

KINSHIP AND POWER IN YI KOREA

A critique of the *sarim* theory

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In an article published three years ago, a leading Korean historian wrote:

The political world of the Yi dynasty was dominated by the *sarim* The *sarim* force began to take shape early in the dynasty, and during the period from Songjong through Chungjong's reign (1469-1544) members of this group came to play an increasingly active role in the nation's political life. However, each time it flexed its strength, the *sarim* suffered cruel purge at the hands of the non-*sarim* forces. Nevertheless, by the end of Myongjong's reign or early in that of his successor Sonjo [ca. 1565-1575], the political scene had taken on an exclusively *sarim* coloration and, in fact, there no longer existed any counterforce that might impede the growing dominance of the *sarim*. In the period of the 'literati purges [ca. 1480-1565] the *sarim* had occupied the position of lower ranking officials not long emerged from the examination process, who make the censoring bodies the principal arena of their activities. But from the reign of Sonjo (1567-1608) the *sarim* force was in full possession of the higher level positions in the government, including even the High State Councillor and Board Minister posts. From their vantage points in the censoring bodies during the period of the literati purges, the *sarim* and launched a fierce attack on the non-*sarim* forces – the high state councilors and the six board ministers. The best example of this *sarim* assault against those who held the highest administrative posts in the government is found in the activities of the young, lower ranking literati led by Cho Kwang-jo in [the years 1515-1519 of] Chungjong's reign.¹

This writer does not go on to characterize the “*sarim* force” in terms, for example, of socio-economic or regional background, and we are left only with the strong implication that the *sarim* (in their formative stage) are to be found in the offices of the three agencies (*samsa*) that comprised the censoring bodies and, accordingly, among the victims of the four literati purges (1498, 1504, 1519, 1545). The non-*sarim* forces, on the other hand, are here characterized as the occupants of the highest positions in the central government – the high state councilor and board minister posts.

¹ Song Ch'an-sik, 宋贊植, “Choson-jo *sarim* chongch'ul ui kwollyok kujo – chollang kwa *samsa* rul chungsim uro 朝鮮朝士林政治의 權力構造 – 銓郎과 三司를 中心으로 (The structural aspect of political power under *sarim* rule in the Yi dynasty – with a focus on the three censoring bodies and on the positions of section chief in the Board of Personnel), *Kyongje sahak* 2 (Jan. 1978), pp.134-135.

A recent survey history of Korea also assigns the same dominant role to the “*sarim* force” but, in contrast, describes the character and composition of the *sarim* in quite specific detail, as follows:

The ruling elite structure of the Yi dynasty began to show signs of serious disturbance from the latter years of the 15th century. This phenomenon is closely related to the emergence on the national political scene of *sarim* from areas outside the capital.

From the founding of the dynasty in 1392 the dominant figures in the central government on the whole had been the so-called bureaucrat-scholar element (*kwanhakp'a* 官學派) consisting of the Dynastic Foundation Merit Subjects and those closely related to them. On the other hand... There was also a non-serving scholar element (*sahakp'a* 私學派). The former element... occupied the highest government positions and possessed immense agricultural estates, while the latter element, the *sarim*, which carried on the tradition of the [end of Koryo loyalist Neo-Confucian scholar] Kil Chae 吉再 and his disciple Kim Suk-cha 金叔滋 ... lacked a base in the political arena of the central government. In the beginning these *sarim* were simply local intelligentsia of the small and middle landholding class, but following upon the advance into central government position of Kim Chong-jik 金宗直 [son of Kim Suk-cha] under the patronage of King Songjong, many of his disciples also entered the bureaucracy and created a new force able to contest for power with the established meritorious element (*hun'gup'a* 勳舊派)....

