



# East Asian History

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## CONTENTS

- i** Editors' Preface  
*Benjamin Penny & Remco Breuker*
- 1–24** “Crossing Over” to Immortality in the Daoist Ritual  
Regulations of Highest Purity  
*Valentina Georgieva*
- 25–46** Flows of Time in the Centres and Peripheries of Tang Experience  
*Oliver Moore*
- 47–62** Within or Without? Ambiguity of Borders and Koryō Koreans’  
Travels During the Liao, Jin, Song and Yuan  
*Remco Breuker*
- 63–74** Reflections on the Tower of the Crimson Clouds and the  
History of the Private Library in Late-Imperial China  
*Duncan M. Campbell*
- 75–96** Taikun’s Zen Master From China: Yinyuan, the Tokugawa  
Bakufu, and the Founding of Manpukuji in 1661  
*Jiang Wu*
- 97–124** Vassal of a Deposed Regime: Archetypes of Reclusion in the  
Poetry of Former Shogunal Official Yaguchi Kensai  
*Matthew Fraleigh*
- 
- 125–128** Preface to A.R. Davis Reprints
- 129–136** Su Shih, Poems
- 137–150** Su Shih’s “Following the Rhymes of T’ao Yüan-Ming” Poems:  
A Literary or a Psychological Phenomenon?
- 151–170** “The Good Lines of the World are a Common Possession”:  
A Study of the Effect of Tu Fu Upon Su Shih
- 171–184** On Such a Night: A Consideration of the  
Antecedents of the Moon in Su Shih’s Writings

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# WITHIN OR WITHOUT? AMBIGUITY OF BORDERS AND KORYŎ KOREANS' TRAVELS DURING THE LIAO, JIN, SONG AND YUAN

 *Remco Breuker*

## *Introduction*

During the five centuries of the Koryŏ 高麗 dynasty, travel was of the utmost importance. Domestically, the travels of the state's officials mapped out the tangible authority of the state apparatus, while more private excursions produced literary narratives that bound together state, locale and the many different pasts of Koryŏ. Internationally, Koryŏ's diplomats were relied on to secure Koryŏ's continued safety and wellbeing and to procure those resources of Sinitic and Manchurian civilisation Koryŏ found useful, while Koryŏ merchants found new temporary homes in Hangzhou 杭州, Mingzhou 明州 and Dengzhou 登州 in China or on the northern frontier shared with the Liao 遼 and later the Jin 金 state. The purpose of this article is to look more closely at the domestic and international travelling done by Koryŏans and to map the constitutive influence frequent travelling exercised upon processes of identity formation then taking place in Koryŏ. Travel up until the period of Mongol domination towards the end of the 13th century was fundamentally different from travel after this period. This was not only due to Koryŏ's new status as a subordinate country of the Yuan 元 empire, with a ruler moreover who was a son-in-law of the Yuan emperor, but even more so on account of clear changes in Koryŏ's perception of its identity and position in the world, which may be gleaned from the redefined purposes attributed to the act of travelling in the late 13th and 14th centuries. The act of travelling reveals perhaps unexpectedly fundamental notions of self-perception and identity formation.

As travelling necessarily involves the crossing of borders, an inquiry into the nature of Koryŏ travel also entails the necessity to look at contemporary conceptions of community and borders. The 11th century saw the construction of a clear image of Koryŏ as well as a surprisingly lucid articulation of the physical, symbolic and historical boundaries of the Korean peninsula.<sup>1</sup> The delineation of a historical homeland in Koryŏ was partly based on the principle of exclusion and partly on the principle of inclusion, which concretely meant that the delineation of Koryŏ territory went hand in hand with

<sup>1</sup> See Remco E. Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918–1170: History, Ideology and Identity in the Koryŏ Dynasty* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2010).

2 I have not included Japan in this article because interaction with Japan was limited for most of the Koryŏ period and extremely limited in the fields of exchange of civilisational notions.

3 Sŏ Kŏjong, comp., *Minjok munhwa ch'ujinhoe*, ed., *Tongmun sŏn* [Anthology of Korean Literature; hereafter *TMS*] (Seoul: Sol, 1998). 64.18a–20b.

4 See, for example, *TMS* 64.20b–23b; *TMS* 65.21b–23a.

5 See Breuker, “Mountains and Streams: Landscape and Limits in Medieval Korea,” in *Architecturalized Asia: Mapping the Continent through Architecture and Geography*, ed. Hazel Hahn and Vimalin Rujivacharakul (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, forthcoming 2013).

the delineation of Koryŏ's other across the border.<sup>2</sup> During the 11th and 12th centuries, a clear picture emerged of Koryŏ's other, of Koryŏ's position in the world and of an immediate sphere of action and involvement which was historically and thus contingently determined. These notions, however, were turned on their head during the period of Mongol domination when Koryŏ became incorporated into the Yuan empire.

I will look into the question of how the act of travelling influenced Koryŏ's perceptions of itself and its position in the world. Simultaneously, the question must be asked how Koryŏ's self-perceptions were reflected in how travel was perceived. If these questions are asked against the widely differing backgrounds of pre-Yuan and Yuan Koryŏ, answers emerge which put Koryŏ's different identities in sharp historical relief against the perennial activity of travelling.

### *Travel and the Landscape in Pre-Yuan Koryŏ*

Recording the establishment of a Buddhist temple complex, Ch'oe Ch'ung 崔冲 (984–1068), one of early Koryŏ's most esteemed scholars, wrote a short text on the nature of travel and its relationship to the governance of the country. He started the text with an etymological discussion of the concept of *ch'oje* 招提, which he alternately glossed as a “temporary dwelling place where excellent persons search for the Buddhist way”, a place “where an inn is established and benevolence and propriety are practised” and as a place that “gives sustenance and protection to officials travelling on official matters and private travellers”.<sup>3</sup> On Ch'oe's advice, the ruler (Hyŏnjong 顯宗, r. 1010–31) had a temple complex with elaborate guest lodgings built in otherwise inhospitable terrain. This act of the ruler was explained as a civilising action; the founding of the temple complex meant the establishment of a physical site where the capital's officials could stay and exert influence on provincial matters and on an ideological level, the text explains that it is an important duty of the ruler to make travel possible. The importance of this project may be surmised from the fact that Koryŏ's highest bureaucrats worked on it. When it was finished, the temple complex was called Honggyŏng-sa 弘慶寺 (Broad Felicity Temple) and the guest lodging was furnished with heated floors and stocked with provisions. This combination of the ruler's civilising virtue, Buddhist redemption and the importance of travel is also found at other moments and places in the early to mid-Koryŏ state.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of the landscape, the need to incorporate it into the state structure by building on it and the necessity to record these actions are well attested in the Koryŏ period until the Mongol domination. There are many extant accounts of ancient temples, monasteries, pavilions and other structures that were either built or restored after having fallen into disrepair. Such accounts are often also semi-travelogues. There are few extant travelogues from the first half of the Koryŏ dynasty, but these records usually feature short comments about the author's travels. Such accounts were always written in conjunction with contemporary history. In these texts the bond between landscapes, the buildings people built upon it and the influence these exercised upon the fate of the country was made explicit. The elements that combined to form these accounts were historical, geographical, geomantic, spiritual, literary, philosophical, or national. This allowed these stories to function in different dimensions, depending on context. Interestingly, the early Koryŏ state made serious efforts to construct one unified landscape under the state to replace the patchwork of contingently connected local landscapes that had made up Koryŏ.<sup>5</sup>

An account by Yi Chayŏn 李子淵 (1003–61) when he travelled to the Song 宋 as an envoy somewhere in the first half of the 11th century compared the landscapes of China and Koryŏ. Yi subscribed to the idea that the landscape directly influenced the people living in it, an idea that was widely accepted at the time, and asserted that the Koryŏ landscape was much better than the various Chinese landscapes he had the opportunity to see.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning of the dynasty, the Koryŏ landscape was constructed through continuous interaction between the state and the province, between literati, Buddhist monks, Daoist hermits, Confucian scholars and specialists in geomancy; people who could read the landscape added layer after layer of significance to particular locales.<sup>7</sup> The importance of the Koryŏ landscape had been codified in the apocryphal *Ten Injunctions* (Hunyo shipcho 訓要十條), ascribed to T'aejo Wang Kŏn 太祖王建 (?–946), but actually dating from the middle of the 11th century.<sup>8</sup> During the same century, the importance for the wellbeing of the state of geomancer Tosŏn 道誥 (827–898) was also codified.<sup>9</sup> Temples, palaces and other structures of extraordinary significance were built (or not) in reference to the landscape and its configuration.<sup>10</sup> Another well-known example of a highly regarded interpreter of the landscape is Yi Chungyak 李仲若 (?–1122, penname Chajin 子眞), who was famous as a hermit, well-versed in Buddhism and Daoism, and as a physician of such prowess that Sukchong 肅宗 (r. 1095–1105) invited him to live in the royal palace. He was most famous, though, for his ability to read to landscape, to function as a human link between the Koryŏ landscape and the state.<sup>11</sup> According to the record devoted to his memory, the author did not know whether “whether the master waited for this landscape or if the landscape waited for the master”, but the presence of an inextricable tie between the two was obvious to him. Yi had chosen the spot to build his hermitage according to the secrets he had learned from another famous geomancer. Having done so, Yi was subsequently invited to come to the capital, served as an envoy to the Song, cured the ruler, established a national Daoist institute and in general served the country to its greater benefit.<sup>12</sup> According to the writer of this commemorative record, sagacious hermits like Yi Chungyak interpreted the landscape to benefit other people. When after his death his hermitage, which had fallen into disrepair, was restored by his son, Koryŏ ruler Ŭijong 毅宗 (1151–70) sent a painting of Kwanŭm 觀音 as a gift.<sup>13</sup>

