

STATUS AND “DEFUNCT” OFFICES IN EARLY MODERN KOREA: THE CASE OF FIVE GUARDS GENERALS (OWIJANG), 1864–1910

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A striking feature of nineteenth-century Korea is the proliferation of generals. Seasoned military officers received appointments as generals of the Five Guards (Owijang), but so did local yamen clerks, Manchurian language interpreters, palace physicians responsible for the health of royal household women, and o-togenerian Confucian students. In many cases, the lucky recipient held the appointment for only one day. Why was the position of Five Guards general so evidently useful beyond the military realm? How did it retain its value to the state as a way to honor subjects and remain attractive to those who received it?

An effort to answer these questions focuses attention on the status system and its weaknesses during a period of great transition. In the late Chosŏn period (1700–1910), Korean society ostensibly consisted of four status groups. The aristocracy (*yangban*) comprised both office and non-officeholding members, rich and poor, and numbered perhaps no more than five percent of the population.¹ Below it was a larger yet still relatively small group, the *chungin* (“middle people”). The most prominent members were government technical specialists, but it also encompassed lower-ranking military officers, administrative functionaries, and the illegitimate sons of aristocratic men.² Commoners made up the third group. They were mostly peasants but also artisans and merchants. At the very bottom were the lowborn, a group consisting of slaves and socially stigmatized people such as shamans and entertainers.

By the mid-nineteenth century, a dozen or so aristocratic families based in Seoul had come to wield paramount political power through occupying the most important positions in the government. As proprietors of the state, they still had to find ways to mollify the status aspirations held by an increasing body of nonelites who possessed considerable cultural and economic capital. The effort was not entirely successful, as the uprisings of the nineteenth century attest, but one method was to grant court ranks and offices as honors to worthy notables. The central aristocracy utilized the high-ranking post of Five Guards generals, among others, as a mechanism of social integration within the parameters of the status bound society.

The actual military significance of the office had, in fact, long since become attenuated. In early Chosŏn (1392–1550), the generals had a military function just like other officials in the Five Guards which formed the main capital army. After the breakdown of this system in the sixteenth century, however, new military units eventually known as the Five Military Divisions took over their role.³ Late Chosŏn law codes and private writings alike note that nonetheless the post of general and other Five Guards offices survived. In fact, the state continued to fill these positions at least until 1894, and official histories, local gazetteers, and genealogies, among other sources, record countless Five Guards generals.

This study argues that appointment as a general recognized the special merit of those who had no prospect of attaining the kind of important, high-level offices monopolized by the central aristocracy. Although many appointees saw the post purely as an honor and resigned after a brief tenure, those with a military background often performed security functions. The generalship did not completely lose its prestige, as did many court ranks and offices sold by the late Chosŏn state. By the late nineteenth century, many nonelites had become both cultured and wealthy to the extent that the state, which needed their services and cooperation, could not fool them with empty signs of recognition. All the same, maintaining an adequate gradation of mollifiers helped aristocratic statesmen defend the integrity of the existing status hierarchy. Both donor and recipient benefited.

In reaching these conclusions, I dissect the problem from various angles. I first examine how the late Chosŏn law codes describe the post and its duties. Then, citing cases from other types of sources, I identify four grounds for a Five Guards general appointment: one, military merit; two, technical expertise; three, financial support for the government; and four, scholarly distinction at an advanced age. Finally, I discuss four distinct types of generals in terms of social status: one, the central aristocracy; two, the local elites; three, the *chungin*; and four, those demonstrating other signs of influence such as wealth. The fact that the generals could be found across the nominal status boundaries not only tells us how the office functioned in terms of social integration but also hints at the possibility of a shift in status boundaries—a highly contentious issue for social historians looking at Chosŏn Korea.⁴

I. The Five Guards and Affiliated Offices

An assessment of the social significance of nineteenth-century generals must consider the vital functions of the original Five Guards. At its peak troop strength of some 300,000 in the 1460s, the early Chosŏn army included the Five Guards of 3,248 military officials and at least 10,000 troops of varying social status, geographical origins, martial skills, and duties.⁵ Operating in hierarchical units of five, the Five Guards drew soldiers from all over Korea. After serving in Seoul, the draftee returned to a provincial army in or near his home locale.⁶ During the period of peace in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, however, the government not only did allow commoners to substitute active-duty service with *corvée* labor but the aristocracy increasingly shunned military duty.⁷ On the eve of the massive Japanese invasion in 1592, overall troop strength had dwindled to fewer than a thousand battle-worthy soldiers.⁸

In the ensuing decades, new military units eventually known as the Five Military Divisions took over the Five Guards' former functions. Created in the course of the Korean-Japanese war (1592–98) and two wars with the Manchus (1627, 1637), the Five Military Divisions included a mixture of paid professionals and rotation duty conscripts, who were now generally from Seoul and its vicinity. The Five Guards' role merely entailed patrol duties performed by small units drawn from the Five Military Divisions on a rotational basis, overseen by Five Guards generals.⁹

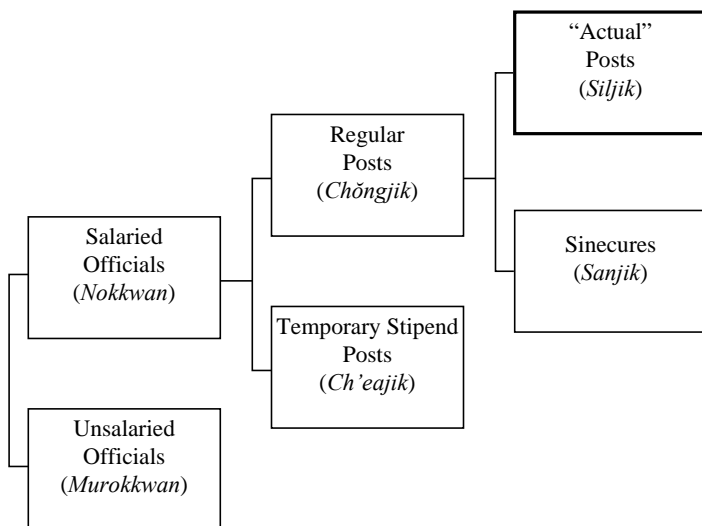
Including the generals, the Five Guards military posts underwent changes of

interest to us due not so much to their scaling back as to their social significance. First, the number of posts decreased from 3,248 in 1469 to just 1,548 as of 1746, then again to 1,427 as of 1865.¹⁰ Here is the caveat: in a nine-rank bureaucratic hierarchy with each rank divided into senior and junior levels, the number of low-level offices (seventh rank and below) decreased drastically while those of the middle level (lower senior-third rank down to sixth rank) and high level (upper senior-third rank and above) remained essentially unchanged.¹¹ This makes it appear that the state kept the high-ranking positions intact as a type of honor.

