

The Merit of Not Making Merit: Buddhism and the Late Koryŏ Fiscal Crisis

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The period of Mongol overlordship during the late Koryŏ period witnessed the influx of an unprecedented number of non-traditional elements into the central bureaucracy. These nontraditional recruits to the old system tried to partake in the culture of the great descent groups of the capital and thus present themselves as equals of these great families. As they lacked both hereditary social status and a long and illustrious history of producing central officeholders, these men from nontraditional backgrounds tended to seek recourse in Buddhism, which for centuries served as the primary locus of the capital-based elite's identity as great families. But the capital-based elite were beset by a serious fiscal crisis that threatened their very livelihood during the late Koryŏ. As a result, the late Koryŏ elite became increasingly aware of and concerned about the material riches of Buddhism. This heightened attention and not the purported decadence of Buddhism played an important role in Buddhism's fall from its privileged position among the Koryŏ elite.

Keywords: Buddhism, Koryŏ dynasty, memorial temples, Cho In'gyu (1237-1308), Yun T'aek (1289-1370)

Like many other historians preoccupied with the Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition, what fascinates me most about the history of the Koryŏ dynasty is a relatively straightforward question, namely why did it fail after nearly five hundred years, several military coups, and no less than two major and other incessant minor foreign invasions? I think a very reasonable answer has been provided by the historian John B. Duncan. In his influential book on the subject, Duncan argues that an important, if not the very, cause behind the dynasty's collapse was the tension between "an imported central bureaucracy that presumed a

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comparatively high degree of social differentiation and a locally particularistic native tradition in which resources and political roles remained embedded in ascriptive social groups.”¹ This tension, he claims, led to institutional difficulties—most notably the fiscal crisis that consumed the state and its elite during the waning years of the Koryŏ dynasty—and thus necessitated reform. The institutional reforms that were thus carried out at the end of the fourteenth century formally marked a final break with the old order—a strongly aristocratic system embodied in the local strongman class of late Silla and early-Koryŏ, that is, the *hyangni* 鄉吏—and the transition into a mixed aristocratic-bureaucratic system, which characterized the Chosŏn dynasty.

I think this reading is right on the money. But I think we do ourselves a serious disservice if we do not ask the obvious follow-up question: *when and how did the Koryŏ elite become seriously aware, either consciously or viscerally, of the tension that ostensibly necessitated the change of dynasties?* What, if any, practical consequences did this awareness have? How is this awareness related to the late Koryŏ fiscal crisis? And, what prompted the central elite to “redefine themselves in a way that put greater emphasis on their histories as central officeholders,”² that is, as *sadaebu* 士大夫 or “scholar-officials” in the capital who belonged either to the civil or military branch of the central bureaucracy (*yangban* 兩班)?³

That members of the great descent groups of the capital who dominated the central bureaucracy felt a need to consciously dissociate themselves from their local origins and the hereditary social status for which they stood by the late thirteenth century is not in doubt.⁴ Again, as Duncan points out:

The advent of *sadaebu* and *yangban* as general terms for great descent groups marked a major change in the central bureaucratic aristocracy’s view of itself and its relationship with other social groups. The use of such terminology was designed not only to distinguish the established central descent group segments

1. John B. Duncan, *Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 9.

2. *Ibid.*, 97.

3. It must be borne in mind that *sadaebu* here does not, as many still seem to presume, refer to the so-called “new scholar officials” (*sinhŭng sadaebu* 新興士大夫). Rather, the term *sadaebu*, as Kim Tangt’aek has shown, actually refers more generally to central officeholders, both civil and military, and was frequently used in the late Koryŏ; see Kim Tangt’aek, “Ch’ungnyŏl wang ŭi pogwi kwajŏng ŭl t’onghae pon ch’ŏngye ch’ulsin kwallyo wa ‘sajok’ ch’ulsin kwallyo ŭi chŏngch’ijŏk kaltŭng,” *Tong’a yŏn’gu* 17 (1989): 195-232. See also John B. Duncan, *Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 52-53.

4. See John B. Duncan, *Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 97.

from nonaristocratic elements, but to set the central bureaucrat aristocrats apart from the local aristocracy from which they had sprung.⁵

Demonstrating his integrity as a scholar, however, Duncan is also the first to admit that “Why [this change in self-understanding or image] took so long to manifest itself is not clear.”⁶

There is, admittedly, no easy way to answer this question. But, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, the Mongol invasions, which took place in the mid-thirteenth century, and their century-long lordship over Koryŏ seem to have served as an important catalyst behind this radical shift in the Koryŏ elite’s self-understanding.⁷ Among other things, what Mongol overlordship during this period made possible was the influx of an unprecedented number of non-traditional elements into the central bureaucracy. These nontraditional recruits to the old system, as we shall see, seem to have desired to partake in the culture of the great descent groups of the capital and thus present themselves as equals of these great families, but this proved to be no easy task as they lacked both hereditary social status and a long and illustrious history of producing central officeholders. But what these men from nontraditional backgrounds could do was turn to Buddhism, which for centuries served as the primary locus of the capital-based elite’s identity as great families. And that is, indeed, what they did. But, curiously, this newfound patronage did not, as one might expect, guarantee Buddhism’s success. On the contrary, Buddhism began to slowly lose its footing among the elite in the fourteenth century.

What happened? The prevailing assumption—an assumption that is based almost exclusively on the polemical writings of a handful of Confucian thinkers from the late Koryŏ—would have us believe that Buddhism’s fall from grace was due in large part to the fact that it had grown materialistic, corrupt, and decadent.⁸ Those who hold this view often cite the criticisms that were leveled

5. Ibid., 89.

6. Ibid., 97.

7. See my article, “This Way of Ours: Buddhist Memorial Temples and the Search for Values during the Late Koryŏ Dynasty,” *Han’guk pulgyohak* 54 (2009): 35-83.

8. In his widely used textbook on Koryŏ history Kim Sanggi makes such an argument; see Kim Sanggi, *Simp’yŏn Koryŏ sidaesa* (Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo Chulp’anbu, 1996), 656. See also Chai-shik Chung, “Chŏng Tojŏn: ‘Architect’ of Yi Dynasty Government and Ideology,” in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 74-75; and John Isaac Goulde, “Anti-Buddhist Polemic in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Korea: The Emergence of Confucian Exclusivism,” Ph.D. dissertation (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1985), esp. Chapter 3. Arguably, no one, however, is more closely associated with this argument than the Korean historian Han Ugŭn; see Han

against the monk Sin Ton 辛旽 (d. 1371) and the lavish temple building projects of the late Koryŏ as evidence of Buddhism's downward spiral. But I think this view tells us only part of the story and is, therefore, very misleading. As we can easily glean from texts such as the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), for example, Buddhist temples in Korea had always impressed, or at least tried to impress, the beholder with their opulence and splendor. All throughout the Koryŏ period, its kings and ministers commissioned the construction of impressive temples and shrines. The extravagance of Buddhism is not, in other words, a new development that began to unfold in the fourteenth century.

There is, nevertheless, some truth to the claim that the late Koryŏ elite was becoming increasingly aware of and concerned about the material riches of Buddhism. It is, I think, this *heightened attention* and not the purported decadence of Buddhism that deserves closer attention. As I hope to show in the present article, this subtle but noticeable change in the way the Koryŏ elite (and not just a handful of reform-minded Neo-Confucian scholar-officials) *perceived* the material conditions of Buddhism, and hence the very basis of their identities as a great family, seems to bear a very close relation to the fiscal crisis that besieged the capital-based elite during the late Koryŏ period. Building upon my earlier findings, I shall, therefore, investigate this relation between Buddhism and the late Koryŏ fiscal crisis a bit further. In doing so I hope to accomplish two modest objectives. First, I would like to dispel the unfounded notion—the economic thesis, as I like to call it—that the late Koryŏ fiscal crisis was precipitated for the most part by the large private landholdings of the numerous Buddhist temples, which, we are told, eventually brought about Buddhism's own downfall.⁹ Second, and perhaps more importantly, what I hope to

Ugŭn, *Yugyo chŏngch'i wa pulgyo: Yŏmal sŏnch'o taebul chŏngch'aek* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1993). For an English version, see idem, "Policies Toward Buddhism in the Late Koryŏ and Early Chosŏn," in *Buddhism in the Early Chosŏn: Suppression and Transformation*, ed. Lewis R. Lancaster and Chai-shin Yu (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1996), 1-58. Although I do not necessarily agree with Han's assessment of late Koryŏ Buddhism, he was certainly right to follow the lead of Yi Sangbaek and try to make sense of the fall of Buddhism without having recourse to the rise of Neo-Confucianism or the so-called new scholar officials (*sinhŭng sadaebu*) in Korea. In an otherwise excellent study of Koryŏ Buddhism, Hŏ Hŭngsik, for instance, credits the fall of Buddhism to its accumulation of wealth in the form of private estates and the rise of Neo-Confucianism; see Hŏ Hŭngsik, *Koryŏ pulgyosa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1981), 38-39.

9. See Yi Sangbaek, "Yubul yanggyo ŭi kyodae e taehan il yŏn'gu," in *Han'guk munhwasa yŏn'gu non'go* (Seoul: Ŭryu munhwasa, 1954 [1947]), 7-44; see also Takahashi Tōru, *Richō bukk'yō* (Osaka, 1929), 37-38; and Hatada Takashi, "Koraichō ni okeru jin keizai," *Shigaku zasshi* 43, no. 5 (1932): 557-593. To be sure, it does seem to be the case that the late Koryŏ

ultimately show is that this ill turn of Buddhism's fate, which did gain momentum towards the end of the fourteenth century, was less an economic issue than an issue of how to define the values that set great families apart from the rest.

