KOREAN STUDIES FORUM

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As implied by its name, it is hoped that the Korean Studies Forum will serve as a publication in which many and varied interpretations of Korea and aspects of Koreana may be presented and developed.

It is intended that contributions from a wide range of academic fields and from varied analytical approaches will serve to increase knowledge of Korea and things Korean both as a unique human development and in comparison with and contrast to the experience of other nations and culture groups.

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"The Good, The Bad And The Ugly": Personalities in the Founding of the Koryŏ Dynasty

G. Cameron Hurst III

INTRODUCTION

Founding a Korean dynasty was a difficult endeavor for everyone involved. It was certainly no mean military or political feat for the founders themselves. Indeed, only three times in Korean history was most of the peninsula incorporated within a dynastic structure.

Dynastic founding was no less difficult for historians charged with compiling "correct" records of previous dynasties or earlier reigns. This was because Korea adopted quite early the ideology as well as the vocabulary of Chinese historiography. Korean historians cast the accounts of their own dynastic developments in the Chinese fashion, which inevitably distorted the political and social realities of the contemporary period.

Since Chinese (Confucian) society placed great emphasis upon loyalty to the sovereign, attempts at usurpation were the most heinous of crimes. Paradoxically, the concept of the Mandate of Heaven provided a philosophical loophole, and successful usurpation resulting in the founding of a new dynasty became a great virtue. Tampering with the Imperial dignity was thus extremely risky, not only for the would-be usurper but for the historian as well. One only need recall the fate of Kim Chongjik 金宗直 in the reign of the Yŏn-san'gun 燕山君 to the reminded of the price one could pay for mentioning usurpation.[1]

Incorporating such ideas as the Mandate of Heaven and "praise and blame" didacticism, the Confucian historiographical process forced scholars to cast rulers in stereotype. Two of the most common stereotypes were the "bad last king" and the "good dynastic

founder." The last rulers of a dynasty were normally depicted as tyrants who had lost the moral right (the Mandate of Heaven) to govern the country while the founder of a new dynasty had to be saintly enough to warrant Heaven's bestowal of the Mandate. Thus the rise and fall of dynasties was attributed to the moral qualities of the sovereign. Political, economic, social and other factors were slighted or seen as derivative of the ruler's morality.

As a result, the most difficult part of the dynastic founding process may well be the task of latter-day historians attempting to reconstruct the real story from the fabric woven of historiographical stereotypes. A good case in point is the fall of Silla and the rise of Koryŏ in 10th century Korea.

SOURCE MATERIALS

There are no primary sources to aid the scholar in a reconstruction of the events. The three main sources are Confucian accounts officially commissioned by the state, or heavily Chinese-influenced versions written well after the events took place. All contain the inevitable bias in favor of the "good dynastic founder" Wang Kŏn 王建 whose descendants ruled Korea for almost five centuries and were on the throne at the time of the compilation of these sources.

The sources are the *Samguk Sagi* 三國史記, *Samguk Yusa* 三國遺事 and *Koryŏsa* 高麗史. The *Samguk Sagi* was compiled in 1145 by the statesman and Confucian scholar Kim Pusik 金富軾 at the order of Koryo's 17th monarch King Injong 仁宗.[2] The *Samguk Yusa* was written sometime in the latter part of the 13th century by the Buddhist priest Iryŏn. Although the *Samguk Yusa* is not an official history and is less Confucian than the *Samguk Sagi,* Iryŏn subscribed to the general principles of Chinese historiography and relied as well upon Kim Pusik's work for much of his information.[3] The *Koryŏsa* is the official dynastic history of the Koryŏ period, published in 1451 during the succeeding Yi dynasty. The section of the *Koryŏsa* which deals most extensively with the founding of the dynasty, the T'aejo Annals—T'aejo 太祖 being Wang Kŏn's posthumous name—were compiled by Hwang Churyang 黃周亮, a member of the Office of History established during the reign of King Chŏngjong 靖宗 (1034-1046). Hwang was charged with re-creating the records of T'aejo's

reign which had been destroyed, along with all the documents kept in the Secretariat, in the Khitan invasion of 1011.[4] These Annals, however, underwent several rewritings before the *Koryŏsa*'s publication.[5]

Thus the distressing fact about Wang Kŏn's dynastic founding is that there are no hard "facts" in the strictest sense of the term, no primary sources to corroborate later accounts. Furthermore, we have little idea of the nature of the materials Kim Pusik, Iryŏn and Hwang Churyang used.[6] Although Hwang's original compilation came only about a century after the events in question, the earliest of the sources was not published until two hundred years later. Imagine trying to piece together the background of the Watergate conspiracy a thousand years hence, using only three brief accounts written in 2175, 2300, and 2500 by pro-Nixon people, without any newspaper or magazine accounts, or the books written by the participants themselves, let alone the records of the trial. The interplay of political, social and economic factors in the overthrow of one dynasty by another, a process covering perhaps fifty years, must surely have been more complex than a campaign of political dirty tricks, no matter how bizarre those tricks appeared at the time.

Not only are all these sources products of a later date, they are also heavily biased, showing deliberate falsification and selective editing. All three were written or compiled by persons loyal to the Koryŏ dynasty which Wang Kŏn founded. All three compilers accepted Chinese historiographical stereotypes, cast the Silla dynasty as a Korean replica of the T'ang imperium, and most importantly, were consciously motivated to depict Silla as Koryŏ's direct—and sole—cultural and political ancestor.[7]

The account in these sources of Silla's decline and fall, and Koryŏ's rise to a position of paramountcy, is deceptively simple. Although all the sources contain some of the normal Chinese stereotypes, they are somewhat distorted because of the bias of the compilers, especially Kim Pusik, a prejudice which Professor Rogers refers to as "Silla-successionist."[8] Actually, information about Silla is very scanty in these accounts, and the three main actors in the drama—"the good, the bad and the ugly"—are non-Silla personalities. The general plot is as follows:[9]

> In the last years of the Silla dynasty, especially during the reign of Queen Chinsŏng 眞聖王 (887-897), the throne lost its moral leadership and bandit groups "swarmed like bees" throughout the kingdom. In the north, a déclassé Silla aristocrat named Kung Ye 弓裔 (the "ugly") captured territories in present-day Kangwŏndo and established himself as King of Later Koguryŏ.[10] In the Southwest, a former Silla military man, Kyŏn Hwŏn 甄萱 (the "bad"), declared himself King of Later Paekche. A situation reminiscent of the earlier Three Kingdoms Period resulted.
>
> Wang Kŏn (the "good"), a young general-minister in the service of Kung Ye, expanded the territories of his master's kingdom, which underwent several changes in name. Later, when Kung Ye became tyrannical and perpetrated unspeakable deeds, his subjects deposed him and embraced Wang Kŏn as ruler. Wang Kŏn and Kyŏn Hwŏn became the two major forces on the peninsula, and fierce struggles raged between the two as Silla continued to wane. In 927 Kyŏn Hwŏn attacked Kyŏngju, killed the Silla ruler and replaced him with King Kyŏngsun 敬順. At length, Kyŏn Hwŏn was overthrown by his own sons and fled for sanctuary to Wang Kŏn. In the same year—935—King Kyŏngsun surrendered Silla to Wang Kŏn, and in 936 Wang Kŏn defeated Later Paekche, effectively bringing the peninsula under his rule.