Second, except for the General, most Five Guards offices devolved into temporary stipend posts.¹² Reflecting legal changes that had occurred since the *Great Code of State Administration* of 1469, the *Amended Great Code* of 1746 distinguished the generals and regiment commanders, both of whom performed patrol duty at night, from the rest of the Five Guards military positions—all temporary stipend posts (chart). Along with those holding a regular position, temporary stipend post holders were all salaried officials as distinct from unsalaried officials. However, unlike the regular positions that we can in turn divide into “actual” posts and sinecures, a temporary stipend position entailed no formal duties while still entitling its holder to a stipend. Common recipients included: former or incumbent officeholders; government technical specialists such as interpreters, physicians, jurors, astronomers, accountants, calligraphers, painters, and musicians; and the *chungin* military officers.¹³

Third, other changes suggest that the pool of potential generals became more diverse. Reflecting the lowered political stature of the post, the 1746 code degraded the general’s rank from junior second to senior third and labeled two generalships in the Five Guards “leftover” (*chosa*).¹⁴ More significantly, the next law code, the 1785 *Great Code Explication*, specified that a general was exempt

Chart 1



‘from the standard military appointment requirement, according to which the Board of War had to recommend three candidates for each vacancy. Also, the update formally recognized the ongoing practice whereby the state appointed more generals than that prescribed by the official quota of 12, as well as specifying that the two “leftover” general slots were for civil officials.¹⁵ Then in 1865, the *Great Code Reconciliation* increased the quota of generals from 12 to 15 and made military officials and protection appointees (those neither a civil nor a military examination graduate) eligible for one of the two “leftover” slots.¹⁶

The late nineteenth-century rosters of officials reflect these changes. Each page is filled with rectangular shaped boxes labeled with office names. In many cases, a pasted-on nametag gives the name of the individual currently filling the position.¹⁷ The oldest version among the three specimens that I consulted, dated around 1860, has 11 slots for generals, including four labeled with the name of a royal palace.¹⁸ The total of 11 is puzzling in that the number of generalships should have been either 12 or 15. Perhaps the five undifferentiated slots on the roster represent the original Five Guards, even though nine generals were supposed to rotate in commanding them. A roster from the 1880s includes labels giving the names of individuals for about 40 percent of all the office slots, but for some reason even the roster boxes for the generals are missing.¹⁹ The edition dated 1889 or later is most complete, with two-thirds of the roster having its nametags intact.²⁰ It includes all 15 generals’ slots—even indicating various types of generalship. The compiler, however, affixed nametags on only the two “leftover” slots, perhaps not wanting to bother with the occupants of the other 13 slots often serving a term as short as one day.

Although the generals only performed patrol duties, the state continued to regard the office as more than just an empty honor. The most detailed record of Five Guards general appointments is available in the *Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat*.²¹ Even during the dynasty’s final decades when the state granted generalships as an honor to countless individuals, the source records the appointments alongside other military personnel actions.²² Typically they are all military-related, albeit some are clearly more important than others. In fact, the state treated the generalship as equivalent to the governor’s military aide. For instance, a court discussion in 1868 viewed a Five Guards general experience as a substitution for the latter in contrast to two lower Five Guards military posts.²³

When the state formally abolished Five Guards generalships is unclear. Despite the dizzying pace of bureaucratic reorganization during the late nineteenth century, it continued to grant the posts at least until 1894. Two unused blank appointment certificates, both dated 1902, are for generals—each complete with the traditional junior-third civil court rank title and the concurrent office (a sinecure) of the Fourth Minister-without-Portfolio to go with it.²⁴ It would appear that the generalship had life of its own beyond the official records.

Actual security functions performed by at least some generals apparently assured that the post enjoyed greater prestige than various court ranks and offices that the state sold outright—a practice fully institutionalized in late Chosŏn.²⁵ The state set no limit on the number of so-called extra-quota generalships, and this begs a number of questions. Was the honor restricted to certain types of individuals? Was it important for the state to give content to honors so that they were meaningful? What was in it for the state? In order to investigate these issues,

let us now look more closely at the reality of Five Guards general appointments in the late nineteenth century.

II. Patterns of Appointment, 1864–94

Nineteenth-century officeholders in the central government reflect a wide range of appointment patterns. A small segment comprised those having a more or less continuous career of appointments—including civil, military, and technical officials from Seoul or its vicinity. Much greater in number, though, were the residents of the regions beyond who maintained more tenuous connections to the officialdom through no more than an appointment or two, if any.²⁶ Five Guards generalships went to both groups.

Throughout much of Kojong’s reign (1864–1907), military merit remained a solid ground for a generalship as Korea experienced security crises ranging from local riots to foreign incursions. The French (1866) and American (1871) attacks and the Tonghak Uprising (1894–95) provided opportunities for courageous men to distinguish themselves on battlefields. Since the government troops had limited capabilities against foes technologically superior, as in the case of French and American intruders, or against the inspired Tonghak militants, the help of those willing to fight on the side of the government and do more than that required by the call of duty was indispensable. Those of extraordinary merit received recognition ranging from material reward to court rank or office. The generalship admirably served this purpose.

The case of a former military officer, Pak Ch’un-gwŏn (1839–1920), illustrates this point. In 1866 when an American ship, *General Sherman*, intruded into the Korean waters to demand trade, Pak audaciously boarded the vessel and rescued the governor’s military aide that the crewmen had detained. Upon receiving the report of his heroics, Kojong heaped praise on Pak’s courage and nominated him as the sole candidate for an extra-quota generalship—a gesture that amounted to the candidate’s actual appointment.²⁷ Moreover, only three days later, Kojong reappointed Pak as the provincial army commander’s aide.²⁸ Thus the generalship for Pak, whose age was just 28 *se* at the time, was a breakthrough for a military career that otherwise might have remained unremarkable.²⁹

Besides a one-time heroic action, distinguished military service over a longer period could also result in the individual’s appointment as a Five Guards general. A typical case is that of U Sin-sŏk (n.d.). As a cavalryman in 1874, U performed well during a special archery competition held in royal audience and then passed the military examination—the degree holders of which tended to be in their early thirties.³⁰ In the following year, he became a Special Military Officer, generally chosen through archery and military classics tests to serve in a capital or provincial army unit. In 1880 while still a Special Military Officer, U received a Five Guards generalship.³¹ Considering that he is known to have later held at least one provincial army office in the way the military men harboring any hope of getting more coveted assignments in the capital were expected to do, the generalship has to be seen as a mark of distinction for a military man who had risen through the ranks and had a bright future ahead of him.³²

These and other cases concerning men of military merit suggest that a Five Guards generalship tended to be a milestone in their careers. For some, the post

signaled the beginning of more significant promotions to come. For others, it added luster to an otherwise undistinguished or stymied career. Regardless, the generalship, a senior third-rank office, was both a reward and an honor for those achieving the post through military merit. These factors insured that the generalship did not become an empty honor.

Good service in other areas such as technical expertise also prompted the state to reward the worthy with a generalship. In the case of a Manchurian language interpreter, Pak Ki-myŏn (1827–n.d.), the generalship was one of many honors that the state granted him.³³ Before becoming a general at 52 *se* in age, Pak had passed the Manchurian examination at 23 *se* in 1849 and become an interpreter of senior third rank by 1878.³⁴ Soon after being appointed as a general, though, Pak requested to be relieved of his duty due to alleged ailment—an all-too-common excuse among the newly appointed generals. In Pak's case, the generalship was an honor for an aging technical specialist who had performed his duties well for decades.³⁵

Among the Five Guards generals of a technical-specialist background I have examined, Pyŏn Chong-hyŏp (1803–n.d.) provides a most revealing case. After passing the government physician's examination (1827), in 1830 Pyŏn attained the post of palace physician responsible for the health of royal household women.³⁶ Before his promotion to the coveted position of king's physician some 30 years later, Pyŏn received numerous instances of official recognition of his merit. They include: a colt from the king, a junior-second civil court rank, a junior second-rank sinecure, and a senior second-rank sinecure.³⁷ A promotion in 1867 followed the recovery of the king's father and *de facto* regent, Taewŏn'gun (1820–98), and this typifies the kind of reward for meritorious service that Pyŏn performed as a physician.³⁸ Since a document recording his earning the aforementioned junior-second civil court rank in 1864 shortly after promotion to the king's physician post refers to him as a former Five Guards general, it seems that the generalship was one of many honors he received.

For the technical specialists who received generalships, the meaning of the post was similar to that for nonelite military men. A generalship was one way to recognize a *chungin* who had performed distinguished services yet harbored dim prospects of attaining the politically meaningful high offices largely reserved for the central aristocracy. Highly specialized services by the *chungin* were vitally important to the state, and neither those above or below them commanded expertise in areas such as foreign language, medicine, law, astronomy, accounting, calligraphy, painting, and music. By the nineteenth century, certain *chungin* families based in Seoul had come to dominate these fields—the kind that the aristocracy held in low regard as narrow specialties, but to which commoners with limited cultural capital simply had no access.³⁹ Besides the importance of their services, the huge economic capital that many *chungin* had accumulated—especially interpreters and physicians who profited much from Korea's official trade with China—was something neither the state nor its proprietor, the aristocracy, could ignore.⁴⁰ They provided political funds for aristocratic statesmen and financial support for the government.