The idea that the characteristics of special landscapes were essential for the well-being of both man and state is a recurrent theme in Koryŏ writings on landscape and travel from this period.<sup>14</sup> Although the precise manner how is not specified in any of the extant sources, apart from geomantic specialists, literati also seem to have played an important role with regard to the landscape. It was up to them to travel around the country and record Koryŏ's most exquisite scenery and in this way make it accessible to more people. According to poet Im Ch'un 林椿 (1148–86), “as for fostering an energy conducive to composing literature, one who does not travel to visit famous mountains and great streams and who does not search for intriguing tales and spectacular sceneries, will likewise not be able to broaden the intentions in his breast”.<sup>15</sup> Yi Kyubo 李奎報 (1169–1241) lamented that: “I have wanted to travel the four directions and record all the strange things I would hear and see from the places my horse would take me. I wanted to preserve these in poetry and collect them in writing, so that later generations would see them. But oh, what has become of my plan?”<sup>16</sup> Although their role was significantly different from that of the professional interpreter of the landscape who could construct a direct relationship between the

6 *P'abanjip* [Collection to Break Up Idleness, hereafter *PHJ*], 2.27–28. See Ch'oe Cha, Yi Illo, *P'abanjip, Pohanjip* [Reprint of Two Titles in One Volume] (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 1972).

7 Despite its importance, Koryŏ geomancy has been little researched. The only monograph is still Yi Pyŏngdo, *Koryŏ shidae-ŭi yŏn'gu: t'ŭkhi to'cham sasang-ŭl chungshim-ŭro* [A Study of the Koryŏ Period: With Special Attention to Divinatory Thought] (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1980, rev. ed.). Other studies deal with certain aspects of geomancy or with certain periods only.

8 Breuker, *Forging the Truth: Creative Deception and National Identity in Medieval Korea*. Special issue *East Asian History* 35 (2008).

9 *TMS* 27.9a–9b; *TMS* 27.9b–10b; *TMS* 117.16b–22b.

10 The second injunction is famous in this respect, for prohibiting building temples outside of the places that had been determined to be suitable by Tosŏn's geomantic assessment. For another example, see *TMS* 108.20b–22a.

11 *TMS* 65.6a–10a.

12 Yi had beseeched Ŭn Wŏnch'ung 殷元忠 and Sŏn master Ikchong 翼宗 to teach him their secrets. See Chŏng Inji, ed., *Koryŏsa* [History of Koryŏ; hereafter *KS*] (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1983), 122:1a–3b for more information on Wŏnch'ung, who is mentioned as submitting a memorial on geomancy and the destiny of the state-like Kim Wije 金謂碑, yet another great geomancer, had done before him.

13 *TMS* 65.6a–10a.

14 See, for instance, *TMS* 65.10a–12b, 65.12b–15b, 66.13a–14b, 65.21b–23a; *Pohanjip* [Sequel to The Collection to Break Up Idleness; hereafter *POHJ*], 1.83–84. Rituals in honour of the spirits of the landscape (or rather particular localities that were considered especially significant) were frequently held. Some of these rituals were votive and for special occasions or wishes, others part of a regular curriculum. For some examples, see *KS* 2.34a, 3.23b, 4.12b, 4.17b, 8.5b–61, 9.34a, 10.8a, 10.10b, 10.15b, 12.28b, 13.12b, 15.28a–b, 16.10b–11a, 16.29b, 59.38a–b, 63.20b, 63.23a, 77.26b, 98.7b; Yi Kyubo, *Tongguk Yi Sangguk chip* [The Collected Works of Minister Yi Kyubo of Korea; hereafter *TYSJ*] (Seoul: Myŏngmundang, 1982), 38:6a–b, 41.15a–b.

15 *TMS* 59.3b–4b.

16 *TMS* 66.6b–7a. Also see *TMS* 65.10a–12b, 65.12b–15b.

17 It should be noted here that this was not a phenomenon unique to Korea, but something that in different guises was part of a much wider East Asian discourse on viewing the relationship between man and the landscape.

18 See Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter four.

19 *TMS* 65.12b–15b. On this particular trip, Im retraced the steps of two of Shilla's most famous monks Wŏnhyo and Ŭisang 義湘. He not only lamented the absence of many Shilla remains, but also the fact that he had not been able to meet Kwanŭm at the spot where Ŭisang had met Kwanŭm some five hundred years before.

20 *TMS* 66.6b–13a.

21 See, for instance *TMS* 60.25b–26b, 65.21b–23a; *POHJ* 1.79.

22 One such an example is the *Record of the Country of Karak* [Karakuk kil], a history of the Kaya kingdom in the south of the peninsula. Kim Yanggam 金良鑑 (fl. late 11th century) wrote it during the late 11th century in an effort to bring Kaya history within the fold of Koryŏ history. Parts of the text are still extant because of their inclusion in the *The Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* [Samguk yusa].

23 For some notable exceptions, see two writings of Yi Kok that deal with Chŏnju and its surroundings. In these texts, Yi, who was stationed there as a magistrate, wrote that he had explained the glorious past of the region as capital of the Paekche kingdom to its inhabitants. During these visits to the Diamond Mountains, Yi to some extent also mentioned the history of the places he visited.

state of the landscape and the destiny of the state, the capital-based literatus was nonetheless important for more than the inebriated composition of lyrical poetry about the beauty of spectacular scenery. The essential and spiritual bond between man and landscape also needed to be recorded, which was after all the one thing a Confucian scholar could be relied upon to do properly.

If the essential and spiritual bond between man and landscape is one aspect of the perception of Koryŏ landscape during the first half of the dynasty, the strong historicising of the landscape is its other defining characteristic. The duty of the literatus with regard to the recording of the landscape in texts was of essential importance because only the well-educated scholar was able to remember, confirm or at times forge the history of a particular locale. The historicising of the landscape was the concrete and down-to-earth counterpart of the geomancer's analyses of the same physical places.<sup>17</sup> If anything, travelogues of the early to middle Koryŏ period literati are distinguished by the at times rather extreme attention given a particular locale's historical background. And in the context of Koryŏ's plurality of pasts (it had after all succeeded to Kaya 伽倻, Paekche 百濟, Shilla 新羅 and Koguryŏ 高句麗 and kept these—at times conflicting—heritages alive), the references were to different pasts, recalling a variety of historical events and figures from various periods and provenances.<sup>18</sup> When Im Ch'un travelled the country, for instance, he was sensitive to the fact that Shilla, despite its long history, had left so little to be physically visited and appreciated.<sup>19</sup> Yi Kyubo travelled the southern part of the peninsula and recalled the equally vanished legacy of Paekche, although he noted that Paekche traditions still lingered on in the area around the old Paekche capital, Chŏnju 全州. But Yi also visited the site of the monastery where Koguryŏ monk Podŏk 寶德 (fl. early 7th century) had magically flown his entire monastery in an effort to save it from the impending doom facing Koguryŏ. Yi had prepared well before travelling south; he used Shilla scholar Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's 崔致遠 (857–?) account of what had happened to complement Ŭich'ŏn's 義天 (1055–1101) account of the same event. He visited the ancient dolmen in Kunma-gun 群馬郡 and identified Namwŏn-bu 南原府 as the site of the Daifang Commandery 帶方郡 (a later addition to the original four Han Commanderies); Yi also went to a room in a small hermitage where Shilla monk Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–686) had stayed, and where this eminent monk was honoured with a portrait of his own as well as a Buddha statue.<sup>20</sup> His journey was not completely devoted to Koryŏ's pasts, however. Yi also went to Pyŏn-san Mountain 邊山 to oversee the felling of trees there. As the place where most of Koryŏ's timber came from, Yi was naturally interested to go there. Yi's fascination with the history of localities is reflected in other writings that appeared from the beginning of the dynasty until the Mongol domination.<sup>21</sup> The scholars' reflections on local history and their attempts to draw local histories into the fold of the history of the Koryŏ state in travelogues were mirrored in similar contemporary attempts to write local histories with reference to the state's history.<sup>22</sup> Although the historicising of the landscape in the manner described above by forging explicit ties between the author's own period and the different pasts of each locale did not completely disappear after the Yuan domination of Koryŏ, it did dramatically decline in frequency.<sup>23</sup> Reading a landscape in a historical manner was an art best and most often practiced during the early and middle Koryŏ periods.