If anything, what altered the course of Buddhism's history in Korea during this period, as I shall try to show, was not its purported unchecked growth but the increasing tendency to question the relation between material success and the greatness of a family, which had hitherto been taken for granted. In the well-established aristocratic social order of mid-to-late Koryŏ, privilege and greatness were expected, not made. Indeed, Buddhist temples once stood for the greatness that was simply expected of the Koryŏ elite (be it central or local), but the numerous temple restoration projects launched during the late Koryŏ by new, nontraditional elements in the central bureaucracy, who thus aspired to become great, introduced a new twist to this understanding of Buddhist temples: *greatness could no longer be simply taken as a given fact but as something that had to be established, maintained, and demonstrated*. A gap, in other words, had opened up between social and material success and the qualities or values that guaranteed such success. Awareness of this gap, as we shall see, is evident in late Koryŏ texts where we find a subtle redefinition of a great family as, first and foremost, a family that embodied *enduring* values.

But I think we can be a bit more specific about the process through which greatness was redefined during the late Koryŏ and that is what I intend to do in the present article. And to do so I would like to rely primarily on the tale of two families, the Musong Yun 茂松尹 and P'yŏngyang Cho 平壤趙, who emerged and played an important role in the transformation of Buddhism (and, ultimately, of the dynasty) during this turbulent period.

Buddhist temples managed vast tracks of land. In his now classic study of land tenure during the Koryŏ Kang Chinch'ŏl, for instance, estimates that Buddhist temples may have owned as much as one-sixth of all arable land during this period; see Kang Chinch'ŏl, *Kaejŏng Koryŏ t'oji chedosa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1997), 142. But it must be borne in mind that Kang's estimate is based on data from the early Chosŏn. Indeed, despite the losses that they (mostly state-sponsored temples) had to sustain during the Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition, Buddhist temples seem to have maintained control over their large estates well into the fifteenth and even the sixteenth century; see Kim Kapchu, *Chosŏn sidae sawŏn kyŏngjesa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Kyŏng'in Munhwasa, 2007), esp. 9-112. Trying to understand late Koryŏ Buddhism from the perspective of land alone, then, will not do. A more refined approach is in order. This article hopes to develop just such an approach.

The P'yŏngyang Cho

Let us begin with the P'yŏngyang Cho. In fact, let us begin with the appellation itself. The P'yŏngyang Cho, despite the designation of the great western capital P'yŏngyang as their ancestral seat (*pon'gwan* 本貫), are technically speaking not from this strategically important military garrison (*pu* 府). As the Korean historian Min Hyŏn'gu points out, the late Koryŏ official Cho In'gyu 趙仁規 (1237-1308), who for all intents and purposes is the progenitor of the P'yŏngyang Cho, originally came from a nearby county (*hyŏn* 縣) named Sang'wŏn 祥原 in present day Southern P'yŏng'an province.¹⁰ Unfortunately, little is known about Sang'wŏn. According to the "Monograph on Geography" in the *Koryŏsa* 高麗史 (History of Koryŏ), Sang'wŏn was a subordinate county that originally belonged to the Hwangju district 黃州牧 of the Sŏhae circuit 西海道. The district came under the direct control of the Mongols in 1269 and upon its return to Koryŏ in 1290 Sang'wŏn became a subordinate county of P'yŏngyang, hence the appellation "P'yŏngyang" Cho.¹¹ In 1322, fourteen years after Cho In'gyu's death, Sang'wŏn, however, was elevated to the status of prefecture (*kun* 郡) because, we are told, it was the hometown of Cho In'gyu's grandmother. As Min Hyŏn'gu points out, the association of Sang'wŏn with Cho's grandmother seems to indicate that his grandfather had moved to Sang'wŏn where he settled down by marrying into a local family. Min, I think, is also right to contend that since Cho's grandfather and father were neither officials, local strongmen, or slaves they must have been of commoner status. Indeed, Cho In'gyu's biography in the *Koryŏsa* clearly states that he "rose from low status" (*ki ŏ mich'ŏn* 起於微賤).¹²

Whatever the case may be, their decision to settle down in Sang'wŏn undoubtedly proved to be an important one. Six years before Cho In'gyu was born, the Mongols launched their first attack against Koryŏ and, by the time

10. Min Hyŏn'gu, "Cho In'gyu wa kŭ ŭi kamun (sang)," *Chindan hakpo* 42 (1976): 18 and 28; see also *Koryŏsa* 105, 36b.

11. Min Hyŏn'gu therefore concludes that Cho In'gyu could not have designated P'yŏngyang as his ancestral seat before 1269; see Min Hyŏn'gu, "Cho In'gyu wa kŭ ŭi kamun (sang)," 28.

12. *Koryŏsa* 105.39b. Min thinks Cho In'gyu's grandfather may have belonged to the class of wandering commoners (*yuimin* 流移民) who were uprooted during the period of military rule; see Min Hyŏn'gu, "Cho In'gyu wa kŭ ŭi kamun (sang)," 19. The term *mich'ŏn* ("low status" or, literally, "weak and base") here is not a technical term that denotes a specific status but rather a relative term that is used in a more general sense to refer to those who do not belong to the central elite. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

Cho turned thirty-three in 1270, their conquest of the Korean peninsula was complete. Sang'wŏn's proximity to the border and to the military garrison in P'yŏngyang meant that its inhabitants, Cho In'gyu included, would have had to bear the brunt of the Mongol attacks. Cho In'gyu, in other words, had grown up under the shadow of Mongol influence. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Cho In'gyu ended up studying Mongolian and, later, found himself accompanying the crown prince Sim 謹, the future King Ch'ungnyŏl 忠烈王 (r. 1274-1308), to the Yuan capital Dadu 大都 as his interpreter in 1269. This was undoubtedly the opportunity of a lifetime. Indeed, as the crown prince's interpreter, Cho In'gyu was able to quickly forge close relations not only with the crown prince himself but also with his Mongol consort, Princess Cheguk 齊國公主 (1259-1297), and her father Kublai Khan (r. 1260-1293). Cho In'gyu quickly moved up the bureaucratic ranks from lieutenant general, royal secretary, deputy commissioner of the royal secretariat, and eventually to the highest post of chancellor (*sijung* 侍中) in 1292. Fifteen years later, he also received the title of Lord of P'yŏngyang (P'yŏngyang kun 平壤君).

This was quite an accomplishment for someone who emerged from humble origins, especially given the monopoly over the high-ranking posts at the Secretariat-Chancellery (*chaech'u* 宰樞) that the old and distinguished descent groups of Koryŏ had enjoyed. But the greatest accomplishment, perhaps, was the marriage of his daughter to the crown prince, the future King Ch'ungsŏn 忠宣王 (r. 1298, 1308-1313), in 1292. Proof of this accomplishment appeared shortly after King Ch'ungsŏn reclaimed the throne in 1308 after a brief hiatus. The court had produced a list of great families, or *chaesang chi chong* 宰相之宗, that could offer their daughters as royal consorts and the P'yŏngyang Cho made it into the list.¹³

The aim of the present article, however, is not to talk about the accomplishments of Cho In'gyu. It is to talk about his death or, more precisely, how his family dealt with his death. But lest we jump to hasty conclusions, it seems worth noting here at the outset of our discussion that the P'yŏngyang Cho's response to their primogenitor's death was very much in line with traditional patterns of elite behavior during the Koryŏ. There are, of course, some caveats that I would like to add and, needless to say, these caveats are what I would really like to address. But, first, let us revisit Cho In'gyu at the time of his death.

13. *Koryŏsa* 33.24a-b; see Kim Tangt'aek, "Ch'ungsŏn wang ūi pogwi gyosŏ e poinŭn 'chaesang chi chong' e taehayŏ," *Yŏksa hakpo* 131 (1991): 1-29; and also Min Hyŏn'gu, "Cho In'gyu wa kŭ ūi kamun (sang)," 27.

The Death of Cho In'gyu

Cho In'gyu passed away on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of 1308.¹⁴ According to his funerary inscription,¹⁵ a small sore (*chong* 瘡) appeared on Cho In'gyu's neck and, having received a grim diagnosis, he refused medical treatment and began to devote his attention to Buddhism. As he approached the moment of death, Cho took a bath, changed his clothes, and passed away on his knees facing West and chanting the name of the Buddha Amitābha.¹⁶ His funeral took place three days later at Unggok 熊谷 in the capital Kaesŏng and he was given the posthumous title (*siho* 諡號) Lord Chŏngsuk 貞肅公. Before the funeral, his eldest son Cho Sŏ 趙瑞 (d. 1313), an official in the Security Council (*ch'umiruwŏn* 樞密院), visited a close family friend, the Hallim academician and drafter of proclamations (*chijego* 知制誥), Pang Usŏn 方于宣 with his father's record of conduct (*haengjang* 行狀) in hand and politely requested an inscription for his father's funerary epitaph.¹⁷ The learned official Pang respectfully complied with Cho Sŏ's request. This, however, was just the beginning.