Documents abound with references to those who had made financial contribution to the government being appointed as generals. Typically, a governor or an undercover royal inspector commends a local magnate for his generosity. For

example in 1866, the State Council cited such a local report requesting that a military examination graduate, An Nak-p'ung (n.d.), residing in a northwestern county, be so recognized. Son of a deceased military officer who had served with distinction when the government suppressed the Hong Kyōng-nae Rebellion in 1812, An reportedly sold his house to help pay for the local artillerymen's rations. The State Council recommended that he be put forth as the sole candidate for an extra-quota generalship, as well as bestowing a posthumous office on his father. Kojong approved.⁴¹

This case and others similar to it suggest that private financial contributions were important for the government, especially during famine, flood, epidemic, civil unrest, or warfare. The nineteenth century was an especially difficult time. By then in both Korea and Japan, significant advances in premodern agrarian technology achieved in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had reached their limits—exemplified in overcultivation, deforestation, frequent floods, famine, and epidemics—and the population was either decreasing or in stasis.⁴² Thus whether in the form of grain or cash, sizable donations by wealthy individuals prompted the government to recognize them—regardless of their social status. Accordingly, the court granted Five Guards generalships, ostensibly of senior third rank in the central officialdom, to top donors.

Was the financially strapped government simply selling these generalships? After all, the late Chosŏn state sold ranks and offices, as well as issuing blank appointment certificates that various government agencies, at their discretion, could issue to deserving individuals. Some of the most recent specimens date to 1902. Not only did this practice produce additional revenue for the state, but also nonelite men of wealth were particularly likely to take advantage of it—especially since the aristocracy did not admit into its ranks the increasing number of nonelites who were accumulating wealth in the more commercialized economy of late Chosŏn.⁴³ But on the other hand, no late Chosŏn price listing of ranks and offices that the government sold includes the generalship. Since, unlike other Five Guards military offices, it was not a temporary stipend post either, this appointment must have been much more prestigious, in the eyes of a recipient, than a court rank or office that he could otherwise have purchased outright.

Compared to those appointed as Five Guards generals due to financial support for the government or military merit, mention of individuals receiving the post due to advanced age is less frequent. I have found that such elderly appointees tend to be incumbent central officials or Confucian students, especially the licentiates, that is the passers of the entrance examination for the State Confucian Academy. In 1882, for example, Kojong instructed that every official of age 70 *se* or above who had recently received a promotion be recommended as a sole candidate for an extra-quota generalship or Royal House Administration first secretary position.⁴⁴ More than a dozen references, in the *Veritable Records* of Kojong's reign, to incumbent or former first secretaries show a pattern: they were all learned men from less politically prominent families, yet for one reason or another they were deemed by the state to be worthy of special recognition.

The cases of elderly Confucian students receiving a generalship are more numerous than those of elderly officials. The *Veritable Records* contain one reference to the classics licentiates and nine to the more prestigious literary licen-

tiates so honored. Of the nine latter cases, all but one involved recent elderly licentiates. The qualifying minimum age varied from 70 in 1879 and 1883, to 80 in 1870, 1873, and 1885, to 85 in 1874 and 1880.⁴⁵ On every one of these occasions, the king awarded extra-quota generalships or nominated the elderly without any competing candidates.

The variation in the qualifying age indicates that the state appointed elderly Confucian students as generals on an ad hoc basis. Nonetheless, the cases where the numbers of appointees are recorded hint at a large number of such appointments throughout the period. In 1883, for example, 12 licentiates of age 70 or more received the honor.⁴⁶ The 12 licentiates may account for most, if not all of the licentiates of advanced age produced by this particular competition: during the last three decades of the dynasty, the median number of degrees that each licentiate competition awarded was 150, and the majority of licentiates were between 20 and 40 se.⁴⁷

The appointment of elderly Confucian students as Five Guards generals was a social gesture on the part of the state. It was an act of royal grace toward those who attained a high-level of scholarship after decades of study yet due to advanced age had little chance of ever receiving an official appointment. After all, the majority of the licentiates in this period never received an office or passed the higher civil examination, which was much more likely to result in an appointment.⁴⁸ Also, the cardinal Confucian virtue of filial piety dictated honoring the elderly, and of course, this was one of the three cardinal virtues (along with the subject's loyalty to the ruler and the wife's fidelity to her husband) that buttressed the universal moral hierarchy that Confucianism conceptualized. Thus the state maintained the tradition of honoring *all* elderly of a certain age level or above with court ranks, although the minimum age varied throughout the dynasty and tended to be higher for those of lower social status.⁴⁹ Overall, the state clearly needed a formal means to validate the ascription of importance to the aged within the Confucian system—thereby legitimizing the entire structure guided by the Confucian ideology.⁵⁰ This helps explain why rewards, such as generalships, were given to elderly Confucian students.

Actual patrol duties required of generals prompted many appointees, especially those of advanced age, to claim illness and request dismissal after short tenures. For example in 1887, 11 new generals petitioned for dismissal from their posts on such grounds.⁵¹ In this case, which is typical of countless similar ones recorded in the *Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat*, the request and the king's immediate granting of permission strongly suggest that for many appointees the post was strictly honorary in nature.

All the same, that the state continued to regard the Five Guards generalship as a military post and use it to reward good service or honor those of advanced age helped the generalship retain its value, and it appealed to many. What mattered was not how the individual acquired it, its actual responsibilities, or the length of its tenure so much as the fact of ever having received it. Especially if a man had no other distinction, holding the senior third-rank military office of Five Guards general for even just a day translated into the most notable accomplishment in his life.⁵² Since a general's career varied tremendously depending on the individual, does this then mean that the appointment transcended nominal status boundaries? Did the appointments signify that the existing status hierarchy

was breaking down? Let us now consider the social backgrounds of the period's Five Guards generals.

III. Social Backgrounds of Appointees, 1864–1910

Social historians of nineteenth-century Korea know that an individual's service label, even as recorded on official documents, can be a tricky indicator of his ascriptive status. On a spectrum extending from the most telling label to the least, at the former end would be a service label such as the High State Councillor indicating that the individual was a true aristocrat. The least indicative labels would be something like *hallyang* (“idle lad”), the designation used for military examination candidates across status boundaries. The office of Five Guards general falls somewhere between these two extremes.

In considering how the position retained its prestige even after it lost its original military function, the fact that the central aristocrats continued to receive generalships, especially the two “leftover” positions, is noteworthy. The central aristocracy differed from local aristocrats in residence and career patterns. After about 1700, a limited number of families living in Seoul or surrounding areas in western central Korea dominated court politics. Moreover, an aristocratic family there tended to specialize in just one branch of service, either the civil or the military bureaucracy—a departure from the earlier Chosŏn pattern. While the central aristocracy dominated officialdom, locally based elites enjoyed limited success in producing examination passers or officeholders.⁵³

The central aristocrats appointed to the generalship were incumbents having a successful career in officialdom. A case in point is that of the Board of War appointing a renowned scholar and official, Yun Chong-üi (1805–86), as a “leftover” Five Guards general in 1875 and 1877.⁵⁴ Hailing from a P'ap'yŏng Yun lineage that had been producing examination graduates and civil officials for generations, Yun himself passed the licentiate examination at just 18 *se* (1822) and subsequently held many meaningful high-ranking civil offices even though he never passed the civil examination.⁵⁵ Yun's appointment as a general was in line with the 1865 law code's stipulation that one of the two “leftover” Five Guards generalships be reserved for an individual who was neither a civil nor a military examination graduate. The fact that incumbent officials such as Yun continued to receive generalships presumably helped the post retain its prestige.