In the course of the recurrent literati purges... during the half century from 1498-1545, the *sarim* were harshly suppressed by the established meritorious element, but they did not abandon their struggle. Drawing their strength from their landholdings on which they lived in the countryside, and utilizing the private academics (*sowon* 書院) and village contract (*hyangyak* 鄉約) as a springboard, they rose again to take up positions in the central government bureaucracy... And ultimately, in the time of Sonjo (1567-1608) they drove out the established meritorious element and seized political power.²

No doubt from a somewhat different perspective, North Korean historiography takes a similar view of the *sarim* and their political destiny. The *sarim* entry in a historical dictionary published in 1971 offers the following explanation:

Sarim: term indicating a group of *yangban* 兩班 scholars, most of whom came from small and middle landlord background, that constituted a socio-political force in the first half the Yi dynasty.... Many Neo-Confucian scholars of this background emerged from the school of Kil Chae.... When Kim Chong-jik came to occupy important position on the feudal government toward the end of the 15th century, he secured posts in [the censoring bodies of]... the central government for many *sarim* scholars of small and middle landlord background, who worked to curb the power of the higher officials and to strengthen the authority of the throne.... At first their efforts met with harsh suppression, in literati purges aimed at

² Kang Chin-ch'ol 姜晉哲, Kang Man-gil 姜萬吉, Kim Chong-bae 金貞培, *Segye sae pich'un Han'guk ui yoksa* 世界史에 비춘 韓國의 歷史 (The history of Korea in the perspective of world history), Seoul, Koryo Univ. Press, 1975, pp.92-93.

the *sarim* as a group.... But at last, after Sonjo came to the throne in 1567, the *sarim yangban* were able to seize power.³

All three of the sources cited above tell us explicitly and with complete certainty that a group of scholar-officials identifiable as the *sarim* faction, or the *sarim* force, came to dominate Yi dynasty politics by some time in the reign of Songjo, that is by the end of the 16th century. The first writer focuses his attention on the instrument by which the *sarim* gained and then wielded its power – principally through the activities of the censoring bodies that it controlled. The other two citations present a more specific case, centered on the geographical, economic, and ideological or scholarly orientation of the so-called *sarim*. Many other contemporary survey histories and monographs deal with the question of the character and composition of the ruling elite of the Yi dynasty in similar fashion. Among those that I have seen only one, a short and rather theoretical essay, attempts explicitly to discuss the *sarim* in the context of Yi political history after 1600.⁴ All writers on the subject appear to take note of the Neo-Confucian ideological commitment of the *sarim*, and all characterize the originally dominant political force that the *sarim* attacked and eventually overcame as the “bureaucrat – scholar element” (*kwanhakp’a*), or the “established meritorious element” (*hun’gup’a*). But I have not yet found a study that attempts to discuss these apparently discrete forces in terms of the individuals who comprised the two constituencies at crucial periods in their struggle for power, or thus with specific reference to the implications such an inquiry must have for analysis of Yi Korea’s ruling elite structure in both the pre-1600 and post-1600 periods.

My own research on the question of *sarim* vs. non-*sarim* forces has not proceeded far enough, by any means, for me to propose satisfactory solutions to the many problems that beset his issue. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the *sarim* hypothesis has overlooked certain fundamental facts that must be taken into account in developing any view of the nature of the dominant political force, the ruling elite class, in the Yi dynasty. I believe I can point out some directions that further research on this problem must take. And I can offer, very tentatively, the beginnings of a different kind of analysis of the composition of the Yi dynasty ruling class.

I am not certain when the *sarim* interpretation first appeared in recent Korean historiography. Probably Dr. Yi Pyong-do was one of the earliest to use it as a tool of analysis. He noted that there were four “factions” or schools”(p’a 派) in 15th century Korea – the *hun’gup’a*, *choruip’a* 節義派 (“school of principle”), *ch’ongdamp’a* 清談派 (“school of disinterested discourse”), and *sarimp’a*, and he wrote about the confrontation between the *hun’gup’a* and the *sarimp’a*.⁵ Before that, Dr. Sin Sok-ho had written about the “conflict between the new and established officials” in the reign of Songjong (1469-1494), which is another way of describing the same phenomenon.⁶ But neither of these scholars made

³ Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of History, Dictionary of History (Ryoksa sajon 歷史事典), P’yongyang: 1971, II, p.10.

