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THE MILITARY AND  
SOUTH KOREAN SOCIETY

*edited by*  
Young-Key Kim-Renaud  
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# WAR AND PEACE IN PREMODERN KOREA: INSTITUTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

EUGENE Y. PARK

While societies have espoused various understandings of war's place in human existence, two stand out among the well-known Western formulations. In the early nineteenth century, Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), the Prussian general and influential military thinker, saw war as an extension of politics. In contrast, Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937), German army strategist and chief-of-staff during World War I, viewed peace as a mere interval between wars. In Ludendorff's theory of "total war," politics serve the conduct of war, for which the nation's entire physical and moral forces should be mobilized.<sup>1</sup> These ideas represent extreme positions on war in the modern West, but both, as well as myriad positions in between, arose in an environment that idealized the individual of martial prowess through images such as a medieval knight.<sup>2</sup>

In East Asian societies warfare's role was traditionally even more limited than under Clausewitz's model. Robert L. O'Connell argues that war as we know it developed out of the varied patterns of interaction between the steppe nomads and sedentary agricultural peoples of Eurasia. In light of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian patterns, he argues that the traditionally negative attitude toward war in premodern China was linked to the relatively late introduction of the violent methods of steppe warfare, which the Chinese continued to regard as an abnormal state of existence—one that disrupted their peaceful agricultural society of bygone days, particularly as extolled by Con-

fucians. The negative military ethos was solidified by Chinese sociopolitical practices that kept the male population focused on a more scholarly ethos. This was a rather unique phenomenon in the premodern world, as most societies instead emphasized the mutually reinforcing poles of war and religion by casting men into the roles of soldier and priest.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, premodern East Asian societies shared common attitudes toward war. In both China and Korea, the expanding influence of Confucianism not only stressed morality over Legalism or militarism as the ruler's preferred means of governance<sup>4</sup> but also acculturated the aristocracy to distance itself from martial virtue. Physical combat skills no longer constituted a defining element in the self-identity of the aristocracy. Of course, centuries of warfare in medieval Japan and its warrior elite, the samurai, make Japan seem like an anomaly in East Asia, but the Japanese warrior's code of conduct, the *bushidō*, came of age during the peaceful Tokugawa period when an idle, demoralized samurai class reflected on its calling.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, official portraits of Tokugawa *shōgun* and their predecessors always depict them wearing court dress rather than armor, as if these supreme generals had to legitimize their positions as the emperor's chiefs-of-staff rather than as warriors.<sup>6</sup> These practices put premodern Japan more in line with China or Korea than Europe, where even in modern times, rulers, aristocrats, and statesmen have donned military garb and carried a sword, even if not fan-

cying themselves knights.

When King Kojong (r. 1864-1907) of Korea took up the Prussian uniform and sword upon his assumption of imperial title in 1897, he was expressing an aspiration to make Korea as militarily strong as a modern Western nation. By then, the Korean military had undergone a millennium of transformation from that of effective armies of the Koguryō (37 BCE, trad.-668 CE) or Silla (57 BCE, trad.-935 CE) kingdoms to the Chosŏn dynasty's (1392-1910) barely functional fighting force. In attempting to explain this transition, Korea observers have investigated military organization, performance against foreign invaders, and even the seemingly intangible "national energy." In particular, pioneering studies on military organization have laid the foundation for a basic understanding of the Korean chain of command, details of personnel recruitment, and various military units' political and military functions in addition to more specific aspects of the premodern Korean military organization.<sup>7</sup> All the same, existing works lack the kind of overarching framework utilized by many studies examining other societies' military traditions and practices.<sup>8</sup>

Meant to be not so much a detailed comprehensive study as a preliminary set of observations, this paper argues that several long-term forces reshaped Korea's military experience in premodern times. Above all, during the millennium separating the Three Kingdoms and the late Chosŏn periods, Korean society settled more firmly into a sedentary, agrarian mode of existence, while the main external source of security threat shifted from sedentary native Chinese states to nomadic, semi-nomadic, or maritime powers.<sup>9</sup> Also, with the expanding influence of Confucianism, the relative importance of martial virtue as an essential part of aristocratic culture decreased, and the aristocracy relegated much of military activity to the realms of popular imagination. To be sure, the aristocracy continued to exercise real control

over the military organization, but military service became a vehicle for limited social mobility for the general population rather than a crucial identifier for elites. This paper traces these developments phase by phase, through the aristocratic armies of the ancient period, the early Koryŏ professional army, the conscript army of late Koryŏ-early Chosŏn periods, and the mixed salaried-conscript army of late Chosŏn.<sup>10</sup>

### Aristocratic Armies of the Ancient Period

The aristocracy of the Three Kingdoms period played a leading role in martial activities. When the walled town states coalesced into confederated kingdoms that in turn grew into larger, more centralized kingdoms, aristocrats loyal to the king conducted warfare. Continuing the earlier practice of tribal armies who had trained and fought together, aristocrats not only commanded troops and served as officers during battle but also honed their martial skills even in times of peace. This system functioned well, as ancient Korean armies were—making good use of their logistical advantages—able to fight off numerically superior enemies such as the invading armies of Sui and Tang China. What follows is a more detailed look at some salient characteristics of ancient Korean warfare.