This general outline may roughly contain the actual story of the events, but the social, political and economic details are glossed over or recounted in such stereotypes that it is difficult to understand the dynastic change in depth. Furthermore, the didacticism is so heavy that the reader cannot fail to recognize "the good, the bad and the ugly."

QUEEN CHINSŎNG

Another important person in the drama is Queen Chinsŏng since it was her misrule which provided the social background for the rise of the three major actors. Since there was technically no usurpation

of the Silla throne in the sanitized sources, there was apparently no great need to portray the last Silla rulers as particularly villainous, but simply as inept and lacking Mandate-quality moral leadership. But this lady suffers greater castigation than other late Silla rulers; although there are six monarchs who follow her before the dynasty's collapse, she is a stereotype for the "bad last king" of Silla. Much of this castigation of Chinsŏng probably may be attributed to the sexist bias of Confucian historiography. No healthy Chinese or Korean dynasty would have selected a female sovereign in the first place.[11]

At any rate, even though Silla was in decline long before her time, Queen Chinsŏng's reign is singled out in the sources for special attention. Even Iryŏn contrasts Chinsŏng with her elder brother King Hon'gang 憲康 thusly:

> The forty-ninth sovereign was King Hon'gang (875-886). During his reign houses with tiled roofs stood in rows from the capital to the four seas and not a thatched roof was to be seen. Soft music was heard on all the roadsides. Gentle sweet rain came with harmonious blessings and all the harvests were plentiful.
>
> The fifty-first sovereign was Queen Chinsŏng. Her nurse, Lady Puho, together with her husband (Wihong *kakkan*) and a few favored courtiers, had great influence on the court, and with their machinations brought the kingdom to the brink of ruin. Patriots who were deeply worried about the situation began scattering leaflets containing Buddhist spells *(dharani)* cursing the corrupt and immoral court.
>
> During her reign the Queen had many lovers and favorites who usurped and misused her authority, amassing fortunes for themselves and oppressing the people. Thousands of farmers left their homes and wandered about the country, and highway robbers struck in broad daylight. The nation was in utter confusion as a result of the Queen's misrule.[12]

In much the same tone, the *Samguk Sagi* refers to the same calamities—usurpation by favorites, lawlessness, fleeing peasants, swarming

bandits and famine as well—twice, including the Queen's own enumeration of them in her speech of abdication.[13]

Although the situation worsens (and indeed the dynasty falls) under succeeding male sovereigns, no criticism of their misrule approaches these proportions. East Asian history is replete with examples of kings who make fools of themselves over women; but the historians seem to express greater concern over women rulers being easy prey for clever men who can take advantage of them. One is reminded of the 8th century Japanese Empress Kōken (Shōtoku), who was so duped by her adviser and reputed paramour, the priest Dōkyō, that she was on the verge of turning over the realm to him. It is for this reason, we are told, that the Japanese refused to consider women for the imperial position for the next one thousand years.

How about the three giants of the age, Kung Ye, Kyŏn Hwŏn and Wang Kŏn? What do the sources tell us about them? Just how "good" was Wang Kŏn, how "bad" Kyŏn Hwŏn and how "ugly" Kung Ye?

KUNG YE

Kung Ye is the first of the three to appear in the sources, when the *Samguk Sagi* mentions him in 891 in the service of the bandit leader Yanggil.[14] Kung Ye was the son of one of two Silla kings, either Hŏnan 憲安 or Kyŏngmun 景文, by a concubine.[15] He was born outside the palace on an unlucky day. A strange light, like a long rainbow, shone over the roof of his birthplace; and he had a mouth full of teeth at birth. From these rather unusual portents, it was (quite prophetically) divined that this infant could bring nothing but harm to the realm. Orders were given to have Kung Ye killed.

Although he was hurled down from a turret by a royal messenger, Kung Ye did not die, but was picked up by a nurse who fled with him to a safe place. Unfortunately, in her haste to escape, the lady poked out one of Kung Ye's eyes. This nurse raised him until he was in his teens, at which time she had to send Kung Ye to a temple where he was known as Sŏnjong 善宗. But priestly life did not suit the young man, and he ran away to join the camp of the bandit chieftain Kihwŏn 箕萱. Kung Ye was not treated well there, so he

fled once again, this time to Yanggil 梁吉 who recognized his talents and gave him employment.

Kung Ye soon became an independent chieftain in Ch'ŏrwŏn 鐵圓 . In 895 he moved to Songak 松岳 (Kaesŏng 開城) where he first came into contact with the twenty-year old Wang Kŏn. By 901 he was powerful enough to claim the title of King of Later Koguryŏ.[16] From his capital at Ch'ŏrwŏn, Kung Ye spent the next seventeen years expanding the borders of his kingdom at the expense of both Silla and Kyŏn Hwŏn of Later Paekche. He changed the name of his kingdom first to Majin 摩震 and then to T'aebong 泰封 . The struggles against Kyŏn Hwŏn for control of central and south central Korea were particularly fierce, and the primary force behind Kung Ye's successes was the young general Wang Kŏn, who also rose to be chief among Kung Ye's ministers.

At some point, however, Kung Ye turned bad. He was given to overindulgence, cruelty and tyrannical rule, committing acts evil enough to qualify him as a candidate for all-time "bad last ruler."[17] He executed defectors from Silla, cut up portraits of his Silla ancestors and called for the destruction of that kingdom. Believing himself to be a Buddha incarnate, Kung Ye dressed in Buddhist robes and wore a golden crown; his sons accompanied him, dressed as Bodhisattvas. Among other ugly deeds, Kung Ye accused his wife of infidelity and killed her by thrusting a red-hot iron rod into her womb. He followed that by killing his sons, but the records spare us the details.[18] On another occasion he confronted Wang Kŏn with an accusation of plotting rebellion. Forewarned by a sympathetic courtier, Wang Kŏn "confessed" his treachery and this sincerity won the heart of Kung Ye who accordingly forgave him.[19]

At length, however, everyone from his ministers to the common people became so unhappy with the crazed tyrant that a group of officials secretly visited Wang Kŏn and beseeched him to take the throne. In fact, the *Samguk Sagi* first mentions Wang Kŏn at this juncture in the Silla chronicles, in the second month of 918 when "the minds of the followers of Kung Ye suddenly changed, and they accepted T'aejo as their ruler. Kung Ye fled but was killed by his subjects. T'aejo succeeded to the royal position and changed the era name."[20] This brought to an end a career for Kung Ye of some twenty years as bandit chieftain and king.

KYŎN HWŎN

The sources are less severe in their criticism of Kyŏn Hwŏn, and he can only be described as "bad." Originally born into the Yi family, he later took the surname Kyŏn.[21] Although he began life as a farmer's son, Kyŏn Hwŏn joined the Silla military and became a successful commander. Supposedly a man of great physical and spiritual power, he had a "tiger's face and a tiger's spirit," which is only fitting since, we are told, one day when his mother put him down beneath a tree, a tiger came along and suckled him.[22]

In 892, that year in Queen Chinsŏng's reign when politics were in a shambles, immorality rampant, peasants fleeing, bandits swarming and famine widespread, Kyŏn Hwŏn revolted. With about 5,000 followers he attacked Mujinju 武珍州 where he established a headquarters. Although he seemingly did not feel powerful enough to call himself a king, Kyŏn Hwŏn did adopt a grandiose title which commenced with "Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Southwest Silla."[23] Appealing to the people of the region to restore the glory of the former Paekche kingdom, which had of course been defeated in 660 by a joint T'ang-Silla force, Kyŏn Hwŏn won popular support and made himself King of Later Paekche, with a capital at Wansan.