### *Middle and Later Koryŏ Records*

Records such as the text written by Ch'oe Ch'ung form an intriguing contrast with late Koryŏ records, similar in format and written by authors in similar social and political positions, but which seem to rely on a completely different perception of the significance and meaning of travel. An Ch'uk 安軸 (1287–1348), a late-Koryŏ Neo-Confucian scholar, wrote a text about his travels. In it, he explained the meaning of travel in rather abstract terms:

All things under heaven endowed with form possess an underlying principle. There is nothing that is not like this. Regarding large things, there are mountains and streams. Regarding small things, there are stones the size of a fist and plants of only one inch high. People who travel and see these things are stimulated on account of these and accordingly take pleasure in viewing them. This is why pavilions and outdoor structures are built. The strangeness of their forms is located [at the level of] their accessibility and can be appreciated with the eyes, but the mystery of their underlying principle is located at the level of meticulous perception and must be approached with the mind.<sup>24</sup>

The contrast with Ch'oe Ch'ung's idea of travel as a means to mediate between the landscape, the state and Buddhism can hardly be greater, although it should be remarked that these two conceptions of travel are not mutually exclusive but merely opposing extremes. Examples of both extremes can be found both in pre-Yuan and Yuan Koryŏ; it is the frequency with which they are found reveals changes in the understanding of travel. Examples such as An Ch'uk's were quite common in the late Koryŏ period, where the landscape is thoroughly dehistoricised and personalised, while examples from the early and middle Koryŏ periods describe the landscape in strongly historical terms, situating it in the context of the state.<sup>25</sup> A particularly poignant example from a different genre (which is nevertheless pertinent to the argument here) was written by Kim Puil 金富併 (1071–1132, one of the older brothers of great statesman Kim Pushik 金富軾). In a text celebrating the royal legacy of the Western Capital of P'yŏngyang, Kim compared the capital to that of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The text uses imperial terminology throughout, claims that the Koryŏ ruler was invested on the throne by a thousand spirits and ends with expressing the wish that in the future the lands of Liaoyang will once again belong to Koryŏ, ostensibly referring to the historical legacy of Koguryŏ, which was time and again dusted off and brought out.<sup>26</sup> This text is typical of the middle Koryŏ period: it is filled with historical references, portrays the Koryŏ ruler as Son of Heaven and represents Koryŏ as the centre of the world.<sup>27</sup> If this is compared to a late Koryŏ text on Liaoyang, written by the famous scholar Yi Saek 李穡 (1328–96) the contrast seen between the conceptions of travel of Ch'oe Ch'ung and An Ch'uk re-emerges. Yi Saek's text on Liaoyang does not claim it for Koryŏ, which is not surprising, because the Koguryŏ legacy in Koryŏ was not unambiguous. What is surprising is the complete absence of historical references, whether to Koguryŏ or to another past.<sup>28</sup> The border between the Korean peninsula and Liaoyang is described, but only in physical terms. In fact, the text could I have been about any east Asian country. A poem written by Yi Kok 李穀 (1298–1351) reveals a similarly different way of perceiving the past. The poem is dedicated to Chŏng Chungbu (1308–45), a scholar on his way to Hangzhou to meet the Yuan Chancellor. Reminiscing about the empire and its servants, Yi writes:

24 TMS 68.26b–28a.

25 Personalised melancholy seems to have functioned as a substitute for the historicising found in earlier texts. See, for instance, *Ikchae nan'go* [Random Jottings of Ikchae Yi Chehyŏn; hereafter *ICNG*] 2.12b–13b; TMS 7.21a–22a.

26 TMS 104.6b–7b. For a discussion of the role of the Koguryŏ legacy in Koryŏ, see John B. Duncan, "Historical Memories of Koguryŏ in Koryŏ and Chosŏn," *Journal of Inner and East Asian Studies* 1.1 (2004): 90–117; Breuker, "The One In Three, The Three In One: The Koryŏ Three Han as a Pre-Modern Nation," *Journal of Inner and East Asian Studies* 2.2 (2006): 143–68.

27 Breuker, "Koryŏ As an Independent Realm: The Emperor's Clothes?," *Korean Studies* 27 (2003): 48–84.

28 TMS 72.21a–22a.

29 Yi Kok, *Kajŏng chip* [Collected Works of Yi Kok], in *Koryŏ myŏngbyŏn chip 3* (Collected Works of Famous Koryŏ Worthies). 5 vols. Seoul: Sŏnggyun'gwan Taehakkyo Taedong Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn, 1986. 17.

30 For a fuller exploration of the emergence of Koryŏ's boundaries, see Breuker, "The One In Three, The Three In One," pp.143–68.

31 Breuker, “The One In Three, The Three In One”.

32 The Amnok was even wrongly imagined as the ancient boundary of Shilla (*KS* 3.6a, 82.42b–43a, 14.21a–b). For more explicit references to the Amnok as the eternal border of Koryŏ, *TMS* 35.23b–24b (“the frontiers of our country have from times immemorial run until the Amnok River”) *KS* 7.33a–34b (“Our country has made the Amnok river its boundary ever since [the establishment of] Kija’s old territory). Also see *KS* 1.7b, 2.19a; *TMS* 39.5b–6b, 28.5a–6b; *KS* 14.20a–22b, 15.20a–21a; *TMS* 35.6b–7b).

33 *KS* 9a–12b, 94.4b–5a.

34 *KS* 82.31b–32a; *KSC* 4.5a

35 *KS* 7.35a–b, 64.18a.

36 See, for instance *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng* [Collection of Koryŏ Epigraphy; hereafter *KMC*] 424.5, 496.12; *TMS* 15.14a. Kim Yongsŏn, ed., *Koryŏ myojimyŏng chipsŏng* [Collection of Koryŏ Epigraphy] (Seoul: Hallim taehakkyo ashia munhwa yŏn’guso, 2001; Hallim taehakkyo Ashia munhwa yŏn’guso charyo ch’ongsŏ 10, rev. ed.).

37 See, for example, this short letter written to a frontier commander by the newly enthroned Injong: “During the eighteen years that my father Yejong ruled the country, he wielded authority in the four directions and kept enemies at a thousand li. How was this achieved except by wise scholars and brave warriors exerting themselves, fighting loyally and stopping [enemies]? I have newly succeeded to the achievements of previous kings and richly reward wise subjects. I intend to honour your strenuously gained meritorious deeds while doing duty at the borders. I hereby promote you to the rank of general and appoint you as the commander of the Three Armies. Receive this glorious order in understanding of my great intentions.” (*TMS* 30.12a–b). There are many similar texts from pre-Yuan Koryŏ, in which the duty to keep the frontier secure is stressed. In another text, Yejong is praised for the stability of the north during his reign, while a generalissimo who performed meritorious services in the north was promoted to a position as civil official at the ministry of punishments. See *TMS* 30.13a. For other similar instances, see *TMS* 29.18a–b; *POHJ* 1.73–74; *TMS* 34.17b–18a; *TMS* 39.15a–b. The best possible situation to be strived after was expressed in the following poem, which in effect equates the prosperity of Koryŏ with quiet borders in the north: “The light of autumn is bright in Yongsŏn/In the old garrison barracks white smoke hangs aslant/For ten thousands mile around there are no weap-

The nearer to the south of the river you get, the newer everything is  
Vestiges of the Six Dynasties no longer possess their authenticity,  
Now that the sacred Yuan have unified the world, the past is no more  
I laugh at those people from the past, each clinging to their own [part of  
the world].<sup>29</sup>

Yi Kok’s poem is explicit in its rejection of a historical perception of the past and celebration of the erasure of borders. The stark contrast with attitudes from the pre-Yuan period is intriguing and not easily explained. Given that neither position seems to have been restricted to a select few, but were distributed among a number of literati and scholars and seems tied to definable historical periods, the difference in position must be attributed to something other than personal proclivity. It can perhaps be explained, however, by charting contemporary notions of Koryŏ as a historical territory and the position of Koryŏ in the international world over the *longue durée*. In order to do this, a detour is unavoidable, but the route will lead us back to compare fruitfully the differing notions about travel of pre-Yuan Koryŏ and Yuan Koryŏ and to ask whether Koryŏ was within or without the Yuan empire.