⁴ Yi T’ae-jin 李泰鎮 “Simnyuk segi *sarim* ui yoksa jok songkyok 十六世紀士林의 歷史的 性格 (The historical character of the 16th century *sarim*), Taedong munhwa yon’gu 13 (1979), pp. 106-111, 132-135

⁵ Yi Pyong-do 李丙燾. Kuksa taegwan 國史大觀 (Survey of Korean history), Seoul: Pomun’gak, 1955, p.381.

⁶ Sin Sok-ho 申奭鎬, “Chosen Seiso jidai no shin-kyu tairitsu” 朝鮮成宗時代の 新舊對立 (The conflict between the incoming and the established officials in the time of Songjong), in Kondai Chosen shi kenkyu, Keijo: 1944, pp.303-406.

mention of the socio-economic background or base of the *sarim* force, nor did they go on to characterize the *sarim* as the dominant force in later Yi dynasty politics.

It behooves us, then, to look more closely at exactly who was involved on the *sarim* side, in two or three specific confrontations, or controversies, during the Songjong-Chungjong period.

When Songjong died in 1494, his successor Yonsan'gun routinely commanded that Buddhist funeral rites be performed for him, as had been the case with all Yi dynasty kings up to that time. The censoring bodies objected strongly, and some officials in the Office of Special Counselors (Hongmun'gwan 弘文館) even refused to compose the required texts to accompany the rites. Backed by Songjong's widowed queen and by such high officials as No Sa-sin 盧思愼, Yonsan'gun ordered the Royal Secretariat (Sungjongwon 承政院) to bring no further protests to his attention. At this point a large number of students in the National Confucian Academy (Songgyun'gwan 成均館) launched a violent attack on Buddhism in general and on No Sa-sin, then the Second State Councillor, in particular. But Yonsan'gun's reaction was to have 157 of the students arrested and before long he banished three of them and barred 21 others from taking the higher civil service examinations (*munkwa* 文科).

It is significant to examine who these punished students were and what happened to some of them later, since all of them were pardoned within a year after the incident. With regard to the three ringleaders who were banished, Yi Mok 李穆 and Chong Hui-ryang 鄭希良 became major victims of the Purge of 1498, and Yi Cha-hwa 李自華 became a minor victim of the Purge of 1504. Kim Ch'ol-lyong 金千齡 and Im Hui-jae 任熙載 (the son of the great villain of 1504) died in the 1504 purge. Pak Kwang-yong 朴光榮, Yun Won 尹源, Yu Hui-jo 柳希渚, and Cho Yu-hyong 趙有亨 all suffered in some degree in the Purge of 1504. Kim Su-gyong 金壽卿 and Song Mong-jong 成夢井 both became merit subjects (*kongsin* 功臣) when Chungjong was enthroned in 1506. Sim Chong 沈貞 also became a merit subject at the same time and is notorious as a major architect of the Purge of 1519. Song Un 成雲 also was among the purgers in 1519, but Yi Song-dong 李成童 was among the victims. Han Hyo-won 韓效元 became Chief State Councillor in the middle years of Chungjong's reign.

The point is that this controversy was fundamentally an ideological one. To some extent, of course, it was a conflict between the higher ranking, established officials and the rising, next generation of officials. This sort of tension between old and new generations of officials is a common phenomenon, a phenomenon seen in many different cultures and in many different historical periods. At this time in Yi Korea this natural conflict was sharpened by the existence of an ideological gap as well as a generation gap. But it seems clear that such factors as geographical or socio-economic background played little or no part in the controversy over Buddhist rites for Songjong.