Compared to the Seoul aristocracy, many more local elites appear as Five Guards generals in the various documents of this period. Based on patterns of examination success and representation in central officialdom, we can recognize at least three distinct local elite zones in late Chosŏn: one, the south, especially Kyŏngsang and Chŏlla provinces but also the parts of central Korea where localized aristocrats resided; two, the commercial city of Kaesŏng and its vicinity; and three, the north, mainly P'yŏngan and Hamgyŏng provinces where the local elite's claim to aristocratic status was disputed by the central and southern aristocrats. Let us examine the three types of local elite as far as the Five Guards general appointment is concerned, because patterns of receptivity to the generalship can expose differences in elite perception of the honor.

In late Chosŏn, the southern aristocracy became a more purely local elite. The number of examination passers and officials hailing from the south de-

clined drastically after 1600, and the local aristocrats had to be content with what influence they exerted in their regions. According to many historians, even at local levels the aristocratic hegemony came under challenge by social newcomers—including wealthy commoners and the descendants of aristocrats by concubines—who made inroads into political and cultural arenas.⁵⁶ Other scholars, however, instead stress that the regional aristocrats not only fortified their self-identity through cultural means but also defended their sociopolitical positions successfully against the newcomers.⁵⁷ This disagreement centers on the question of the degree to which the southern aristocracy came to share power and influence with new social elements. In most counties, the old aristocracy stopped updating the register of local agency officers—traditionally drawn from the most prestigious families—as upstart families began winning representation in the agency and hence started appearing in the register.

Reflecting the fact that the late Chosŏn southern aristocracy was an ascriptive status elite independent of degrees, ranks, or offices, Five Guards generals do not feature prominently in the listings of local notables in late Chosŏn town gazetteers. This is especially true for the local aristocracy of Kyŏngsang Province, a conservative Neo-Confucian stronghold that produced a disproportionately small number of examination passers and central officials after 1600. Also, the region's low regard for martial virtue and the military examination might account for the generalship's relatively weak appeal.⁵⁸ Defined by birth, a Kyŏngsang aristocrats' status manifested itself more exclusively through cultural edifices such as private academies and shrines, although social newcomers increasingly imitated them.⁵⁹ Moreover, perhaps the region's predominantly Southerner and Northerner factional orientations made its aristocracy spurn any sort of a gesture by the center—dominated by the enemy Old Doctrine faction—amounting to anything less than real political power, which it had once wielded before suffering defeat in the seventeenth century. Granting generalships could have been a means for the center to play a role in influencing local elites to its advantage by making them more cooperative with centrally appointed magistrates, and the southern aristocracy wanted none of it.

Such intentions by the state and its aristocratic proprietors is evident in the way the regional elites of disputed aristocratic credentials, such as those of Kaesŏng and the north, accepted generalships. Since Kaesŏng had been the capital of the previous dynasty where many loyalists remained, the government treated the residents with some suspicion.⁶⁰ The state did not even permit them to take the civil examination until 1470, that is, nearly a century after the 1392 dynastic change, and the first native son to pass did so only in 1515.⁶¹ In fact, plentiful are the primary and secondary source observations on how the Kaesŏng's most talented instead turned to commerce, as the city became the seat of great merchants. The Kaesŏng elite did not entirely shun government service, but those who succeeded in obtaining degrees, ranks, or offices tended to be from affluent families.⁶²

Considering the city's history, it seems natural that the wealthy elite of Kaesŏng often acquired Five Guards generalships. Extant Kaesŏng gazetteers record a large number of military examination passers from the city who received this post.⁶³ Given that the late Chosŏn governor's military aides were fully functioning military officers, the government's decision to recognize the Kaesŏng

men’s generalship experience as equivalent to that of a military aide shows that the generals from Kaesŏng were bona fide military officials. This pattern also implies that the generals hailing from the city may have been somewhere between the bona fide aristocracy and military *chungin* in social status.⁶⁴

A report dated the third lunar month of 1871 is illuminating. When the Kaesŏng special mayor recommended local residents for military merit accrued during the earlier 1866 French incursion, he listed a former Five Guards general alongside two high rank-holders and a former regiment commander after two Confucian students and a military examination passer but before two military examination candidates and five local functionaries.⁶⁵ Both their wealth and less than solid aristocratic credentials seem to have fueled the Kaesŏng elite’s enthusiasm for the generalship.

Likewise, the north also produced many Five Guards generals who were men of influence and yet not fully acknowledged members of the aristocracy. Giving weight to the contentions of central and southern aristocrats who refused to accept the northern elite as their social equals, some scholars argue that the north had no real aristocrats.⁶⁶ Other historians stress the significant socioeconomic stature and cultural attainments of northerners who asserted their status.⁶⁷ Regardless of the rhetoric of their detractors, what is undeniable is that the local elite—especially those of P’yŏngan Province in the northwest through which the Korea-China trade route passed—not only caught the attention of the center for their growing economic clout but also achieved a level of cultural sophistication high enough for them to compete successfully in the prestigious civil examination and actively engage in intellectual discourse with the more open-minded aristocrats to the south.

Socioeconomic assets and cultural accomplishments seem to have helped the northern elite receive generalships. In a typical case, occurring in 1868, the governor of the northernmost region, Hamgyŏng Province, recommended that some local literati and “warriors” be rewarded for defending a border watch station against Russian intruders. Among them was a former Five Guards general, Kim Sŏng-p’il (n.d.). From the way in which the governor distinguished soldiers from scholars in his recommendation, we can surmise that Kim most likely was a military type pure and simple. And considering that the court ultimately promoted him and also gave a scholar his first official post ever, as well as the fact that the two were the leaders of local militia manning the watch station, it seems that both were men of influence.⁶⁸ The court’s decision makes sense not only in conjunction with the northern elite’s increased socioeconomic potential and cultural achievements but also the overall importance of the region to the central government which put more effort—starting in the seventeenth century—into developing the area and thus shaping the local sociopolitical structure.⁶⁹

Compared to local elites, even more individuals that we may regard as *chungin* received Five Guards generalships. Since we have already considered technical specialists, let us consider local functionaries many of whom, in the waning years of Chosŏn, attained generalships thanks to their social or economic capital. A vivid portrayal of such an individual appears in the *Hidden Aspirations of Paekpŏm*—essentially an autobiography of Kim Ku (penname Paekpŏm, 1876–1949), a famous Korean independence activist. As a young man, he took part in the Tonghak Uprising. While sojourning in Chŏlla Province after the uprising

had been crushed, he came across a local notable, Mun Wöl-lae (n.d.), and they became travel companions. A well-built man around 40 *se*, Mun struck Kim as a wealthy person. When the two arrived at a tavern, the owner addressed Mun as a Five Guards general and offered him a drink. Because Mun was receiving an especially welcome treatment from the owner, Kim declined an offer to rest there together and instead continued on alone—not wanting to be a freeloader. Later in the day while having his supper elsewhere, he heard the news that more than 30 armed robbers had attacked the tavern and killed Mun with an axe when he drunkenly ordered them to disperse. Kim learned from the locals that Mun was an unpopular local functionary whose arrogant younger brother was a caretaker for a powerful royal in-law clan statesman, Min Yǒng-jun (1852–1935).⁷⁰ Clearly then, Mun was a local functionary who had acquired his generalship thanks to personal connections as well as local influence.

Other generals of this era that I have come across in documents show no signs of membership in the aristocracy or even *chungin* status but still hint at social or economic capital. For example, in Yun Ch'i-ho (1865–1945)'s diary, where the author reveals his thoughts and feelings on the tumultuous change Korea underwent, a general appears in one of the entries. Unfortunately, Yun refers to him only as “Five Guards General Pak” (Pak Owijang) when mentioning him as the host at the home that he and other plotters of the ill-fated Kapsin Coup of 1884 had visited earlier in the year.⁷¹ This Five Guards general most likely was not a government officeholder or aristocrat of enough significance for Yun to bother with the name. All the same, the fact that the leaders of the coup—younger men from central official families—were visiting Pak suggests that as a resident of Seoul, he was a man with powerful connections who enjoyed significant social standing.