Almost three decades later in 1341, with the family record (*kajŏn* 家傳) in hand Cho Sŏ's younger brother Cho Wi 趙瑋 (1287-1348) and his nephew, the Lord of P'yŏng'wŏn 平原君 Cho Ch'ungsin 趙忠臣, visited the renowned scholar Yi Kok 李穀 (1298-1351), while the latter was serving as the Vice Director of the Left and Right Offices of the Secretariat at the Eastern Expedition Field Headquarters at the Yuan capital Dadu,¹⁸ and requested another inscription for their late father and grandfather Lord Chŏngsuk, Cho In'gyu.¹⁹ Although the

14. According to the Gregorian calendar, this would be the 13th of July, 1308.

15. "Cho In'gyu myojimyŏng," in *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng*, Reprint Edition, ed. Kim Yongsŏn (Ch'unch'ŏn: Hallim Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2006), 629-632. For the sake of convenience, when citing from Kim Yongsŏn's compilation I will cite the abbreviated titles of the funerary inscriptions supplied by Kim.

16. For more on deathbed practices and conceptions of afterlife during the Koryŏ, see Kim Youngmi, "Buddhist Faith and Conceptions of the Afterlife in Koryŏ," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 193-220.

17. "Cho In'gyu myojimyŏng," 631.

18. Yi Kok was appointed the Vice Director of the Left and Right Offices of the Secretariat at the Eastern Expedition Field Headquarters (*chŏngdonghaeng chungsŏsŏng ch'wawsawŏnwoelang* 征東行中書省左右司員外郎) in 1335. He returned to Koryŏ in 1344 and the very next year was given the rank of assistant chancellor (*toch'ŏmŭ ch'ansŏngsa* 都僉議贊成事) and received the title Lord of Hansan 韓山君.

19. See "Cho Chŏngsuk kong sadang ki," in *Koryŏ myŏnghyŏn chip*, vol. 3 (Seoul: Songgyun'gwan taehakkyo taedong munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, 1986), 25-27.

lord already has a funeral inscription, he does not yet have, they pleaded with Yi Kok, an inscription for his path of the spirits (*sindo* 神道), that is, his ancestral hall (*sadang* 祠堂). The late lord, they continued, used to spend his time in a hall behind his house that he named Kiwŏn 祇園 or Jetavana. His descendants, they claimed, would now like to hang the late lord's memorial portrait in this hall and also place a stone stele in front of it so that the lord's example will be available for *all* future descendents to see and follow. Unfortunately, Yi Kok was too busy—he had to rush back to the Yuan capital—and could not comply with their request. But Cho In'gyu's fourth son, the monk Ŭisŏn 義旋 (ca. 1284-1348), also happened to be in the Yuan capital at the time and, apparently, continued to pester Yi Kok about this matter. Yi Kok eventually submitted to the persistence of the P'yŏngyang Cho and wrote the inscription.

The inscription was placed, as intended, before the ancestral hall in question, which was located behind Cho In'gyu's private villa (*pyŏlsŏ* 別墅) on Mt. Ch'ŏnggye 清溪山 near the southern capital, that is, present day Seoul.²⁰ In the new ancestral hall, Cho In'gyu's descendents, as they had promised Yi Kok, installed a memorial portrait for their distinguished ancestor and a portrait for his late wife as well. The ancestral hall seems to have eventually become the property of a temple known as Ch'ŏnggyesa 清溪寺, which Cho In'gyu himself had established (or, more likely, restored) “to pray for the king.”²¹ Although there is no way to know for sure, the temple may have initially consisted of a few buildings within or located near Cho In'gyu's villa, but the entire villa seems to have eventually been converted into the temple's permanent property (*sangju* 常住) after his death. This allowed Cho In'gyu's children and grandchildren to provide the temple with land and slaves to ensure the continued performance of ancestral sacrifices (*sasa* 祀事). And that is exactly what happened. The ancestral hall, we are told, eventually came to house the portraits of Cho In'gyu's prominent descendants, namely his sons Cho Sŏ, Cho Yŏn 趙璉 (d. 1322), and the monk Ŭisŏn 義旋 (ca. 1284-1348), Yŏn's son Cho Tŏgyu 趙德裕 (1314-1352) and his son Cho Chun 趙浚 (1346-1405), and all of their wives. If we are to trust an inscription prepared in 1689 by an eleventh-generation scion of the P'yŏngyang Cho, the temple and its ancestral hall

20. Mt. Ch'ŏnggye is located in present-day Ŭiwang, Kyŏnggi province.

21. It was standard procedure to dedicate all new and restored temples to the king. This was done to circumvent the ban on constructing private memorial temples. See Sem Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas: The Politics of Buddhism During the Koryŏ Dynasty (918-1392)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 306.

remained in the possession of his family for almost 400 years.²²

Buddhism Near the Capital

But what does all this have to do with the changes that occurred in the central elite's self-understanding? To answer this question, there are a few things here in the responses to Cho In'gyu's death that we need to examine more closely. First, we should note that Cho's burial site (Unggok), ancestral seat (P'yŏnggyang), and the site on which his memorial rites are regularly performed (Ch'ŏnggyesa) do not coincide. This, in fact, was not as uncommon as one may think. Memorial rites for merit subjects (*kongsin* 功臣) such as Ch'oe Sawi 崔士威 (961-1041),²³ Ch'oe Hang 崔沆 (972-1061),²⁴ and Yi Chayŏn 李子淵 (1002-1086),²⁵ for instance, were not performed exclusively at either their burial sites

22. See "Ch'ŏnggyesa sajŏk ki pi," in *Kyŏnggi kŏmsŏk taegwan*, vol. 5 (Suwŏn: Kyŏnggi-do, 1992), 15-22. This stele inscription was prepared by Cho In'gyu's eleventh generation descendant and recent literary licentiate (*jinsa* 進士) Cho Un 趙櫟 in 1689 to commemorate the temple's restoration after a devastating fire that consumed the temple earlier that same year.

23. According to his funerary inscription, Ch'oe Sawi (whose ancestral seat is Suju 水州, present-day Suwŏn, Kyŏnggi province) was buried near the temple Purilsa 佛日寺 on Mt. Pŏbun 法雲山 in Songnim county 松林縣, Changdan prefecture 長湍郡 (in the capital area of Kyŏnggi), in 1041, but reburied presumably somewhere else in the same county in 1076. But two decades before his reburial in 1052, Ch'oe Sawi had been named a merit subject and his family was given permission to perform his memorial rites at King Hyŏnjong's 顯宗 (r. 1009-1031) tomb, Sŏllŭng 宣陵. See "Ch'oe Sawi myojimyŏng," *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng*, 26. According to the *Koryŏsa*, that same year (1052) King Munjong decreed that the memorial rites for Ch'oe Sawi be performed in the courtyard of the ancestral shrine of the former king (i.e., Hyŏnjong), which most likely refers to the separate hall for Hyŏnjong and his wife at the royal shrine (*t'aemyo* 太廟); see *Koryŏsa* 94.14a.

24. According to his funerary inscription, Ch'oe Hang (whose ancestral seat is Kyŏngju, North Kyŏnsang province) was buried on Mt. Ch'angji 昌支山 in Chin'gang county 鎭江縣 (present-day Yangdo-myŏn, Kanghwa-gun, Inch'ŏn); see "Ch'oe Hang myojimyŏng," *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng*, 389. The *Koryŏsa*, however, tells us that a special endowment for memorial rites—more on this shortly—had been donated to the temple Hyŏnhwasa 玄化寺 for Ch'oe Hang. When his eldest son Ch'oe Yubu 崔有孚 was commissioned to serve as second commandant (*puyusu* 副留守) of the western capital, P'yŏnggyang, the Secretariat-Chancellery recommended that his rank be elevated to the third-grade and kept in the capital so that he may continue to perform the memorial rites for his father; see *Koryŏsa* 93.31b. See also Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ū kujo wa kinŭng* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1998), 277.

25. According to his funerary inscription, Yi Chayŏn (whose ancestral seat is Inju 仁州, present-day Inch'ŏn) took his last breath, as many during the Koryŏ tended to do, at a temple (which, in Yi's case, was Myogaksa 妙覺寺). He was cremated according to the Buddhist custom and his remains buried in Imjin county 臨津縣, Changdan prefecture, which was located not far from the capital. His son Yi Chŏng 李頤 (1025-1077) was also cremated, and the remains buried, in Imjin

or at a location near their ancestral seats. Special provisions were also made for the continued performance of their memorial rites at the royal shrine (or, more precisely, the memorial hall of the king that they respectively served) and at the large memorial temples (*wōndang* 願堂) that were built to serve the royal family.²⁶ For the capital-based elite, the shrines where their honorable dead were remembered and worshiped seem to have been more important for maintaining their greatness than their tombs or places of origin during the Koryŏ.²⁷ Needless to say, the more magnificent the place of worship the more obvious the greatness of the people (often kings and merit subjects in the early Koryŏ) worshipped therein.