Let us look next at the victims of the Purge of 1498, which generally is described as a purge of the disciples of Kim Chong-jik. It is certainly true that the core element of those officials who were purged in 1498 were disciples of Kim Chong-jik. But as I would analyze the Purge of 1498, Kim Chong-jik and his disciples were symbolic victims. They symbolized an institutional development – the growth of the power of the censoring bodies – that was considered highly improper and dangerous by Yonsan'gun and many of his high officials. If the particular issue of Kim Il-son's 金駟孫, history draft had not arisen, I think it quite likely that another issue would have been found, and perhaps then the purge

would have focused on a different group of officials who had abused the function of remonstrance. In this connection it should be noted that, although 18 disciples of Kim Chong-jik were punished in 1498, 12 others who were named as disciples by Kim Il-son were not punished. I have not yet been able to investigate this point, but it seems likely that a correlation will be found between the degree of activity as a censor and the decision to punish a particular disciple or not.

Finally, let us examine two aspects of the Purge of 1519. One of the most important measures in Cho Kwang-jo's 趙光祖 reform program was the *hyollyangkwa* 賢良科 ("examination for the sage and good"). This was a radical proposal aimed at recruiting new officials by a recommendation process rather than by the usual step by step process of the civil service examinations. The term *sarim* does not seem to have been used in the debate on the *hyollyangkwa* proposal, although the term *yuil chi sa* 遺逸之士 ("idle literati") appears. However, there should be no question that the so-called *sarim*, among whom Cho Kwang-jo himself is regarded as the archetypal figure, were the target group that Cho Kwang-jo and his followers wanted to recruit. At any rate, after a heated debate, Chungjong swept aside the objection of many of his high officials and ordered officials in the capital and in the provinces to recommend men of learning and upright conduct. This was done, and a year after it was first proposed the Yi dynasty's only *hyollyangkwa* (also known as *ch'on'gokwa* 薦舉科, or "recommendation examination") was held and 28 men were awarded the "crimson certificate" of the successful candidate.

What was the geographical and family background of these 28 successful candidates? If it is agreed that these men can properly be called representatives of the *sarim*, then we thus may discover, in part, what the characteristics of the *sarim* one – or at least, negatively, what does not characterize the *sarim*.

As for their geographical background, 19 of the 28 lived in Seoul, including 15 of the first 16 in order of rank on the examination; 5 lived in Kyongsang province: and one each lived in Kyonggi, Cholla, Hwanghae, and kwangwon provinces. Accordingly, it may be suggested that a higher proportion of *hyollyangkwa* candidates were members of, or close to, the capital bureaucracy than was the case in the normal higher civil service examination.

At this stage in my research I can discuss the family background of the successful *hyollyangkwa* candidates only in terms of the official careers of their immediate forbears or close kinsmen. Among the 28, 12 have two among their "three ancestors" (father, grandfather, great-grandfather) who passed the *munkwa*. Seven others have one among their "three ancestors," or an uncle, or an established older brother who passed the *munkwa*. Six more have rather important of influential family connections within the preceding two generations, such as a father-in-law who was a grandson of King Sejong. Only three seem to have only low-ranking close kinsmen (although further research may well reduce this small number to zero), and one of these is a great-great-grandson of Yi won 李原, an early Yi merit subject and Second State Councillor.

In short, the products of the *hyollyangkwa* were representative members of the existing bureaucratic establishment. And in this respect they were very much like the force that brought them into being – the force of "men of 1519" led by Cho Kwang-jo. These too were a substantially Seoul-centered group with strong ties to the existing official order. For example, six among the eight primary victims of the Purge of 1519 were men of Seoul, including Cho Kwang-jo, the other two being residents of Cholla

province. One of the Cholla residents, Kim Ku 金綏, came from an extraordinarily successful *munkwa* background – his grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather and four of his father’s brothers all passed the *munkwa*. Cho Kwang-jo’s grandfather and two of his uncles passed the *munkwa*, and his great-great-grandfather Cho on 趙溫 was a leading Dynastic Establishment Merit Subject. Pak Hun 朴薰 represents the fourth successive generation to be successful in the *munkwa*, and two uncles also had passed the *munkwa* and had had distinguished careers. Ki Chun’s 寄遵 father, an uncle, and an older brother all passed the *munkwa*. Yun Cha-im’s 尹自任 father passed the *munkwa* under Songjong and served at the board minister level.

