.¹⁰ After Sugunchar 速渾察, Mukali's grandson who became King, passed away, his eldest son, Kurumsi 忽林池 succeeded the throne. However, Emperor Monke heard that Kurumsi was weak and vulnerable and gave Nayan 乃燕, who was his brother and close to Kubilai, the throne. Nayan declined the position quite firmly, and eventually Kurumsi succeeded the throne. This is a case where the Khan's judgement intervened in the process. Lastly, Kirman's case is an example of a succession of the king status of a subjugated state. During Emperor Ogedei's era, Barak Hajib, who was Kirman's lord-sultan, sent his son Rukun ad-Dîn to the Khan's palace to express his will to succumb. Rukun ad-Dîn became lord of the Kirman kingdom when he returned, after his father died. His brother Kutub ad-Dîn went to the Khan's palace and attended the court of Khan, and eventually entered the kešig, the imperial family's royal body guard. However, during the time of Emperor Monke, Rukun ad-Dîn committed a crime in the royal court, and while specifics of the crime remain unclear, he was executed. Emperor Monke made Rukun ad-Dîn's brother Kutub ad-Dîn Kirman's Lord-Sultan.¹¹ In these cases, instead of the common practice of successions by blood ties within the family, these figures succeeded or attempted to succeed the lord or king status of each political unit, based on personal relationships with the Great Khan (relationships created within the kešig system).

Seen in this light, there was no reason for the Mongol emperor to deny succession between father and son, unless there were "special" circumstances, and that was true even when he intervened in the succession of the Koryŏ

throne. Intervention by the Mongol emperor in the Koryŏ throne did not mean blatant rejection of succession from father to son. It was rather a judgement call on the successor's suitability, and sometimes the emperor would decide whether or not the current king was suitable for the throne. This consideration of the successor's "suitability" existed before relations with the Mongol Empire, but it was during this era that relations with the Mongol imperial family and emperor came to serve as a significant factor. Based on this relationship, problematic kings could be dethroned or be threatened by other more suitable competitors. The main agent deciding these matters was the emperor who stood above the king.

The campaign to enthrone Wang Go as the Koryŏ king that occurred during King Ch'ungsuk's era is a good example.¹² In 1320 (7 years after King Ch'ungsuk ascended to the throne), King Ch'ungsŏn was disgraced and exiled to Tibet during a regime change inside Yüan. King Ch'ungsŏn's close forces attempted to dethrone King Ch'ungsuk and enthrone the Shim (Sen) regional lord 藩王 (whose name was Wang Go), who was King Ch'ungsuk's cousin and a Mongol lord 諸王. Because the Shim regional lord and his close forces slandered King Ch'ungsuk, Ch'ungsuk was summoned to the Mongol court the following year.¹³ Starting in August of that year, Kwŏn Han-gong 權漢功, Che Ha-jung 蔡河中, Yu Ch'ŏng-shin 柳清臣, and other close personnel of King Ch'ungsŏn became key figures, and they began attempting to enthrone the Shim regional lord (Wang Go) on the Koryŏ throne.¹⁴

At the time, Che Ha-jung, upon returning from the Mongol court said: "the Emperor has appointed the Shim regional lord Wang Go as king." The day after this statement was made, government officials "held a congratulatory ceremony for Wang Go's mother Anbi 安妃."¹⁵ Throughout this event, vassals expressed no confusion. This shows that Koryŏ vassals accepted the "replacement" of the Koryŏ king by the Mongol emperor as something natural. The campaign to enthrone Wang Go as the Koryŏ king also shows that in Koryŏ, relationship with the Mongol royal family and emperor was more than

9. Before Emperor Kubilai, Emperor Guyuk and Emperor Monke gave lord status of Chagatai Ulus to people they had friendly relations with. For more information on the lord status of Chagatai Ulus, refer to ad-Dîn 2005, 238-41.

10. Of several lords of delegated realms in the Mongol (Yüan) Empire, lords of the Mukali family called themselves "king." This does not mean that they referred to themselves as king of an independent kingdom, but as the highest level of authority as they fought a war for conquest in the Hwabok region. This "king" title was used for lord of the Mukali family and lord of Otchigin Ulus of 3 king families in the Eastern region. For more information on the title "king" used under the Mongolian Empire, refer to Kim 2007, 99-100; Koo 1999.

11. The Kirman case can be seen throughout, generally in the following: ad-Dîn 2005, 105; 290; 299; 353.

12. Passage 2 of chapter 3 in Myungmi Lee's previously mentioned book (2016) has been summarized here to explain the meaning of this event within the context of power structures in Mongolian kešig.

13. For this. Please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 24 (King Ch'ungsuk 8, January); *Koryŏ History* 91 (Biography of Wang Go).

14. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 24 (King Ch'ungsuk 8, August).

15. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 24 (King Ch'ungsuk 8, August).

important, as much as blood lineage had been, in receiving “installation” from the emperor and becoming king or maintaining the position. Wang Go was the son of Wang Cha 王滋, King Ch’ungryŏl’s eldest son. At the time of the campaign to enthrone Wang Go, King Ch’ungsuk’s son Wang Chŏng 王禎 (later King Ch’ung’hye) was only 7 years old. If another royal figure instead of Ch’ungsuk was to be established, it could be said that Wang Go was the most suitable figure within the royal family hierarchy. It is important to understand why Koryŏ vassals judged that King Ch’ungsuk was not suitable to be the Koryŏ king, and why Wang Go was seen as more suitable.

Even after the throne was passed on to King Ch’ungsuk, King Ch’ungsŏn had power. Only when King Ch’ungsŏn was disgraced, could King Ch’ungsuk take the lead in political matters. Afterwards, for 4 months before the campaign to enthrone Wang Go as the Koryŏ king began, the only thing King Ch’ungsuk did was purge close subjects of King Ch’ungsŏn.¹⁶ This became an important backdrop for the campaign to enthrone Wang Go as the Koryŏ king, as close subjects of King Ch’ungsŏn came to resent King Ch’ungsuk.¹⁷ But other Koryŏ vassals “had mostly turned to Wang Go”¹⁸ as well. It is indeed puzzling why there “was only a very small minority that remained loyal to the king.”¹⁹ The reason why many Koryŏ vassals stood on the side of Wang Go rather than on the side which wanted to reinstate King Ch’ungsuk, was not because they felt that King Ch’ungsuk’s purges were problematic, but may have been because they “hesitated, and waited to see what happened,” and later chose Wang Go when they were put in a pressing situation.²⁰ Koryŏ vassals who naturally accepted the dethronement and enthronement by the Mongol emperor must have figured that the possibility of Wang Go’s eventual enthronement was more than high, and perhaps this was due to the fact that Wang Go, compared to King Ch’ungsuk, had a stronger and more stable relationship with the Mongol royal family and the emperor.

Shim regional lord, Wang Go, succeeded the Shim regional lord status from King Ch’ungsŏn in March 1316 (3 years after King Ch’ungsuk

ascended to the throne) and married Princess Nullun 訥倫, daughter of the Ryang regional lord 梁王 Jung Shyan 松山, who was the eldest son of Chin regional lord 晉王 Kammalla. Ryang regional lord, Jung Shyan, was a cousin of the Mongol emperor at the time, who was Emperor Ayurbarwada, and brother of King Ch’ungsŏn’s wife, Princess Kyekukdaejang. It’s important to take note that Wang Go’s marriage was arranged as an extension of King Ch’ungsŏn’s earlier marriage. Through this marriage, Wang Go came to be favored by Emperor Ayurbarwada, and King Ch’ungsŏn also preferred him more than before. He also received affection from Emperor Shidibala 英宗. These relations with the Mongol royal family and emperor were what led him to want the Koryŏ throne, and an important reason why many Koryŏ people became his close aid or support.²¹ King Ch’ungsuk later married Ryeong regional lord 營王 Yesun Temur’s 也先帖木兒 daughter, Princess Bukgukjang 濮國長公主 Irinjinbala 亦憐眞八刺. This marriage is meaningful in that it was yet another marriage between the Mongol and Koryŏ royal families. However, in comparison to Wang Go’s marriage, this union was not quite useful in boosting King Ch’ungsuk’s relationship with the Mongol emperor or his authority as king (Lee 2003).

Early in 1298, the Mongol emperor replaced King Ch’ungsŏn with his father and former king Ch’ungryŏl, just 7 months after King Ch’ungsŏn had ascended to the throne.²² The arrogance of King Ch’ungsŏn’s reforms on the government’s systems and his discord with Princess Kyegukdaejang 薊國大長 due to the incident of concubine Cho being framed, were important factors. After this incident, the Koryŏ king and his vassals were clearly aware that the Mongol emperor could dethrone the Koryŏ king at its own will, and that relationships with the Mongol emperor and royal family through marriage with the princess or other methods would be very important in maintaining the king status.

After this incident, King Ch’ungsŏn was summoned again to reenter kešig. In order to prevent King Ch’ungsŏn from being restored to the throne, King Ch’ungryŏl and his close aides decided on a remarriage for Ch’ungsŏn’s

16. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 24 (King Ch’ungsuk 8, February).

17. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 125 (Biography of Kwŏn Han-gong).

18. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 91 (Biography of Wang Go).

19. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 35 (King Ch’ungsuk 12, October, the Ŭlmi 乙未 day).

20. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 35 (King Ch’ungsuk 12, October, the Ŭlmi 乙未 day).

21. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 91 (Biography of Wang Go).

22. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch’ungryŏl 23, October); *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch’ungryŏl 24, January).

Queen Princess Kyegukdaejang.²³ This shows that political powers in Koryŏ were aware that relations with the Mongol imperial family through marriage with the princess were an important factor in the succession of the throne. King Ch'ungsŏn was aware of this as well, and tried to prevent his own wife's remarriage, despite his discord with the Princess (Kyegukdaejang).²⁴

In sum, direct relations with the Mongol royal family and emperor became a highly important factor in the Mongol Emperor's "installment" of the Koryŏ king. Based on this, kings could be and were replaced. The Koryŏ king and his vassals used this factor, depending on their political positions, to replace the throne or maintain it. As this factor became more important, it brought about changes in the system, which now aimed to create a successor through good relations with the Mongol royal family and emperor. This will be discussed below.

Changes in the system—Change in the T'eja (Crown Prince 太子) System and the Rise of the Kešig System

The Koryŏ T'eja system, introduced during King Kwangjong's 光宗 time, included the appointment process and official operations of the T'eja office. Usually, the eldest son of the currently reigning king was appointed T'eja, to maintain the tradition of prioritizing the blood line. Appointing officials to an office designed to serve the T'eja figure allowed the creation of a political environment even before the actual enthronement so that when the prince ascends the throne, he will already be able to exercise his authority as king. Officials attached to the T'eja office, in charge of the prince's education and guard, were appointed to cultivate the crown prince's skills, but it also allowed relationships between bureaucrats and the prince to form before the prince came to power. Those appointed as officials attached to the T'eja office generally took on that role while they were also occupying high ranking seats inside the government. Even if this was not the case, the official would

usually obtain a high ranking position after the king came to power (Kim 2008). The T'eja system also prevented discords that may disrupt state affairs around the time of succession, and intended to stabilize the political base of the current king. The crown prince was appointed by the king, and the T'eja system's political base was within the king's political base, as was shown in the formation of officials attached to the T'eja office.

Koryŏ's crown prince system changed with Koryŏ's relationship with the Mongol Empire. The T'eja (crown prince to become "[Koryŏ] emperor") was degraded to "Seja" (crown prince to become "Koryŏ king"), reflecting Koryŏ's status as the Mongol Empire's sovereign princely state. The new "Seja system" was altered even further, during and after King Ch'ungsŏn's reign.

Examples in the early half of the Koryŏ era show that appointment of the T'eja occurred gradually. Generally, the current king made his eldest son the T'eja, appointed officials to the T'eja office, formalized the office and then began educating the prince, and then appointed him officially at an appropriate time. The time between making the son T'eja and appointing him T'eja varied. From the time of Wŏnjong until King Ch'ung'ryŏl, management of the Seja system was similar to that during the early half period of Koryŏ. In 1260 (the first year), right after Wŏnjong ascended to the throne, he installed his eldest son Wang Sim (who later becomes King Ch'ung'ryŏl) as the T'eja.²⁵ During regular appointments of governmental seats in 1262 and 1263, officials attached to the T'eja office were appointed and the office was formed.²⁶ King Ch'ung'ryŏl, who ascended to the throne after Wŏnjong, appointed officials for the Seja office in 1277 (three years after King Ch'ung'ryŏl ascended to the throne) and formed the crown prince office. Wang Wŏn (whose name changed to Wang Chang, and later became King Ch'ungsŏn), son of Princess Chaegukdaejang, was installed as the Seja.²⁷ Afterwards, during King Ch'ung'ryŏl's time (before the "1298 overlapping of living and former and present king reigns" incident), appointment of officials attached to the Seja office continued,²⁸ and it seemed the Seja office continued to operate. It is

25. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 25 (King Wŏnjong 1, August, the Chŏng'yu 丁酉 day).

26. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 25 (King Wŏnjong 3, December); *Koryŏ History* 25 (King Wŏnjong 4, December).

27. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 28 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 3, January, the Kabo 甲午 and Imin 壬寅 days).

28. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 5, February, the Pyŏng'o 丙午 day); *Koryŏ*

23. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 22 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 27, May); *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 22 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 29, September, the Kyŏng'o 庚午 day).

24. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 23 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 31, November); *Koryŏ History* 32 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 32); *Koryŏ History* 125 (Biography of Wang Yu-so).

notable that these two installments of the T'eja/Seja seat occurred immediately after the King ascended to the throne. During King Ch'ung'ryŏl's time, the installed Seja was only 3 years old at that time. This was quite early given the fact that during the early half of the Koryŏ period, installed T'eja figures were around the ages of 7 to 10.²⁹

This active installation of the T'eja figure can be understood within the political context of the time. Wŏnjong ascended to the throne when Kim Chun 金俊 and other military figures were still dominating the government, so he probably installed the T'eja figure quickly in order to achieve stability of the government. Wang Sim had already come of age, and as the grandson of the King, filled the vacuum after Kojong 高宗 had died and Wŏnjong was in Mongolia. Wang Sim took Wŏnjong's place in governmental operations, until Wŏnjong returned.³⁰

Ch'ung'ryŏl's quick appointment of his son as Seja can also be explained with two factors. First, it may have been to prevent disorder that may have occurred because of Wang Cha's 王滋 presence. Wang Cha was the son of Koryŏ Queen Chŏngsin. In December of 1276 (2nd year of King Ch'ung'ryŏl's reign), right before the Seja was installed in January 1277 (3rd year of the same king's reign) there was an incident of a false written accusation that Kungju 宮主 Chŏng'hwa, also called Queen Chŏngsin, had ordered a shaman to curse the princess.³¹ This may have been one factor that led to the quick installation of Ch'ungsŏn as Seja.³²

And such move would also have meant to strengthen the royal authority

History 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 6, December, the Kye'yu 癸酉 day); *Koryŏ History* 29 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 9, August); *Koryŏ History* 30 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 17, September, the Ŭlmi 乙未 day); *Koryŏ History* 30 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 18, June, the Shin'hae 辛亥 day); *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 21, January, the Kisa 己巳 day); *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 23, August, the Shinchuk 辛丑 day); *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 23, October, the Shinmyo 辛卯 day); *Koryŏ History* 31 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 23, December, the Imin 壬寅 day).

29. There is a case where Uijong installed his eldest son Wang Hong, who was 5 years old, as T'eja (crown prince) in 1153. For this, please refer to *Koryŏ History* 18 (King Uijong 7, April). For more information on installment of T'eja in the first half of Koryŏ, please see Kim 2011.

30. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 25 (King Kojong 46, April, the Imin 壬寅 day).

31. For this, please see *Chronicles of Koryŏ History* 19 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 2, December, the Pyŏngja 丙子 day).

32. Even before this, after Princess Chaegukdaejang married into the Koryŏ royal family, she was jealous of Kungju Chŏng'hwa. For more information, please see *Koryŏ History* 89 (Hubi 后妃 2, Biography of Princess Chaegukdaejang).

in the early days of King Ch'ung'ryŏl's reign. In the beginning of his reign, King Ch'ung'ryŏl implemented several policies designed to stabilize and strengthen his royal authority among Koryŏ's political powers as well as Mongol powers. He aggressively used his position as the son-in-law of the emperor in the Mongol royal family as well as the prime minister of the Chŏngdong Haengsŏng provincial government.³³ Added to that, by installing the son of the Mongol princess (and grandson of Kubilai), his (Ch'ung'ryŏl's) royal authority would be directly connected to the Mongol emperor's authority, and King Ch'ung'ryŏl made sure that this status and authority would be passed down to his and princess's eldest son, Ch'ungsŏn.

It is also important to note that Wang Chang was formally installed by the Mongolian emperor.³⁴ In the early half period of Koryŏ, there were cases where China installed Koryŏ's T'eja as the Kukgong (highest level of nobility 國公), but the title, "Seja of Koryŏ," was not given, nor did it occur regularly.³⁵

In sum, installation of the T'eja/Seja system and operations of related systems during Wŏnjong and King Ch'ung'ryŏl's eras remained somewhat similar to that of the earlier Koryŏ T'eja system. However, this "Seja system" changed greatly during King Ch'ungsŏn's time. Many of its functions disappeared and the system did not operate properly to stabilize royal authority and the process of succession to the throne.

King Ch'ungsŏn's eldest son Wang Kam (Gam) 王鑑 and younger son Wang To (Do) 王燾 (who later became King Ch'ungsuk) each succeeded the throne as "Seja" in January 1310 (2 years after King Ch'ungsŏn was reinstated as king of Koryŏ) and March 1313 (5th year of King Ch'ungsŏn's second reign).³⁶ There are records of Wang Kam (Gam) being "installed as Seja" in biographies,³⁷ but exactly when is not known. We can infer when this was. These two princes were children of the Mongolian woman Uibi 懿妃 Yasokjin 也速眞. King Ch'ungsuk was born in 1294, so Wang Kam (Gam), the elder brother must have been born earlier than that. When King Ch'ungsŏn ascended to the throne for the first time in 1298, he did not remain in the

33. For specific detail refer to Lee 2016, 79-138.

34. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 30 (King Ch'ung'ryŏl 17, September).

35. For more information on Chinese installment of T'eja during the Koryŏ era, refer to Shim 2002.

36. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 33 (King Ch'ungsŏn 2, January); *Koryŏ History* 34 (King Ch'ungsŏn 5, March, the Kabin 甲寅 day).

37. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 91 (Biography of Wang Kam [Gam]).

throne very long, and he just married Princess Kyegukdaejang only recently. Thus, it is unlikely that he made Wang Kam (Gam), a child of another woman, Seja at this time. Wang Kam (Gam) probably became Seja after King Ch'ungsŏn was restored to the throne in August 1308, or at least before January 1310. His younger brother Wang To (Do) (Ch'ungsuk) was installed as Seja probably before March 1313, when he "succeeded the throne as Seja" and after Wang Kam (Gam) died in May 1310.³⁸ However, it's important to note that records on the installation of these two princes are absent. There are also no records on the formation of the Seja office. This is also true for Seja figures who came afterwards.

Records show that Wang Chŏng (who later became King Ch'ung'hye), eldest son of King Ch'ungsuk, went to the Mongol court "as Seja" in 1328,³⁹ but there are no records on the Seja's installation or formation of the Seja office. The fact that King Ch'ungsuk was summoned to the Mongol court due to conflict with the Shim (Sen) regional lord, and returned to Koryŏ in 1325 probably affected this. However, there were about 3 years before Wang Chŏng had to go to the Mongol court in 1328 as Seja. Installation of the Seja figure and formation of a Seja office would have probably been required as a political gesture to maintain political stability, especially after a conflict with the Shim (Sen) regional lord over the succession of the throne. However, there are no relevant records found, which is different from how things were during Wŏnjong and King Ch'ung'ryŏl's eras.

There are no records for King Ch'ungmok, who was the eldest son of King Ch'ung'hye, being appointed as Seja. There's a possibility that King Ch'ungmok was not made Seja during King Ch'ung'hye's reign because he was only 8 years old when he ascended to the throne. This resembles what happened during King Ch'ungsŏn's reign, as he did name his eldest son as Seja but never established a Seja office or arranged an official ceremony to appoint him as one. Maybe there has been such establishment or ceremony, which was only not recorded, but if we consider the status that the Seja figure would have held as the formal and official successor to the throne, a ceremony appointing him and therefore that meaningful should have been recorded, if it was ever held at all. Previous examples in the early half of the Koryŏ era show that after

the T'eja was installed, related decrees were issued and the prince's birthday was declared as a day of joy that should be celebrated from then on. Thus it's quite puzzling that there are no records of facts that should have entailed the Seja installation. Afterwards, the situation remained the same. Both Kings Ch'ungjŏng and Kongmin were not sons of the previous king, and probably had never become a "Seja" figure.

The "Seja" crown prince system had not been operating properly since King Ch'ungsŏn's era, because the authority of the Koryŏ king, and previous Koryŏ notions that defined power and the throne succession process had been weakening significantly, as Koryŏ's relationship with the Mongol Empire was continuing to grow more and more important. The social hierarchy, with the Mongol emperor at the top, was also applied to the succession of the Koryŏ throne. Afterwards, Mongol methods became ultimately dominant in selecting the successor to the Koryŏ throne and building a political environment for him. What replaced aspects of the Koryŏ Seja system in the new political environment was the Mongolian kešig system.

Kešig is the Mongol term for "attendants in the imperial palace." They are the Mongol imperial family's royal body guards, which also included the representative Nŏker family that received the emperor's trust by having a close relationship with Genghis Khan, as well as sons or relatives of newly subjected political units' lords. This unit was made up of members of the Mongol Empire's key ruling class. Sons of lords of other political units were summoned to join the kešig as a measure to secure subjugation of those political units, but it was also a measure to guide and educate them as the ruling class of the Mongol Empire (Morihira 2001). As participants of kešig, they could associate with political powers of the Mongol empire and secure their political base.

This was the same for Koryŏ as well. In the beginning of the relationship, the Mongol Great Khan summoned Koryŏ royal family members as turkak, or "hostages," and those who went to the Mongol court as turkak participated in the kešig.⁴⁰ Attending and observing imperial rounds of discussions in the Mongol Empire was also in part a "rite of passage" for the succession of the

38. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 33 (King Ch'ungsŏn 2 [second reign], May, the Ŭlsa 乙巳 day).

39. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 35 (King Ch'ungsuk 15, February, the Chŏngsa 丁巳 day).

40. Dokrohwa (Korean pronunciation of 秃魯花) is the Chinese transliteration for the Mongolian term "Turkak" which refers to the son who is a hostage to the kešig system. These sons of the Koryŏ royal family were sent to the Mongol court to participate in kešig. For more information on this, refer to Morihira 2001.

next Koryŏ throne (Morihira 2001), partly because it was the nature of the Mongol kešig system itself, and partly because relations with the Mongol emperor and the imperial family and political powers were so important for the Koryŏ throne succession.