By no means, however, was it necessary to be a merit subject to have a separate site for one's memorial rites. Central officials and men of influence seem to have often supplied Buddhist temples with a special endowment or fund called *kiilbo* 忌日寶 to support the continued performance of memorial rites for their relatives.²⁸ During the military era, the powerful statesman Ch'oe U 崔瑀 (alt. Ch'oe I 崔怡; d. 1249), for instance, furnished the temple Susŏnsa 修禪寺 (present-day Songgwangsa 松廣寺) with precisely such an endowment to ensure the regular performance of memorial rites for his late mother and younger sister.²⁹ And, given Ch'oe's ties to Susŏnsa,³⁰ it does not seem too presumptuous to say that his memorial rites were probably performed there as well. Ch'oe, however, was not alone in this respect. Officials who had ties to the Ch'oe regime such as the supreme general (*sang changgun* 上將軍) Kim Chunggu 金仲龜 (1175-1242) and Sŏ Ton'gyŏng 徐敦敬 also endowed Susŏnsa with a *kiilbo* for their parents.³¹

Temple endowments, as Han Kimun has shown, were not limited to the

county. The *Koryŏsa*, however, tells us that the memorial rites for Yi Chayŏn were allowed to be performed in the courtyard of the ancestral shrine (*myojŏng* 廟庭) of King Munjong 文宗 (r. 1046-1083); see *Koryŏsa* 95.11a.

26. A comprehensive list of these merit subjects can be found in *Koryŏsa* 60.33-36.

27. Consider also the following. As Han Kimun points out, it seems to have been the case that the central government had designated the temple Hŭngguksa 興國寺 as the memorial temple for distinguished civil bureaucrats and the temple Haeansa 海安寺 for distinguished military officials; see Han, *Koryŏ sawŏn ū kujo wa kinŭng*, 278.

28. See Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ū kujo wa kinŭng*, 278-281; and also idem, "Koryŏ sidae sawŏnbo ū sŏlch'i wa unyŏng," *Yŏksa kyoyuk nonjip* 13/14 (1990): 361-391.

29. "Susŏnsa tanwŏl kŭp yujibi," in *Han'guk ū komunsŏ*, ed. Hŏ Hŭngsik (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1988), 269; cited in Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ū kujo wa kinŭng*, 280.

30. For instance, he sent his two illegitimate sons to Susŏnsa to be ordained as Buddhist monks.

31. "Susŏnsa tanwŏl kŭp yujibi," 270; cited in Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ū kujo wa kinŭng*, 280.

funding of memorial rites. Similar endowments were made to print Buddhist texts, maintain important monastic property, and pray for the long life of a certain patron (*changnyŏnbo* 長年寶) or the wellbeing of the king (*ch'uksŏngbo* 祝聖寶).³² The explicit purpose of temple endowments thus varied, but many of these endowments may have also served another implicit purpose. Speaking of Ch'oe U and Kim Chunggu's donations to Susŏnsa, Hŏ Hŭngsik argues that these donations were used as an expedient to build an economic and institutional base for Ch'oe and his clique. The donated land was thereby, as Hŏ puts it, "privatized" and was put to use as capital for usury.³³

To what extent the temple Susŏnsa or any other memorial temple for that matter was able to function as a practical economic base for something other than itself and its inhabitants is unclear. But donating land and movable wealth to a temple did shift the burden of financing the continued performance of various rites from an individual or a family to the temple. To be more precise, it was the abbot of the temple who had to bear this burden. Naturally, to ensure the efficient management of monastic property and its endowments the capital-based elite seem to have had a great interest, and often involved themselves directly, in the appointment of the abbot of their memorial temples.³⁴ When the chancellor Ch'oe Chean 崔齊顔 (d. 1046), for instance, restored the temple Ch'öllyongsa 天龍寺 near his ancestral seat, Kyŏngju, in 1040 he left specific instructions wherein he requested that the abbot not be appointed by the central government but rather be chosen from among the resident monks.³⁵

32. See Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ŭi kujo wa kinŭng*, 278-281; and also *ibid.*, "Koryŏ sidae sawŏnbo ŭi sŏlch'i wa unyŏng."

33. Hŏ Hŭngsik, *Han'guk ŭi komunsŏ*, 269 n. 11 (a). Buddhist temples were accused of taking advantage of endowments (*po* 寶) and moveable wealth in the form of usury as early as the tenth century. In his memorial to the throne submitted in 982, the minister Ch'oe Sŭngno 崔承老 (927-989), for instance, called for a ban on this practice. More specifically, he maintained that money, grains, and taxable men (*chŏnjŏng* 田丁) that originally belonged to the temple should be returned to the temple estate (*sawŏn chŏnjang* 寺院田莊), that is, they should not be lent to others outside the temple as a loan; see *Koryŏsa* 93.14; and also Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 161-162. Here, my translation of *sawŏn chŏnjang* as "temple estate" and *chŏnjŏng* as "taxable men" is tentative. The meaning of the term *chŏnjŏng* has received much scholarly attention but still remains a matter of debate; see Palais, "Land Tenure in Korea: Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," *Journal of Korean Studies* 4 (1982-1983): 73-205; and also Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 319 n. 62. For a discussion of the term *sawŏn chŏnjang*, see Kang Chinch'ŏl, *Kaejŏng Koryŏ t'oji chedosa yŏn'gu*, 159.

34. See Han Kimun, "Koryŏsidae sawŏnbo ŭi sŏlch'i wa unyŏng," 388.

35. *Samguk yusa* 3, T'apsang 4, Chŏllyongsa; cited in Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ŭi kujo wa kinŭng*, 279-280; and also Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 306.

The capital-based elite, however, were also keen on the idea of securing memorial temples that were closer to the capital. Ch'oe U's efforts to build a sister temple named Sŏnwŏnsa 禪源寺 on Kanghwa island, I think, better represents the general leanings of the capital-based elite. Even more telling, perhaps, is the case of Ch'oe Sŏngji 崔誠之 (1265-1330), a prominent official in the Secretariat-Chancellery, who not only donated funds to the temple Sŏnwŏnsa on Kanghwa island to pray for his wife, dead son, and his own long life but also restored the temple Ch'ŏnhwasŏnsa 天和禪寺 near the capital to perform memorial rites for his parents.³⁶ Throughout the Koryŏ period, memorial temples—especially those located in or near the capital area—had always been the preferred method of establishing great family credentials.³⁷

Fiscal Crisis

What, then, does this tell us about the P'yŏngyang Cho? As noted earlier, what we need to note about the P'yŏngyang Cho is the location of their memorial temple, Ch'ŏnggyesa. Why is the location of Ch'ŏnggyesa in the capital district of Kyŏnggi so important? To answer this question we need to go back to the year 1271. A year earlier, having fully surrendered to the Mongols, the Koryŏ court moved back from its temporary abode on Kanghwa island to the capital Kaegyŏng 開京. But the continued Mongol invasions left large tracks of land unusable and the royal granaries had been depleted, which made it all but impossible to pay state officials their salaries (*nokpong* 祿俸) or grant them land for their services (i.e., rank land).

Largely as a stopgap measure, the Koryŏ court, the fierce opposition from royal favorites and relatives who owned large tracks of land in the capital area notwithstanding, quickly promulgated the Salary Rank Land (*nokkwajŏn* 祿科田) system in 1271.³⁸ The plan was rather simple. In lieu of grains, which the

36. See "Sŏnwŏnsa chesŭnggi," *Koryŏ myŏnghyŏn chip*, 398; cited in Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ūi kujo wa kinŭng*, 281 and 285.

37. See Hŏ Hŭngsik, *Koryŏ pulgyosa yŏn'gu*, 47-102; Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ūi kujo wa kinŭng*, 217-351; and also Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 305-310 and 335-349.

38. See *Koryŏsa* 78.18-19. One of the earliest studies to study the Salary Rank Land system was Fukaya Toshigane's article "Kōraichō rokkadenkō," *Chōsen gakuhō* 48 (1968): 259-274. A far more reliable study was published a few years later by Min Hyŏn'gu, "Koryŏ ūi nokkwajŏn," *Yŏksa hakpo* 53/54 (1971): 55-98. Some of the questionable assumptions made by Fukaya were rendered suspect by Min. A more updated and thorough study of the system can be found in Yi Kyŏngsik, *Chosŏn chŏn'gi t'oji chedo yŏn'gu: t'oji pun'gŭpche wa nongmin chibae* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1986). A very useful summary and update of this research can also be found in O Ilsun,

state did not have, officials would be paid with revenues from “reclaimable lands” (*kanji* 墾地), which, as the historian Yi Kyöngsik claims, seems to refer to land that did not already have a rightful tax or prebend (*cho* 租) recipient (e.g. the state or *yangban* officials) in the eight counties of the Kyönggi area.³⁹ But the opposition from powerful families in the capital to the state’s use of this land seems to imply that these families had actually, without proper authorization, claimed this land as their own.

Opposition from powerful families was not the only problem that the court faced during this period. A continued drought and the invasion of the Red Turbans and Wako pirates also confronted the state with serious shortages of grains that could be handed out as salaries and by 1391 only those officials belonging to the first three ranks were able to receive salaries, albeit in the reduced amount of one measure or *sök* of rice each.⁴⁰ This, however, does not mean that Koryö officials were all starving. Some of them, who owned large private estates and due prebends for their services to the state, were certainly better off financially than new recruits to the bureaucracy like the Musong Yun whom we will visit shortly. But for us to better understand the turn of events that I have schematically outlined above, it is necessary that we first take a very brief detour and look at land during the late Koryö.