Accordingly, the conclusion is inescapable that the so-called “men of 1519” cannot be distinguished from other power groups on the basis of geographical or social background. What does distinguish them, then? It was their ideology of Neo-Confucianism, in particular their extreme commitment to Neo-Confucian principles of statecraft and moral conduct, that set apart the “men of 1519”, and their forerunners in the reigns of Songjong and Yonsan’gun, from their contemporaries. Thus it is devotion to Neo-Confucianist ideology and determination to shape the conduct of Yi dynasty government in accordance with its principles that mark and define the so-called *sarim*.

Among modern Korean historians who have attempted to deal with the *sarim* issue, perhaps the late Dr. Yi Sang-baek 李相佰 has suggested most clearly what the term *sarim* really means. In his *Han’guk sa kunge chon’gi p’yon* (History of Korea: Early Modern Period), in a section titled “Literati Purges, Factional Strife, and the *Sarim*” he writes:

Political strife in the period marked by the literati purges differed in a number of ways from that earlier in the dynasty, and the fact that political factions or cliques came to have an ongoing character may be cited as the major such difference. This is not to say that political groupings were forced for the purpose of achieving some objective. It was rather the case that an entity or force called the *sarim*, espousing the ideology of the Neo-Confucian school, put down roots in both the capital and the provincial areas, and maintained its viability in the face of recurrent political vicissitudes. The *sarim*, then, entered the political arena and, in its frequent clashes with the quondam forces that opposed it, was the victim of repeated purge.⁷

In this passage is found the fundamental characteristic that identifies the so-called *sarim*, its devotion to Neo-Confucianist principles. Dr. Yi also describes the *sarim* as a force with roots both in the capital and in the countryside. As I have indicated earlier, I would go considerably farther than this and suggest that the *sarim* were essentially a Seoul-based, central government based, force that continuously extended its roots from the capital area out into the countryside, especially into the areas of Kyonggi, the western edge of Kangwon, and Ch’ungch’ong provinces that lie within reasonable communication and travel time from Seoul. In the early period of the Yi dynasty one segment of the *sarim* (and in terms of long-run political power not a very important segment) arose from its original base in the countryside, entered the officialdom through the examination process, and for about one century competed with fair success for major central government positions. These rural Neo-Confucianist literati, especially those from North Kyongsang province, may have taken the lead, very briefly, in espousing and spreading the still undigested ideology of Neo-Confucianism, but they never were a distinct political force. Even when

⁷ Yi Sang-Baek 李相佰, *Han’guk sa kunge chon’gi p’yon* 韓國史近世前期篇, Seoul, Uryu Munhwasa, 1962, p.563.

they wore at the peak of their political strength, in the reigns of Songjong and Yonsan'gun, their position in the central government relied heavily on the cooperation and support of like-minded Seoul-based scholar-officials. And as the Neo-Confucian ideology and principles of statecraft rapidly took hold throughout the whole of the scholar-official class, that segment having roots only in the countryside soon was submerged in the tide of the longer and more deeply rooted force of scholar-officials who lived in the heartland area of Seoul and its surrounding counties.

What I have been trying to demonstrate above is that the term *sarim* may be useful in describing the nature of a vitally important ideological movement in the early Yi dynasty, but it is definitely not a useful term in analyzing the actual composition of the Yi dynasty ruling elite. If I may make this statement in an extreme way, then I would argue that, from the standpoint of the composition of the Yi dynasty ruling class, it is meaningless to say – in the words of the historian I quoted when I began: “The political world of the Yi dynasty was dominated by the *sarim*.” Again, from the standpoint of the actual composition of the Yi dynasty ruling elite, it would be equally meaningless to say that the Yi political process was dominated by *sadaebu* (literati 士大夫), or by the *yangban* class. Of course the *sarim* were not from the beginning of the Yi dynasty the exact equivalent of the *yangban* or *sadaebu*. But after the Neo-Confucian ideology became established as the dominant mode of thought, and as the exclusive ideological basis for Yi dynasty government, then the terms *sarim*, *sadaebu*, and *yangban* became freely interchangeable.