If the generals were men of means, then whether they constituted a new class defying the nominal status boundaries is a pertinent question for the social history of early modern Korea. A reliable method of gauging social cohesiveness among the generals is to examine marriage patterns. Did the honor of a Five Guards general position affect the marriage prospects of the descendants of those who received such an honor? For example, could a rich commoner who attained a generalship find spouses for his children or grandchildren from the bona fide aristocracy?

In late Chosŏn, marriage was an in-group institution. For an aristocratic man, only a woman of equal status could become his legal wife, and only their children enjoyed the full legal and social prerogatives as aristocrats. At most, a non-aristocratic woman could become a concubine, and the offspring—considered illegitimate—normally assumed the mother's status. Such an illegitimate child had to find a partner of comparable background.⁷² Also, aristocratic families of late Chosŏn increasingly favored marriage partners from other aristocratic families of same political stature, factional loyalty, and bureaucratic branch affiliation (civil versus military).⁷³ Technical specialists and local functionaries, too, found marriage partners within their respective social groups.⁷⁴

The marriage prospect for a Five Guards general or his children depended on his ascriptive status, and none of the eight generals featured in this study gives any indication that he overcame the nominal status boundary. One problem is that it is difficult to find local functionaries and northerners in extant genealo-

gies, and so far I am unable to trace the ancestry of the three generals from such a background. Given that true aristocrats are well documented in the genealogies rich with marriage information, the three nonelite generals most likely failed to form marriage ties to bona fide aristocratic families. As for the cases of two clearly Seoul *chungin* generals and a probable Seoul *chungin*, the first two formed marriage ties to families of similar social background also living in Seoul while the third individual's provenance remains unknown.⁷⁵ The sole central aristocrat among the eight generals discussed in the study, Yun Chong-üi, had an impeccable pedigree: his patrilineal and matrilineal ancestors, as well as the fathers-in-law, were all central civil aristocrats.⁷⁶ If the generals of aristocratic or Seoul *chungin* status indeed found marriage partners within their respective status groups, then it seems extremely unlikely that the generals of commoner status somehow found partners of higher social standing.

The case of Five Guards General Pak T'ae-sik (1855–1933) and his children's marriages illustrate both the rigidity of traditional status hierarchy and its slow dissolution in the late nineteenth century. Born into a wealthy Seoul *chungin* family with marriage ties to technical specialists and military officers, in 1881 Pak became a Special Military Officer.⁷⁷ Later in the career, he passed the military examination (1882), attained a Five Guards generalship (sometime in the 1890's), and received a promotion from senior third rank to junior second rank after transporting royal portraits to a newly built imperial shrine in P'yöngyang (1902).⁷⁸ Himself married to a woman from Seoul *chungin* family just like that of his own, Pak's children married as follows: the first daughter to the son of a military Seoul *chungin* (ca. 1900); the first son to the daughter of a technical specialist Seoul *chungin* (ca. 1900); the second son to a woman whose ancestry I have not yet been able to trace (ca. 1906); the third son to a woman from a family either wealthy commoner or hereditary local functionary in status (ca. 1913); and finally, the second daughter to a descendant of the illegitimate son of a sixteenth-century local aristocrat (ca. 1920).⁷⁹ The reason why the latter two children did not marry Seoul *chungin* is because the family had been forced to flee Seoul in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05).⁸⁰ The third son married down in terms of status but perhaps up in terms of economic class, and the second daughter's marriage is equally ambiguous. Marriage patterns among Pak's children, like those of the generals discussed previously, suggest that this honor did not translate into obvious social mobility.

Final Thoughts

The foregoing discussion answers a question previously ignored in conventional scholarship: why did the state retain a seemingly defunct post for centuries, and who got these posts? The generals, on the whole, were those individuals of special merit who due to status or age constraints had little hope of ever attaining the kind of important positions typically held by those from prominent aristocratic families. The generalship attracted them because it was not only contingent upon merit—good service, financial support, or scholarship at an advanced age—but also could entail actual responsibility in the form of a security function. These factors insured that the generalship remain more prestigious than a court rank or office that wealthy nonelites commonly purchased.

In fact, the generalship sometimes even went to aristocrats. Both the state and its aristocratic proprietors had an interest in maintaining a gradation of honors, so that they could better control who got what honors and ultimately protect the integrity of the existing social hierarchy.

The clear social utility of the generalship raises further questions. As much as those who went for and got a generalship may have found it attractive, how did they feel about the limitations of the honor which apparently could not transcend nominal status hierarchy? Could nonelite generals still have harbored discontent? Would they have welcomed any fundamental change to the existing order?

We can try to address these questions in light of what happened to Korea during this era. Rewards and honors such as a generalship would have been appealing only so long as the recipients were more or less willing to accept the status quo. Even if Korea had not come under external pressure in the form of imperialism in the late nineteenth century, it seems certain that many nonaristocrats, especially the technical specialist *chungin* of Seoul, would have continued to increase their economic and cultural capital as they had for two centuries or so. That the pace at which they made gains in politics, business, and culture accelerated during Kojong's reign is a sure indicator of accumulated potential.⁸¹ We may deduce that even without a powerful external stimulus that forced Chosŏn Korea to change more dramatically, the state and the aristocracy would have come under greater pressure to meet the rising expectations of nonelites. What was increasingly at stake were the positions traditionally reserved for the members of top families rather than the honors such as a generalship—no matter how esteemed the latter may have been.⁸²

The question of loyalty to the overall system becomes relevant in conjunction with external threats against Korea if we assume that social groups reject the status quo only if they are either desperate or certain of gains. Neither condition seems applicable to those who received generalships, as they still wielded much influence and wealth in society in comparison to the vast majority of nonelites—the commoners and slaves—and only a small minority, the aristocracy, stood above them. Thus when the pace of social reform accelerated during Kojong's reign, and especially so after the inauguration of the Korean Empire in 1897, many, if not most, nonelite men of means still had reasons to remain loyal to a system in which their chances were improving.⁸³

Thus an assessment of the efficacy of honors such as the Five Guards generalship in a status-bound society holds great significance for the social history of Korea. It shows that the nominal social order did not completely stifle status negotiations by the state and the aristocracy on the one hand and nonelites of means on the other. Safety valves such as the generalship made it possible for the state to appease those whose economic stature was rising but whose status remained the same. Since the issue of what early modern Korean society really looked like constitutes a highly contentious topic for historians, debates surrounding this issue are likely to drive a good deal of social history research on Korea in the future.