### Bordering Koryŏ

Nationalist historians have suggested that the borders of the peninsula have followed the Amnok 鴨綠江 and Tuman 豆滿江 Rivers since the Chosŏn period, but ironically perhaps, they err on the side of caution; this estimate is off the mark by about half a millennium. The borders of the Koryŏ state were written into Koryŏ society at a much earlier date than has been assumed. Although Koryŏ’s boundaries were not uncontested during later periods and significant parts of the territory bordered by the Amnok and Tuman rivers sometimes did not fall under control of Koryŏ (most notably during the Mongol period) or Chosŏn, the boundaries as such have never come seriously under discussion on the Korean peninsula, even if an early Koryŏ border coincided with the great wall that Koryŏ constructed north of P’yŏngyang. The formation of the borders of the peninsula as they are more or less at present took place during the early Koryŏ period, between the end of the 10th and the middle of the 11th centuries.<sup>30</sup> The boundaries constructed during this period and consolidated during later periods were physical, symbolic and historical in nature.

It does not fall within the scope of this paper to explore in full detail how the boundaries of the Koryŏ state were constructed and how they were reflected in contemporary notions about society’s boundaries, so an outline must suffice. Koryŏ traced back its historical descent to the three states of Paekche, Shilla and Koguryŏ, which were habitually referred to under the comprehensive (and historically erroneous) designation of the Three Han (Samhan 三韓).<sup>31</sup> This notion, which developed into a supradynastical but territorially bounded entity, was at the bottom of the *Weltanschauung* that placed Koryŏ in the middle of the known world. Koryŏ’s territory, the territory inhabited by the Three Han, was limited, though. Bordered by the sea on three sides, the only truly contested frontier was in the north. The northern frontier was consistently contested and fought over, to the extent of exercising a formative influence upon the self-perception of Koryŏ. It was formed by the Amnok in the northwest, Mount Paektu 白頭山 in the middle and the Tuman in the northeast.<sup>32</sup>

The physical establishment of the boundaries of the Koryŏ state went hand in hand with an equally formidable demarcation of symbolical boundaries. While the peninsula’s destiny had several times been decided at or near



the banks of the Amnok (e.g. Sŏ Hŭi's 徐熙 famous settlement with Liao in 993 and the destruction of the Liao army in 1018 by Kang Kamch'an 姜邯瓚),<sup>33</sup> several rulers had made every effort to build a line of fortresses running from the northwest to the northeast, which was completed in 1031–32.<sup>34</sup> The Amnok came to possess a clear symbolical significance: it divided Koryŏ from abroad. Crossing the Amnok meant entering the territory of Koryŏ and in 1055 as soon as the imperial Liao envoys had crossed the Amnok, Munjong 文宗 (1019–83) immediately ordered the food consumption and entertainment at court to be cut down in honour of the Liao Emperor.<sup>35</sup> The expression “crossing the Amnok” acquired the meaning of returning home to Koryŏ. The southern bank of the Amnok was the place where travellers returning from abroad were welcomed and envoys about to leave for the Chinese court were sent off.<sup>36</sup> The northern frontier formed by the Amnok, Mount Paektu and to a lesser extent the Tuman was heavily defended and keeping the frontier safe was considered one of the ruler's major responsibilities.<sup>37</sup> The contested nature of the northern border contributed much to the construction of the notion of the Koryŏ historical homeland. The identification of the Amnok, the Tuman and Mount Paektu with the natural and symbolic borders of Koryŏ and of the peninsula had only become possible during centuries of incessant if small-scale warfare in the north. A complex of geographically bounded historical events, myths and legends, national and local religious ceremonies of worship and the fact that Korea was surrounded by the sea on three sides and walled off by mountains on the one remaining side enabled the emergence of a strong sense of territorial belonging in a territory both naturally and symbolically bordered by the Amnok, Mount Paektu and the Tuman.

### *Koryŏ in the World*

Our detour must now be taken further by mapping Koryŏ's position internationally. Travel across the borders of the Koryŏ state involved more than the physical crossing of the Amnok 鴨綠江. Frequent travel to foreign courts by high dignitaries and the frequent reception of foreign envoys in the Koryŏ capital were essential to the construction of advantageous foreign relations. A treatment of Koryŏ's foreign relations and a report of the comings and goings of its envoys, even if only cursory, would need considerable more space than this paper allows, so I will restrict my argument to the way Koryŏ literati perceived their position in the international world and, in particular, with regard to Koryŏ's relations with the northern states of Liao, Jin and later Yuan, and make only passing reference to Koryŏ's position vis-à-vis the Song, a field which has already been researched extensively.<sup>38</sup>

An interesting idea was articulated by Kim Puil in a text in which he congratulated the Liao emperor because he “developed and enlarged [his] territory and made both Chinese and barbarians follow [him] peacefully”.<sup>39</sup> This text confirms the practice of Koryŏ international relations: a tendency to seek out the court in Manchuria, rather than the court in China proper.<sup>40</sup> The still often-used traditional dichotomy that divided and categorised the world according to the categories of Chinese/civilised and barbarian/uncivilised is not sufficiently subtle to understand Koryŏ.<sup>41</sup> The Northern Court appears as a third category in Koryŏ's *Weltanschauung* and cannot be reduced to the category of the Chinese or that of the barbarians. Such a view of the world ties in with the strong sense of cultural self-sufficiency that pervaded the middle Koryŏ period. Koryŏ could afford to be selective in accepting Sinitic or Manchurian cultural resources.<sup>42</sup>

ons/The children of the barbarians sing of peace and tranquillity”. See *POHJ* 1.77.

38 For the sake of clarity, I use the term “Liao” when I refer to the Liao state and “Khitan” when I refer to Khitan tribes not or only loosely connected to the Liao state. The Liao state called itself the Khitan state for several decades in the 10th century, but I will nonetheless refer to this state as “Liao” in order to avoid confusion.

39 *TMS* 39.14b–15a.

40 See Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter six.

41 Although recent scholarship has significantly altered the view that Liao and Jin were barbarian and has succeeded in evaluating these dynasties in a considerably less biased way, this kind of research has been restricted to the field of sinology. Sinological studies on the Khitan, Liao, Jurchen and Jin have duly acknowledged the intricacies, complexities and bi-directionality of their relationships with each other. To date, however, the *Hwa-I* dichotomy is perpetuated in all modern accounts of Koryŏ. See Nicola di Cosmo, “New Directions in Inner Asian History: A Review Article,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42.2 (1999): 247–63; Nicola di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt, eds, *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries, and Human Geographies in Chinese History* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Denis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, “The Liao,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): pp.43–153; Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2007); Standen, “The Five Dynasties,” in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 5a, Five Dynasties and Sung, 906–1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Standen, “What Nomads Want: Raids, Invasions, and The Liao Conquest of 947,” in *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads And The Outside World*, ed. Michal Biran and Reuven Amitai (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), pp.129–74; Standen, “Who wants to be an emperor? Zhao Dejun, Youzhou and the Liao,” in *Perspectives on the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms*, ed. Peter Lorge (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2007).

42 Koryŏ looked to Manchuria in particular with regard to Buddhist knowledge, religious architecture and iron working. Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter six.

43 See Michael C. Rogers, "P'yŏnnyŏn T'ongnok: The Foundation Legend of the Koryŏ State," *The Journal of Korean Studies* 4 (1982–1983): 3–72.

44 Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter four; Duncan, "Historical memories of Koguryŏ in Koryŏ and Chosŏn", pp.90–117.

45 According to the *History of Liao* [Liaoshil], Liao succeeded to Parhae and, as such, to Koguryŏ (since Parhae was the official successor of Koguryŏ) (*LS* 38.455, 457). The *History of Liao* also contains concrete traces of a Koguryŏ legacy in Liao, such as counties named after Koguryŏ counties and instances of historical consciousness that acknowledged the Koguryŏ history of parts of the Liao territory. The geography section of the *Liaosbi* usually mentions Parhae and Koguryŏ together (See *LS* 38.462, 48.812). The *History of Jin* [Jinshi] records a very similar story. The section on Jin-Koryŏ relations (which conflates Koguryŏ and Koryŏ at times, something that is all too familiar in Chinese sources also) clearly depicts Koryŏ and Parhae as successors of Koguryŏ. When Parhae was conquered by Liao, the remnants of the Parhae people maintained a distinct identity all through Liao. And when Jin conquered Liao, the succession of Jin to Koguryŏ and Parhae was formally established when these Parhae descendants submitted to Jin. The *History of Jin* explicitly describes the historical interconnectedness of Koguryŏ, Koryŏ, Liao, Parhae and Jin. See Tuotuo, ed., *Jinsbi* [History of Jin], facsimile in Wang Yunwu, ed., *Ersbisi shi* [The 24 Dynastic Histories] (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1967).135.1a–b.