Reflecting earlier armies that fought under their tribal leaders, aristocrats played an integral role in the armies of ancient Korea, particularly at the commander and officer ranks. In the best-known cases from the Koguryŏ and Silla kingdoms, aristocratic families not only dominated court politics but also formed the backbone of each kingdom's army on the battlefield. Owing loyalty to the king, each aristocrat in turn counted on the loyalty of his kinsmen, retainers, and slaves. In 645 the Koguryŏ court fielded a mixed Koguryŏ-Mohe army of 150,000 commanded by two men bearing the royal surname to relieve a

Koguryŏ fortress under Tang siege.<sup>11</sup> Even if this figure were inflated and the Koguryŏ fighters numbered less than half this number, the troop strength at hand strongly suggests that ancient Korean states were capable of mobilizing a large segment of the general population for battle. Moreover, extant histories such as the *History of the Three Kingdoms* (*Samguk sagi*) and the *Memoabilia of the Three Kingdoms* (*Samguk yusa*) show that martial virtue was an important part of an aristocratic young man's education, if not to the image of an ideal man.<sup>12</sup>

Many Korea observers tend to interpret the ancient military organization's effectiveness as a manifestation of ancient Koreans' courage or strong national energy while overlooking the ancient states' adept use of the climate, terrain, and fortifications to their advantage. At the time, major invasions against Korea originated in China's Central Plain and generally relied on land routes as maritime travel straight across the Yellow Sea posed technological challenges.<sup>13</sup> A land invasion, however, had to negotiate forbidding, densely forested areas during a brief, month-long period between the end of a long, bitter winter and the months of heavy summer rain.<sup>14</sup> Although not shying away from frontal assaults against the Chinese,<sup>15</sup> the Koguryŏ defenders relied on their more or less self-sufficient fortresses, being less dependent on agriculture than the Koreans would later become.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, a Chinese invasion force faced a dilemma: taking on the fortresses one by one prolonged the campaign, but bypassing resistant fortresses and heading straight to the capital, P'yŏngyang, jeopardized the already overstretched supply line. The costly Sui Grand Canal extension project in 605-10 was a massive, furious effort to ameliorate this problem by providing safer and more efficient grain transport, but ultimately what enabled the Tang to defeat Koguryŏ in 668 was a strategic alliance with the latter's peninsular enemy, Silla.<sup>17</sup>

The Silla army, too, was quite effective before its disintegration in the ninth century. After destroying Koguryŏ and Paekche, the Silla and Tang forces fought each other over control of the newly gained territories, and Silla defeated the Tang in both land and sea battles before the latter's withdrawal.<sup>18</sup> By the late seventh century, the Tang had come to terms with Silla and in 733 even launched a joint attack against Parhae (698-926), Koguryŏ's successor state.<sup>19</sup> For the most part, though, Parhae, Silla, and the Tang maintained peaceful relations, and in the ninth century, the main security threat to Silla lay within. When the aristocracy of the Silla capital, Kyŏngju, became mired in violent internal strife over the throne, the Silla state lost control over its outlying areas. Outside the capital, increasingly autonomous regional strongmen controlled their own castles, farming land, and armies of locally conscripted peasants. By the early tenth century, armies of the earlier era had weakened in Silla and Parhae, both of which succumbed to new foes; the semi-nomadic Khitans destroyed Parhae and Silla surrendered to a newly independent state in Korea, the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392), founded by regional warlords who reunified the peninsula in 936.

### The Early Koryŏ Professional Army

State-supported professional soldiers performing military duties on a hereditary basis were the mainstay of the early Koryŏ military organization. Along with military men from central aristocratic and local functionary families, hereditary professional soldiers could rise through the ranks and become military officials who, along with civil officials, constituted the so-called "two orders," or *yangban*. The military's role was essential for the early Koryŏ state. In addition to repelling invading Khitan armies, such military men came to wield enough power to mount a successful coup in 1170, beginning a military rule that

lasted a century. All the same, though invaders faced stiff Korean resistance—especially in siege warfare—the long period of peace lasting through the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the devastating Mongol invasions in the early thirteenth century destroyed what remained of early Koryŏ military organization.