In this connection I have noticed an interesting fact. In the index volume to the Choson wangjo sillok 朝鮮王朝實錄 (Annals of the Yi dynasty) there is only one item or heading beginning with the term *sarim*, and that is “*sarim* calamity (or purge).” The first entry is for the year 1515, the same year that Cho Kwang-jo passed the *munkwa* and emerged as a force in the central government. There are 75 citations between 1515 and 1564, the period from the time when the purge of 1510 finally subsided. After this period, to the very end of the dynasty, there are only eight more citations under this heading.

No doubt there are deficiencies in the Annals index volume with regard to coverage of the term *sarim*. Nevertheless, it may be justifiable to draw certain tentative conclusions from the way the term *sarim* is indexed. First, the *sarim* were not identified contemporarily as a distinct group or force by that name for about half a century after they first are said to have emerged. Secondly, when the *sarim* finally came to be identified it was as a group of scholar-officials who were made to suffer as a consequence of the political ideology they advocated and the political actions they took while serving as officials in the central government. Those men were not a distinct force in terms of geographical or social background: there are no heading in the Annals index titled “rural *sarim*” or “countryside *sarim*,” nor can we find headings like “established meritorious element” or “bureaucrat-scholar element” in the Annals index volume. Thirdly, the virtual disappearance of the term *sarim* after being in use for only fifty years suggests that it became no longer useful in distinguishing one ideological stream from another. The actual composition of the ruling class had not changed in any significant way, other than to diminish the political role of those *sarim* who had only local or regional roots. It was the political ideology that had changed, since by the end of Myongjong's reign in 1567 Neo-Confucian ideology was the shared belief of all members of the ruling class. In short, the Annals index volume lends support to the notion that the *sarim* had become synonymous with the *sadaebu* or *yangban* as a term for the entirety of the ruling elite of the Yi dynasty.

My basic approach in examining the *sarim* question has been to investigate the social background of sample aggregations of early Yi dynasty figures who represent the so-called *sarim* force. The conclusions I have drawn from this evidence will be strengthened by a similar attempt to analyze the composition of the force with which the *sarim* was in conflict, the *kwanhakup'a* or *hun'gup'a*. There are several reasons why this is not an easy task. For one thing, as a political entity or force the *kwanhakup'a* does not seem so easily identifiable as the *sarim* – for example, traditional Korean historiography has provided us with ample lists of the victims of the *sahwa* but has not given us comparable lists of those who purged the *sahwa* victims. Secondly, we must ask ourselves what are the implications of the alleged defeat of the *kwanhakup'a* or *hun'gup'a* force and, conversely, of the asserted “political dominance” of the *sarim*? When one speaks of the victory of the *sarim* is one suggesting at the same time that the lineal descendants of acknowledged *kwanhakup'a* figures, as well as those of similar socio-political background, were excluded from significant participation in the political process in the later Yi dynasty? And other subtle and complex issues will arise in any careful attempt to address the question of the fate of the force or forces opposed to the *sarim* at any given moment in the history of political conflict in the early Choson period.