The bulk of the *Samguk Sagi* and *Samguk Yusa* information on Kyŏn Hwŏn deals with his battles against Wang Kŏn, although there is much detail about his struggles with Silla as well. Kyŏn Hwŏn is depicted as an excellent general whose forces always give Wang Kŏn a hard fight; in 927 Kyŏn Hwŏn defeats his adversary decisively.[25] Kyŏn Hwŏn was also in communication with the Chinese continent, sending emissaries by sea until Wang Kŏn cut off that communication by a blockade in 907.[26] He was even recognized by Later T'ang as the ruler of Paekche and duly invested.[27] Kyŏn Hwŏn also turned his diplomatic skills on Wang Kŏn, and in 924 they exchanged hostages to bring about a temporary truce.[28]

The acts that clinch the portrayal of Kyŏn Hwŏn as "bad"—and certainly revolting against a Mandate-possessing Silla dynasty was a "bad" beginning—occurred in 927. In the 10th month of that year, Kyŏn Hwŏn and his troops invaded the Silla capital of Kyŏngju while the king and his court were enjoying an outing at P'osŏkjŏng 鮑石亭 on the outskirts of the city. Kyŏn Hwŏn killed King Kyŏngae

景哀, violated the queen and seized a number of important prisoners whom he dragged back to his capital along with precious jewels, skilled craftsmen and young court ladies. Kyŏn Hwŏn then enthroned one of Kyŏngae's relatives, Kim Pu 金傅, as King Kyŏngsun. Silla had earlier requested aid from Wang Kŏn, but his troops arrived too late to prevent the "Rape of Kyŏngju." They did give chase, but in a fierce battle at P'algongsan 八公山 they were severely defeated, Wang Kŏn himself barely escaping death.[29]

Several years later, after an interlude of peace and the exchange of letters supposedly written by erudite scholars in the service of the two warrior-kings,[30] Kyŏn Hwŏn reached the end of his rule when he tried to install his fourth son, Kŭmgang 金剛, as heir apparent. Furious at this turn of events, Kyŏn Hwŏn's three older sons (half brothers to Kŭmgang) plotted with several ministers. They imprisoned Kyŏn Hwŏn and killed Kŭmgang after which the eldest son, Sin'gŏm 神劍, made himself king.[31] Kyŏn Hwŏn managed to escape and fled for sanctuary to his old enemy Wang Kŏn, who magnanimously accepted his defection and even awarded him high honors.

In the next year, 936, Wang Kŏn destroyed the forces of Later Paekche. However, when he not only failed to kill Sin'gŏm for his treachery but even appointed him to a high position, Kyŏn Hwŏn retired in bitter disappointment to a temple where he soon died some forty-five years after he had risen in revolt.

WANG KŎN

Since in the end he emerged victorious and founded the dynasty of which all the compilers of the sources were loyal subjects, Wang Kŏn not surprisingly appears in the sources as an unqualified "good dynastic founder." It is the prerogative of the victors to write their own history, but the degree to which these historians went to demonstrate Wang Kŏn's saintliness arouses more than a mild degree of skepticism in the modern researcher.

Born on a lucky day in 877, Wang Kŏn was destined for great deeds from the beginning. Indeed, his birth as a future ruler had been prophesized by Tosŏn 道詵, a practitioner of the geomantic beliefs widely held at the time.[32] There was also a strange light shining on Wang Kŏn's house at the time of his birth. He had a dragon's

forehead and a square chin; and even at an early age he showed great intelligence, firmness and depth of character, and was expansive in his speech.[33]

The compilers of the *Koryŏsa* sought to elevate Wang Kŏn's status by providing him with ancestors from both the Silla high aristocracy and T'ang China. Some attention is given to the career of his grandfather Chakchegŏn 作帝建 and that of his father Yonggŏn 龍建 (later Yung 隆) who seems to have been active in an area stretching from *Songak* (Wang Kŏn's birthplace) and the coastal plains around the Imjin 臨津 and Yesŏng 禮成 Rivers southwest to Kanghwa Island. This information, coupled with later evidence has led most scholars to conclude that Wang Kŏn and his family were involved in maritime trade.[34]

Wang Kŏn first appears in the sources in 895 when Kung Ye moved into the Songak region. There his father surrendered to Kung Ye and recommended that Kung Ye also employ his son's talents. There is some disagreement about the post to which Wang Kŏn was appointed,[35] but from this time he appears to have been a lieutenant in Kung Ye's service. Soon he began to expand Kung Ye's territories in the area of the present day Kyŏnggi and Ch'ungch'ŏng provinces, distinguishing himself as an excellent general and rising in court rank. Moving into the present day Kyŏngsang provinces area as well, he won a major victory against Kyŏn Hwŏn in 906 at Sangju.

Wang Kŏn displayed another aspect of his talents in the Chŏlla area, where the center of his activities was Naju. Here it was as a naval strategist rather than as a general that Wang Kŏn distinguished himself. The opening of a base of operations for Kung Ye's kingdom (then called Majin) in the Naju area meant that Kyŏn Hwŏn was forced to adopt a two-front defense against Majin. It also cut off his communication with the continent. As Kung Ye's commander, Wang Kŏn seems to have spent considerable time in Naju, frequently absenting himself from the capital as Kung Ye became increasingly unstable and tyrannical.[36]

For all his highly successful campaigns, Wang Kŏn was promoted to chancellor *(sijung* 侍中), the highest position in Kung Ye's officialdom. Thus he was both a commander in the field and head of the officials in the capital, a perfect combination of the loyal civil-military official.[37] But Kung Ye's behavior began to disturb many of

those in his service, apparently including Wang Kŏn, since he spent much time away from court. The time was ripe for a change.

The most obvious sign was the appearance of an old mirror which foretold the fall of Kung Ye and the rise of Wang Kŏn.[38] The mirror was purchased by the Chinese merchant Wang Ch'ang-chin 王昌瑾 from a strange old man in the market place of Ch'ŏrwŏn in the 3rd month of 918.[39] Wang hung the mirror on the market wall, and when a ray of sunlight struck it, he noticed that there was an inscription carved on the surface of the mirror. Wang presented the mirror to Kung Ye who in turn gave it to a group of scholars to decipher. It was inscribed with a series of eleven couplets, a total of 145 characters,[40] which they soon understood was a prophesy predicting that Kung Ye would be replaced by Wang Kŏn who would found a dynasty of twelve generations lasting 360 years. The scholars realized, however, that if Kung Ye learned the truth of the inscription, Wang Kŏn would be in danger and their own lives would probably be threatened. So they hid the true meaning of the prophesy from the king and lied to him instead.