The military's relatively strong performance record during the early Koryŏ period owed to the professional army system.<sup>20</sup> After reunifying the peninsula, the Koryŏ state consolidated its control of regional strongmen and their resources.<sup>21</sup> Decades of warfare had turned the local warlords' peasant conscripts into professional fighters, and they now provided military service to the Koryŏ government on a hereditary basis. Receiving regular compensation from the state, soldier households formed the backbone of early Koryŏ military organization.<sup>22</sup> As such, the Koryŏ army faced an external enemy radically different from the earlier Chinese armies in the semi-nomadic Khitan invaders that controlled Manchuria and were less constrained by the logistical problems that had limited the effectiveness of the native Chinese dynasties' military campaigns against Korea. Nonetheless, the Koryŏ army performed well during the wars against the Khitans and used the terrain, espionage, and their fortresses to their advantage. The crushing defeat the Korean defenders delivered to the Khitan invaders in 1019 not only earned Koryŏ relative peace and prosperity for the following hundred years but also enhanced its stature in East Asia.<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, as the early Koryŏ professional military organization broke down during the two centuries following their victory over the Khitan and the Koreans had difficulty defending their borders against Jurchen raiders, the military's political stature increased.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the civil branch of central officialdom, which increasingly relied on the examination and protection appointment systems, the military branch continued to accept

those who had risen through the ranks as common soldiers or officers. Accordingly, the civil aristocracy held the military in low regard, but their success in fighting off the Khitans and factionalism among the aristocracy in the twelfth century enhanced the military's role as a political arbitrator. Tired of discriminatory treatment at the hands of civil officials, military leaders engineered a coup in 1170 that commenced a century-long military rule. After initial infighting within the military, political stability followed the establishment of what amounted to the Ch'oe house shogunate (1196-1258). Under Ch'oe military rule, the sociopolitical barriers that had previously separated civil and military families broke down, and what emerged was a *yangban* aristocracy producing officeholders in both branches of the government.<sup>25</sup>

Could military rule have persisted, as it did in premodern Japan, had the Mongols not subjugated Korea in 1258? While it is not clear whether the fact that the military assumed power at roughly the same time in Korea and Japan reflects some similarities in both countries' pre-Confucian social practices vis-à-vis succession, inheritance, and marriage,<sup>26</sup> the Koryŏ military's record against nomadic Mongols was not bad. The Koryŏ army was one of the few that attempted an offensive against the Mongols who were more used to destroying defenders wherever they went.<sup>27</sup> In the long run, though, what proved to be more effective against the Mongols, an enemy that found their scorched earth policy less deadly against the Koreans than with the Chinese, was Korea's strengths in siege warfare. While the Mongols devastated the countryside and slaughtered the population that could not flee to fortresses or islands, Koryŏ forces put up a fierce resistance that made an aged Mongol officer note that, although he had seen many cities fall to Mongol might, he had never seen anything like the way a Koryŏ fortress held out.<sup>28</sup> The decisive factor that spurred

the Koryŏ court to accept Mongol suzerainty was court intrigue between the king and his civil aristocracy that decided to use the Mongol power to put an end to the military rule.

### The Late Koryŏ-Early Chosŏn Conscript Army

Both the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods saw the rise and fall of state armies based on the principle of universal military service. In rejecting Mongol suzerainty and fighting various foreign invaders in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the Koryŏ state relied on generals who commanded private armies of peasant conscript soldiers.<sup>29</sup> Yi Sŏng-gye (1335-1408), who toppled the Koryŏ and founded the Chosŏn dynasty in 1392, exemplified the costs of reliance on private military forces. Gaining fame and respect as a successful battlefield commander, Yi attracted a following of military men and more radical reformists among Confucian scholar-officials. After the dynastic change, the early Chosŏn state and statesmen brought such private armies under the government's control and by the mid-fifteenth century had established a centralized military organization where aristocrats and non-elites alike performed military duty. As such, the early Chosŏn army was effective in campaigns against foreign enemies, but decades of general peace starting in the late fifteenth century prompted the state to allow taxpayers to substitute military obligations with a military cloth tax that paid for the expenses of the smaller standing army. Although Chosŏn military commanders such as the famous Yi Sun-shin (1545-98) achieved one victory after another against numerically superior enemy forces, the sixteenth-century Chosŏn military organization did not fare as well.