46 See Kim Ilgwŏn, "Koguryŏ pyŏkhwa-wa kodaie Tong-Asia pyŏkhwa ch'ŏn-mun chŏnt'ong koch'al: Ilbon K'itora ch'ŏnmundo-ŭi saeroun tŏngjŏng-ŭl tŏtpuch'ŏ," *Koguryŏ yŏn'gu* [Koguryŏ Studies] 16 (2003): 243–86.

47 Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the vast majority of studies done on Koryŏ look, as a matter of fact, to China as the reference for developments in Koryŏ (with the obvious exception of the Mongol period).

48 *KS* 10.30b.

49 The tripartite division into Sinitic/southern, barbarian and Manchurian/northern categories was often used. The ritual section of the *History of Koryŏ*, for example, shows that qualitatively different rituals were performed for the Southern Court, the Northern Court and barbarians (*KS* 65), which is reflected in the existence of different kind of mis-

Appearances notwithstanding (Koryŏ adopted literary Chinese as its official written language and with it a large part of Sinitic classical civilisation), Koryŏ was perhaps more eager to learn from the north—if indeed this can be quantified. In particular, with regard to cultural achievements in the fields of Buddhism, religious architecture, literature and art, the Northern Court served as an inspiration for Koryŏ's literati, scholars, administrators and religious professionals. While concerns about security, particularly with the northern frontier, were never absent in Koryŏ's relationship with its neighbors in Manchuria, it would go too far to simply reduce it to security concerns. It is of importance to note here that the way Koryŏ traced its historical descent back to the three states of Paekche, Shilla and Koguryŏ, exercised direct influence on Koryŏ's view of the north. Koryŏ and Liao, for instance, shared historical memories of and identification with Koguryŏ. While there is every reason to believe that Koryŏ identification with Koguryŏ was rather limited (despite its prominence in the legitimating myth of the Koryŏ ruling family, the *Comprehensive Record Arranged By Year* (P'yŏnnyŏn t'ongnok 編年通錄),<sup>43</sup> Koguryŏ's heritage was also claimed by the Liao state.<sup>44</sup> This was achieved mainly by way of Parhae,<sup>45</sup> but also through the continued presence of historical memories and cultural remnants of Koguryŏ, for example in its astronomical knowledge.<sup>46</sup> Koryŏ and Liao shared Koguryŏ's historic legacy and were aware of the claims made by the other. This notion gave rise to the idea that Koryŏ was, perhaps, partially tied to a lineage of Manchurian states.

The presence of a strong Manchurian state on its northern border (an inescapable reality for Koryŏ which only disappeared with the Mongol conquest of the continent) did not mean that the Southern Court or the incumbent Chinese dynasty did not play an important role in Koryŏ's worldview. Although I strongly disagree with the notion that only the Southern Court counted for Koryŏ, the plethora of studies conducted on the many intricacies of Sino-Korean relations show the importance of the Southern Court.<sup>47</sup> As one Koryŏ monarch put it, Koryŏ "maintains diplomatic relations with the Liao in the north, has always served the Song in the south, while these days the Jurchen 女眞 in the east have become enemies to be reckoned with".<sup>48</sup>

Koryŏ's world could thus be roughly divided into three categories: Sinitic/southern, barbarian, and Manchurian/northern.<sup>49</sup> Practically, this meant that Koryŏ not only aimed at internalising those Sinitic cultural resources that would help Koryŏ to build and maintain the kind of state that it preferred to be, but also that Koryŏ had fixed its gaze on the north, looking for the same kind of universal principles that underlied Sinitic civilisation.<sup>50</sup> Fundamental knowledge (such as the principles involved in religious architecture or the implementation of the use of money) was actively sought after by Koryŏ. The Northern Court was of defining importance in Koryŏ's worldview and the term was used as a generic term to describe the Manchurian dynasties with regard to Koryŏ and the indigenous Chinese dynasties.<sup>51</sup> The term was also retroactively applied to both Koguryŏ and Parhae, clearly delineating a sense of historical kinship between the states in Manchuria and those on the peninsula.<sup>52</sup> And after the Mongol conquests, the term was used to refer to the Yuan as well.

Koryŏ's pluralist *Weltanschauung* during the 10th and 11th centuries meant that its foreign policies aimed at maximising frontier security and obtaining cultural resources from Song and Liao. Diplomats and envoys were dispatched with high frequency to plead Koryŏ's case and to show

what Koryŏ had to offer. Although no travelogues of these men are extant, their view of the world was influenced by their experiences abroad and mentioned them in their writings and made them clear in their actions. The construction of Koryŏ's *Weltanschauung*, in which its ruler was also a Son of Heaven and in which a northern and a southern court existed not only historically but also ontologically, was made possible by the travels of Koryŏ's diplomats and scholars. These travel experiences played a crucial role in balancing Koryŏ's ambitions with the military and economic superiority of its neighbours. The construction of Liao as Koryŏ's other also hinged on the one hand on Koryŏans' travels abroad and, on the other hand, on Liao's excursions into Koryŏ.

### *Travel and the Landscape in Yuan Koryŏ*

This detour has taken us a long way from the original questions on the perception of travel in pre-Yuan and Yuan Koryŏ, but was necessary, because it enabled us to estimate Koryŏ's perception of its position in the international world. The question posed at the outset of this paper was how the contrast in perceptions of travel between Ch'oe Ch'ung and An Ch'uk may be explained. How did the change come about that made late Koryŏ travelogues describe the landscape as dehistoricised? A closer look at some more examples also reveals other phenomena. Koryŏ's symbolic borders, established in the 11th century, held out under the onslaught of personalised melancholy and dehistoricised landscapes of the 14th century. The notion of the Amnok as Koryŏ's most important border also occurred frequently in Yuan Koryŏ. The precise quality of the border seems to have changed, though. Its military character had become obsolete by this time, but its crossing still signified the return to Koryŏ of its inhabitants. The most poignant example of this was the return of the Koryŏ crown prince who, as the son of a Mongol imperial princess and a Koryŏ prince, was only allowed to go to Koryŏ after the death of his father. His "return" to Koryŏ was a significant event, in particular if it is realised that the Koryŏ ruler, independent from the real power he could wield, had always been seen as the symbol of the dynasty, the focus of common worship and obedience.<sup>53</sup> Two poems about travelling and returning home across the Amnok may suffice to illustrate the continued relevance of Koryŏ's physical and symbolic borders. The first is by Chŏng Mongju 鄭夢周 (1337–92); the second by Yi Saek:

Ŭiju is the gateway to our land,  
Heavily defended since old.  
When was the long wall built  
That meanders along the mountains and hills?  
The waters of Malgal 靺鞨 flow widely  
To the west, forming the border.  
I have already travelled those thousand miles  
Arrived here, wandering aimlessly about.  
Tomorrow morning I will cross the river, going home  
The sky over the Crane Field will be distant and high.<sup>54</sup>

And:

The fragrant spring breeze blows on the traveller's way  
The setting sun shines on my homeland.  
In the drizzle the sound of the waves is audible  
The grasses in the wide valley look cold

sives to be sent to different categories of recipients (*POHJ* 3.139–42). Often, when discussing Koryŏ's place in the world, if the Southern Court was mentioned, so was the Northern Court. Munjong was eulogised as follows: "Each year letters from the Song praising the king arrived and from the Liao embassies to congratulate him on his birthday came to Koryŏ each year. [...] He welcomed the barbarians in the north within the borders and gave them land and houses. This is why Im Wan [a 12th-century scholar] called him a saintly ruler of our country" (*KS* 9.37a–b).

50 For concrete examples, see Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter six.

51 Given the current historiographical battle over the legacies of the Manchurian states raging between China and South Korea, it is ironic to note that Song scholars also considered Parhae and its peoples, the Khitan, Liao, the Jurchen and Jin related to Koryŏ and, as such, as constituents of the North. See the Song documents in Chang Tongik, ann. and ed., *Songdae Yŏsa charyo chimmok* [Index of Koryŏ-related Articles in Song Sources] (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2000), p.547.

