



Special Review

Celebrating the Legacy of Goryeo
after 1,100 years since its Foundation

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Editor's Note

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The year 2018 marked the 1,100th Anniversary of the Goryeo dynasty's foundation in 918. More than a dozen of conferences and symposiums were held this year, while various exhibitions were arranged throughout the country. Academic circles also commemorated the occasion with several publications. In other words, the year was virtually a year-long festival for all Goryeo scholars either Korean or not.

And with 2018 now over and also in the past, it is time for us to review things which were done well and those that unfortunately were not. Scholars and researchers are contemplating on how the year really was, and what kind of tasks lie ahead. They are asking themselves as honestly as possible, whether there was anything that anyone involved could have done differently, or should have done more.

The *Review of Korean Studies* decided it was one of the journal's academic duties to lend a hand in such effort. So here we are, presenting to you a special review section composed of seven reviews collected by seven gifted and dedicated Goryeo scholars. Each of them respectively selected specific portions from last year's Goryeo-related activities, to provide us with a distinctively professional assessment of how things were handled. With their assistance, we'll be able to experience and appreciate once again the Goryeo historians' efforts last year, and hopefully the magnitude of such efforts' meaning as well.

Chae Oong-Seok reviewed a book that was published in 2018 in commemoration of the year 918's historical significance. This book was co-authored by over 30 scholars who have all been engaged in Goryeo historical studies for the past couple of decades. Entitled *A Look Back into the History of the Goryeo Dynasty from the Perspective of the 21st century*, this book was originally intended as a revision to an existing book—published nearly 30 years ago—that had covered various aspects of Goryeo society, but as its original contents have already turned somewhat outdated, it was decided to write an entirely new book which would include all the recent studies to bring the edition itself up to

date. The result was a book that provides readers with a fresh new look into the culture and history of Goryeo. Chae himself served as chief editor of this book, so by reading his review of the end product as well as his contemplation on the entire endeavor, we will not only be able to look into the editing committee's true intentions, but also have a better grasp on what kind of dynasty Goryeo was, and what sort of status it occupies in the history of Korea.

Sin Eunjae reviewed two major conferences that were held to celebrate the dynasty's birth 1,100 years ago. One was held by the Korean History Society under the title of "The Historical Significance of the Founding of Goryeo and the Formation of Gyeonggi," and the other was by the Korean Medieval History Society with the theme of "The Goryeo Dynasty in East Asia: Worldview, Foundation of State Identity." While the former dealt with the dynasty's capital city, the latter discussed the Goryeo people's point of view reflected in their perception of the outside world. Considering that the capital served as the heart of the dynasty's physical existence, and the Goryeo people's view of the universe embodied the population's specific state of mind, we could say that these conferences picked the most relevant themes concerning Goryeo civilization. Featured scholars were from various backgrounds, including both seasoned scholars and fresh young minds, and Sin evaluates the merits of these conferences, while pointing out some things that were left to be desired.

Sem Vermeersch reviewed a conference that tackled upon an extremely important past text, which has been believed as one of the most important historical resources in exploring Goryeo history. The name of that book is *Gaoli tujing (Illustrated Account of Goryeo)*, which was a documentation of all things Goryeo as witnessed by a Song emissary in the 1120s as he was visiting the Goryeo court at the time and actually stayed there for a few months. Because Goryeo historical data is so scarce, the importance of this material has been recognized by scholars in and outside Korea from the very beginning, and such recognition culminated in many insightful works. At the conference held by the Gyeonggi Provincial Museum (Gyeonggi-do Bangmulgwan) as part of its own effort to honor the dynasty's foundation, various aspects of Goryeo society that had been described in the book were examined by many scholars in great details. Vermeersch himself had earlier published an entire translation of this book, so his review of this conference would most definitely help us newly appreciate the irreplaceable nature of this particular source of historical reference.