Land during this period seem to have consisted largely of three types, namely *kongjön* 公田 (tax revenue land), *sajön* 私田 (prebend revenue land), and private estates such as *nongjang* 農莊.⁴¹ Both *kongjön* and *sajön* were, respectively, land from which tax or prebends were gathered and assigned either to the state (as in the case of *kongjön*) or to individuals and institutions who provided services to the state such as *yangban* officials, temples, clerics, soldiers, local strongmen etc (as in the case of *sajön*). (Allegedly, for *kongjön* ¼

“Koryö hugi t’oji pun’güpche üi pyöndong kwa nokkwajön,” in *14 segi Koryö üi chöngch’i wa sahoe*, ed. Han’guk yöksa yön’guhoe (Seoul: Minümsa, 1994), 270-292. As O Ilsun correctly points out, the Salary Rank land system was not, it seems, meant to serve as a replacement for the Field and Woodland Rank (*chönsigwa*) system or the salary system of early Koryö.

39. See Yi Kyöngsik, *Chosön chön’gi t’oji chedo yön’gu*, 58-59; and also Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosön Dynasty*, 94 and 182-184. “Reclaimable land” here, as Yi argues, seems to refer to land that was once tilled but was deemed to have lost its recipient during the land survey conducted in 1269. As O Ilsun also points out, the *Koryösa* clearly distinguishes “reclaimable land” from “uncultivated land” (*hwangji* 荒地); see *Koryösa* 78.5b.

40. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosön Dynasty*, 183-184. See also *Koryösa* 80.20a.

41. The meaning of *kongjön* and *sajön* and other related terms in this context is anything but clear and still remains a matter of debate. For a very useful summary of this debate, see Palais, “Land Tenure in Korea.” As it will become clear shortly, I think these terms make more sense if we approach them from the perspective of revenue rather than ownership.

of the yield went to the state and for *sajŏn* ½ of the yield went to its officially designated recipient.⁴²) Who actually owned *kongjŏn* and *sajŏn* land is still a matter of debate, but as long as the right proportion of tax or prebend revenues from this land went to its rightful recipient (and the peasants who tilled the land had the right to do so) the question of who owned the land was, apparently, not really important.⁴³ As for the last category, private estates, this too remains an ill-defined concept, but it seems clear that there was plenty of it, at least in the waning years of the dynasty.⁴⁴ Cho In'gyu's private villa on Mt. Ch'ŏnggye is a good case in point.

Admittedly, it is unclear how exactly Cho In'gyu acquired this precious plot of land. Given his ties to Sang'wŏn and his family's lack of ascriptive privileges, it seems highly unlikely that Cho In'gyu had inherited this land as what is known as *choŏpchŏn* 祖業田 or patrimonial land. This leaves us with a few other possibilities. He may have purchased it, serendipitously stumbled upon it, or perhaps even stolen it. But it seems more likely that it was granted to him by King Ch'ungnyŏl as something called *sa(gŭp)chŏn* 賜(給)田 or "grant land," a system that was abused in particular by King Ch'ungnyŏl to gain the loyalty of merit subjects and inner palace favorites like Cho In'gyu.⁴⁵ In fact, in Cho In'gyu's *Koryŏsa* biography there is a record of him receiving land and peasants from King Ch'ungnyŏl.⁴⁶ The king, we should note, took these measures because he seems to have strongly desired to strengthen the throne at the expense of the capital-based *yangban* elite.

Ch'ungnyŏl seems to have been stuck between a rock and a hard place. Cajoled, it seems, by the powerful families (*hogang* 豪強) who owned grant lands, Ch'ungnyŏl also forbade the use of these grant lands as salary rank lands in 1279, which means that the families who owned these grant lands were also assigned *additional* prebend revenues from rank lands despite the shortage of

42. Kang Chinch'ŏl, *Kaejŏng Koryŏ t'oji chedosa yŏn'gu*, 65. See also the discussion in Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 276-277.

43. Although the Koryŏ ideal was to follow the equal-field (*juntian* 均田) system of the Tang, in reality, as Duncan points out, it may have been the case that "the state simply recognized as prebends a portion of the lands own by *hyangni* descent groups" and powerful institutions such as temples (Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 48); for the latter, see Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 290-291.

44. For a very useful discussion of *nonjang* estates and the fiscal crisis of the late Koryŏ, see Wi Ŭnsuk, "Nongjang ŭi sŏngnip kwa kŭ kujo," in *Han'guksa 19: Koryŏ hugi chŏngch'i wa kyŏngje*, ed. Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe (Seoul: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 1996), 225-290.

45. See O Ilsun, "Koryŏ hugi t'oji pungŭp ŭi pyŏndong kwa nokkwajŏn," 286-289; and also Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 185.

46. *Koryŏsa* 105.37b.

land in the capital district.⁴⁷ Unlike rank land, there was no mistaking who owned a specific lot of grant land. The powerful families with grant lands held in their possession what was known as *sap'ae* 賜牌 or “grant ordinance,” which they used as proof of ownership.⁴⁸ As one may expect, it seems to have been the case that these grant ordinances were not necessarily always acquired through proper means.⁴⁹ Using these *sap'ae*, we are told, powerful families took over land in the capital district without the permission of its rightful owner who had legal deeds (*chöck* 籍) to the land and refused to pay state taxes (*kongjo* 公租) on this land that they newly acquired.⁵⁰ Even worse, perhaps, several families would lay claim over land that was set aside for defense of the northern border and also land that was restricted, it seems, to officeholders, who had to turn it over to their successor upon leaving office.⁵¹ Needless to say, seizure of this office land by powerful families prevented it from being transferred to its rightful recipient.⁵² Certain *yangban* officials and powerful families had thus appropriated (*kyömb'yöng* 兼併) more land (or, more precisely speaking, its prebend revenues) than they could rightfully claim as their own and thereby deprived the Koryö court of the resources necessary to manage the state. In some cases more than one family laid claim over the same plot of land, making it virtually impossible for peasants or commoner tenants to make a living off this land.⁵³

According to the *Koryösa*, in 1285 King Ch'ungnyöl did issue an order to investigate grant lands and had any grant land that “had an original owner” (*yu bonju* 有本主) returned to this owner; and he also strictly prohibited those with grant ordinances from seizing land that had already been “reclaimed” (*kaegan* 開墾) by commoners.⁵⁴ In 1298, King Ch'ungnyöl's son and Cho

47. *Koryösa* 78.19a.

48. *Koryösa* 78.4b-5b and 16.

49. See Yi Sung'in's 李崇仁 (1347-1392) memorial; *Koryösa* 78.16b.

50. *Koryösa* 78.4b-5a. This seems to imply that this land was originally *kongjön* or land from which state taxes were collected.

51. *Koryösa* 78.5b and 47a. The latter is probably referring to salary rank land. The salary rank land system fell apart not long after it was put into effect, it seems, primarily because of the illegal seizure of this land by powerful families with *sap'ae*; see *Koryösa* 78.19b (cited in Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosön Dynasty*, 302 n. 146).

52. *Koryösa* 78.5b.

53. *Koryösa* 78.23b-24a and 32a.

54. *Koryösa* 78.4b-5a. Ch'ungnyöl's order to return land to their original owners notwithstanding, there is some evidence to suggest that the order was not followed through at the local level. In 1308, a decree was issued to punish local magistrates who, fearing retaliation from powerful

In'gyu's son-in-law, King Ch'ungsŏn, seems to have made another attempt to reverse this trend (surely under the pressure of the *yangban* elite), but, it seems, to little or no avail.⁵⁵ That year, in his inaugural decree, King Ch'ungsŏn specifically mentioned, for instance, the reckless and illegal establishment of private memorial temples by *yangban* officials and the abuse of *sap'ae* by Buddhist temples and shrines (for *ch'o* 醺 sacrifices) who seized the field and woodland (*chŏnsi* 田柴) reserved for *yangban* and converted them into private *nongjang* estates.⁵⁶ But the concern here, I believe, is not necessarily about the dangerous expansion of the private estates of Buddhist temples per se but rather, it seems, the threat of the shrinkage of *kongjŏn* and *sajŏn*—especially around the capital—that was caused by its absorption (via donation) into temple estates.⁵⁷ (The families who donated this land probably maintained some, if not complete, control over this land.)

In 1308, when he reassumed the throne, Ch'ungsŏn adjusted his message a bit and tried to simply tax grant land, which the powerful families (*hose chi ka* 豪勢之家) tried to pass off as patrimonial land and, inevitably so, exceeded the amount of land to which they were rightfully allotted.⁵⁸ He also made sure that tax collected from temples with proper documentation was returned and restored as rightful prebends to the temples.⁵⁹ Later in 1317, the abuse of the *sap'ae* system was so apparent that King Ch'ungsŏn's son, King Ch'ungsuk 忠

families, ignored or delayed lawsuits that were filed by the original owners of the land; *Koryŏsa* 84.24b-25a. See also *Koryŏsa* 115.1b-2a. Grant ordinances, the *Koryŏsa* notes, were originally given to royal family members, officials, palaces, and temples who wished to cultivate "idle land" (*hanjŏn* 閑田); *Koryŏsa* 78.4b. But those with these grant ordinances, we are told, abused their privileges and seized land that was clearly not "idle."

55. *Koryŏsa* 78.5 and 16a.

56. *Koryŏsa* 84.22b and 24b. I suspect that the language used by the *Koryŏsa* here is misleading. The Buddhist temples and shrines probably received, rather than "seized" or stole, field and woodland reserved for *yangban* as donations.