In the early days, the imperial court did not ask a specific person to report to China as kešig. So the Koryŏ royal family sent members who were not in the direct line of royal descent as well.⁴¹ Then later, the imperial court started to call for specific persons. During King Ch'ungsŏn's reign, the second son Wang To (Do) (who later became King Ch'ungsuk) was also sent to become kešig along with the crown prince Wang Kam (Gam).⁴² After King Ch'ung'hye was restored to the throne, his younger brother Wang Ki 王祺 (who later became King Kongmin) was summoned for kešig.⁴³ After King Kongmin ascended to the throne, King Ch'ung'hye's son from a concubine, Sŏkgi, was summoned probably to be included in the kešig, though he never went.

It's hard to say for sure if members of the Koryŏ family other than the "Seja" figures were summoned for kešig in the Mongol Empire in order to be named as successors of the next throne in case a replacement was needed. There was a regulation in place where, when members of the Tong'unsa 統軍司, Kwan'gun Manho 管軍萬戶, and Kwan'gun Chŏn'ho 管軍千戶, etc. (titles of officials in the military) were to send their sons to the royal court as turkak but had no one at all or only very young sons, younger brothers or cousins were to be sent instead (and later be replaced by the son when he became 15 years old).⁴⁴ Thus, King Ch'ung'hye, after being restored to the throne, sent his younger brother Wang Ki to become kešig probably in place of his very young son (Ch'ungmok).⁴⁵ However, it seems that Koryŏ vassals believed that members of the royal family who went to the Mongol court for kešig were actually successors to the next throne. This can be observed from the fact that

vassals called Wang Ki the "great eldest son" 元子.⁴⁶ The term "eldest son" itself refers to the King's oldest son, but it does not mean that this son will necessarily become the crown prince and successor to the throne. However, Koryŏ vassals referred to King Ch'ung'hye's "brother" Wang Ki the "great eldest son," not because he was installed as the "Seja," but because they thought that Wang Ki had obtained status as the successor to the throne by becoming a kešig inside the Mongol court.

In sum, the fact that the Mongol emperor "actually installed" figures in the Koryŏ throne has three meanings. First, the Mongol emperor was the one who judged whether or not the successor was appropriate, either during the succession itself or in preparation for a possible replacement. Next, during this judgement process, relations with the Mongol emperor and imperial family became an important standard, along with blood lines within the Koryŏ family and the person's own "talent." Lastly, as an institutional strategy to secure the successor beforehand and educate him and form a political environment around him, the Mongolian kešig system became more and more important, while the traditional Koryŏ T'eja system became less and less. Direct relations with the Emperor or the imperial family arranged or developed through marriages as well as the kešig system became very important, as such structural relations would directly connect Koryŏ figures to the Mongol empire's state system and ensure them relationships with Mongol figures. It's important to note that the Koryŏ people also knew that. Installation of the Koryŏ throne by the Mongol emperor was not an aberrant act of a "strong and powerful Mongol Empire coercing Koryŏ to do so." The Koryŏ king and vassals were fully aware of the Mongol concepts and systems that existed. This vividly shows us the nature of the Koryŏ-Mongol relationship of this era, and the Koryŏ royal authority which was based upon it as well.

Conclusion: The Complexity of the Koryŏ-Mongol (Yüan) relationship and Koryŏ Royal Authority

Marriages arranged between figures inside the ruling class have political

41. Examples of this include: Lord of Yeongnyung, Wang Jun, Lord of Daebang under King Chungryol, Wang Jing, and his son Lord of Jungwon Wang On, who went to Mongolia as turkak in 1241 (28 years after Kojong ascended the throne, before Koryŏ's consolidation with Mongolia).

42. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 124 (Biography of Yun Sŏk).

43. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 38 (King Ch'ung'hye 2 [second reign], May).

44. For this, please see *History of Yüan Dynasty* 98 (History of the military system, Emperor Kubilai Khan 4, February).

45. The fact that Taebang Lord Wang Chin etc. entered kešig right after King Ch'ung'ryŏl ascended to the throne can be understood within this context (Morihira 2001).

46. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 38 (King Ch'ung'hye 2 [second reign], May).

implications in any society, but in the Mongol Empire, marriages strongly connoted political alliances. In the beginning of the Mongol Yüan Empire, when its political system was unstable and the state had not yet formed, Genghis Khan made alliances with other political units using various methods, and marriage was an important one. Marriages transformed unstable yet cooperative relationships between political powers into close, personal, and familial relationships. It united two separate families, and helped cultivate long-term relations. Marriages between lords of political units were even more important. Meanwhile, aside from the method of marriage, Genghis Khan formed alliances with other groups through various methods including mutual pledges designed to form blood brother relationships, (and) formation of federation or leagues that would lead to the establishment of *nŏker*, as well as devising other master-servant relationships with “friends, companions, comrades,” and “boghol.”⁴⁷ Families that formed these relationships with each other became key members of the system by serving as *Ch’ŏnho* or *kešig*. Their private relationships were absorbed into official systems and domains of the state. This became the basis for the structure of the Mongol Empire, which was made up of several leader-level political units.