At this stage in my research and tentative analysis will be based, first, on the most complete listing of *kwanhakup'a* figures that I have found – that given by Prof. Yi Sang-baek in the source cited earlier,⁸ where he lists fifteen representative members of the *kwanhakup'a/hun'gup'a* – plus a sixteenth figure (Kang Hui-maeng 姜希孟) commonly included on other *hun'gup'a* lists. Secondly, I will offer some observations on selected figures from the roster of *chwari kongsin* 佐理功臣 promulgated at the beginning of King Songjong's reign. This *kongsin* roster of 75 men, unlike earlier and subsequent *kongsin* lists, does not honor those who acquired merit in the course of settling a succession dispute, or in crushing a treason plot or insurrection, or in fighting against a foreign enemy. Instead, the *chwari kongsin* on the whole represent the elite core of those who held the reins of political power when Songjong came to the throne, and the reason why these 75 men were rewarded in this way apparently was to ensure political stability as the new boy-kin, Songjong began his reign. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to assume that the *chwari kongsin* roster provides perhaps the best available evidence of the actual composition of the *hun'gup'a* force at the precise time when the *sarim* are said to have first appeared in the political arena of the central government. Finally, as a rough means of determining the political fate of these *kwanhakup'a/hun'gup'a* figures, I will briefly examine the degree of *munkwa* success achieved by descendants of these figures in the later Yi dynasty.

Let us now turn our attention to certain representative *kwanhakup'a/hun'gup'a* figures. Sin Suk-chu 申叔舟 not only heads the list of *chwari kongsin* but also rank high on all *kwanhakup'a* lists. His Koryong Sin clan produced 85 *munkwa* passers in the course of the dynasty, all of whom descend from Sin Suk-chu's grandfather and 81 from Sin Suk-chu himself. Sin Ik-sang 申翼相 (*munkwa* 1662), who reached Uuijong 右議政 position, provides one example of the continuing access to high office enjoyed by Sin Suk-chu's descendants. The more important Koryong Sin lineages of course remained in the Seoul area.

⁸ Yi Sang-baek, *Han'guk sa kulse chon'gi p'yon*, p.687 (which in turn cites Yi Pyong-do 李丙燾, *Charyo Han'guk yuhak sa ch'ogo* 資料韓國儒學史草稿, 3 p'yon 編, 1 chang 章, 7 chol 節).

So Ko-jong 徐居正 also is both a *chwari kongsin* and an acknowledged leading *kwanhakup'a* figure. While it is true that none of his own descendants passed the *munkwa* (his direct line appears to have ended after two more generations), at least 126 Taegu So *munkwa* passers are descended from his elder brother So Ko-gwang 徐居廣. These include the numerous important officials from this clan in the 18th and 19th centuries, who also lived preponderantly in Seoul.

Yi Sok-hyong 李石亨 too is usually named as a *kwanhakup'a* figure and also was included on the *chwari kongsin* roster. More than 100 Yonan Yi among his descendants passed the *munkwa* throughout the Yi dynasty, and almost all of them lived in Seoul.

Prof. Yi Sang-baek's list of 15 *kwanhakup'a* men includes five Kwangji 廣州 Yi brothers (Yi Kuk-pae 李克培, Yi Kuk-chung 李克增, Yi Kuk-ton 李克敦, Yi Kuk-kyun 李克均, and Yi Kuk-kam 李克堪), the first three of whom also are *chwari kongsin*. More than 140 descendants of these five brothers were later successful in the *munkwa*, including a number of highly important scholar-officials, and Seoul remained a prime place of residence for these lineages.

The argument to be made in the case of Kang Hui-maeng 姜希孟 admittedly is less direct but nevertheless appears to be compelling. The number of his direct descendants who passed the *munkwa* is not large, but the most important political lineage among the Chinju Kang is comprised of the many other descendants of Kang Hui-maeng's great-grandfather who formed one component of Choson's political elite throughout the dynasty.

Unlike those just described, Kim Kuk-kwang 金國光 and his brother Kim Kyom-gwang 金謙光 are both *chwari kongsin* but are not identified as *kwanhakup'a* figure. One of Choson's most distinguished and powerful scholarly and political lineages descends from Kim Chang-saeng 金長生 a fifth-generation descendant of Kim Kuk-kwang, and many other politically successful Kwangsan Kim also are descended from these two major *chwari kongsin*.

