QUANTIFICATION AND STUDY OF YI DYNASTY KOREAN ELITES

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Edward W. Wagner
Harvard University

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The project described in this report was begun nearly ten years ago.* The fact that it still is very much in process is a consequence of many factors, but prominent among them is the additional burden imposed by the computer as it drags the weary researcher onward toward ever greater fullness and perfection. The Munkwa ("Civil Examination") Project, as we call it, could not exist without the computer, yet it seems legitimate to wonder whether the larger conclusions we have reached, and will reach, would not have revealed themselves anyway, as the end product of less arduous processes. Personally, however, I entertain few such doubts, believing that the refinement and ordering of a coherent mass of historical data provides its own justification.

The Munkwa Project is an attempt to define and characterize the political-social elite component of traditional Korean society (specifically the society of the Yi Dynasty, 1392-1910), by analysis of the 14,600 men who passed the higher civil service examination in the full five-hundred year period during which it was administered, 1393-1894. Research that would fully answer the question of how representative this group was of the total elite structure has not yet been done. But several considerations suggest that leadership in Yi Dynasty society in all vital areas and at all levels within these areas came primarily from those lineages that supplied successful candidates in the civil service examinations. More narrowly, to offer a single illustration, a recent study has shown that 90% of those who reached the three High State Councillor positions during the Yi Dynasty had taken the final civil service degree.

Accordingly, being certain in broad outline of the overriding importance of recruitment by civil examination, a study of those who passed through this system will throw much light on the nature of the Yi Dynasty polity and the social order that underlay it. Who were the men recruited through the arduous series of civil examinations? What was their immediate family and clan background? What marriage ties did they form? What areas of Korea did they represent? What career success might be expected to attend a particular background? How important was factional affiliation in determining success in the examinations and in the subsequent career? Was the system, within reason, fair and did it offer real opportunity to men of talent? Was the examination system a channel for social mobility, at least within the broad privileged class?

It is still not possible to suggest answers to all of these specific questions and to the more fundamental problems on which they bear. To date, enough work has been done to titillate but not to satisfy, and my purpose here will be first of all to state the research problem. Having done that, I shall try to set forth in some detail one of the more interesting results that the project already has yielded.

* The research described herein was undertaken jointly with Professor June-ho Song of Korea's Chŏnbuk National University. Despite the geographical span that makes personal contact sporadic and uncertain, the Munkwa Project has been and continues to be a collaborative one in every meaningful sense.

Portions of this paper have appeared in the author's "The Ladder of Success in Yi Dynasty Korea," Occasional Papers on Korea (No. 1, June 1972), and in "A Computer Approach to Genealogical Research in East Asia," Studies in Asian Genealogy, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1971.

Materials. I think it true that the Korean case offers a unique opportunity for exhaustive study of a large, traditional East Asian leadership elite. This is because of the abundance and nature of the materials available for use in analyzing the civil examination process. First of all, an excellent, comprehensive control exists in the form of the examination rosters that list every one of the 14,600 men who passed the final civil examination. Among the ten or so extant versions three stand out in terms of fullness or accuracy or both, and while substantially the same, each provides some data lacking in the others. Principally, the following types of information are given for each candidate: names; post or title at the time of the examination; year of birth; three paternal ancestors, mother's father, and father-in-law; preliminary examinations passed; clan seat; place of residence; brief career data.

To supplement the official examination rosters, there are a large number of private compilations generally known as munbo, or candidates' genealogies. These seem to have appeared from about the beginning of the 19th century, often with the aim of listing all living degree holders. Typically, these sources trace lineage back for eight generations, giving such data as office or title held in each generation, examinations passed (licentiate, military, or civil), and marriage relationships. Some munbo even use symbols to show a candidate's factional affiliation.

A third vital source material is the clan genealogy, which Korea traditionally produced -- and still produces today -- with such devotion, in such numbers, and, I believe, with great respect for veracity. Genealogies do not normally provide lists of clan members who passed the examinations, but diligent search will yield large dividends. In addition to providing a useful check on data found elsewhere, a genealogy often will furnish new data on career, marriage relationships, residence, illegitimacy, discipleship. And, not the least of its benefits, the clan genealogy will relate the candidate to others of his lineage who also played important roles on the public stage -- past, present, and future.