Providence thus required more coaxing before Wang Kŏn's succession could be realized. In the 6th month of the same year (918) four of Kung Ye's generals went secretly to Wang Kŏn's residence and beseeched him to overthrow the tyrant and take the throne.[41] These men—Hong Yu 洪儒, Pae Hyŏn'gyŏng 裵玄慶, Sin Sunggyŏm 申崇謙 and Pok Chigyŏm 卜智謙—later received appointment to the First Order of Merit, the only four of Wang Kŏn's supporters so honored.[42] According to the *Koryŏsa* and *Samguk Sagi,* they attempted to sway the stalwart and steadfast Wang Kŏn with references to Chinese history on the suitability of overthrowing an evil lord; but Wang Kŏn was equally eloquent in his Confucian-inspired rebuttal, refusing to compromise his loyalty. Even their reference to the mirror and its prophesy failed to move him.

Finally his wife, Lady Yu 柳, claiming that humanity must always strike down inhumanity, dressed Wang Kŏn in his armor and hastened him off towards the palace. The procession of Wang Kŏn and his protecting generals attracted a large crowd along the way, and they created a great clamor, shouting "Lord Wang has raised the righteous banner!"[43] Wang Kŏn entered the gates of the palace itself, and Kung Ye, startled by the sudden turn of events, fled but was

soon captured and killed. Wang Kŏn was duly enthroned, and he named his kingdom Koryŏ, establishing his capital in his hometown of Songdo. This capital was called Kaegyŏng 開京 or Songdo 松都 (Kaesŏng today). The era name was changed, quite appropriately, to "Heaven Bestowed" (Ch'ŏnsu 天授).[44]

As king, Wang Kŏn continued to exhibit those personal virtues which had made him the focus of popular sovereignty. He returned largely to the Silla forms of government to which people were accustomed, built temples to elicit Buddha's protection, warned against overtaxing the populace, received many refugees from Parhae 渤海 which fell to the Khitan in 926, and established P'yŏngyang 平壤 as the Western Capital, staffing its officialdom at a level rivaling that of Kaegyŏng. But mostly Wang Kŏn seems to have devoted his energies for the next 18 years to the conquest of Kyŏn Hwŏn's Later Paekche kingdom.

The sources concentrate upon the military campaigns to unite the Later Three Kingdoms. Details are lacking, however, and a curious situation emerges. The wars take place on a two-way axis between Later Paekche and a Silla-Koryŏ alliance. The alliance is formalized by the two rulers exchanging diplomatic visits to each other's capital. And Wang Kŏn, cast clearly in the role of Silla's protector, seeks several times to save Silla from Kyŏn Hwŏn's incursions. Silla troops seem to play almost no part in the drama, Koryŏ never fights Silla, and most of the fighting occurs between Wang Kŏn and Kyŏn Hwŏn.

In 935, after a protracted debate by all the chief ministers, Silla's last ruler, King Kyŏngsun, delivers his kingdom to Wang Kŏn whom Silla officials deem worthy of the Mandate.[45] The next year Kyŏn Hwŏn is forced to flee to Wang Kŏn because of the revolt of his sons, and soon Wang Kŏn defeats Later Paekche, effectively gaining control of the area originally under Silla's domination.

Thenceforth Wang Kŏn devoted more time to converting his warlord followers into a more organized officialdom. He further showed great concern with the recapture of the old Koguryŏ territory in the north. Earlier he had dispatched General Yu Kŭmp'il 庾黔弼 to secure a foothold in the northeast, and now he appears concerned with building a strong base in P'yŏngyang and expanding northward as a true successor to the old Koguryŏ state.

But his energies had been largely expended in the long fight for peninsular hegemony, and Wang Kŏn was monarch of a reunified Three Kingdoms for only seven years. In 943 he drew up a set of Ten Injunctions (*Hunyo sipcho* 訓要十條) to aid his descendants in ruling the kingdom. He died shortly thereafter at the age of 66.[46]

Summarizing the main strengths of Wang Kŏn as presented in the sources, one can point to: (1) *loyalty*, first to his own king, Kung Ye, despite his demonstrated cruelty and tyranny, and second to the Silla rulers as the proper possessors of the Mandate; (2) *magnanimity*, a charitable, forgiving nature toward his bitter enemies whom he greets with open arms, emerging as a paragon of humanity and peace in an era of violence; (3) *military prowess*, a demonstrated ability, on both land and sea, to plan attacks, to lead men, and to succeed in winning victories—although Wang Kŏn is excused from the bloodletting, he is the warrior-king who continues to lead his armies even after the demise of Kung Ye; and (4) *benevolent rule*, in which regard he is understanding of Confucian statecraft, follows the Chinese calendar, employs Confucian scholars, demonstrates concern for the plight of the peasantry and supports a Buddhist protection of the state without overindulging its institutions. Wang Kŏn, "the good," can thus be seen as a perfect polar opposite of Kung Ye, "the ugly," who was disloyal, lacking in compassion—indeed openly cruel—not credited with much martial ability and singularly deficient in the practice of benevolent rule.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SOURCES

The story of the decline and fall of the Silla dynasty and the concomitant rise of Koryŏ is thus largely the tale of three individual personalities, Wang Kŏn, Kyŏn Hwŏn and Kung Ye, who combine in various adventures to work out their assigned roles in the drama. Very few solid, verifiable facts are available for the historians beyond these stereotyped people playing stereotypical roles. But the sources, especially the *Samguk Sagi* (which heavily influenced Iryŏn and was available to the final compilers of the *Koryŏsa*), suffers from certain historiographical biases which affect, perhaps unalterably, our view of these men and their period.

First, Kim Pusik was a Confucian scholar-official in an age when

the concept of dynastic legitimacy seems to have become well established on the Korean peninsula;[47] and he was extremely concerned with a "correct" view of Wang Kŏn as the founder of his dynasty. Second, *Samguk Sagi* is really a Silla-oriented history. Kim goes to great lengths to make Silla an older dynasty than Koguryŏ, although the reverse is true, by simply predating the Koguryŏ founding dating which was probably not too inaccurate.[48] Furthermore, even after the demise of Koguryŏ and Paekche and the "unification" by Silla, Kim continues his narrative of the history of the "Three Kingdoms" for the next 260 years. In fact, more emphasis is placed upon Silla after unification.[49] He fails to consider the kingdom of Parhae, which included most of the old Koguryŏ territory, in effect making a north-south history of the peninsula a more logical organizational device. In fact, Kim was criticized for this in the succeeding dynasty.[50]

Finally, as a member of the "Silla-successionist" group at Kaesŏng, Kim Pusik appears to have been consciously motivated in his writing of the *Samguk Sagi* to stress the direct Silla-Koryŏ link to counter the original and competing dynastic view which was "Koguryŏ-successionist." There was in all likelihood an earlier Koguryŏ-oriented history, and there was certainly strong sentiment for that view in Kim's time, most clearly expressed in the revolt of Myoch'ŏng 妙淸 which Kim himself had crushed just a few years earlier.[51]

Thus an outstanding feature of the *Samguk Sagi* (and also the *Samguk Yusa*, and to a degree the *Koryŏsa*) is the lengths to which the author/compiler goes to create a congenial, successionist relationship between Silla and Koryŏ rather than an antagonistic one. First, there is the theme of Wang Kŏn as friend and protector of Silla. It is true that Wang Kŏn's early activities on behalf of Kung Ye were directed against territories technically controlled by Silla, but little is made of this and Kung Ye is made to bear the responsibility for the anti-Silla sentiment in Majin-T'aebong. Later, when Wang Kŏn becomes king, none of his campaigns are directed against Silla but rather against Kyŏn Hwŏn, who is cast as the one eager to swallow up Silla's domain.