Relationship between the Mongol empire and Koryŏ was also a result of the Mongols’ traditional relationship-forming methods. As observed above, this can be seen through changes that occurred in the process of the “installation of a figure in the throne,” which was a symbolic and important process in terms of East Asian relations at the time. Relations with the Mongol emperor and the royal family, through arranged marriages, came to become an important factor. And as a result, the *Seja* system of Koryŏ which had been supporting the succession between father and son was no longer operating properly, while the Mongol *kešig* system kicked in and came to educate the next successor to the Koryŏ throne and form a political base for him. The concepts and systems related to the succession of the Koryŏ throne was somewhat replaced by Mongolian concepts and systems, with the Mongol emperor at the top of a hierarchy engulfing Koryŏ as well. This did not only affect the succession of the Koryŏ throne, but also the authority of the Koryŏ king itself. These two factors will be discussed further below.

First, relations with the Mongol emperor and imperial family became significant for the Koryŏ royal authority as well, and as a result, powers within Koryŏ shattered and literally became diverse. During his days as *Seja*, King *Ch’ung’ryŏl* restored his father *Wŏnjong* to the throne through his marriage with the Mongol royal family. Immediately after King *Ch’ung’ryŏl* ascended to the throne, he actively used his status as the son-in-law of the Mongol imperial family and Governor of the *Chŏngdong Haengsŏng* provincial government in reinforcing his own status as the Koryŏ king. At least in the beginning, the Koryŏ king had the strongest relationship with the imperial power and was in close proximity to the imperial family, and as a result a firm and unitary power structure between the emperor and king was established. However, the personal and familial relationships with the Mongol imperial family and the emperor that King *Ch’ung’ryŏl* actively utilized and relied upon was something that could be built “pluralistically,” and not only by *Ch’ung’ryŏl*, the Koryŏ king. Relationships similar or even stronger than the one that was formed between Koryŏ king and the Mongol imperial family were continuously formed in and out of the Koryŏ royal family, by other figures and families. Thus, with close relations with the emperor or the imperial family forming here and there, axis of powers based on the emperor’s authority continued to diverge. This caused a phenomenon that could only be characterized as “horizontal power axis bursting here and there,” and an inevitable “relativization” of the Koryŏ king’s authority and the Koryŏ royal family’s power. Instances such as disputes between the “father king” (who was formerly on the throne) and the “son king” (presently on the throne), or challenges launched against legitimate occupants of the throne such as the *Shim* (*Sen*) regional lord’s attack upon the sitting king, and the *Qi* family’s rise to power due to the authority of Empress *Qi* in Yüan during King *Kongmin*’s reign and the threats they mounted targeting the royal throne, began when the power center in Koryŏ was dismantled by a superior power structure which gauged someone’s authority by its relationship with and closeness to the Mongol emperor and the imperial family.

This “relativization” of the royal authority that occurred during this time period also affected the succession of the throne as well. In the traditional dynasty system, the *T’eja* figure was able to have power on a similar level to that of the King without being threatening to the throne because his power began with the king and his political base was directly connected to the king’s own. However, in this new environment, if the next successor to the throne

47. For more information, refer to Kim 2010, 96-100.

was not present in Koryŏ and was participating in kešig at the Mongol royal court, the king would have been unable to control his successor when he was off building his own independent power base. Under the T'eja system, the T'eja's political base had been inside the king's political base, but when the Seja or a potential successor to the throne formed his power base through the kešig system, the king could relate and connect with the T'eja to only some extent, without the means to exercise stronger authority. The Koryŏ king's level of connection with the T'eja figure could only be depending on the length of the period he served as kešig and the capabilities of the royal family members.

Furthermore, Koryŏ kings had no control over new installations of kings who were dethroned in the process of repeated disputes related to the succession of the throne. King Ch'ungsŏn and King Ch'ung'hye were dethroned by the Mongol court in 1298 and 1332 respectively. They were both summoned and were to go through the kešig system again and were restored to the throne only after their fathers died. King Ch'ung'hye who reentered kešig after being dethroned in 1332 had to return because of his insincerity.⁴⁸ Based on this case, it seems that dethroned kings were summoned and were to go through kešig again for "reeducation" purposes. Whatever the Mongol emperor's intentions were, measures related to dethroned kings did not allow "current kings" to have control over the "former kings," which may have allowed for the possibility of the "former king" to be restored in case it was needed. This "dismantled (pluralized)" Koryŏ's power center and restricted the authority of the king.