The early Chosŏn period was a continuation of the late Koryŏ's private armies consisting primarily of peasant conscripts that provided the bulk of manpower. During the final decades of

Koryŏ, private armies led by politically powerful central officials were effective in fighting off foreign invaders, including the Red Turban, Jurchen, and wakŏ armies, as well as constituting a formidable invasion force of some 38,000 against Ming China.<sup>30</sup> Given the role private armies played in the fall of the Koryŏ, these private troops posed a serious threat to the new Chosŏn state pursuing centralization.<sup>31</sup> Finally in 1400, the government brought all private armies under the government's control.<sup>32</sup> While extolling the imagined Confucian ideal of ancient China where peasants served rotational defensive duties, by the mid-fifteenth century early Chosŏn policymakers had established a new army founded on the principle of universal military service.<sup>33</sup> Every taxpayer provided military service, with each active duty serviceman provisioned by two or three support taxpayers. Even the members of aristocracy ostensibly performed military service, often in special elite or ceremonial guard units.<sup>34</sup> Maintained along these lines, the early Chosŏn military organization was effective in dealing with its main enemies, the wakŏ and Jurchen raiders.

In a repeat of the earlier Koryŏ pattern, however, the long period of peace spanning the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century facilitated the dissolution of the early Chosŏn military organization. In the late fifteenth century, aristocratic men began avoiding military duty. Although I have yet to find a Chosŏn legal code stating that the *yangban* were exempt from military service, it seems that they came to view their avoidance as a part of their exemption from taxes in general—the prerogative which they rationalized in the context of their self-identity as scholar-officials. Their withdrawal from the military arena was also part of a general trend wherein most taxpayers stopped performing real military duties. Commoners drafted as infantrymen or marines actually used bolts of cloth, received from their support taxpayers, to get out of their active du-

ties by hiring substitutes. Usually a private slave or a vagabond, these substitutes increasingly performed corvée labor instead of military service.<sup>35</sup> In order to maintain a smaller, salaried military, the government imposed a military cloth tax on all adult males in 1537, but widespread corruption among the government agencies and middlemen involved in administering the levy led to deterioration in state finances in general and in the army's effectiveness in particular.

The breakdown of early Chosŏn military organization resulted in the generally poor battlefield performance records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the late sixteenth century, mounting Jurchen military pressure in the north compelled the government to hold frequent large-scale military examinations and offer the previously excluded illegitimate sons and slaves conditional permission to compete. In principle geared toward selecting new potential military officials, the military examination became an expedient measure for soldiers manning border garrisons, since the standing army's overall troop strength had dwindled.<sup>36</sup> According to one estimate, the number of battleworthy soldiers available on the eve of the massive Japanese invasion in 1592 was less than one thousand.<sup>37</sup> While Yi Sun-shin's navy performed brilliantly and Kwŏn Yul (1537-99) provided diligent leadership for land troops, both commanders constantly struggled with manpower shortages and court factionalism throughout the Korean-Japanese war (1592-1598). Without reviewing the scholarship about these leaders in detail, Yi in particular is worthy in the sense that he made excellent use of prior preparation, terrain, surprise tactics, intelligence gathering, and even psychology vis-à-vis his own soldiers as well as his enemies. Unfortunately for Korea, he was more an exception than the norm; most of his military colleagues could not overcome their cultural condescension toward the Japanese and refused to take the enemy more se-

riously. The 1592 Japanese invasion proved a rude awakening.

### The Mixed Salaried-Conscript Army of the Late Chosŏn

The late Chosŏn state maintained an army no bigger than what was dictated by internal security, and most personnel came from non-elite backgrounds.<sup>38</sup> During the Korean-Japanese war, however, the Chosŏn government began implementing measures to strengthen the military, which soon came to include more professional soldiers in addition to conscripts, although both were supported by the state's military cloth tax and other revenues. Besides maintaining a paid army of mostly commoner soldiers, another salient characteristic of the late Chosŏn military organization was the inclusion of formerly excluded slaves in the armed forces. This reflected, for the most part, the rigid social hierarchy in the sense that ascriptive status largely determined how far a soldier or an officer could advance. Nonetheless, military service enabled non-elites to enhance their social status to a limited degree and inspired popular imaginings of what someone with martial prowess could achieve in life. Thus, the late Chosŏn military organization was more about serving the internal needs of society than potentially fielding combat-ready troops against foreign forces.

In general, the late Chosŏn military organization was a byproduct of internal changes in the levy system and external stimuli in the form of Japanese and Manchu invasions. These incursions finally persuaded the generally conservative policymakers of the power of new technology, and a musket test and other changes were introduced to the military examination.<sup>39</sup> The government also set up the Military Training Administration (*Hullyŏn Togam*), in 1593, to train