The exchange of correspondence between Wang Kŏn and Kyŏn Hwŏn offers a perfect example of this Silla protectionist role. As quoted in the *Samguk Yusa*, Wang Kŏn—in a letter purported to have been penned by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn—wrote to Kyŏn Hwŏn:

> Boorish upstart that you are, you have violated decorum and ignored the courtesy due to a prince, forcing the King to kowtow to you like a commoner. This violation of the proper relation between higher and lower was an unpardonable sin against heaven and against man....
>
> I have neither ambition nor wicked designs; I seek only to rescue the royal court and the nation from danger. But you have broken the laws of heaven and earth for material gain and carnal pleasure. You have murdered the King, burned the palaces, massacred the ministers, plundered the royal treasures, violated the Queen and the court ladies and rode off with the choicest beauties and the most precious jewels loaded on your carriages as spoils of war....
>
> I am faithful to my lord, like a hawk that hunts only small birds. I play but the part of a dog or a horse for the King my master....[52]

This correspondence, the exchange of diplomatic visits, the Silla-Koryŏ alliance and Wang Kŏn's attempt to save Silla from the "Rape of Kyongju" are all links in the grand chain of Silla-successionism. Virtually all anti-Silla activities and sentiments are laid at the feet of Kung Ye and Kyŏn Hwŏn, and Wang Kŏn emerges as a spotless paragon of loyalty in the sources.

There is also the theme of Silla's voluntary submission to Wang Kŏn, who thus never takes a violent role in her demise. In fact, Silla really does not come to an end at all, but fuses itself into the mainstream of the new dynasty. And in Kim Pusik's time, Silla lives on in spirit if not in name. There is an exchange of royal brides between Wang Kŏn and King Kyŏngsun, thus providing consanguineal expression to political fusion. Kim is not willing to leave this blood link as a simply stated fact. Instead, at the very end of the Silla chronicles, he points out that King Hyŏnjong 顯宗 (Koryŏ's 8th monarch) was Silla-related and that this king's descendants have ruled Koryŏ ever since, a hidden virtue of the final Silla ruler.[53] The *Koryŏsa* takes care of the other end of the Silla connection. In his preface, Kim Kwanŭi 金寬毅 provides a high-ranking Silla aristocrat as one of

Wang Kŏn's ancestors, something which certainly would have met with Kim Pusik's approval.[54]

Thus Wang Kŏn is only once an usurper, and that usurpation is not only justified by but even demanded by the tyranny, cruelty and unpopularity of Kung Ye. Not only that, Wang Kŏn had practically to be carried, kicking and screaming, into the throne room by his supporters. And Silla does not fall by conquest but by absorption sanctioned by the agreement of a council of Silla ministers and the king. This final ruler, actually enthroned by Kyŏn Hwŏn and thus possessing illegitimate Mandate credentials himself, has at least the wisdom to recognize Wang Kŏn's virtue and yields up the Mandate, thus bridging the gap between the two kingdoms voluntarily and peacefully. This is the only act for which the sources praise King Kyŏngsun.[55]

Kim Pusik's Silla-successionist view dominates the historiography of the period. Although the *Samguk Yusa* is a very different text in many ways, in this aspect Iryŏn follows Kim's lead. And the *Koryŏsa,* while offering a fuller and more balanced account, was complied by Confucian historians within the Silla-successionist tradition as well. Our view is thus almost irrevocably colored.

My own preliminary study of the materials devoted to this period of Korean history leads me to the following tentative conclusions, although, given the nature of the sources, perhaps I should call them impressions.

(1) "Unified" Silla was a much less unified entity than we are usually led to believe, both by the historians of earlier times and in most general works published today. Local Koguryŏ and Paekche culture and traditions, perhaps even language, remained strong and in fact contributed to the demonstrated ability of Kyŏn Hwŏn in the southwest and Kung Ye and Wang Kŏn in the north to establish and maintain long-lived, powerful states with localist orientations.[56] Despite the source material bias for a "united" Silla view, both Kung Ye and Kyŏn Hwŏn are recorded as having appealed to the local, nativist feelings of the populace when founding their kingdoms, which themselves were certainly not named simply out of a sense of historical parallelism with an earlier era.[57]

(2) Wang Kŏn was a man and not a saint, and was most likely less "good" than the texts would have us believe. He cannot have been

the loyal, benevolent and nonviolent figure beloved of lord and peasant alike. As a local warlord, *not* a Confucianized local gentry figure, Wang Kŏn must have been well-versed in the arts of death and destruction to have emerged victorious against such hardy foes. Since the sources provide precious little detail about the actual fighting required to unify the peninsula, we shall never know the extent of the bloodshed. But since he continued to command his troops personally even after becoming king, there is no reason to believe that Wang Kŏn's hands were not considerably stained with that blood.

(3) Kung Ye was, by contrast, probably not as "ugly" as pictured. Although Kim Pusik and the other historians were not obliged to adopt the whole Chinese pattern to describe Wang Kŏn's takeover of Silla, they were faced with the reality that Wang Kŏn was a usurper in his own kingdom before achieving the countrywide Mandate. So Kung Ye serves as an effective "bad last king." But he must have been a man of great ambition, political acumen and personal charisma himself to have begun what Wang Kŏn finished.

Cast out by those responsible for his birth, dispatched into a religious life incompatible with his character, Kung Ye fled into banditry and quickly rose to the heights of regional power. Even the antagonistic histories credit him with the support of the people,[58] although it is possible that such statements may be designed to show the bankruptcy of Silla rather than to demonstrate the merit of Kung Ye. At the very least, Kung Ye was a shrewd judge of talent since he employed Wang Kŏn when he was only twenty years old. There is also little reason to believe that all the military and administrative accomplishments of Kung Ye's kingdom were the result of Wang Kŏn's supreme virtue. The acts attributed to Kung Ye at the very end are surely exaggerated in order to justify Wang Kŏn's usurpation.

(4) Likewise, Kyŏn Hwŏn needs considerable resurrection from his "bad" image.[59] Here was a man in southwest Korea, thrown against the forces of a declining but still Mandate-possessing Silla dynasty and a Koryŏ which enjoyed considerable military and moral power, who not only survived, but actually flourished for almost a half a century. Just who supported him and why is not clear, but I suspect that he too must have been a man of considerable leadership ability

and military genius, and that as well, he depended upon a stubborn Paekche nativism which remains apparent despite the universalist methodology of the sources. That one of Wang Kŏn's "Ten Injunctions" specifically warns against the appointment of people from the southwest bespeaks a considerable legacy of Paekche irredentism, and should be regarded as more than a product of Wang Kŏn's longstanding rivalry with Kyŏn Hwŏn's Later Paekche kingdom.[60]

(5) Wang Kŏn was not as friendly to Silla as the sources suggest. His close followers were mostly local warlords from the northwest, from the area around the basins of the Imjin and Yesŏng Rivers, who rebelled against the declining Silla hegemony. Later he forged political-military alliances, cemented by numerous marriages, with local strongmen who were virtually all non-Silla homeland people.[60] Why would he deliberately create such a following of non-Silla people if his ultimate intent were not to defeat Silla by surrounding and isolating her in the capital area?