52 For instances of Koguryŏ and Parhae described as the "northern dynasty" or "northern state", see the *Samguk sagi* [Histories of the Three Kingdoms; hereafter *SGSG*] Sŏngnam: Academy of Korean Studies, 1998, 10.116; *SGSG* 10.120, 37.360. For examples of the Jin as the "northern state", see *KMC* 52.16, 86.15 and 138.6.

53 *TMS* 111.17b–18a, 112.19a–b, 37.13b and 11.8b–9b. The king's return was likened to the coming of the Buddhist faith, which had also come from afar. For an analysis of the persona of the Koryŏ ruler, see Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapter five.

54 No Sashin, ed., *Shinjŭng tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* [Newly Expanded Encyclopedia of Korean Geography; hereafter *STYS*] (Seoul: Myŏngmundang, 1981), 53.4b.

55 *STYS* 53.5a.

56 *TMS* 70.4a–5a.

57 *TMS* 70.9b–10b.

58 *TMS* 71.13b–22a; *KJJ* 2.4b–12b

59 *TMS* 71.13b–22a. Yi wrote that this official Hu Zhongdan 胡宗旦 was from the Tang, but he actually came from the Song. The *History of Koryŏ* is also not very positive about Hu's role at Yejong's court,

portraying him as the archetypal arrogant foreigner only interested in his own benefit. See *KS* 14.42b–43a.

60 This did not mean that there was no room for subversion. In response to an unreasonable Yuan demand for rice, the Koryŏ court wrote back that the Koryŏ landscape was unsuitable for the transport of large amounts of rice, since it consisted of 70 per cent mountains and that accordingly, Koryŏ could not comply. *KS* 105.26b–27a.

61 William Henthorn, *The Mongol Invasions of Korea* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963); Yun Yonghyŏk, *Koryŏ Sambyŏlch'o-ŭi tae-Mong bangjaeng* [The Resistance of the Koryŏ Three Extraordinary Watches against the Mongols] (Seoul: Ilchisa, 2000).

62 In the aftermath of six devastating Mongol invasions, the extreme Mongol demands on Koryŏ, in terms of ships, sailors and soldiers for the invasions of Japan, were too much for the economy to handle. When both invasions failed, this, moreover, meant that Koryŏ would see no return on its investments. See Henthorn, *The Mongol Invasions of Korea*, pp.194–225.

63 Elizabeth Endicott-West, “The Yuan Government and Society,” in *Alien Regimes and Border States, 987–1368*, pp.587–615. The military exploitation of Koryŏ by the Yuan (in the form of forced conscription, the merging of the Koryŏ army into the Yuan expeditionary forces, the extraction of resources and skills, and the mobilisation of much of society to serve the war effort) is eerily similar to the Japanese mobilisation of Korean resources during the Pacific War. See Carter J. Eckert, “Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea,” in *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*, ed. Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.3–39. For an explicit comparison of these two periods on the Korean peninsula, see Breuker, “Colonial Modernities in the 14th Century: Empire as the Harbinger of Modernity,” in *Korea in the Middle. Korean Studies and Area Studies*, ed. Remco E. Breuker (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2007). pp.45–66.

64 This tribute usually included paper, silver, gold, ginseng, hawks, marmots, otters, ceramics, and medicines, but more importantly also people; skilled artisans and attractive young girls. See Henthorn, *The Mongol Invasions of Korea*, pp.201–206.

65 Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, ed., “Koryŏ hugi-ŭi chŏngch'i-wa kyŏngje [Politics and Economy in Late Koryŏ], in

If I go north, a million miles lay before me  
Returning east, I will reach the Three Han.  
Where now is my four-horse-drawn cart?  
My face fills with embarrassment.<sup>55</sup>

Koryŏ borders had not changed, but Koryŏ's position in the world had. Whereas before the Yuan domination of Koryŏ, Koryŏ had regarded the world through a prism that understood the world through the existence of the Southern Court, the Northern Court and the barbarians, the world had now been conquered by the Yuan. The Yuan now represented both the Southern and Northern Courts, which was expressed in late-Koryŏ writings by referring to the Mongols as Khitan or Jurchen on the one hand, and by establishing the Yuan as the new wellspring of civilisation on the other hand. Yi Kok wrote about the Yuan as a sacred empire that spread its culture and politics throughout the known world, establishing new schools everywhere, although he is at the same time quite despondent about the chances of the new learning of the Yuan being understood in Koryŏ.<sup>56</sup> The poem in which he stated that the past had ceased to exist (or perhaps more precisely, to matter) after the sacred Yuan had unified the world underscores this notion. The idea of the Yuan as the wellspring of civilisation was supported by daily reality. As Koryŏ's crown princes spent the first part of their lives in the Yuan capital, and Yuan domination of Koryŏ politics and its bureaucracy was far-reaching, many Koryŏ scholars also spent prolonged periods in the Yuan capital or, like intellectual great Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢 (1287–1367), entered the Yuan bureaucracy, where they became acquainted with Neo-Confucian thought. This new role of the Yuan in the context of the absorption of Koryŏ into the Yuan empire is intriguing because it directly influenced Koryŏ's self-perception and the perception of its landscape, and hence the perception of travel. Whereas before, the Koryŏ landscape was replete with historical references, now while the Koryŏ landscape had lost nothing of its lustre, much of its historicity had disappeared. When a visitor from the Yuan visited the Diamond Mountains (Kŭmgang-san 金剛山), he was suitably impressed, exclaiming that they were spectacular, even in the context of the Yuan empire.<sup>57</sup> He continued his interest and financial support for a temple there after his return home. The crux here is that the Diamond Mountains now functioned in the context of the Yuan empire and had ceased to function as strongly historicised Koryŏ mountains. When Yi Kok travelled through the same mountains, he made mention of a temple and a temple bell established at the behest (and cost) of the Yuan emperor.<sup>58</sup> Despite the historical allusions Yi makes (in which he was an exception), it is clear that the Diamond Mountains had lost a sense of being Koryŏan; this is underscored when Yi writes some enigmatic lines about a Koryŏ official, originally from the Song, who had toured the country to wipe out, destroy or plunge into water all the historical inscriptions he could find, as if Koryŏ's history was not safe from foreigners.<sup>59</sup> Koryŏ's scenery had become embedded in the Yuan empire; travels within Koryŏ had become travels within the Yuan empire.<sup>60</sup>

Whereas the Northern and Southern Courts had collapsed into the Yuan court and thus had unified Koryŏ's immediate outer world, in other respects Koryŏ's experience of the world was torn into fragments. The violence of the Mongol invasions and the traumas and socioeconomic upheavals associated with Koryŏ's forced incorporation into the Yuan empire created a situation that was in all respects colonial. The Koryŏ state had capitulated after a decades-long struggle that had all but devastated the state's economy.<sup>61</sup> After Koryŏ's absorption into the Yuan empire, its economic circumstances did not

improve. The demands of the empire to contribute to its war machine were immense and broke the back of the state's financial and economic system.<sup>62</sup> The Koryŏ bureaucracy was kept in place, but it was made subservient to the Invade the East Branch Secretariat (Zhengdong xingsheng 征東行省), a Yuan institution based in Koryŏ, or to the local Mongol overseers (*darughaci*), which, in effect, meant that Koryŏ gradually came to be indirectly ruled by a newly established colonial administration.<sup>63</sup> Economic demands extended to the requisitioning of Cheju-do 濟州島 as Mongol pasture land, heavy annual tribute and a never-ending supply of young girls for the imperial and other harems.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, some segments in Koryŏ society—those that were well-connected in Dadu 大都—prospered; these lineages supplied the middlemen, without whom the economic interaction between Koryŏ and the Yuan would have been impossible.<sup>65</sup> A more positive consequence of the Yuan incorporation of Koryŏ was that Koryŏ was now part of well-established, relatively safe and open Eurasian trading networks.<sup>66</sup> Trade and exchange through these networks involved products, but also people, ideas and inventions. Given the fundamentally colonial nature of Koryŏ's location in the Yuan empire, however, the accessibility of trading opportunities and concomitant profits were extremely unevenly distributed and tended to benefit the Yuan considerably more than Koryŏ.