ENDNOTES

1. A true aristocrat had to be descended from an eminent ancestor, who was either an official or a scholar at the beginning of Chosŏn, and had to demonstrate an impeccable pedigree. Accordingly, he took in a woman of lower status only as a concubine, and an aristocrat without a natural son by his wife could pass down his status only by adopting an heir among the patrilineal kin of the next generation. Also, an aristocratic family had to maintain a cultured lifestyle entailing proper Confucian rituals and education. A family's aristocratic status had to be acknowledged for generations by the society in general and other aristocrats in particular. Song Chun-ho, *Chosŏn sahoesa yŏn'gu: Chosŏn sahoe ūi kujo wa sŏngkyŏk mit kŭ pyŏnch'ŏn e kwanhan yŏn'gu* [Studies in Chosŏn social history: research on Chosŏn society's structure, characteristics, and change] (Seoul, 1987), 160–64, 242–59.
2. Social historians disagree over who could be included in the *chungin* status group. According to a narrow definition, it comprised only government technical specialists and their kinsmen. More broadly defined *chungin* also include various other status groups occupying a position between the aristocracy and commoners, for example some nonelite military officers, hereditary administrative functionaries, and the descendants of aristocrats' concubines. Song Pok, “Kŭndae ihaenggi chungin yŏn'gu' ūi p'iryosŏng” [Necessity of 'Studies on the *chungin* during Korea's transition to modernity'], in *Han'guk kŭndae ihaenggi chungin yŏn'gu* [Studies on the *chungin* during Korea's transition to modernity], ed., Yŏnse Taehakkyo Kukhak Yŏn'guwŏn (Seoul, 1999), 19–25. In this study, I use the term *chungin* in the broadest sense to refer to social groups that were neither aristocrat nor commoner in status.
3. For a more detailed study on the Chosŏn military organization, see Ch'a Mun-sŏp, *Chosŏn sidae kunje yŏn'gu* [A study on Chosŏn military institutions] (Seoul, 1973); Yukkun Sagwan Hakkyo Han'guk Kunsu Yŏn'gusil, ed., *Han'guk kunjesa* [A history of Korean military institutions], Vol. 2, *Kŭnse Chosŏn hugi p'yŏn* [the early modern/late Chosŏn period] (Seoul, 1977); and Ch'a Mun-sŏp, *Chosŏn sidae kunsu kwan'gye yŏn'gu* [A study on the military matters of Chosŏn] (Seoul, 1996).
4. Representative monographic studies that emphasize the stability of late Chosŏn social order are Song Chun-ho, *Chosŏn sahoesa yŏn'gu*; and James B. Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions: Yu Hyŏngwŏn and the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle, 1996). For a narrative of more sweeping socioeconomic change, see Yi Ki-baek, *Han'guksa sillon* [A new history of Korea], revised edition, (Seoul, 1990); and Han Yŏng-u, *Tasi ch'amnŭn uri yŏksa* [Our history rediscovered] (Seoul, 1997).
5. The exact number of men on duty is unknown, because extant documents do not specify the quota for some military units that contributed troops to the Five Guards. *Han'guk minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajŏn* [Encyclopedia of Korean national culture; hereafter HMMTS] (Sŏngnam, 1991), s.v. “Owi” [Five Guards]; and Han, 250–51.
6. HMMTS, s.v. “Owi.”
7. Han, 254, 289.
8. Ibid., 289–90.
9. HMMTS, s.v. “Owi.”

10. *Taejŏn hoet'ong* [The great code reconciliation] (1865; rpt., Keijō, 1938; second rpt., Seoul, 1985), 4.6a-8b.

11. The vast majority of officeholders never attained the sixth rank, the lowest level at which officials were eligible to attend court meetings held in royal audience, and achieving this rank was considered to be a break-through in one's career. The next milestone, which only a small minority of officials ever passed, was to achieve the senior third rank, divided into upper and lower sublevels. Receiving the upper-senior third rank signaled admission into the top stratum of officialdom.

12. Exceptions numbered just 21 as of 1469, 20 as of 1746 and 1785, and 23 as of 1865. *Taejŏn hoet'ong*, 4.7a.

13. HMMTS, s.v. "Ch'eajik" [Temporary stipend posts].

14. *Sok Taejŏn* [The amended great code] (1746; rpt., Seoul, 1983), 4.1b-4a.

15. *Taejŏn hoet'ong*, 4.1b. The 1865 code indicates the updates of 1785 as such.

16. *Ibid.*, 4.7a.

17. Nametag color indicates the appointee's factional affiliation.

18. "Naeoe kwanan" [Roster of central and local officials], manuscript at Harvard-Yenching Library (Rare Book TK 4787.18 4233), Harvard University.

19. "P'uman" [Roster of court ranks], manuscript at Harvard-Yenching Library (Rare Book TK 4787.19 6300), Harvard University. The blank pages toward the roster's end have a large number of tags affixed. Perhaps they had fallen off over the years, and the later owners of the roster did not know where the tags belonged.

20. "Kwanan" [Roster of officials], manuscript at Harvard-Yenching Library (Rare Book TK 4787.18 4233.2 Folio), Harvard University. The library catalogue records the approximate date of the manuscript as 1887, but I was able to arrive at precise year of 1889 based on when the two recorded "leftover" generals are known to have occupied their posts. Their respective tenures briefly overlapped in 1889. *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* [Daily records of the Royal Secretariat] (http://e-kyujanggak.snu.ac.kr/sub_index.jsp?ID=SJW) [hereafter *SI*], 2981.1889.09.49a, 2981.1889.11.35b, 2992.1890.02.67b. The original text comprises some three thousand bound volumes (*ch'aek*). Within each volume, though, each month begins at the recto side of page one. Thus for each citation, I provide the four-digit volume number, followed by the four-digit year number, the two-digit month number, and the page location. When used as part of a citation, all dates are according to lunar calendar, as employed by the original text.

21. It does not contain a complete record of all personnel appointments

22. For example, a typical listing, dated 1891, mentions the following military-related appointments besides 17 generals: 14 regiment commanders, 18 palace sentinels, a Military Training Agency third secretary, two Military Training Agency fourth secretaries, a Military Training Agency auditor, five sixth-rank Military Training Agency civil officials, an Office of Ministers-without-Portfolio inspector, six heralds, a provincial army commander, a provincial army commander's aide, a provincial navy commander's aide, and three commanders of large ports. *SI*, 3005.1891.07.80a-81a.

23. *Kojong-Sunjong sillok* [Veritable records of Kojong and Sunjong] (Keijō, 1935; rpt., vols. 1–3, Seoul, 1986), vol. 1, *Kojong sillok* [Veritable records of Kojong; hereafter *KS*], 5.46a. The recognition of the equivalence seems to have become discontinued sometime thereafter, as a court discussion in 1874 referred to it as a former practice. *KS*, 11.93a.

24. Original certificates are at Kwandong University Museum (02-Kangwŏn-128, 02-Kangwŏn-159) in South Korea. The Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (National Institute of Korean History) also has microfilm copies (MF 0020042).

25. Eugene Y. Park, *Between Dreams and Reality: The Military Examination in Late Chosŏn Korea, 1600–1894* (Cambridge, 2007), 128–32.

26. For an insightful case study on how the pattern of officeholding varied even among the aristocrats, see Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi, “Chosŏn hugi yangban ūi sahwan kwa kase pyŏndong: Sŏnsan muban'ga No Sang-ch'u ūi sarye rŭl chungsim ūro” [Officeholding and changing family fortune among late Chosŏn aristocrats: The case of No Sang-ch'u from a military family of Sŏnsan], *Han'guksa ron* 19 (1988), 355–84.

27. *KS*, 3.42b.

28. *KS*, 3.42b-43a.

29. According to lunar calendar, a person at birth is already one *se* and gains in age upon each New Year. Thus, the difference between *se* and modern Western-calendar age can be one or two years. On the career patterns of the military examination passers from prominent aristocratic families, see Chŏng Hae-ŭn, “Chosŏn hugi mukwa kŭpcheja yŏn'gu” [A study on late Chosŏn military examination graduates] (Ph.D. dissertation, Han'guk Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, 2002), 199–236.

30. *Ibid.*, 205–06.

31. “Chigugwanch'ŏng ilgi” [Daily records of the Military Guard Agency; hereafter *CI*], manuscript at Changsŏgak Library (2-3375), late nineteenth century, Han'gukhak Chungang Yŏn'guwŏn (Academy of Korean Studies), vol. 7, entry for lunar 1880.12.29. The image file of the original text I viewed at the Han'gukhak Chungang Yŏn'guwŏn website (<http://yoksa.aks.ac.kr/jsp/aa/VolView.jsp>) has no page numbers. See also *SI*, 2871.1880.12.99a.

32. In early 1888, U was appointed as a junior ninth-rank local defense military officer (Pyŏlchang) in Wŏnsan. *SI*, 2969.1880.01.80b.