Next, relations with the Mongol Empire also affected the existing political networks that had been surrounding the Koryŏ king and his relationship with the vassals. Personal and familial relationships with the Mongol imperial family and the emperor could be built by anyone, and power groups in Koryŏ continued to diverge. Koryŏ vassals continuously formed circles, parties, and communities based on these changes.

Interestingly enough, vassals who accompanied royal family members—potential Koryŏ throne successors—on their way to the Mongol court to join kešig played a role similar to that of the officials who had been attached to the T'eja office in the earlier periods of Koryŏ. Thus, the successor to the throne

didn't establish his own political base with Koryŏ vassals inside the country, but with vassals who accompanied them to the Mongol court where they stayed for a long time (up to 10 years), as well as political powers within the Mongol court. These vassals came to compose a crucial political base for the kings, after they ascended to the throne.⁴⁹

And some of these vassals participated in the kešig themselves. And that participation did not end with that vassal, but continued through generations with their sons succeeding after them. For example, in 1279 (5th year of King Ch'ung'ryŏl's reign), records on Park Kŏ-sil, son of Park Wŏn'gweng who accompanied Taebang-gong as a turkak, state that "Chŏng'yun-gong (Park Kŏ-sil) filled in for his father at kešig, and lived under the Heaven lord."⁵⁰ This case shows that qualifications for kešig were passed down from father to son independently, without going through the king (Morihira 2001). Choi Wŏn, son of Choi Ahn-do who participated in the emperor's kešig during King Ch'ung'hye's time also participated in kešig.⁵¹ Though not clearly stated, it seems that this was also another case where status within the kešig was passed down between father and son. Thus, the kešig system, which was an important channel for the Koryŏ king to form key political relationships within his relationship with the Mongol Empire, allowed Koryŏ vassals to break away from the Koryŏ king's control and connect directly with the emperor. Koryŏ's political network of relationship was initially structured with the Koryŏ king at the top, but was reorganized into a structure with the emperor at the top.

In sum, changes in the king's authority due to Koryŏ's relationship with the Mongol empire was a result of subjugation by the Mongols which exercised its power directly, but this was not the only cause. The relationship between Koryŏ and the Mongol Empire was formed within the relationship-forming methods of both East Asia and the Mongols. The Mongols' powerful intervention that occurred as a result of this interaction was never random, but occurred within a structural system with principles. This caused "relativization" of the Koryŏ royal authority, and directly affected the Koryŏ king and his vassals, leading to the concepts and systems of maintaining and succeeding the

49. For information on close aides within the Mongolian kesig, refer to Kim 1991; Lee 1996.

50. For this, please see "The Story of the Tomb Belonging to Lord of Pyeongwongun's Wife" in Vol. 2 of *Jolgecheonbaek* 拙藥千百 written by Choi Hye.

51. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 124 (Biography of Choi Ahn-do).

48. For this, please see *Koryŏ History* 36 (King Ch'ung'hye 2 [second reign], February, the Kabja 甲子 day).

authority of the Koryŏ throne, and not to mention the relationship between political powers, to change.

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Abstract

Mongol's intervention in the succession process of the throne of the nearby states was actually an act of officially "installing" kings and lords in those perimeter states. It was performed as a formality within East Asian international relations, but was also based upon Mongol traditions. This paper has shown that Mongol intervention in the succession of the Koryŏ throne was one of those examples. How it changed the dynamics inside Koryŏ is observed in this article. As the relationship with the Mongol emperor as well as the imperial family became more and more important to the Koryŏ king's royal authority and the succession of the Koryŏ throne which would only be completed by the aforementioned "installation" process, traditional blood ties within the Koryŏ family becomes less and less crucial. The Koryŏ T'eja figure used to obtain the throne and ensure the stability of its own royal authority based on traditional blood ties, but in this period the T'eja seat itself lost its prior political and meaning, and the kešig system replaced its functions. These changes also affected the Koryŏ king's royal authority, and the existing Koryŏ hierarchy based on blood relations was severely distorted. The political center (of Koryŏ) itself was shattered, and then created was a structure where the king was unable to control other power subjects. The king was no longer at the top of that hierarchy. The emperor was. In sum, in order to adequately observe this time period, we need to consider that the relationship formed between Koryŏ and the empire was a result of Mongol's own relationship-forming method. We should be aware that Mongol Empire's blatant intervention in the Koryŏ throne succession process was neither impulsive nor random, but only occurred as a systemically determined decision. What should be noted is that this caused the literal "relativization" of the Koryŏ royal authority, which directly affected the status of the Koryŏ king and his vassals, meaning of concepts and systems concerning the Koryŏ throne itself, and the relationship between political powers, in an irrevocable fashion.

Keywords: Koryŏ-Mongol relationship, the Mongol Empire's installation, Koryŏ T'eja system, Mongol kešig system, the Koryŏ throne succession, relativization of the Koryŏ royal authority