Although the sources give no hint of it, I believe there must have been considerable fighting between Silla and Koryŏ. If that were not the case, it is hard to understand how Kyŏn Hwŏn could have prospered so long. Only if we postulate a more balanced three-way struggle between Silla, Koryŏ and Later Paekche (by raising our estimation of Kyŏn Hwŏn and assuming greater emnity between Silla and Koryŏ), can we understand how it took someone as militarily skilled and personally virtuous as the Wang Kŏn of the sources to triumph.

(6) Regarding Wang Kŏn himself, there are a number of suspicious aspects to the background presented in the sources. He was probably from a locally prominent family (*hojok* 豪族) with military and maritime connections in the area stretching from the Imjin-Yesŏng basins down through Kanghwado,[61] but more we cannot say. Certainly his own name, and the names of his immediate relatives are suspect. Wang Kŏn means "the kingly founder," and it is probable that he had no surname before succession (as was common at the time) and merely chose the name Wang after usurpation.[62] His father's name, Yonggŏn, means "dragon founder," and "dragon" is, of course, one of the most common Chinese terms for the royal position. His grandfather's name is given as Chakchegŏn ("to make an im-

perial founder"), an unusual name indeed. In fact, the meaning of this name seems simply too obvious to be purely coincidental. At any rate, while all three of the names are possibly accurate, it seems highly unlikely that they were the real names of the three generations of the family. Most likely all were created to enhance Wang Kŏn's background after his unification.

Wang Kŏn had considerably less support than the *Samguk sagi*, and probably all the sources, indicate. The prophesy on the mirror, Tosŏn's prediction, the generals' begging Wang Kŏn to usurp, the family members' names, the fanciful genealogy and his own dream at age thirty that he ascended a nine-storied golden tower which rose up out of the sea[63] are, taken all together, simply too much to accept. All are probably fabrications. There is debate, for example, over when the mirror was created—at the time of Wang Kŏn's accession or later [64]—but in either case, it was clearly designed to justify Wang Kŏn's usurpation. If it was a contemporary fabrication, this suggests quite strongly that Wang Kŏn's support was weak, and the mirror was one means to advance his candidacy in the minds of Kung Ye's followers.

The fact that shortly after Wang Kŏn s seizure of power there were at least four rebellions against him (even though Kim Pusik and Iryŏn both fail to mention them) indicates that his usurpation was somewhat less than unanimously accepted. Most likely, Wang Kŏn and the four generals who later were appointed to the First Order of Merit jointly plotted the assassination of Kung Ye and the usurpation of the throne. But there may well have been others among Kung Ye's followers who coveted their chief's position. Unfortunately, the preaccession sources do not yield much information about military figures whose stature might have rivaled that of Wang Kŏn. These four rebellions, however, indicate either a greater degree of loyalty to Kung Ye, or more likely a less universal acceptance of Wang Kŏn's kingship, than we are led to believe from either the *Samguk Sagi* or *Samguk Yusa*.[65]

Most accounts of Koryŏ history depict Wang Kŏn as an astute politician. He certainly must have possessed great personal charisma and leadership qualities to have knit together a workable balance between groups of divergent socio-political backgrounds, not to mention regional orientations. The most basic groupings seem to

have been the upstart, northern warlord types like Wang Kŏn himself and the ex-Silla ruling elite. These respective orientations at the outset of the dynasty are intimately related to the "Koguryŏ-successionist" and "Silla-successionist" groupings in the later dynasty, which were mentioned above.[66]

Despite his own personal charisma and political skills in forging this alliance, cemented by incredibly extensive marriage ties which ultimately gave him 29 wives, Wang Kŏn was no more successful than most dynastic founders at institutionalizing that charisma. Perhaps the most significant event in the early Koryŏ dynasty occurred in the second year after Wang Kŏn's death. This was the so-called succession dispute of 945, a bloodbath which apparently resulted in the death of half the officials in both Kaesŏng and P'yŏngyang. The *Koryŏsa* claims that only forty of the officials were still around at the accession of King Kyŏngjong 景宗, Koryŏ's 5th monarch, who came to the throne in 949.[67] It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the various interpretations of this incident,[68] but there is no question that it was the result of Wang Kŏn's inability to institutionalize the shaky coalition he had founded.

Indeed, he seems to have contributed to the possibility of dynastic instability by his own actions. Conflict always attends the transfer of high office, such as the kingship; and the larger the pool of potential candidates, the more intense the conflict is apt to be. Yet Wang Kŏn created a huge pool of distaff relatives who had a potential stake in the succession. Since struggles for the throne between various royal factions had been endemic in late Silla times, one wonders why Wang Kŏn was not somewhat less eager to acquire so many wives and in-laws.

It does appear that Wang Kŏn attempted to provide firm guidelines for handling succession. In his "Ten Injunctions" he does include one which establishes lineal succession of the eldest son. But the addition of a further clarification that there were instances where other sons might also succeed to the throne made it almost inevitable that violence would break out after Wang Kŏn's death.[69] I do not wish to belabor the point, but merely to suggest that not all of Wang Kŏn's political actions demonstrate unqualified astuteness.

CONCLUSION

Thus the stereotypes of the three great personalities of the last years of the Silla dynasty—"the good, the bad and the ugly"—seem highly distorted in the source materials, and none of them was as saintly or as evil as depicted. They were all necessary actors in a predetermined historical script, cast in roles to achieve specific political goals in the time of the compilers. In this regard, Kim Pusik and the others were not unique. In all ages, even our own (perhaps especially our own), history has been used to serve the needs of politics and nationalism rather than to stand as an impartial record of the past.

Glorification of national heritage is a large part of the current intense nation-building that is apparent in South Korea. And thus, even though Kim Pusik's biases and distortions in favor of Silla are clear, some historians, the government and the media continue to perpetrate his biases for nationalistic purposes. As one foreign scholar so nicely put it: "Perhaps the most piquant irony of all is that the nationalist, modern historians who seek to show that Korea as a distinct and unified cultural entity can be traced to Silla are reduced to using the evidence of a Sinophile to buttress their arguments."[70] Clearly, a unified "Korea" was the product of the post-Wang Kŏn era. But similarly, the government and media continue to utilize Kim's founding dates for Silla, Koguryŏ and Paekche as though they were historical fact rather than unreliable tradition.

Continued representations of Wang Kŏn, in particular, but to a lesser degree Kung Ye and Kyŏn Hwŏn as well, in their stereotypical forms seem unnecessary, however strong the needs of Korean nationalism for heroes. A popular pictoral history of Korea, which graces the bookshelves of many Korean homes, shows the peasants of a village hailing the arrival of the great general Wang Kŏn as a liberator. I am reminded of a childhood hero Robin Hood—"feared by the bad, loved by the good"—who was an exciting and charismatic hero, but also the product of an overactive imagination.