the so-called “three skills army” (*samsubyōng*)—musketeers, bowmen, and close-combat “killers” (*salsu*: swordsmen, pikemen, and spearmen)—in accordance with the military strategies of Ming China’s Qi Jiguang (1528-88).<sup>40</sup> The subsequent establishment of four other special military units by 1682 created the so-called Five Military Divisions (*Ogunyōng*), which functioned as the capital army in late Chosŏn.<sup>41</sup> Unlike the Military Training Administration soldiers who were professionals paid by the state, the rest remained rotating-duty conscripts provisioned by taxpayer support.<sup>42</sup> In the provinces, the government set up the *sogo* (Ch. *shuwu*) army based, again, on Qi Jiguang’s strategies relying on small units. The *shuwu* was a hierarchical organization incorporating men trained in firearms into regular troops. Self-supported, the late *sogo* army drew heavily from non-elites. Whereas commoner recruits tended to be those who could not buy their way out of military obligation, illegitimate son and slave recruits received incentives. After their terms of service, illegitimate sons became eligible for the state examination, while public slaves received manumission. In contrast, private slaves were recruited by compensating their owners with ranks or substitute slaves, and the recruits themselves received no special reward.<sup>43</sup>

As illustrated clearly by the military examination system, the late Chosŏn army was a faithful reflection of the existing social hierarchy, although it still allowed non-elites to enhance their social status to a degree as well as influencing expressions of status aspirations in popular culture.<sup>44</sup> In the late Chosŏn period, increasing domination of the civil branch of the central government by a small number of aristocratic families based in Seoul led to the political marginalization of other *yangban*. Through the military examination, some among the latter transformed themselves into a military aristocracy that functioned as a junior political partner of the civil aristocracy.

Some southern local *yangban* also chose military careers as they struggled to maintain a presence in the central political arena. Despite the differentiation process, however, the central civil official, central military official, and southern local *yangban* families continued to recognize one another as bona fide members of the aristocracy. Meanwhile, local elites of other regions, as well as non-elites, began to participate en masse in the military examinations. The degree satisfied their aspirations for higher social status and helped them win recognition in their social circles, but it did not lead to political power or membership in the aristocracy. The late Chosŏn military examination assumed the dual role of a political institution guaranteeing a place in the power structure for a segment of the aristocracy and a sociocultural medium releasing tensions engendered by the rigid status hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> Various cultural genres such as vernacular narrative fiction (*sosŏl*), *p’ansori*, masked dance, and shaman rituals sustained a unique space where military men of even humble backgrounds achieved the status of popular heroes.

With its main roles confined to satisfying non-elites’ status aspirations in society and performing limited security functions for the state, the late Chosŏn military organization was poorly prepared to face the forces of imperialism in the late nineteenth century. This is evident in a famous work on military strategies compiled by Cho U-sŏk (1782-1863) in 1855—just eleven years before the 1866 French incursion. Hailing from the military aristocracy, Cho demonstrated his knowledge of military administration, weaponry, tactics, and diplomacy in his treatise, the *Mubi yoram* (Essential observations on military preparedness).<sup>46</sup> As he selected materials from Chinese military texts from the ancient Warring States period down to the late Ming period and diligently adopted them to suit Korea’s needs, his discussion of European weapons—cannon, for

example—was limited to facts known to the Chinese in the mid-seventeenth century. In fact, the “red barbarian cannons” (*hongip’o*) the Koreans used against the French invaders in 1866 and the Americans in 1871 dated from late Ming when the Dutch first manufactured them.<sup>47</sup> Overall, Cho did not address the inferiority of Korean weapons in comparison to contemporary Western firearms nor did he advocate a whole-scale conversion of archers and spearmen to musketeers, the refurbishment of weapons, copying or buying foreign weapons, or extending invitations to foreign military specialists.

### Final Assessment

Although constituting just one among many sets of factors that conditioned Chosŏn Korea’s response to Western imperialism,<sup>48</sup> various theoretical and practical characteristics of the late Chosŏn military reflected several major changes since the ancient period. Outlined in this paper are: (1) increased dependence on agriculture over semi-nomadic or hunting activities; (2) external security threats issuing from nomadic, semi-nomadic, or maritime invaders instead of sedentary Chinese states; (3) the Confucian state and aristocracy’s relegation of military force to the least preferred means of governance; (4) transference of martial virtue and military activities from markers of the aristocratic way of life to aspects of non-elite soldiers’ military training regimes; and (5) the emergence of the military as a socio-cultural space where non-elites strive to enhance their status in both reality and fantasy.

These shifts had both positive and negative dimensions vis-à-vis Korea’s historical trajectory, if a historian can make value judgments. Seen positively, one could argue that premodern Korean and Chinese culture came to disdain human activities involving combat or killing and instead honored scholarship, education, and moral cul-

tivation to a degree unseen in the premodern West or Japan. In addition, Koreans historically implemented institutional safeguards for containing militarism through the bureaucracy.<sup>49</sup> In this light, we may interpret the recurring motif wherein after the ancient period, a military organization tended to break down during a long period of peace.