For a fair number of historians, the true end of the Koryŏ dynasty and the real beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty is located in the access gained by Koryŏ intellectuals to Yuan intellectual trends.<sup>67</sup> Even though it has become clear that Neo-Confucianism was known in Koryŏ before its absorption into the Yuan empire, and that a truly Neo-Confucian society only took shape centuries into Chosŏn, it is irrefutable that the unprecedented access to Yuan learning radically changed the ways Koryŏ literati looked at the world.<sup>68</sup> Education and careers in and exchange with the Yuan were wide open to Koryŏ scholars. Given a sufficiently deep purse, the intellectual and scholarly resources of Dadu were there for them to use. Yuan Neo-Confucianism, with its anthropocentric universe in which the goals to be achieved were explained rationally while its methods were simultaneously empirical and clothed in ancient metaphors, was extremely attractive to Koryŏ literati, for it offered them a new and supremely legitimised way of dealing with a world in which their own position had shifted dramatically. Significantly, articulated resistance against the Yuan domination of Koryŏ was mainly voiced through the application of Neo-Confucian thought. The adoption of new technologies was a double-edged sword that could be pointed at both colonised and coloniser. Although Koryŏ's internalisation of Yuan Neo-Confucianism was significantly influenced by the fact that Koryŏ literati were—as a class based in Koryŏ, not necessarily as individuals based in Dadu—seen and treated as on a level below that of Yuan literati, Koryŏ's access to the hotbeds of Neo-Confucian debate went exclusively through the Yuan. Hence, their digestion of Neo-Confucian ideology was considerably less locally inflected than when Kim Pushik had digested Song New Laws (*xinfa* 新法) thought.<sup>69</sup> The ideology of 12th-century intellectuals such as Kim Pushik was tied to the situation in Koryŏ to such an extent as to be positively unpalatable for Song intellectuals;<sup>70</sup> late Koryŏ scholars were part of a large, boundary-transcending network of intellectual exchange and, as such, their thought was much more “connected” to continental circumstances than that of their predecessors ever could have been. The colonial situation in which the Koryŏ literati found themselves precluded a self-positioning as equals to Yuan literati, which was the price that was exacted for their new “connectedness”.

*Han'guksa* [History of Korea] 19 (Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe: Kwach'ŏn, 1996); 14-segi Koryŏ sahoe sŏngkyŏk yŏn'guban 14-(ed.) [Research Group for 14th-Century Koryŏ Society], *14-segi Koryŏ ūi chŏngch'i-wa saboe* 14 [Politics and Society in 14th-century Koryŏ] (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1994). Recently, an authoritative study has appeared that deals with Koryŏ's position in the Mongol Empire. See David Robinson, *Twilight of Empire: Northeast Asia under the Mongols* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). The famous Mongol postal system (*jam*) made it possible to cover up to 250 miles a day, an achievement not surpassed until the middle of the 19th century.

<sup>67</sup> See the review article in Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, “Sŏngnihag-ŭi chŏllae-wa suyong [Transmission and Introduction of Neo-Confucianism],” in *Han'guksa* 21 (Kwach'ŏn: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 1996), pp.126–63; Chang Tongik, *Koryŏbugi oegyosa jŏn'gu* History of Diplomacy in Late Koryŏ] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1994).

<sup>68</sup> For the development of Confucian thought in middle to late Koryŏ, see John Duncan, “Confucianism in the Late Koryŏ and Early Chosŏn,” *Korean Studies* 18.1 (1994): pp.77–102; also see Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, “Sŏngnihag-ŭi chŏllae-wa suyong,” pp.126–63.

<sup>69</sup> Chŏng Sua, “Koryŏ chunggi kaehyŏk chŏngch'aek-gwa kŭ sasangjŏk paegyŏng: Puk-Song shinpŏb'ŭi suyong-e taehan ilsiron” [The Philosophical Background To Revolutionary Policies in Middle Koryŏ: On the Transmission of the Song New Law], in *Hanguksabak nonch'ong* [Essays from the National Institute of History] ed. Such'ŏng Pak Yŏngsŏk kysu kinyŏm nonch'ong kanhaeng wiwŏnhoe, Vol.1, (Seoul: Such'ŏng Pak Yŏngsŏk kysu kinyŏm nonch'ong kanhaeng wiwŏnhoe, 1992), pp.449–66; Chŏng Sua, “Koryŏ chunggi tae-Song oegyo-ŭi chŏn'gae-wa kŭ ūiŭi,” [Development and Significance of Middle Koryŏ Diplomacy towards the Song] *Kuksagwan nonch'ong* [Essays from the National Institute of History] 61 (1995): pp.149–73. Also see Breuker, “When Truth Is Everywhere: The Formation of Plural Identities in Medieval Korea, 918–1170” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> While someone such as Kim Pushik was inspired by the new developments in Song China, he (and others like him) also

realised that the solutions found in the Song would only be applicable in Song China and would rather have detrimental effects on Koryŏ if implemented there, in particular on Koryŏ's independent international course. Any policy that would benefit Koryŏ needed to be rooted in Koryŏ realities. This was precisely why Song New Law proponents were very wary of Koryŏ. In their view, Koryŏ could not be trusted since it would always prioritise its own wellbeing instead of adhering to a Song-centered view on the world. This, of course, was true.

71 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

72 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p.7.

73 See, for example, Kwŏn Kŭn's poem quoted in the conclusion. In it, the tension between a Koryŏ identity and Koryŏ's place in the newly established Ming empire is apparent, in particular since the poem was written at the command of the emperor.

74 TMS 70.20a–24 a.

75 ICNG 6.p. 170–173

76 TMS 69.1a–9b. This theme also recurs in other writings by Yi Chehyŏn.

77 TMS 11.8b–9b.

78 KS 105.26b–27a.

79 KS 34.7b.

Koryŏ literati, like colonial intellectuals in any age or place, worked hard at navigating between the adoption of new technologies and the (re-) construction of their own identities. Both extremes carried risks, but both were needed for Koryŏ to survive as a separate entity within the Yuan empire. The forced participation in the Yuan world had unified some of Koryŏ's previous ways of looking at the world, but fragmented many others, necessitating the construction of workable identities transversing the boundaries of the known and the novel in an environment in which active participation in an international field was enforced under the all-powerful empire. In this sense, while working with or against the exigencies of empire, depending on personal inclination, circumstance and ability, Koryŏ literati were forced to resort to what Partha Chatterjee has called "the appropriation of the inner domain of cultural identity", while control of the outer domain was left to the Yuan.<sup>71</sup> If full-blown resistance aimed at the immediate realisation of independence is not feasible, first and foremost, the colonised's identity needs to be reconstructed to deal effectively with their colonial situation. Koryŏ literati needed to lay claim to the inner domain of Koryŏ culture, while incorporating the technologies with which the outer domain were administered.<sup>72</sup> This bifurcated approach to the construction of identity gave rise to several layers of consciousness in Koryŏ literati, as is, for instance, exemplified by the tension present in many writings of late-Koryŏ literati or the ways in which they visualised a new society to be constructed in the place of Koryŏ.<sup>73</sup>

As perhaps the most articulate scholar of this period, Yi Chehyŏn's understanding of Koryŏ's position under the Yuan is illuminating. Broadly sketching his argument by stating that order follows chaos and chaos order, he explained that the world was already old and used to be divided into the Song or the Southern Court, and Liao and Jin in the north. Now, however, all fighting had been ended by the Yuan. Koryŏ had been rescued from its military overlords, the Ch'oe House 崔氏, by the Yuan.<sup>74</sup> In another text, Yi explained that Koryŏ was older than the Yuan, recalling the unification of the peninsula under T'aejo Wang Kŏn in 935 and arguing for a position of independence for Koryŏ within the borders of the Yuan empire.<sup>75</sup> Yi used a historical anecdote dating from the very beginning of Koryŏ-Mongol relations as a template for the entire relationship. When, in the middle of the 13th century, a group of Khitan was chased by Mongol troops into Koryŏ territory, the Mongols requested and received Koryŏ assistance in defeating the Khitan. The co-operation between the two countries had on that occasion been smooth and had been concluded with a pledge to treat one another as brothers, with the Mongols in the role of eldest brother. In the context of the Yuan empire, a brotherly relationship between Koryŏ and the Yuan was ideal, according to Yi.<sup>76</sup>