Ultimately the clan genealogy likely will prove to be the most rewarding of our sources. It may sound visionary, but I expect we will be able to pinpoint genealogically, with the fruitful results just noted, around 90% of the total of 14,600 final civil degree holders. Let me offer some brief statistics. In one source alone, in the much abridged clan genealogies of the Mansŏng Taedongbo, are to be found fully two-thirds of the total, neatly arranged on their respective ladders of descent. My experience with genealogies and other sources has made me optimistic that another 25% can be located. For example, the Kyŏngju Yi produced 173 degree holders, ranking it 19th among all clans. 128 of these can be found in the abridged genealogies, 24 more through patient persevering in the 54-volume clan genealogy published in 1934-35, and 8 more in the so-called candidates' genealogies. That is 160 out of 173, more than 90%. To be sure, the elusive dozen cry out to be known. Who are they, to remain so obscure? Their obscurity is all the more frustrating since, in this case, most of them passed during the final decades of the dynasty and were residents of the northern P'yŏngan provinces. But perhaps here too diligence will be rewarded, in time.

There was a preliminary civil examination that normally took one hundred candidates in each of two categories: Classics Licentiate and Literary Licentiate. Although passing it was not prerequisite to sitting for the final civil service degree, a large number of final degree holders did pass through

this preliminary stage. Approximately 46,000 men are known to have taken the licentiate degrees and through the herculean efforts of my colleague, Prof. June-ho Song, rosters containing nearly 35,000 of these have been located and a file constructed on the basis of surname, clan and year of examination. This file has been of immense help in supplementing residence data, in particular, for final degree holders and for verifying or correcting certain other categories of data.

The local gazeteer (ŭpchi) also is a useful source. Most such works contain lists of local men who took the final degree, as well as those who were a credit to the county in other ways. And gazeteers also often relate the circumstances under which a lineage came to take up residence in the county, thus providing a means of locating genealogically an otherwise obscure candidate.

Finally, there are the vast number of obituary documents, of a variety of types, found chiefly in the literary remains of Yi Lynasty figures great and small. Although usually based on information supplied by a member of the family or lineage of the deceased, these documents were most frequently written by a close kinsman or friend who must have known much of his data first-hand. These are rich sources, indeed, in almost every kind of information needed in our study, but unfortunately they are as yet largely inaccessible. Not only are the literary remains (munjip) themselves scattered in many different collections, or in many cases still unpublished and uncollected, but no one has indexed these materials to enable location of a particular document relating to a particular person. The Munkwa Project is using obituary documents whenever feasible, but systematic reliance simply is impossible at this stage.

Computer Input. Up to this point all input data has come from three of the comprehensive examination rosters described above. The best one of these lists all successful candidates from the first examination in 1393 to 1774, the worst stops at 1819, and the third, of uneven quality, is the only complete roster. The kinds of data appearing in these rosters are as follows, with our arbitrarily assigned item numbers indicated for convenience of reference to the attached sample code sheet:

02 date (king, year of reign, Western year) of examination
03 type of examination
04 rank on the examination roster
05 post or title or preliminary degree held at time of passing
06 surname
07 given name
08 change of name, if any
09 traditionally noted variation in the way given name is written
10 courtesy name (tzu; Kn. cha)
11 year of birth
12 year of death and/or age at death
13 father
15 grandfather
17 great-grandfather
19 maternal grandfather
22 wife's father
25 natural father, in the event of adoption
27 natural grandfather
29 natural great-grandfather
31 natural mother's father
34 father of a successor wife
37 career highlights
38 preliminary examination(s) and year passed
39 re-examination and year passed
40 indication of unusual social status
41 clan seat or affiliation
42 place of residence (at time of examination)
43 pseudonym or penname
44 posthumous name

56 additional or variant data for any of the above items (for example, a title of enfeoffment for a member of the royal house, or a variation in the way a given name is written)
57 names of close kin in the candidate's clan (excluding the three paternal ancestors recorded above) who also passed the highest civil service examination
58 notice that anecdotal material related to politics, war, family, or the examination system is carried in one or more of the rosters
59 miscellaneous information, such as that relating to discipleship, or retirement to a particular rural area, or editorial comment on the veracity of the data presented
01 source citation (the three comprehensive rosters plus location, whenever found, in a composite, abridged genealogy, Mansŏng Taedongbo)

Other categories of data for which the code sheet provides are not found in the examination rosters. When such data is to be added in the future it will be necessary to locate it in other sources. As indicated earlier, the clan genealogy is the most promising such source. As a feasibility study we have extracted and coded data on more than a thousand candidates from a dozen clan genealogies. The data we have taken includes the candidate's wife's or wives' lineage, his sons and daughters and their spouses, his brothers and sisters and their marriage relationships, further lineage data on his mother and on other wives his father may have had, and the candidate's paternal line of ascent back to an earlier successful candidate or, failing that, to somewhere near the beginning of the 14th century. There are no plans at present to input this large amount of additional information, but clearly it would much enrich the product.