57. Pae Sanghyŏn notes the example of Yun Hwan 尹桓 (d. 1386) and his wife who donated their respective patrimonial lands to the temple Pobŏpsa 報法寺 near the capital and the second assistant master of the Confucian Academy Pak Ching 朴澄 who restored an abandoned temple Yŏmyangŏnsa 艷陽禪寺 in his ancestral seat Kangnŭng for his late mother; see Pae Sanghyŏn, *Koryŏ hugi sawŏnjŏn yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 1998), 30-31 and 59-60. There are, of course, a few exceptions. Monks did amass great fortune in the form of private estates. One notable example was the large estate named Miwŏnjang 迷元莊 owned by the monk Pohŏ 普虛 (or Pou 普愚) (1301-1382); see *ibid.*, 53 and 285-286.

58. *Koryŏsa* 33.25b.

59. *Koryŏsa* 78.46b. Pae Sanghyŏn notes an intriguing example of the improper taxation of *Susŏnsa* during the monk Ch'ungji's 冲止 (1226-1292) tenure as abbot; see Pae Sanghyŏn, *Koryŏ hugi sawŏnjŏn yŏn'gu*, 50-51.

肅王 (r. 1313-1339), had to order another investigation of those merit subjects who illegally expanded their grant lands and paid no taxes.⁶⁰ Eight years later, Ch'ungsuk tried to limit the land that these merit subject families could rightfully “own” to 100 *kyöl* 結 (roughly 250 acres).⁶¹ Periodic attempts were even made during the first year of King Ch'unghye 忠惠王 (1330) and King Ch'ungmok's 忠穆王 (1344) reign, respectively, to confiscate these grant lands and turn them into salary rank land,⁶² but the very fact that this measure had to be repeated so often seems to indicate that it was all for naught.

All this, of course, is just another convoluted way of saying there was a serious fiscal crisis during the late Koryŏ. But more importantly, at the center of this crisis, we find families such as the P'yŏngyang Cho. But history is not without its ironies. As it turns out, the solution to this crisis was the brainchild of none other than Cho In'gyu's renowned great grandson Cho Chun. But before we talk about Cho Chun I would like to take a brief detour now and discuss something a bit more important and that is the issue of how the elite refashioned a new self-image for themselves during this period and what this has to do with the growing fiscal crisis.

Memorial Temples

To be a *great* family, a family during the Koryŏ had to have, it seems, a few things. A great family would have, for instance, a family record known as *kajŏn* 家傳, *sebo* 世譜, *karok* 家錄, *kabo* 家譜, *kach'ŏp* 家牒, *kajang* 家狀, *poch'ŏp* 譜牒, or *po* 譜, which provides a record of the family's ability to produce officials, be it through *ŭm* privilege, civil service examinations, or merit subject status.⁶³ More importantly, a family with such a record would also have to procure from a reputable scholar-official an inscription that rendered this record into stylish prose. This family would also have to have this inscription set in stone on a monumental stele that could forever stand as testimony to the family's greatness. This stele alone, however, was often not enough. A great family would also require a formal structure wherein they could house this

60. *Koryŏsa* 78.16a.

61. See the discussion of *kyöl* in Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 273-274.

62. *Koryŏsa* 78.19.

63. Kim Yongsŏn argues that such records appeared sometime between the founding of the Koryŏ and the earliest reference to a *po* in the early twelfth century; see Kim Yongsŏn, *Koryŏ kŏmsŏngmun yŏn'gu*—*Tol e saegyŏjin sahoesa* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 2004), 47-73.

stele (and other steles with funerary inscriptions) and perform memorial rites to thank and remember its illustrious ancestors.

This formal structure was almost always the portrait hall or ancestral hall located within the walls of, ideally, a grand Buddhist temple. I say “ideally” because memorial rites were expensive, relatively time and labor intensive, and not to mention in need of a permanent staff of experts who could perform them, in theory, indefinitely. There were apparently many different ways of pulling this off. We know, for instance, that some preferred to have a few of their own private slaves become monks, build a small structure for them to live in near the tomb of their ancestors, and have the slaves regularly perform simple memorial rites and guard the tomb in their stead.⁶⁴ The more honorable and ideal method, however, would have been to furnish a grand temple with a special endowment for memorial rites (*kiilbo*) and, of course, a portrait of one’s ancestors so that the temple could continue to offer memorial rites for those ancestors annually on their behalf.

There is, as mentioned earlier, a long history of great families or those aspiring to become one doing just that throughout the Koryŏ dynasty. But some officials and even monks seem to have eventually acquired enough wealth and political clout to restore dilapidated temples or build new ones and claim them as their own private temples.⁶⁵ For instance, in the aforementioned temple Ch’öllyongsa restored by the chancellor Ch’oe Chean and the temple Manŭisa 萬義寺 restored by Cho In’gyu’s brother Hon’gi 混其 (d.u.),⁶⁶ what we see are examples of the family in charge of the restoration taking control over the appointment of the abbot of these private temples, a privilege that traditionally belonged to the state.⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, perhaps, we also find complaints about abbots arrogating temple property and assets to themselves. None of this, however, was new to the late Koryŏ populace, but this is not to

64. See “Kyŏngsa kŭnson mitasa ki,” *Koryŏ myŏngbyŏn chip*, vol. 3.19; cited in Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ŭi kujo wa kinŭng*, 308 n. 326. This practice continued well into the fifteenth century, see *Yongjae ch’onghwa* 2.15a-b. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

65. As Yi Pyŏnghŭi points out, the Mongol invasions seem to have been the single greatest cause for the rapidly worsening state of Buddhist temples during the late Koryŏ; see Yi Pyŏnghŭi, “Koryŏ hugi sawŏn ŭi mangp’yehwa wa t’oji munje,” *Munhwa sabak* 26 (2006): 228. For the “privatization” of these temples, see idem, “Koryŏ hugi sawŏn ŭi chungsu/chungch’ang kwa kyŏngje munje,” *Munhwa sabak* 27 (2007): 783-791. For more on the building of memorial temples through the donation of private estates, see Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ŭi kujo wa kinŭng*, 289-291.

66. For Hon’gi and Cho In’gyu’s ties to the Buddhist establishment, see Ahn, “This Way of Ours,” 56-60.

67. Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 220.

say that change did not take place. Although the evidence is thin, the Korean historian Hō Hŭngsik and others have noted a visible increase in private temples or shrines such as the aforementioned temple Ch'ōnggyesa and Manūisa of the P'yōngyang Cho during and after the period of Mongol domination.⁶⁸

But this is not the story that I wish to tell. More important than the possible increase in the number of memorial temples during the late Koryō is the fact that the restoration of a temple to pray for one's ancestors was not complete until it was furnished with a special inscription. Indeed, all of the figures cited above made sure to secure an inscription for their temples from famed academicians such as Yi Kok 李穀 (1298-1351) and his son Yi Saek 李穡 (1328-1396), which they proudly displayed at their respective temples. So, why are these inscriptions so important and what do they say? Lest the point become too redundant, let us take a brief look at a few examples.

The Sinboksōnsa 神福禪寺 restoration record by Yi Kok contains a long list of names and official titles of all those who belong to the patron, the palace eunuch Pak Swaenooldae's 朴鎖魯兀大 family (including, of course, the patron himself). The record also tells us that Pak—another fine example of a man of influence from a nontraditional background—donated a sizeable sum of land from a nearby town and a considerable amount of movable wealth to restore the temple because his father used to visit the temple to pray for his son's wellbeing. According to the record, Pak made the following argument to secure an inscription for his temple: “the restoration of Sinbok[sōnsa] does not yet have a record—this is the worst case of an unworthy son neglecting his parents.”⁶⁹ Pak goes on to tell us that he wished to have a temple restoration record (*chunghŭng ki* 重興記) carved in stone so that future generations of his family, the Kwangju Pak 廣州朴, may forever remember the loving kindness of his father and the names of his brothers in his hometown Kwangju. Yi Kok, as he candidly admits in the record that he prepared, found this demonstration of filial piety and care for home and family very moving especially since, in his opinion, men who seek wealth, prestige, and high office seem to seldom give any thought to their parents let alone their extended family members and the hometown from which they emerged.

Similar, if not identical, ideas fill the space of the inscription for the temple

68. Hō Hŭngsik, *Koryō pulgyosa yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1981), 42 and 334; and Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 307.

69. “Taewŏn Koryōguk Kwangju Sinboksōnsa chunghŭng ki,” *Koryō myŏnghyŏn chip*, vol. 3, 28.