It is understandable that the three leading figures of the Later Three Kingdoms Period should appear in the sources as stereotypes, larger than life, dwarfing the social, political and economic factors involved in the demise of one dynasty and the founding of another.

Modern researchers such as Professors Yi Pyŏngdo 李丙燾, Yi Kibaek 李其白, Kim Ch'ŏlchun 金哲埈, Pyŏn T'aesup 邊太燮 and others have used the materials creatively to shed light on some of these factors. But the Wang Kŏn of the Silla-successionist sources is difficult to overcome.

It seems to me that the standard accounts of the period still accept too literally the stereotypes—"the good, the bad and the ugly"—of the sources, attributing to Wang Kŏn a "progressive" Confucian approach to ruling which may well reflect the attitudes of the compilers rather than of Wang Kŏn himself. For Professor Kim, for example:

> The fact that his cadres had formerly been robbers forced Kung Ye to adopt the ancient method of exploiting the people in ruling the provinces. In contrast, Wang Kŏn, a local baron who had grown up in the midst of opposition to the excessive exploitation of the people by the Silla government, professed a political ideal of moderate treatment of the people upon accession to the throne. Opposing the ancient methods of exploitation, he adopted a system which was medieval in nature... Wang Kŏn endeavored to integrate the local barons while advocating the abandonment of the ancient methods of exploiting the people and professed his determination to aspire after a Confucian political system.[71]

While such explanations may be moving in the right direction, they still seem to place too much credence upon the sources' presentation of Wang Kŏn as an essentially "Confucian" ruler, as shown in his Ten Injunctions and other documents attributed to him.[72] The basic question (which probably can never be answered satisfactorily) still is: if the basic sources are biased and distorted in certain areas, how accurate are they in others? How much of the information can we believe? In short, where do we draw that line between what we can realistically accept and what we should regard as the bias of the compilers?

We really do not have any other sources to rely upon to alter our views too drastically, nor are we likely to discover any. It is not my suggestion that we ignore these sources, or that we reverse roles,

making Wang Kŏn a treacherous usurper and Kung Ye and Kyŏn Hwŏn great heroes. But it seems more than likely their backgrounds as rebels against the Silla hegemony, their policies, abilities and ideals were considerably more similar than the pro-Wang Kŏn sources indicate. But for a few twists of fate, 10th century Korea might well have been unified by Kyŏn Hwŏn. There might have been a new dynasty ruling the peninsula from the old Paekche heartland, a dynasty which might just as well have propagated a "Paekche-successionist" history to legitimize its conquest.

My purpose in this brief paper has simply been to illustrate some of the difficulties in understanding the founding of the Koryŏ dynasty from the materials available to us today. My choice of the title "the good, the bad and the ugly" to characterize Wang Kŏn, Kyŏn Hwŏn, and Kung Ye is an indication that, at least for me, the story line in the source materials has more in common with a movie script than we might wish.

FOOTNOTES

The author is Professor of History and Co-Chairman, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Kansas. Support to begin research on Koryŏ history was generously provided by the Committe on Korean Studies of the Social Science Research Council, the HEW Fulbright Faculty Research Abroad and the University of Kansas.

1. In a bitter dispute in 1498, a courtier alleged that a slander of King Sejo originated with Kim Chongjik, who had died six years earlier. During a rather bloody purge, Kim's coffin was dug up, and his skeleton was hacked to pieces for his "crime."

2. Yi Pyŏngdo, ed., *Samguk Sagi*, (Seoul: Ŭlyu Munhwasa, 1977). Hereafter cited as *SGSG*.

3. Ch'oe Namsŏn, ed., *Samguk Yusa*, (Seoul: Minjungsŏgwan, 1958). Hereafter, *SGYS*.

4. *Koryosa*, (Seoul: Yŏnsei University Press, 1976), 95:20a-b. Hereafter cited as KRS.

5. Kim Sanggi, *Koryŏsidaesa*, (Seoul: Tongguk Munhwasa, 1961), pp. 853-4.

6. *SGYS*, pp. 14-26. This section is Ch'oe's introduction, in which he discusses the nature of the source materials. See also K.J.H. Gardiner, *The Early History of Korea*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1969), pp. 65-68 and Ellen Salem Unruh, "Reflections on the Fall of Silla," *Korea Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (May 1975), p. 58.

7. For an excellent discussion of Kim Pusik's Silla orientation, see Michael C. Rogers, "The Chinese World Order in Its Transmural Extension: The Case of Chin and Koryŏ," *Korean Studies Forum*, No. 4 (Spring-Summer 1978), pp. 1-22 *passim*.

8. *ibid.*, p. 3.

9. The main lines of the story are found in *SGSG*, pp. 119-28, 451-61; *SGYS*, pp. 99-108; and *KRS*, 1:1-27, 2:1-19b.

10. Only the *Samguk Yusa* mentions the name *Hu Koguryŏ* 後高麗(Later Koguryŏ). The *Samguk Sagi* and *Koryŏsa* give no name for Kung Ye's Kingdom until he adopts the name Majin.

11. There appears to have been some discussion over her suitability as ruler, and she only came to the throne because of the early death of her brother after only eleven months on the throne. *SGSG*, p. 119.

12. The quotations here are from the English translation of the *Samguk Yusa*, by Ha Tae-Hung and Grafton Mintz (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1972), pp. 126, 128, and 146. See also *SGYS*, pp. 88-9, 100.

13. *SGSG*, p. 119 (Chinsŏng, 2nd year); p. 120 (11th year, 6th month).

14. *SGSG*, p. 120.

15. *SGSG*, p. 451.

16. In *SGSG*, p. 452, Kung Ye merely speaks of getting revenge for Koguryŏ's defeat at the hands of the T'ang-Silla forces.

17. The really cruel acts attributed to Kung Ye, which suggest that he may well have been mentally unbalanced, date from after 911, when he changed the name of his kingdom to T'aebong.

18. *SGSG*, p. 453.

19. *KRS*, 1:5b.

20. *SGSG*, p. 120.

21. *SGYS*, p. 99-100; *SGSG*, p. 454.

22. *SGSG*, p. 454.

23. *SGSG*, p. 455.

24. *SGSG*, p. 454; *SGYS*, p. 100.

25. *SGSG*, p. 456.

26. *KRS*, 1:2b-4b; *SGSG*, p. 122.

27. *SGSG*, pp. 455-6; *SGYS*, p. 101.

28. *ibid.*

29. *SGSG*, p. 456; *SGYS*, p. 102; *KRS*, 1:20a-21a.

30. *SGSG*, pp. 456-8; *SGYS*, pp. 102-3; *KRS*, 1:21a-24b. Iryŏn states that the Wang Kŏn letter was written by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn, but this is not accepted by most scholars of the *Samguk Yusa*.

31. *SGSG*, pp. 458-9; *SGYS*, pp. 105-6; *KRS*, 2:8a-b.

32. *KRS*, *Koryŏsegye:* 7a-8a, 9b.

33. *KRS*, 1:1a-b.

34. See Hugh Kang, "The First Succession Struggle of Koryo, in 945: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (May 1977), pp. 411-428 passim; especially see note 7, p. 414.

35. *SGSG*, p. 452 and *KRS*, 1:1b give different positions to which Kung Ye appointed Wang Kŏn.

36. *KRS*, 1:2a, 4b.