To be sure, I have presented above some of the more outstanding examples of continuity of political power in the hands of lineages descended from representative *kwanhakup'a/hun'gup'a* figures. Obviously a full exploration of modest conclusion can be drawn from the evidence I have presented 00 namely, that a particular individual's inclusion among leading *kwanhakup'a/hun'gup'a* figures of the late 15th century in no way constituted an obstacle to his lineage descendants also securing a place in the core group of the political elite of the later Yi dynasty. This in turn suggests that it will be difficult to find substantial basis in historical fact for the view that the *hun'gup'a* or *kwanhakup'a* yielded political dominance in the middle Choson period to another, disparate force.

At the beginning of this presentation I promised to "offer, very tentatively, the beginnings of a different kind of analysis of the composition of the Yi dynasty ruling class." Briefly, the following is what I had in mind.

Two years ago a new and extremely valuable source material became available for research for the first time. I am referring to the 16th century Munhwa Yu-ssi sebo 文化柳氏世譜 (Genealogy of the Munhwa Yu clan), which was republished by the Munhwa Yu clan headquarters in Seoul in July, 1979. This genealogy was compiled over a twenty year period during the reign of Myongjong and originally

was published in 1565. It is not a *chokpo* 族譜 (“clan genealogy”) in the usual style of later Yi dynasty genealogies but rather may be called a multi-clan genealogy. That is, the purpose of its compiler was to include, of course, all male-line descendants of the first ancestor or founder of the Munhwa Yu clan, but also to include all female-line descendants as well. Accordingly, in the case of Munhwa Yu daughters, this genealogy attempts to record not only her sons and daughters but, in turn, all of their descendants down to the time the genealogy was compiled. Thus it is a kind of comprehensive genealogy, although to be sure limited to those who had direct or indirect marriage connections with the Munhwa Yu family.

In an effort to find out more about the actual individual members of the early Yi dynasty ruling class, I have tried to locate all successful *munkwa* candidates who appear in this work. The results of this research seem to me to be highly significant. And here would like to summarize my findings as they relate to some of the problems I have discussed above.

First let us look at the overall statistics. In the critical 75 year period during which the *sarim* are said to have emerged as a powerful force in the central government, fully 70% of all those who passed the *munkwa* can be found in this Munhwa Yu genealogy. The percentage is a little lower, 66%, for those who passed the regular triennial examinations, and it is a little higher, 74%, for those who passed the various kinds of special examinations. And it must be understood clearly that these statistics include only those candidates who appear as members of their own clan lineages or who appear as sons-in-law of other families, and in probably a majority of cases a particular candidate appears in both these capacities. In other words these percentages do not include those candidates who have less direct connections with the Munhwa Yu and their related families. For example, a candidate who does not appear himself may have an uncle, or a son, or a daughter, or other close kinsman who have marriage connections recorded in this genealogy.

I have already discussed above one aspect of the family background of the 28 men who passed Cho Kwang-jo’s *hyollyangkwa*. They also are a remarkable group when examined from the standpoint of inclusion in the 1565 Munhwa Yu genealogy, for 26 of the 28 are found there. It is equally remarkable that 7 of the 8 primary victims of the Purge of 1519 are in this genealogy, and with regard to the only exception, Kim Ku, among four of his father’s brothers who passed the *munkwa*, two are found in this genealogy. Finally, not long after the Purge of 1519 began, list of 35 supporters of Cho Kwang-jo was drawn up as a basis for expanding the scope of the purge beyond its initial rather hesitant limits. Among three 35 men, 30 are found in the 1565 Munhwa Yu genealogy.

Three facts suggest that, from near the beginning of the Yi dynasty, the ruling elite was a considerably more homogenous group than we historians of Korea have thought. Accordingly, it appears likely that more fruitful results will be obtained by trying to analyze the Yi ruling class as a unitary, ongoing entity than as one formed through the clash of two disparate forces.

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