All the same, the shifts outlined above were also about an emerging aristocratic attitude that deemed military service—along with any other obligations not linked to scholarship or office holding—more appropriate for non-elites. This development certainly was helpful to Korea when it came under imperialist pressures, and the end-of-the-dynasty modernization program sought not only to build a Western-style military organization but also foster the Western notion of noblesse oblige. Derailed by Japanese colonization, the concept that elites should set a good example is only now beginning to gain strength in South Korea, although its current application seems limited to the public scrutiny of a politician’s family members’ military service record and citizenship status.<sup>50</sup>

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, fifteenth edition, s.v.

"Ludendorff, Erich."

<sup>2</sup> Frances Gies, *The Knight in History*, 1-6, 195-207.

<sup>3</sup> See Robert L. O'Connell, *Ride of the Second Horseman: The Birth and Death of War*, 159-76. In effect, he highlights the Native Americans' stylized, ceremonial attitude toward war as proof that it was the Eurasian nomad's brutal and chillingly effective tactics that led to the paraphernalia of warfare with which we are so familiar: elites in chariots, peasant foot soldiers in mass formation, cavalry charges,

walled cities, siege engines, pillaging and sacking, slavery, and conquest. Many of these concepts were almost entirely absent in most Native American societies, according to O'Connell. *Ibid.*, 177-200.

<sup>4</sup> John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties of the Chinese Military Experience," 6-9.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Bolitho, "The Myth of the Samurai," 6.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Goble, "Visions of an Emperor," 119. The consensus now is that what was once regarded as a portrait of Ashikaga Takauji on horseback is the depiction of someone else.

<sup>7</sup> Landmark studies of monographic length include: Yi Ki-baek (Kibaik Lee), *Koryŏ pyŏngjesa yŏn'gu*; Yukkun Sagwan Hakkyo Han'guk Kunsu Yŏn'gusil, ed., *Han'guk kunjesa: kŏnse-Chosŏn chŏn'gi p'yŏn*; Ch'a Mun-sŏp, *Chosŏn sidae kunje yŏn'gu*; Yukkun Sagwan Hakkyo Han'guk Kunsu Yŏn'gusil, ed., *Han'guk kunjesa: kŏndae-Chosŏn hugi p'yŏn*; and Yi T'ae-jin, *Chosŏn hugi ūi chŏngch'i wa kunyŏngje pyŏnchŏn*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Victor Davis Hanson analyzes relevant socioeconomic institutions and political cultures of ancient Greece in tracing the origins of Western military ethos. See Victor Davis Hanson, *The Wars of the Ancient Greeks: And Their Invention of Western Military Culture*, 17-27, 204-07. Other similar studies that I found helpful for this study are: Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society*, 7-160; Angeliki E. Laiou, "On Just War in Byzantium," 153-77; Fairbank, "Introduction," 1-26; Winston W. Lo, "The Self-Image of the Chinese Military in Historical Perspective," 1-24; and Bolitho, 2-9.

<sup>9</sup> In a macroscopic account, Gari Ledyard identifies distinct phases and characteristics of each phase in the history of interactions among mainland Northeast Asian peoples. According to him, during the Koryŏ period, Inner Asians such as Khitans, Jurchens, and Mongols became dominant while the native Chinese states were on a defensive. See Gari Ledyard, "Yin and Yang in the China-Manchuria-Korea Triangle," 313-53.

<sup>10</sup> This periodization is a modified version of that proposed by Yi Ki-baek. See Kibaik Lee, "Korea: The Military Tradition," 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> *Samguk sagi* 21:8b.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, 6-13; and Vladimir Tikhonov, "Hwarang Organization: Its Functions and Ethics," 311-35. In the case of famous Silla general, Kim Yu-sin (595-673), his biography, which is a sympathetic account of his life, stresses his sense of loyalty to the state, as well as great courage and martial prowess that he marshaled to that

end. See *Samguk sagi* 41:2b-3a.

<sup>13</sup> Until the eighth century, Chinese water travel technology was concentrated in river and canal craft. As early as the sixth century, the Chinese were building some river and canal ships of up to five decks, but extant records suggest that through the seventh century, the Chinese relied on foreign ships for oceangoing transport. It was only between the ninth and twelfth centuries that the Chinese developed their own seagoing vessels. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 4 Part III, 451-54, 460-61.

<sup>14</sup> John C. Jamieson, "The *Samguk Sagi* and the Unification Wars," 32-34.

<sup>15</sup> Attempting to aid a Koguryŏ fortress under Tang siege in 645, Ko Yŏn-su and Ko Hye-jin, both apparently Koguryŏ aristocrats if not royals, commanded a mixed Koguryŏ-Mohe army of 150,000 in a massive assault against Tang troops but suffered a disastrous defeat. *Samguk sagi* 21:8b-11a.