Kim Yun Jeong reviewed a Special Goryeo Exhibition held for over three

months in late 2018, by the National Museum of Korea under the title of "Goryeo: The Glory of Korea," as well as an academic symposium co-hosted by both, the Museum and the Art History Association of Korea. In this exhibition, virtually all aspects of Goryeo art were on display, ranging from familiar and beloved relics to rarely seen Goryeo artifacts that had been lent from museums and institutions all around the world. Some of them were disclosed to the Korean public for the very first time, making the occasion all the more meaningful. And at the following symposium, important genres of Goryeo art including porcelain, fabrics, and illustrations were discussed, while certain issues of aesthetic or practical nature were also vibrantly debated. Being an expert in Goryeo porcelain, Kim provides us with an extensive review of both the exhibition and symposium which contains not only a general overview of the occasions but her own insight concerning how to study, perceive, and embrace Goryeo art in the future.

Seunghye Lee reviewed various Buddhist exhibitions that were held throughout the year, in honor of several Goryeo period Buddhist monasteries and pagodas. These exhibitions were respectively held by local national museums not only in commemoration of the dynasty's foundation, but the dynasty's Buddhist legacy as well. Monasteries covered in Lee's review include those located in the middle region of the peninsula, and the Changnyeongsa and Geumgangsang vestiges, as well as the renowned Mireuksa Temple. Considering the status Buddhism held in Goryeo culture, and Buddhism's distinct influence on the layered nature of Goryeo people's religious and philosophical lives, these exhibitions were more than a welcome reminder of a truly vital part that Buddhism played in the maturation of Goryeo art, as well as a fitting tribute to core Goryeo artistic accomplishments that had huge impacts on Korean art in general. As an expert in history of Korean art, Lee not only provides us with the overall details of the exhibitions, but the aesthetic qualities of the relics and the historical importance of the sites as well.

Lee Kang Hahn reviewed several conferences that had a specific theme, which was the relationship between Goryeo society and the sea. As we all know, the Korean peninsula is open to the sea on all fronts but one, so dynasties that had ever thrived upon it all developed their own unique ways to deal with the sea. They utilized it in various manners in the process of their political, economic, and cultural exchanges with the outside world, and Goryeo was no exception. In fact, Goryeo may have been the one and only dynasty that had

ever existed on the peninsula to truly appreciate what the sea had to offer. As the maritime condition was such a crucial part in Goryeo history and provided direct/indirect contributions to the formation of Goryeo culture, the theme was naturally dealt with in a couple of academic occasions held in 2018, and Lee reviewed them all. In the process, he discussed the accomplishments of these conferences, things that these occasions unfortunately overlooked, as well as other important studies that were not mentioned in these gatherings, but had to be acknowledged nonetheless.

Hong Young Eui reviewed the Pyeongchang Special Exhibition on Manwoldae that was held in February 2018 celebrating the 2018 Winter Olympics and of course the 1,100th birthday of Goryeo. In his review, he not only discussed the Pyeongchang Special Exhibition, but also recounted how the excavation and restoration of the Goryeo dynasty's Manwoldae Palace—which resides in today's Kaeseong city (Goryeo dynasty's capital Gaegyeong) currently inside North Korea—has been proceeding for the past two decades. Hong has been involved in various archaeological projects in the region for quite some time, almost from the very beginning, and in this review he shared with us his own experience of joining the digs and his thoughts on other potential relics and vestiges that could be explored in the future. In a political climate that makes us feel the two Koreas' reunification is not a mere dream, we should not only be able to feel the importance of this long-lost capital by reading Hong's review that contains the culmination of decades worth of archaeological efforts, but also sense the urge to illuminate past efforts for the present's sake as well.

All the activities reviewed here are, of course, only a part of all the efforts that had been featured in 2018. I regret we were not able to cover them all. Of course, studies of Goryeo history are by no means wrapped or concluded with the ending of 2018. In fact, our exploration of Goryeo history and culture is only beginning. A new generation of scholars will continue to engage in Goryeo historical studies, and probably a century later when the 1,200th anniversary of the dynasty's foundation is celebrated in Korean society, a whole new bracket of studies accumulated for an entire century could be discussed. Until that occasion, Goryeo studies should continue unabated, and the efforts of 2018, as well as the efforts of all seven reviewers who graciously invested their time and expertise to provide us with proper highlights of such efforts, will continue to help people be reminded of just that.