33. For more detailed genealogical information on his family, a Miryang Pak descent line of technical specialist *chungin* status, see Yi Ch'ang-hyŏn, *Sŏngwŏllok* [A record of surname origins] (Seoul, 1985), 449–50.

34. *SI*, 2846.1878.07.17a; and Yi Sŏng-mu and Ch'oe Chin-ok, eds., *Chapkwa pangmok* [Technical examination rosters], CD-ROM (Seoul, 2002).

35. *SI*, 2846.1878.07.17a, 2846.1878.09.5b.

36. Yi, *Sŏngwŏllok*, 676–94; *Ch'ogye-Miryang Pyŏn-ssi taedongbo* [A comprehensive genealogy of the Ch'ogye-Miryang Pyŏn] (Taejŏn, 1987), 5.148; Yi Sŏng-mu and Ch'oe Chin-ok; and *Ilŏngmok* [Record of daily reflections] (http://e-kyujanggak.snu.ac.kr/sub_index.jsp?ID=ILS), 12813-0581.53b. The original text of the *Record of Daily Reflec-*

tions has no page numbers. Thus for each citation, I provide Seoul National University's Kyujanggak collection volume (*ch'aek*) number (a coupling of a five-digit number and a four-digit number separated by a hyphen), followed by a presumed page number that I determined from the online reprint image file at the Kyujanggak website.

37. *Ilŏngnok*, 12814-0125.10b, 12816-0006.8b; and *SI*, 2672.1864.03.12b, 2672.1864.03.24a, 2698.1866.06.36b, 2710.1867.05.26b.
38. *Ilŏngnok*, 12816-0054.32a; and *SI*, 2710.1867.04.22b.
39. Yi Nam-hŭi, "Chosŏn hugi 'chapkwa chungin' ŭi sahoejŏk yudongsŏng: kwagŏ hapkyŏk silt'ae rŭl chungsim ŭro" [Social mobility of late Chosŏn 'technical-examination chungin': actual patterns of examination passing], in *Han'guk kŭndae ihaenggi chungin yŏn'gu*, 302–05.
40. Kim Yang-su, "Chosŏn hugi sahoe pyŏndong kwa chŏnmunjik chungin ŭi hwaltong: yŏkkwan, ŭigwan, ŭmyanggwān, yulgwan, sanwŏn, hwawŏn, agin tŭng kwa kwallyŏn hayŏ" [Late Chosŏn social change and the activity of specialist chungin: interpreters, physicians, astronomers, jurists, accountants, painters, and musicians], in *Han'guk kŭndae ihaenggi chungin yŏn'gu*, 198–216. During a court trial in 1908, the judge described both U Hang-jŏng (1854–n.d.), a member of a largely military officer chungin family, and an interpreter chungin, Yi Kŭn-bae (1849–n.d.), as wealthy individuals. *Taehan maeil sinbo* [Great Korea daily news], 19 January 1908. A household registration record, dated 1903, shows the size of the mansion of U's father at 62 *k'an* (equivalent to about 366 feet) in length measurement—comparable to those of the most affluent, high-ranking aristocratic officials. Catalogued as "Kankoku kŏseki seisatsu" [A collection of Korean household registration records], the original collection of Korean household registration records of 1896–1907, in 165 bound volumes (*ch'aek*), is at Kyoto University Museum. I consulted the microfilm copy at Langson Library (Microfilm M 000797), University of California, Irvine.
41. *KS*, 3.78a.
42. Conrad D. Totman, *Pre-industrial Korea and Japan in Environmental Perspective* (Leiden, 2004), 162–63. Influential studies on historical demography of Korea include: Kwŏn T'ae-hwan and Sin Yong-ha, "Chosŏn wangjo sidae in'gu ch'ujŏng e kwanhan il siron" [A preliminary research on estimating the population of Chosŏn dynasty], *Tonga munhwa* [East Asian culture] 14 (1975): 287–330; and Tony Michell, "Fact and Hypothesis in Yi Dynasty Economic History: The Demographic Dimension," *Korean Studies Forum* 6 (Winter-Spring 1979/1980): 65–93.
43. Kim Yong-sŏp in particular has done an extensive research on changes in late Chosŏn agriculture and their ramifications that cut across existing status boundaries. For a recent English-language discussion of his findings, see Kim Yong-sop, "The Two Courses of Agrarian Reform in Korea's Modernization," in *Landlords, Peasants, and Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, ed. Pang Kie-Chung and Michael D. Shin (Ithaca, 2005), especially 21–26.
44. *KS*, 19.7b.
45. *KS*, 7.8a, 10.8a, 11.48a, 16.21b, 17.20a, 22.12a. Another case from 1885 specified 72 and 85, respectively, for the classics and literary licentiates. *KS*, 22.41b.
46. *Ilŏngnok*, 12816-0264.30a.

47. Han'guk Chǒngsin Munhwa Yǒn'guwǒn, ed., *Sama pangmok* [Licentiate examination rosters; hereafter SP], CD-ROM (Seoul, 1997).
48. Song Chun-ho, *Yijo saengwǒn-chinsasi ūi yǒn'gu* [A study on Yi-dynasty classics-licentiate examinations] (Seoul, 1970), 48–49.
49. Park, *Between Dreams and Reality*, 128–30, 167–68.
50. For an English-language monograph arguing that many early Chosǒn statesmen viewed Confucianism as the official ideology and rigorously applied its tenets to the social reality of Korea, see Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge, 1992), 89–128.
51. SI, 2956.1887.12.86a.
52. During my field research in 1995–96 in South Korea, an elderly man who grew up in a farming village in Puyǒ County, South Ch'ungch'ǒng Province, recalled that in the early 1930s when he was a child, neighbors referred to his grandfather, Pak T'ae-sik (1855–1933), as “Five Guards General Pak” (Pak Owijang). Pak Pyǒng-hae, interview by author, Seoul, South Korea, 5 October 1995. I will discuss Pak's family in greater detail toward the end of this article.
53. Eugene Y. Park, “Military Examinations in the Late Chosǒn, 1700–1863: Elite Substratification and Non-Elite Accommodation,” *Korean Studies* 25.1 (2001), 8–29.
54. SI, 2809.1875.13a, 2834.1877.21b.
55. SP; HMMTS, s.v. “Yun Chong-ŭi”; and *Mansǒng taedongbo* [A comprehensive genealogy of ten thousand surnames] (Keijō, 1931–33), 1.257a, 260b–261a, 268a.
56. Kim In-gǒl, “Chosǒn hugi hyangch'on sahoe kujo ūi pyǒndong” [Structural change in late Chosǒn rural society], in *Pyǒn T'ae-sǒp Paksa hwagap kinyǒm sahak nonch'ong* [Collection of historical studies in commemoration of Dr. Pyǒn T'ae-sǒp's sixtieth birthday], ed. Pyǒn T'ae-sǒp Paksa Hwagap Kinyǒm Sahak Nonch'ong Kanhaeng Wiwǒnhoe (Seoul, 1985), 767–92; Pyǒng-uk An, “The Growth of Popular Consciousness and Popular Movement in the 19th Century: Focus on the *Hyanghoe* and *Millan*,” *Korea Journal* 28 (April 1988): 4–19; and Kim Hyǒn-yǒng, “Chosǒn hugi Namwǒn chibang sajak ūi hyangch'on chibae e kwanhan yǒn'gu” [A study on aristocratic local control in late Chosǒn Namwǒn region] (Ph.D. dissertation, Sǒul Taehakkyo, 1993), 109–45.
57. Fujiya Kawashima, “A Study of the *Hyangan*: Kin Group and Aristocratic Localism in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Korean Countryside,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 5 (1984): 20–24; Song Chun-ho, “Sinbunje rŭl t'onghaesǒ pon Chosǒn hugi sahoe ūi sǒngkyǒk ūi il myǒn” [A facet of the nature of late Chosǒn society as seen through status system], *Yǒksa hakpo* 133 (March 1992): 1–62; and Chǒng Chin-yǒng, “Chosǒn hugi tong-sǒng ch'ollak ūi hyǒng-sǒng kwa paltal” [Formation and development of single-surname villages in the late Chosǒn period], *Yǒksa pip'yǒng* 28 (Spring 1995): 335–43.
58. On the relatively low regard for martial virtue among the local Kyǒngsang aristocracy, see *Chosǒn wangjo sillok* [Veritable records of the Chosǒn dynasty] (Seoul, 1955–58), vol. 29, *Kwanghaegun ilgi* [Daily records of Kwanghaegun], 130.27a; and vol. 46, *Chǒngjo sillok* [Veritable records of Chǒngjo], 39.27a.