<sup>16</sup> Koreans did not acquire various techniques for more intensive farming, such as multiple-cropping methods, until the late Koryŏ period, and even the rice paddies so naturally associated with the Korean rural landscape did not become more widespread until the late Chosŏn. Yi Tae-jin, *Han'guk sahoesa yŏn'gu: nongŏp kisul paltal kwa sahoe pyŏndong*, 92-106.

<sup>17</sup> The Sui emperor may deliberately have postponed 612's massive campaign against Koguryŏ until the completion of a key phase of the Grand Canal project in 609—linking the heart of China to Beijing. Arthur F. Wright, "The Sui Dynasty (581-617)," 144.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed English-language study of the events of this period, see John C. Jamieson, "Collapse of the T'ang-Silla Alliance: Chinese and Korean Accounts Compared," 83-94.

<sup>19</sup> *Samguk sagi* 8:16a.

<sup>20</sup> Some may object to my use of the arguably loaded term, "professional," to refer to an occupation group in a premodern society. Interestingly, though, the early Koryŏ army more or less satisfies all three conditions that a pioneering study identifies as requirements for a professional military system: (1) the control of war-making functions by a "reasonably powerful" and centralized state; (2) the standardization of war-making techniques; and (3) the existence of social groups self-consciously rendering military service to the state. See G. Gerke Teitler, *The Genesis of the Professional Officers' Corps*, 6-8.

<sup>21</sup> John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 16-21, 37-38.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, 14-20.

<sup>23</sup> This was especially true in the eyes of Song Chinese who had not been militarily successful against the Khitans and sought in vain to forge a military alliance with Koryŏ, which wisely stayed out of the Khitan-Song conflict.

<sup>24</sup> The following discussion of the mid-Koryŏ military personnel and the military rule is based on: Edward Shultz, *Generals and Scholars: Military Rule in Medieval Korea*, 9-23, 54-69.

<sup>25</sup> Duncan, 69-77, 116-18.

<sup>26</sup> For a brief comment on these similarities, see Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology*, 82.

<sup>27</sup> Koryŏ attacks against the Mongols tended to be of small scale and often relied on the Night Special Patrol (Yabyŏlchŏ), the elite troops serving the Chŏe house. For example, in the autumn of 1235, Yi Yu-jŏng, a Night Special Patrol junior officer, led 160 men to attack the Mongols in Haep'yŏng but were annihilated. See *Koryŏsa* 23:29b-30a. In the following winter, another Night Special Patrol unit carried out a night attack against the Mongols and killed or captured many enemy soldiers. *Ibid.* 30a-b. In the autumn of 1253, a junior officer, Tae Kŭm-ch'wi, and some 30 Night Special Patrol soldiers engaged the Mongols and killed many enemies as well as taking supply items. *Ibid.* 24:7a.

<sup>28</sup> *Koryŏsa* 103:25a-b.

<sup>29</sup> Once conscripted, such soldiers served under their commanders in a manner more akin to that of personal retainers than government draftees. For example, Kyŏng Pok-hŭng, who was an influential statesman active during the final decades of Koryŏ, mobilized his private army soldiers en masse during a hunting expedition. *Koryŏsa* 111:21b.

<sup>30</sup> Lee, 25-27.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, 25-27.

<sup>32</sup> *Chŏngjong sillok* 4 :4a-5a.

<sup>33</sup> The mastermind with this vision for the new dynasty was Chŏng To-jŏn, who was one of Yi Sŏng-gye's most trusted advisors. Han Yŏng-u, *Chŏng To-jŏn sasang ūi yŏn'gu*, 103-24.

<sup>34</sup> Han Yŏng-u, *Tasi ch'annŭn uri yŏksa*, 250-51.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 289. For most farmers who had to find substitutes, the cost was a heavy financial burden and many ran away.

<sup>36</sup> Eugene Y. Park, "Military Examination Graduates in Sixteenth-Century Korea: Political Upheaval, Social

Change, and Security Crisis," 24-26.

<sup>37</sup> Han Yŏng-u, *Tasi ch'annŭn uri yŏksa*, 290.

<sup>38</sup> The army that the government was able to dispatch to Manchuria in 1618 to aid the Ming army against the Jurchens comprised 10,000 troops comprising 3,500 artillerymen, 3,500 archers, and 3,000 "killers" (*salsu*)—consisting of swordsmen, pikemen, and spearmen. *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 130:12b-13a. Although all the capital and provincial armies put together would certainly have been larger in size, the army actually mobilized for this campaign most likely represented the real troop strength of battleworthy active-duty men.