Chinjongsa 眞宗寺 as well. The temple, we are told, was originally restored by the chancellor Yu Ch'öngsin 柳淸臣 (d. 1329) who, despite the restrictions against men of *pugok* 部曲 origin like himself to rise above the fifth grade in rank, was, like Cho In'gyu, able to become chancellor thanks to his Mongolian skills.⁷⁰ Presumably after the restoration was complete, Yu had his tomb constructed on a hill just to the west of the temple. Naturally, his descendants visited the temple every year to pay their respects. Noticing that the temple, we are told, was in a state of disrepair, Yu Ch'öngsin's grandson Yu T'ak 柳濯 (1311-1371) decided to restore the temple once again. While he was at it, he also decided to add a portrait hall where he eventually hoped to install the memorial portrait of his grandfather. Yu T'ak's reasoning behind the second restoration was not unlike that provided by Pak Swaenoldae. "An unworthy grandson," as Yu T'ak himself puts it, "was only able to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors truly because of their diligent effort to set a good example. Among the sons and grandsons I am the eldest. If I cannot continue [to set a good example by restoring this temple] how could I be excused from being punished for it?"⁷¹ Yi Saek, the author of the inscription for Yu T'ak's temple, boldly declares that it was the chancellor's unwavering adherence to the family legacy (*kaböp* 家法) that won him the respect that he deserved. Filial piety, he continues, is the foundation of Principle (*i* 理). The chancellor's decision to carry on the will of his ancestors and repay the debt of the king with the temple Chinjongsa is, therefore, Yi Saek argues, completely in agreement with the Way (*ki to tang'yön* 其道當然). How, Yi Saek asks, could this compare to those who construct opulent temples and thereby exhaust the royal treasury and harm the people in the name of praying for well-being, driving away the inauspicious, and inviting the good? "Those who call themselves men of influence (*hogöl* 豪傑)," Yi laments, "usually tend towards this and do not consider this Way of ours."⁷²

In his inscription for the restoration of the temple Kōndongsōnsa 乾洞禪寺, Yi Saek's teacher, the famed scholar-official Yi Chehyōn 李齊賢 (1287-1367) similarly voices his concerns about mistaking the magnificence of form for the magnificence of content. An unnamed guest, we are told, once asked him why the Indian monk Chigong 指空, who spent thirty-one months in Koryō (from 1326 to 1328), would praise the military official Ha Wōnsō 河元瑞 for restoring the temple Kōndongsōnsa if someone like Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502-

70. See the discussion of *pugok* in Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 33-34.

71. "Chinjongsa ki," in *Koryō myōnghyōn chip*, vol. 3, 799.

72. *Ibid.*, 800.

549) could get Bodhidharma to speak only after building countless stūpas and shrines. To this query, Yi Chehyōn offered a telling response: “The outward appearance of good work may be identical, but the [underlying] Principle may not be the same; if one does not possess skill in means within one’s breast, he will not be able to discern this [distinction]. The ancient sage possessed all things under Heaven, but he did not consider what had no relation to him to be his possession. If one improperly takes all that which is not in one’s possession and considers them [his own] merit, then this is no better than not doing this and taking [this not doing] as merit.”⁷³

There is, I think, a subtle shift in the attitude towards temples here that we seldom, if ever, witness in the records from early Koryŏ. We can, perhaps, try to understand this shift in the following two ways. First, there seems to be an emphasis on demonstrating, rather than assuming or taking for granted, filial piety through the active restoration of memorial temples. The practice of restoring temples, as we learn from the records left by Yi Chehyōn and others, had become an important, if not exclusive, means of demonstrating the Way, which is transmitted as the family legacy. Second, there clearly was, however, a concern about mistaking material prosperity for the Way. We can, I think, sense this concern in the effort to distinguish the outward appearance of good work (*sase* 事勢) and the Principle that guides this work. Both aspects of the shift in the attitude towards temple building and restoration, I also contend, were intimately related to the fiscal crisis that defined the period in which these men were active. Allow me to explain.

When compared to the restoration or construction of temples during the early Koryŏ, something immediately stands out as lacking in the restoration projects during the late Koryŏ. What was lacking? State support. With a few inevitable exceptions, most temples constructed during the early Koryŏ seem to have received financial support from the king or central government.⁷⁴ Naturally, they were almost always dedicated to the king and the state. For instance, after the official Kim Yŏngŭi 金令義, who was from the Southern Song capital, restored the temple Sorimsa 少林寺 in Kongsŏng county 功成縣 in Sangju (present-day North Kyŏngsang province) in 1177 he reported this to the king and requested a royal endowment of 1500 *sŏk* of rice.⁷⁵ Interest from lending the rice, he explained, would be used annually to pay for Buddhist

73. “Chungsu Kōndongsōnsa ki,” *Koryŏ myŏngbyŏn chip*, vol. 2, 286.

74. See Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 286-295.

75. “Sorimsa chungsu ki,” *Tongmunson* “文選 65.4b. See also the discussion of this temple in Vermeersch, *The Power of the Buddhas*, 308.

services that also included prayers for the long life of the king. Again, requests of this kind were not, it seems, uncommon during the early and mid Koryŏ periods. Now, consider the following words of an abbot found in Yi Chehyŏn's inscription for the temple Kaegugyulsa 開國律寺 which was restored in 1323: "The present [state] of our country is unlike that of former times. It is difficult to expect [the king] to follow old custom and repair our hut. Besides, it is not righteous to expect our neighbors to mend the holes in our fence and not wise to expect others to remove the weeds from our fields."⁷⁶ Witnessing this effort, Yi Chehyŏn himself remarked: "Material things cannot always remain in a state of disrepair. When the time is right they will flourish [again]. The Way cannot indefinitely remain impoverished. When the right person [comes along] it will rise [again]."⁷⁷

One could, in other words, no longer take it for granted that the state would, as it once did, provide the means for maintaining stability and enduring values.⁷⁸ Those who sought greatness for themselves and for their families had to therefore assume a more *active* role in embodying these values. Like the greatness of an old but dilapidated temple—whose condition had always been largely synonymous with the condition of the state and its elite—it seems to have been the case that the greatness of a family, during the late Koryŏ, had to be established and reestablished, not expected or extended, and the initiative had to be taken to demonstrate this greatness in distinctly material ways. But the fiscal crisis that followed the Mongol invasions and the consequent loss of a sense of stability forced the moral economy of Buddhism to change in an irreversible way. What once seemed to be a simple extension of destiny was now a question of *how to define* this destiny—the Way—for one's family. But with land and resources around the capital becoming increasingly scarce and difficult to maintain, the key issue for anyone aspiring to establish great family credentials, then, was whether or not it was *necessary* to follow old forms in this effort to define family values.

The Musong Yun

A response to this issue soon came from the Musong Yun family, whose tale will serve as a conclusion to this article. Three months after the funeral of the

76. "Chungsu Kaegugyulsa ki," *Koryŏ myŏnggyŏn chip*, vol. 2, 284.

77. Ibid.

78. See Yi, "Koryŏ hugi sawŏn ŭi mangp'yehwa wa t'oji munje," 223.

assistant chancellor Yun T'aek 尹澤 (1289-1370), his grandson Yun Sojong 尹紹宗 (1345-1393) visited his teacher Yi Saek with the family record (*kajang*) that he himself had just compiled and requested a funeral inscription for his late grandfather.⁷⁹ Yun Sojong seems to have had to produce his own family record because his family's entry into the central bureaucracy was relatively new. In fact, their entry into the capital began with his great grandfather Hae 諧 who rose to the rank of headmaster (*taesasōng* 大司成) at the National Academy. Virtually nothing, however, is known about Hae's father Yangbi 良庇 who, we are told, was the township headman (*hojang* 戶長) of Musong county (in present day Koch'ang-gun, North Chōlla province).

Although Yun Hae had thus opened the doors for his children to follow in his footsteps and enter the central bureaucracy, his son Sup'yōng's untimely death jeopardized these plans of becoming a great family in the capital. Sup'yōng's son Yun T'aek, however, was able to receive education from his paternal aunt's husband Yun Sōnjwa 尹宣佐 (1265-1343) of the P'ap'yōng Yun 坡平尹 and pass the civil service examination. T'aek's sons Kusaeng 龜生, Pongsaeng 鳳生, and Tongmyōng 東明 and their sons Hyojong 孝宗, Sojong, Hoejong 會宗, and Hūngjong 興宗 were also able to become central officials. Even after the founding of the Chosōn dynasty, the descendants of Sojong, with whom we began our tale of the Musong Yun, continued to receive high posts in the central bureaucracy. Most notable among them, perhaps, is his great-grandson, the chief state councilor (*yōngūijōng* 領議政) Yun Chaun 尹子雲 (1416-1478). There could be no doubt that the Musong Yun had become a great family.

But the Musong Yun, at least during the late Koryō, differed from the other great families in one important respect. They did not have a private estate or memorial temple near the capital Kaegyōng and therefore lacked an institutional base in this area. Needless to say, this had practical consequences and here I would like to mention but one. As noted earlier, it had become customary for the Koryō elite to have a burial site near the capital in areas such as Mt. Taedōk or Changdan and a memorial temple furnished with a portrait hall in the vicinity or elsewhere. The P'yōngyang Cho is a perfect example. The Musong Yun, however, seem to have defied convention and used what the Korean historian Kim Yongsōn identifies, I think rightly, as a clan gravesite in Kūmju 錦州 (in present-day South Ch'ungch'ōng province).⁸⁰ As Kim also points out, the appearance of the clan gravesite for central officials and their

79. "Yun T'aek myojimyoŋg," *Koryō myojimyoŋg chipsōng*, 576.

80. Kim Yongsōn, *Koryō kūmsōngmun yōn'gu*, 195.

families was a phenomenon that took place after the military era. It was, in other words, a late Koryŏ phenomenon.