59. Eugene Y. Park, "Local Elites, Descent, and Status Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Korea: Some Observations on the County Notable Listings in the *Chosŏn Hwanyŏ Sŭngnam*," in *Han'guksa e issŏsŏ chibang kwa chungang* [Provinces and the center in Korean history], ed. Chŏng Tu-hŭi and Edward J. Shultz (Seoul, 2003), 210–20.

60. Actually, Kaesŏng did not lose its status as the dynastic capital to Seoul until 1394, that is two years after the Koryŏ-Chosŏn dynastic change. The court returned to Kaesŏng in 1398, but beginning in 1405, Seoul remained the dynastic capital for the next five centuries.

61. O Sŏng, "Chŏngch'ijŏk soeji Kaesŏng kwa kwagŏ" [Politically excluded locale of Kaesŏng and the examination], in *Han'guksa e issŏsŏ chibang kwa chungang*, 227–28.

62. For an English-language study first suggesting this pattern, see Mark Peterson, "Hyangban and Merchant in Kaesŏng," *Korea Journal* 19 (December 1979): 4–15.

63. According to the local notable listings in the gazetteer published in 1855, the generalship was held by 2 out of 114 civil examination passers, 49 out of 2,136 military examination passers, and 15 out of 149 protection appointees (having neither a civil nor a military examination degree). Cho Pyŏng-gi et al., *Chunggyŏnggi* [Kaesŏng gazetteer] (1855), 10.1a–53b, reprinted in *Chosŏn sidae sach'an ūpchi* [Privately compiled Chosŏn-period local gazetteers] (Seoul, 1989), 5.254–358.

64. KS, 3.92b–93a.

65. KS, 8.20b.

66. For example, see Kyung Moon Hwang, "From the Dirt to Heaven: Northern Koreans in the Chosŏn and Early Modern Eras," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62.1 (June 2002): 135–78.

67. O Su-ch'ang, *Chosŏn hugi P'yŏngan-do sahoe palchŏn yŏn'gu* [A study on social development in late Chosŏn Pyŏngan Province] (Seoul, 2002), 210–32, 331–41.

68. KS, 5.32b.

69. Kang Sŏk-hwa, "Chosŏn hugi Hamgyŏng-do ūi chiyŏk palchŏn kwa pukpang yŏng'to ūisik" [Regional development and awareness of northern territory in late Chosŏn Hamgyŏng Province] (Ph.D. dissertation, Sŏul Taehakkyo, 1996), 217–21; and O Su-ch'ang, 99–126, 210–32, 331–41.

70. Kim Ku, *Wŏnbon Paekpŏm ilchi: Paekpŏm Kim Ku chasŏjŏn* [Original edition *Paekpŏm ilchi: an autobiography of Paekpŏm Kim Ku*] (Seoul, 1989), 127–28.

71. Yun Ch'i-ho, *Yun Ch'i-ho kukhanmun ilgi* [Korean-Chinese diary of Yun Ch'i-ho], trans. Song Pyŏng-gi (Seoul, 1975), 1.157.

72. Deuchler, 150–55, 267–73. Including the book cited, some English-language works translate the Korean term *sŏl* as "secondary child" while rendering *ch'ŏp* as "secondary wife." I prefer the more commonly used English terms—"illegitimate child" and "concubine" since they convey more strongly the discriminatory aspects of these institutions in Chosŏn society.

73. Park, "Military Examinations in the Late Chosŏn," 26–27.

74. Yi Nam-hŭi, 327–33; and Yi Hun-sang, *Chosŏn hugi ū hyangni* [The late Chosŏn local functionaries] (Seoul, 1990), 193–203.

75. Yi Sŏng-mu and Ch'oe Chin-ok; and Ch'ogye-Miryang *Pyŏn-ssi taedongbo*, 5.148.

76. They were the Kwangsan Kim, Yŏhŭng Min, and P'ungch'ŏn Im, and all appear in a highly selective genealogy of early twentieth century recording the most prestigious families. *Mansŏng taedongbo*, 1.158b, 1.162a, 2.149b–150a, 2.151b; and “Umgwan sebo” [Genealogy of protection appointees], manuscript at Changsŏgak Library (K2-1776), Han'gukhak Chungang Yŏn'guwŏn, n.d., 2.28a.

77. *CI*, vol. 7, entry for lunar 1880.12.28; *Miryang Pak-ssi Kyujŏnggong-p'a sebo* [A genealogy of the Kyujŏnggong branch of the Miryang Pak] (Seoul, 1923), 1.65a, 13.11a–b, 32.38a–39b; Chu Ja Cho, telephone interview by author, Chicago, Illinois, 27 September 2004; and Pak Yŏng-il, telephone interview by author, Taejŏn, South Korea, 4 October 2004.

78. *Kwanbo* [The official gazette], *Hooe* [Extra], 14 February 1903; *SI*, 2898:31b–32a, 85b, 2899:14a–b; *CI*, vol. 9, entry for lunar 1882.04.05; *Ilŏngnok*, 12816-0498.12b–15a; *Yŏnan Yi-ssi P'ansagong-p'a taeho* [A comprehensive genealogy of the P'ansa-gong branch of the Yŏnan Yi] (Seoul, 2002), 1.927; and Pak Pyŏng-hae.

79. *Sŏngwŏllok*, 567–68, 988–90; *Tanyang U-ssi taedongbo* [A comprehensive genealogy of the Tanyang U] (Taejŏn, 1966), 1.345, 1.479, 2.394–95, 4.410; *Kwanbo*, 28 November 1899; *SP*; *Naju Kim-ssi taedongbo* [A comprehensive genealogy of the Naju Kim] (Seoul, 2001), 1.13, 1.78–79, 2.3–6, 2.606–07; *Yŏnan Yi-ssi P'ansagong-p'a taeho*, 1.927; Pak Kŭndong, telephone interview by author, Ansŏng, South Korea, 13 September 2004; Chu Ja Cho; Pak Yŏng-il; and the household registration record of Pak T'ae-sik (Hongsan-myŏn, Puyŏ-gun, Ch'ungch'ŏng-namdo, ca. 1930), personal possession.

80. Pak Pyŏng-hae.

81. For a recent English-language discussion, see Kyung Moon Hwang, *Beyond Birth: Social Status in the Emergence of Modern Korea* (Cambridge, 2004), 42–105.

82. Indeed by the 1890s, Seoul *chungin* and other nonelites of means used political organizations such as the Independence Club to voice their opinions on building a modern nation state as well as to influence decision-making process dominated by aristocratic officials. Chin-Oh Chu, “The Independence Club’s Conceptions of Nationalism and the Modern State,” in *Landlords, Peasants, and Intellectuals in Modern Korea*, ed. Pang and Shin, 67–77.

83. In fact, many such leaders, who were active in the Independence Club from 1896 to 1898, advocated a strong monarchy rather than stressing a representative assembly. *Ibid.*, 76–77. Yi T'ae-jin, who has done an extensive research on the nature of late Chosŏn political philosophy and its modern manifestation, suggests that in pursuing reform agendas, Kojong seems to have trusted talented nonaristocrats more than those from prominent aristocratic families. Yi T'ae-jin, interview by author, Seoul, South Korea, 3 August 2001.