37. Wang Kŏn's dual role is somewhat reminiscent of that of Kim Pusik himself. Kim combined both civil and miltary dominance at the court in the mid-twelfth century, although he was somewhat closer to the "scholar-general" ideal of contemporary China. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

38. *SGSG*, pp. 453-4 relates the story of the mirror but in an abbreviated form. For the full inscription, see *KRS*, 1:6a-7b.

39. *SGSG* and *KRS* record the Chinese merchant's name as Wang while a later source, *Tongguk Saryak* 東國史略, has it as Chang. Yi Pyŏngdo 李丙燾, *Han'guksa: Chungsep'yŏn* 韓國史中世篇, (Seoul: Ŭlyu Munhwasa, 1962), p. 27, note 5.

40. The complete version of the inscription in the *Koryŏsa* claims that there were 147 characters on the mirror, but an actual count yields only 145.

41. *KRS*, 1:7b-8a. *SGSG*, p. 454 gives a somewhat longer version, presenting a heavily Confucian discussion of the virtues and vices of usurpation.

42. *KRS*, 1:12b-13a. The biographies of these four men are also conveniently recounted together in *KRS*, 92:1a-3b.

43. *SGSG*, p. 454.

44. *KRS*, 1:8b.

45. *SGSG*, p. 127. Also see Ha and Mintz, *op. cit.*, for the English translation of the *Samguk Yusa* account.

46. *KRS*, 2:14b-17a. Wang Kŏn supposedly handed these Injunctions to Pak Surhŭi 朴述熙, the man to whom he entrusted military defense of the kingdom and protection of the next king.

47. Kenneth Gardiner, "The *Samguk Sagi* and its Sources," *Papers on Far Eastern History*, (Canberra, Sept. 1970), p. 11.

48. *ibid*, p. 16, note 8, quoting Suematsu Yasukazu.

49. The first five books of the *Samguk Sagi* deal with Silla from 57 BC to the 668 unification, while the following seven books are devoted to the next 250 years.

50. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 14 and p. 21, note 42.

51. *ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 11-12 and 20, note 34. See also Kim Usŏng 金右成 "*Samguk sagi ŭi kusŏng kwa Koryŏ wangcho ŭi chŏngt'ong ŭisik* 三國事記 의 構成과 高麗王朝의 正統意識," *Chindan Hakpo* 震檀學報, No. 38 (Oct. 1974), pp. 204-5.

52. Ha and Mintz, *op. cit.*, 151-2.

53. *SGSG*, p. 127-8.

54. *KRS, Koryŏsegye:* 8b-12b.

55. For the account of King Kyŏngsun's reign, see *SGSG*, pp. 125-8.

56. See Unruh, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-62, *passim*.

57. *SGSG*, p. 452 (Kung Ye) and 455 (Kyŏn Hwŏn).

58. *SGSG*, p. 452.

59. Unruh *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7 also insists that Kyŏn Hwŏn's image requires upgrading.

60. *KRS*, 2:16b. Unruh, *ibid.*, also suggests that this was the import of Wang Kŏn's 8th Injunction.

61. See note 34.

62. William Henthorn, *A History of Korea*, (New York: Free Press, 1971), p. 82 also questions the name. In the *Korea Herald* of December 14, 1978, Dr. Shin Sok-ho, a genealogist, was quoted as saying that Wang Kŏn had no surname until he came to the throne. He further claimed, and here the *KRS* offers substantial corroboration, that Wang Kŏn gave surnames to his followers.

63. *KRS*, 1:61.

64. For a discussion of the mirror, see Yi Pyŏngdo, *op. cit.* pp. 27-32, and the same author, *Koryŏ sidae ŭi yŏn'gu* 高麗 時代의 研究, (Seoul: Ŭlyu Munhwasa, 1948), pp. 6-12.

65. For the rebellions, see *KRS*, 1:9a-14b. There is somewhat more detail in the biographies of the rebels, *KRS*, 127:1a-3b. The rebels were Hwan Sŏn'gil 桓宣吉, I Hunham 伊昕嚴, Im Ch'un'gil 林春吉 and the brothers Chin Sŏn 陳瑄 and Sŏnjang 宣長.

66. Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4, 11-12 and 20, note 34.

67. *KRS*, 93:10a-b.

68. Perhaps the most perceptive article on the succession dispute to appear recently is Hugh Kang, "The First Succession Struggle of Koryo, in 945: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3 (May 1977), pp. 411-28. While not totally convincing and certainly difficult to follow, Kang makes a good case for this incident being more than a simple struggle for the throne or a power-oriented coup. The major cleavage he sees in the early Koryŏ ruling elite is between the ex-Silla aristocrats, trying to turn the new regime in their favor, and the upstart followers of Wang Kŏn, mostly local northern warlords, who have their own idea of what shape the new dynasty ought to take.

69. *KRS*, 2:15b, Injunction no. 3.

70. Unruh, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

71. Kim Ch'ŏlchun, "Social Conversion from the Last Years of Unified Silla to the Early Years of Koryŏ and Medieval Intelligence," *Social Science Journal*, Vol. IV (1976-7), pp. 41-2. This article is an English version of Professor Kim's "*Namal ryŏch'o ŭi sahoe chŏnhwan kwa chungse chisŏng* 羅末 麗初의 社會轉換과 中世知性" which first appeared in the winter edition of *Ch'angchak kwa Pip'yŏng* 創作과 批評 but has since been reprinted in several of his books.

72. These injunctions do smack of later fabrication, and the Japanese

scholar Imanishi Ryū once claimed that the injunctions were just that. Korean scholars have vigorously defended their historicity, but it cannot be said that no doubts about their authenticity still exist. See Yi Pyŏngdo, *Koryo sidae ŭi yŏn'gu, op. cit.*, pp. 23-48 for a criticism of Imanishi and investigation of the contents of the injunctions.

A Disgruntled View of Korea: Charles Chaillé-Long, 1887-1889

Shannon McCune and David Icenogle*

Not all of the early Western visitors to Korea were favorably impressed by the land and the people. Yet Korea did provide even for these disgruntled visitors an interest-filled interlude in their lives.[1] One of these critical visitors was Charles Chaillé-Long (1842-1917), who served as United States Consul-General and Secretary of the United States Legation from October 1887 to August 1889. He wrote over a dozen, often repetitious, accounts of his travels in and impressions of Korea. These accounts appeared in different journals in Europe and the United States in the early 1890's. They may have served to create more of a negative than a favorable view of Korea and the Korean people.

CHAILLÉ-LONG IN AMERICA AND AFRICA

Charles Rollinson Whittingham Long was born in 1842 in Princess Anne, Maryland, the youngest son of a plantation owner. His paternal grandmother was Margaret Chaillé, descended from a French Huguenot ancestor who had emigrated to America in 1710. In order to keep the Chaillé family name alive, Long, with his father's encouragement, legally changed his name to Charles Chaillé-Long in 1869. However, since he had no children, the Chaillé name became extinct upon his death in 1917.[2] Chaillé-Long was very proud of the French component of his ancestry, could speak French from childhood and wrote a number of books and articles, including some on Korea, in French.[3]

The youthful Charles R. W. Long (as his name appears in early records) had intended to gain a university education, but his plans