<sup>39</sup> Yi Sŏng-mu, *Han'guk ūi kwagŏ chedo*, 236. The *Supplement to the Great Code (Sok Taejŏn)*, promulgated in 1746, reflected the addition of a musket requirement. See *Sok Taejŏn* 4:26b-27a.

<sup>40</sup> He had earlier designed them to counter *wakŏ* raids in eastern China.

<sup>41</sup> Ch'a Mun-sŏp, *Chosŏn sidae kunje yŏn'gu*, 179-431.

<sup>42</sup> James B. Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 417-20; and James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea*, 322, n. 42.

<sup>43</sup> Palais, *Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions*, 88-91.

<sup>44</sup> Eugene Y. Park, "Military Examinations in the Late Chosŏn, 1700-1863: Elite Substratification and Non-Elite Accommodation," 1-50.

<sup>45</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that the late Chosŏn military organization alleviated social frictions. According to Andreski, a conscript army of a society rigidly divided along class or ethnic lines tends to be less effective, especially if not exposed to warfare for any significant length of time. See Andreski, *Military Organization and Society*, 39-74.

<sup>46</sup> The *Mubi yoram* text I used is the 1982 Ilchogak edition with a preface by Yi Pyŏng-do. Genealogical information comes from: *P'yŏngyang Cho-ssi sebo*. 1:2a-6b, 14:1a-2a, 4a-5b, 20b; *Ssijok wŏllyu* 297-98 (modern reprint pagination); and *Mansŏng taedongbo* 2:82a-84b.

<sup>47</sup> During the Manchu invasion of 1637, Korean defenders were clearly terrified by the enemies' "red barbarian cannons." *Injo sillok* 34:13a. Apparently, it was not until the early eighteenth century when the Koreans finally were able to manufacture the cannon on their own, as suggested by a report to King Yŏngjo in 1731. *Yŏngjo sillok* 30:27a. The interval of nearly a century may be explained by the fact that the Qing carefully monitored the Chosŏn court after the latter capitulated in 1637. Most likely, then,

it was not so much the lag in technology as the watchful eyes of the Qing that prevented the Chosŏn government from acquiring and manufacturing its own red barbarian cannon for some time.

<sup>48</sup> As pointed out in Carter J. Eckert's comments on this paper, policy choices that Kojong made while struggling to negotiate modern imperialism largely determined the unfortunate outcome for Korea—colonization by Japan. This view attaches greater importance to causes that are more immediate in a temporal sense. The late Chosŏn period's cultural horizon has received much attention as a factor as well. According to JaHyun Kim Haboush, following the "barbarian" Manchu conquest of China, the late Chosŏn state and aristocracy regarded Korea as the only true civilization that guarded the Way. See JaHyun Kim Haboush, *A Heritage of Kings*, 23-24.

<sup>49</sup> The Chinese military underwent a development that roughly paralleled that discussed in this paper. See Fairbank, 6-9, 25.

<sup>50</sup> For recent expressions of this sentiment employing the term, "*noblesse oblige*," in the South Korean news media, see: Hŏ Hun, "Nobŭllesŭ obŭlliju," *Kyŏngnam ilbo*, 6 November 2005 ([http://www.gnnews.co.kr/opinion.html?f\\_mod=VIEW&f\\_index=117771](http://www.gnnews.co.kr/opinion.html?f_mod=VIEW&f_index=117771)); Sŏ Chŏng-ja, "Kŏje-si Chawŏn Pongsa Hyŏbŭihoe nobŭllesŭ obŭlliju sŏyaksik," *Kŏje t'aimjŭ*, 20 October 2005 (<http://www.geojetimes.co.kr/news/read.php?idxno=10613&rsec=S1N6&section=S1N6>); and Kim Mu-sŏng, "Kukchŏk pŏgi sarye kŭpchŭng," *Segye ilbo*, 17 May 2005 (<http://www.segye.com/Service5/ShellView.asp?TreeID=1052&DataID=200505171515002680>). Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Jiyul Kim's paper described my observation as positing "an increasingly [*sic*] narrowing of the historically based society-military gap due to a greater recognition in contemporary South Korea of the noblesse oblige of the people to contribute to the security of the nation-state." This characterization is misleading in that my paper did not recognize any separation between society and the military in premodern Korea. Instead, I stressed that between the Three Kingdoms and late Chosŏn periods, not only did the elite distance itself from martial pursuits but military service became an integral part of the general population's tax obligations (namely the military cloth tax). Jager and Kim then asserted that "while agreeing with Park that the gap is closing," it has narrowed "not due to any increased recognition of military service" but rather military culture and that military service have come to be "seen as instruments for a peaceful unification" in South

Korea. Aside from the issue of the gap that my paper did not imply, Jager and Kim's apparent suggestion that *only* their subject phenomenon is the valid explanation seems warranted neither by their own evidence nor mine.