In reality, this was but the aborted dream of a colonised mind and there was no such ideal relationship. Under the supervision of the Yuan, the Koryŏ ruler married a Yuan imperial princess to his designated heir, and stayed behind with her in Dadu until his enthronement.<sup>77</sup> For the first time in Koryŏ history, its rulers were truly kings, subordinated to the Son of Heaven, both in theory and in daily reality. The economic burden on Koryŏ was heavy, hence its appeals to the peculiarities of Koryŏ geography in order to evade rice levies.<sup>78</sup> When King Ch'ungsuk 忠肅王 (r. 1313–30, 1332–39) toured the country with Yi Chehyŏn and instructed him to dedicate a volume of prose on the beauty of the landscape, the object of their travels had been to find the best ink for the Yuan Emperor and not the celebration of Koryŏ's scenery.<sup>79</sup> The Yuan demand for young girls also prompted literati to write

sad, resigned poems dedicated to the girls destined to go to the Yuan.<sup>80</sup> The overall melancholic tone of travelogues and poetry alike is readily understandable and contrasts sharply with the tone of texts written on the occasion of the forced travel of the court to Kanghwa-do 江華島 at the beginning of the Mongol invasions. At that time, despite the rather desperate circumstances, a famous poem by Ch'oe Cha 崔滋 (1188–1260) expressed obvious pride in Koryŏ's literary, military and bureaucratic traditions, and the move of the capital was praised as a chance for a new start, the revitalisation of the dynasty, which Ch'oe Cha emphasised with strong reference to Koryŏ's long history.<sup>81</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to completely read this melancholic tone into the travelogue of An Ch'uk. The absence of strong historical content in this travelogue and others like it is, in itself, certainly not negative. Late-Koryŏ admiration for Yuan Neo-Confucianism and the promises its application and relevance in Koryŏ held was as real as the earlier Koryŏ admiration for Liao cultural achievements had been. But whereas Ch'oe Cha had seen a chance at revitalisation in the context of Koryŏ's illustrious history, scholars like An Ch'uk saw the same chance by ridding Koryŏ of its by now burdensome history. As such, the personalisation and dehistoricising of the travel experience carries significance beyond the act of travelling itself. Many late-Koryŏ and early-Chosŏn travelogues (the boundaries are blurred) seem to be introverted to a high degree; the subject matter is restricted not even to one's own country, but to the immediate circle of one's own friends and acquaintances.<sup>82</sup> The factors behind this change are complicated and diverse, but one ideological factor may be mentioned here. When Yi Kok had written about Koryŏ having been rescued from its military rulers by the Yuan, he did so in the context of a commemorative piece in honour of a high-Koryŏ official called Cho Ingyu 趙仁規.<sup>83</sup> Cho had dedicated his life to the Yuan and was, according to Yi, not considered to be Koryŏan by Khubilai Khan, on account of his fluency in Chinese and Mongolian languages and customs. This anecdote may serve as a metaphor for the great ideological changes that took place in Koryŏ during this period. Cho had distanced himself from what, in the eyes of Khubilai, was typical for Koryŏans, and became fluent in Chinese and Mongolian in order to incorporate a new way of seeing the world and behaving accordingly. He was the perfect colonial official. Similarly, scholars and literati of late Koryŏ had distanced themselves from the many historical relationships that had shaped their predecessors' perception of the Koryŏ landscape in order to take part in the new civilisation the Yuan offered Koryŏ and reap the rewards of a chance at a new society. Given the colonial context, this was, of course, a Janus-faced opportunity. Safeguarding Koryŏ's identity as an independent community and simultaneously adopting the Yuan's technologies did not go together without serious friction. In a way, it would be no exaggeration to say that the state of Chosŏn was partly born out of such friction.

### Conclusion

Ironically perhaps, it must be concluded that the Yuan domination of Koryŏ did not give rise to the emergence of a Koryŏ nation, as is habitually argued, but rather the opposite.<sup>84</sup> It also gave birth to a new conception of travel and appreciation of the Koryŏ landscape. Perhaps works such as the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, which emphasises the intimate relationship between man, landscape and history to an extreme extent, should

80 TMS 18.13a–b.

81 TMS 2.1a–5b

82 *Ch'ŏn sokchip* 2.7a–27a.

83 TMS 70.20a–24 a.

84 Michael Rogers has argued the opposite, noting that the Tan'gun 檀君 myth emerged during the Mongol period, which differed from earlier myths in that it enveloped the entire peninsula and its population. I strongly disagree. The emergence of the Tan'gun myth during this period also needs reconsideration because its precursors can be found in earlier periods, but I mainly disagree because the Koryŏ community, or the Three Han community, was in possession of constitutive political myths that fulfilled the function the Tan'gun myth is thought to have served. The Tan'gun myth only became important much later in peninsular history. For a detailed argument, see Breuker, *Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea*, chapters one to four. Also see Michael C. Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ," in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th to 14th Centuries*, pp.151–72 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), ed. Morris Rossabi.

85 Iryŏn 一蓮, the author of the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* was, after all, a high-ranking monk whose institutional and religious affiliations precluded him from embracing those aspects of Yuan civilisation that contemporary and later Koryŏ scholars embraced. The many accounts of travel and pilgrimage and the absence of interest in contemporary Koryŏ would certainly seem to point in this direction.

86 Duncan has shown that in the transition from Koryŏ to Chosŏn, there was no historical rupture with regard to the ruling class. The majority of the lineages that had belonged to the traditional ruling class in Koryŏ, appeared in the same role in the early Chosŏn dynasty. See John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

87 *STYS* 53.4b.

be understood against this background; if anything, the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* stands out for its almost obsessive recording of the histories associated with places and the places associated with historical tales.<sup>85</sup> Despite the *communis opinio* in contemporary scholarship on the late-Koryŏ that sees this period in terms of national identity formation, many of the expressions relatable to forms of national consciousness disappeared during this period and were replaced by a tense and ambiguous reconfiguration of their position in the Yuan empire. This is not to say that national identity disappeared, merely that the form in which Koryŏ identity had been expressed until the period of Mongol domination was altered radically. Koryŏ identity was refashioned to survive under colonial conditions. As a result, it changed rather decisively. As travelogues and other writings from late Koryŏ show, the unification of the peninsula in 935, the historical borders of the peninsula, and Koryŏ's venerable age when compared to the Yuan remained important, but now, necessarily within the Yuan empire, which had become an unavoidable point of reference after the disappearance of the Northern and Southern Courts. Although it is impossible to speak of a historical rupture at this moment, for research into the transition from Koryŏ to Chosŏn has convincingly shown that there was little of a rupture,<sup>86</sup> we should, perhaps, speak of an ideological rupture (which included a wholesale cultural reorientation) that was first made possible during the period of Mongol domination, and was confirmed and made permanent with the ideological transition to a Neo-Confucian state.

Travel and landscape in Koryŏ possessed different modalities during different periods. Koryŏ's absorption into the Yuan empire positioned Koryŏ within this empire, but also without a significant part of Koryŏ's historical experience. Finally, this led to a radically different and colonised form of self-perception, perhaps suitably expressed by Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1352–1409), a scholar born during the late-Koryŏ period and one of early Chosŏn's most important ideologues. In ambiguously wishing both the ideological and geographical boundaries between China and the peninsula to disappear, Kwŏn Kŭn illustrated this point very well in a poem on the Amnok river, written on command of the Ming emperor:

The villages at the border are cold, the trees old  
 The river, long as a root, keeps Liaoyang at a distance  
 The imperial virtue does not distinguish between Chinese and barbarians  
 So how could geography keep our territories divided?  
 Leaving the rocking of my small boat to the waves  
 I look with pleasure at the sun shining at even the remotest places  
 Who knows the busy, busy intentions of these comings and goings?  
 I shall tell my lord the message of the emperor.<sup>87</sup>

Koryŏ was undoubtedly part of the Yuan empire in many aspects. With regard to its self-perception, the conclusion is inevitable that Koryŏ was positioned well within the boundaries of the Mongol empire. As any colonised community, however, it simultaneously took trouble to remain there and to imagine itself without the empire. The rather stark contrast this offers with how Koryŏ viewed itself before the Mongol empire is indicative of the changes in *Weltanschauung* that occurred during and after the Mongol invasions of Koryŏ. The ambiguity of mental borders, which had been the hallmark of Koryŏ's *Weltanschauung*, sharply decreased, while the ambiguity of the physical borders of the peninsula, largely absent until the Mongol invasions, increased under Koryŏ's incorporation in the Yuan empire. In the end, this meant that Koryŏ physically came to be positioned within



the empire, with unrestricted access to its cultural resources, but to a large extent also outside of its own historical experiences. The reconfiguration of its own identity under colonial conditions precluded the unchanged preservation of its historical memories. Given the strong association of those historical memories with pre-Yuan Koryŏ's ideological world, it was, perhaps, inevitable that the social, political, economic and ideological transformations under Mongol tutelage together with the earnest desire of Koryŏ literati for ideological and social change and for the realisation of independence would involve the distancing of a significant part of Koryŏ's particularistic historical memories. Only by doing so could Koryŏ's mountains be visited and appreciated as phenomena whose "underlying principle is located at the level of meticulous perception and must apprehended with the mind".

Forcibly placed within the Mongol empire but simultaneously imagining itself outside of it, Koryŏ's diplomats and scholars no longer travelled to the capitals of the Southern Court and Northern Court, but could simply travel to Dadu. Ultimately, the conflation of the Southern Court and the Northern Court into the Yuan brought with it not only a significant simplification of travel routes for Koryŏ diplomats, but also radical changes in their view of the world, their landscape and themselves.

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