If we are to understand the Musong Yun's decision to use a clan gravesite, it should first be borne in mind that the ancestral seat of the Musong Yun is (obviously) not Kŭmju but Musong county. But why then did they not establish their clan gravesite in Musong? A good clue, I think, can be found in Yun T'aek's funerary inscription where it is recorded that Yun T'aek had himself buried near his mother's burial site in Kŭmju.⁸¹ Judging from the fact that his mother's surname was Kim, it does not seem too unrealistic to say that his mother may have been a member of the Kŭmsan Kim 錦山金 clan whose ancestral seat was Kŭmju. If so, it may be the case that T'aek's father Hae had left Musong county and had become a part of his wife's household in that area. Uxorilocal residence, as Martina Deuchler and others point out, was not uncommon during the Koryŏ.⁸²

But what, we may ask, *kept* Yun Hae's family in that area? We know, for instance, that T'aek (and presumably his wife), T'aek's son Kusaeng and his wife from the Haeju Ch'oe clan also had themselves buried in Kŭmju as well. In fact, the funeral inscription for Kusaeng's wife tells us that there were seven tombs in all that belonged to the Musong Yun family in Kŭmju. Although concrete evidence is lacking, an important factor behind the Musong Yun family's decision to settle down in Kŭmju may have been Yun Kusaeng's decision to build a modest ancestral hall (*sau* 祠宇) and ritual room (*chaesil* 齋室) near the clan gravesite according to the guidelines of the *Jiali* 家禮 or *Family Rituals* attributed to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200).⁸³

Was it, then, necessary to seek family values in old forms, that is, in Buddhism? If the Musong Yun example is any indication, the answer, by the late Koryŏ, was apparently "no." What seems to have allowed the Musong Yun to make this decision, as I have tried to show, was a shift in the way the elite understood greatness—what was once taken for granted now had to be demonstrated and this, I believe, opened up a disquieting gap between the form and content of greatness. Amidst, for instance, the repeated reassurances by Yi Saek and others that the restoration of grand temples and the Way were perfectly in tune, we sense—do we not?—a confidence that is adumbrated by ambivalence and perhaps even anxiety. But we should not jump to hasty conclusions. The opening of this gap did not, as far as I can tell, undermine

81. "Yun T'aek myojimyŏng," 578.

82. Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 66.

83. See Yun Kusaeng's biography in the *Koryŏsa* 121.21.

Buddhism. Far from it. It seems to have simply allowed some late Koryŏ officials to raise questions about its necessity. The first to raise questions, in fact, were folks like the Musong Yun who lacked an institutional base in the capital—be it a temple or a private estate (or both)—and thus the very means to establish greatness in the traditional manner. Hence, I think, Yun T'aek's following instruction to his children: "Do not use the Buddhist method because [you] feel bound to custom. Do not be wasteful."⁸⁴

By no means, however, was this shift from Buddhist temples to Confucian halls or shrines limited to relatively new recruits to the central bureaucracy such as the Musong Yun. The state councilor Ch'oe Mundo 崔文度 (1292-1345) of the Chŏnju Ch'oe 全州崔 clan, for instance, chose to honor his late parents by building not a memorial temple like his father Ch'oe Sŏngji but a family shrine (*kamyo* 家廟).⁸⁵ The building of stand-alone family shrines may therefore reflect the interests of families both old and new, but the fact remains that the shift to such shrines is a relatively late phenomenon that we only begin to see clearly in the fourteenth century.

Conclusion

In sum, the P'yŏngyang Cho and the Musong Yun both offer what, I think, are two radically different responses to the same underlying concern, namely the late Koryŏ fiscal crisis. A thoughtful response to this crisis was necessary since

84. "Yun T'aek myojimyŏng," 578.

85. "Ch'oe Mundo myojimyŏng," *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng*, 528. Ch'oe Mundo's funerary inscription tells us that he mourned for his parents for three years at the family shrine that he established. This seems to imply that the shrine was a Confucian-style ancestral hall (*sadang*). Ch'oe's funerary inscription also tells us that he was buried near his parents' graves, the Chŏnju Ch'oe clan gravesite on Mt. Okkŭm 玉金山, according to custom; "Ch'oe Mundo myojimyŏng," 527. If there was, indeed, such a custom, it seems to have been relatively new; see Kim Yongsŏn, *Koryŏ kŭmsŏngmun yŏn'gu*, 188-197. For more on the Chŏnju Ch'oe, see Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 131-132.

Also worth noting here is the case of Kim Pyŏn 金珣 (1248-1301). When Kim Pyŏn, the grandson of Kim Ch'wiryŏ 金就呂 (d. 1234), passed away his wife buried him on Mt. Taedŏk 大德山 in the capital district and built a temple nearby named Kamŭngsa 感應寺 to perform the memorial rites for her late husband. Later, Kim Pyŏn's wife and grandson Kim Ryun and Ryun's wife were also buried on Mt. Taedŏk, as Han Kimun points out, seems to imply that Kamŭngsa functioned as a memorial temple for this faction of the Ŏnyang Kim 彦陽金 family; see Han Kimun, *Koryŏ sawŏn ūi kujo wa kinŭng*, 293. As Kim Yongsŏn points out, however, clan gravesites seem to be a late phenomenon. When they began to appear in the late Koryŏ, they were often accompanied by a Confucian-style ancestral hall. If Han Kimun is right, the Ŏnyang Kim example would constitute a rare exception to this trend.

it had broad implications for a family's potential status as a great family. Cho In'gyu and his family, as we have seen, chose to respond to this crisis by following the established pattern of demonstrating greatness: they built and restored Buddhist temples despite the lack of state support for such projects and an escalating fiscal crisis during the late Koryŏ period. The same is true for other non-traditional recruits to the central bureaucracy such as Yu Ch'ŏngsin and his son Yu T'ak.

But men who entered the central bureaucracy through the traditional means of recruitment (i.e., the civil service exams) during the fiscal crisis seem to have found it exceedingly difficult to establish great family credentials with Buddhist temples. The modest income that they earned as officials during this period would have made it practically impossible for them to build or restore temples and the lack of state support made it even less likely that families such as the Musong Yun would pursue such expensive projects. So, these families turned to more affordable means of honoring ancestors and establishing great family credentials, namely the Confucian ancestral hall.

But the transition from Buddhist temples to Confucian ancestral halls was not simply an outcome of growing economic constraints. For certain members of the civil branch of the central bureaucracy, the Confucian ancestral hall also had the added appeal of legitimizing their careers and identities as Confucian scholar-officials; hence, I think, its appeal to men like Yun T'aek, Yun Sojong, and Ch'oe Mundo.⁸⁶ For these men whose responsibility it was to keep the king's power in check and look out for the interests of the bureaucracy, Buddhism's close ties to the king and his inner circle (e.g. Cho In'gyu), which became only more intense in the last few decades of the dynasty (e.g. Sin Ton and Pou), may have also played an important role in their decision to shift to the Confucian ancestral hall. This, I think, may explain the vitriolic attack on Buddhism launched by Kim Chasu 金子粹, Kim Ch'o 金貂, Pak Ch'o 朴礎 (1367-1433), and others from the Confucian Academy (Sŏnggyun'gwan 成均館).⁸⁷

History, however, is not without its ironies. As different as their responses to the fiscal crisis may have been, the P'yŏngyang Cho and the Musong Yun eventually crossed paths to form what was to become a practicable solution to the fiscal crisis that threatened the very livelihood of the great families of late Koryŏ. Cho In'gyu's great grandson Cho Chun, apparently with the help of his teacher Yun Sojong, addressed the fiscal crisis head on through a series of

86. For Ch'oe's education, see *Koryŏsa* 108.11b.

87. See also the discussion in Ahn, "This Way of Ours."

memorials submitted to the throne in 1388. One memorial would eventually become the fiscal blueprint for the new Chosŏn dynasty. Here, we need only point out a few aspects of the memorial that pertain directly to the issues that concern this article. First, Cho Chun makes a strong case for *sajŏn* reform: “the territory of Kyŏnggi must be used as land to support the comfortable livelihood of scholar-officials (*sadaebu*) and the royal house. The rest should all be reformed to pay for the expenses of the royal house (*kongsang*), ancestral rites, official’s salaries, and military expenses. The road to the [illegal] appropriation [of land] should thus be shut.”⁸⁸

In a subsequent memorial submitted the same year Cho Chun reasserted the necessity of providing scholar-official families (*sajok* 士族) with inheritable rank land (*serok* 世祿) from the capital area of Kyŏnggi. He reminded the new king Kongyang 恭讓王 (r. 1389-1392) that using land outside of Kyŏnggi to satisfy those who did not receive enough rank land in the capital area would (once again) open the doors to the illegal appropriation of land.⁸⁹ In 1390, the *kongjŏn* and *sajŏn* registers were set ablaze, but, as John Duncan points out, this left private (grant) land owned by great families like our P’yŏngyang Cho intact.⁹⁰ What Cho Chun tried to do, in other words, was ensure that all officials, both old and new, in the central bureaucracy would have a secure source of livelihood in the capital area to enjoy by making sure tax and prebend revenues were collected and handed over to their rightful recipient. This, however, would inevitably entail an investigation of land tenure (with, no doubt, a focus on the capital area), which would, in turn, ensure that donations of patrimonial land to temples like Ch’ŏnggyesa would no longer be illegally seized. It could then do what it was suppose to do. Cho Chun’s fiscal policy was no persecution or suppression of Buddhism. In fact, if anything, it was the exact opposite. This notwithstanding, Buddhism did begin to face some serious challenges. In lieu of the economic argument, and as a conclusion to this article, I submit the longstanding tension between the central bureaucracy and ascriptive social groups and the relatively abrupt but subtle shift in their understanding of greatness in the fourteenth century as a potentially more important cause behind the stepping out of Buddhism from the Koryŏ elite’s limelight.

88. *Koryŏsa* 78.35b.

89. *Koryŏsa* 78.36.

90. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, 209.