The kinds of data desired and the sources for them having been determined, it was necessary to settle upon a coding system, as a mode of input. Given the limitations of computer technology, and the funding available, the options appeared to be few. Chinese character data had to be transferred to computer tape via some letter or number code, or by some combination of the two. Which was it to be? There are distinct advantages to coding in romanization, insofar as this can be made perfectly discrete, and so we used romanization for surnames, place names, and an assortment of terminology of which the major component is office and post names. The advantages are, first of all, speed and accuracy of coding and proofreading. When the Korean surname 金 is to be coded "KIM" (rather than, for example, "6855"), the coding person, Korean of course, is not likely to err. Secondly, and of equal importance, when the computer gives something back to you in romanization you know at a glance what you have, and others also will know what you have, without reccurse to coding manuals.

Unfortunately but inevitably the Munkwa Project involves much data that cannot be coded practicably in romanization. The problem in particular is with given or personal names. Here it is unavoidable that some system be employed that arbitrarily assigns sequences of letters or numbers to each Chinese character. To us the four-digit Chinese telegraphic code number system seemed the wiser choice, essentially for two reasons. To begin with it already existed, together with the Berkeley indices and even a code book arranging the characters in Korean alphabetic order, courtesy of the U.S. Army. But more importantly, the Chinese telegraphic code number was being used as the computer address, so to speak, in Professor Susumu Kune's

project at Harvard for the American Mathematical Society to develop computer capability for both encoding Chinese character data and reproducing it. This meant that we might look forward to an ultimate reward for our labors in the form of Chinese character output and that, indeed, we might make use of this machine capability in our preliminary procedures as well.

One further component of the coding procedure might be noted in passing, and that is the handling of cyclical dates. The simplest procedure seemed to be to number these serially from 01 甲子 to 60 癸亥 and then give the encoder a chart from which to work. The computer also is given a chart, one that lists ten Western-year possibilities for each cyclical date. The required calculations then are made on the basis, ultimately, of the Western year in which the examination took place, this date being incorporated into the data encoded for each candidate.

Among the many problems encountered in the input process certainly the most pervasive, and one of the most annoying, is the occurrence of Chinese character variation, either from source to source or within a single source. The problem is met with on many levels, such as:

(1) Two or more visibly different forms that a character may take, both (or all) sanctioned by tradition; for example: 寶 and 寚 and perhaps 宝, 年 and 秊, 德 and 悳. In this last case there are Chinese telegraphic code numbers for both characters. In general we have coded what we have seen, trusting to the computer to make the equations at a later stage.

(2) Miner variation in radical, where traditional usage generally fails to make distinctions, or fails to make them consistently. Examples are: 廸 and 迪; 協 and 協, 博 and 博; 裕 and 裕; 節 and 節. We might the more readily be inclined to brush aside this type of problem were it not for conventions in giving generation names. Inadvertent or whimsical in most instances, the distinctions are in other cases real. Nevertheless, our solution probably must be to choose one of each pair and be consistent about it.

(3) Major variation in radical, where we may presume one version to be correct and the other wrong. These are all but endless in their variety, but illustratively involve 土 vs. 王, 木 vs. 禾 or 釆 or even 扌, 日 vs. 目, 糸 vs. 糹, 氵 vs. 亻 and the like. Research in other sources, such as the dynastic annals or genealogies, is the only answer.

(4) Confusion stemming from identity of pronunciation, as in the case of 景 for 慶, or 茂 for 永. Again we must turn to other sources.

(5) Confusion stemming from near identity of shape. 成 vs. 咸 is one frequently met, and 蒸 vs. 蒸, or 鍊 vs. 鍊 are understandable confrontations. But I was surprised to find 長 and 良 frequently substituted one for the other. A particular puzzle is whether the element 尊 or 尊 is intended; alas, our sources often finesse the question by mating the two, thus: 尊. Again each case must be researched.

Another kind of Chinese character problem is posed by the Korean predilection for using obscure characters in their personal names. It may well be, indeed, that some have been created for the purpose. We found in our

three comprehensive rosters approximately 1,500 characters not included among the 9,300 characters assigned numbers in the Chinese telegraphic code. These range from a common occurrence like 喜 to esoterica such as 㷉 . We are adding these new characters to the repertoire of Professor Kuhn's computer, and since there are not enough unused four-digit numbers available, we have discarded most of the characters in the supplement to the code (#8000 and up) and replaced them with our own. An ancillary problem here will be to determine the pronunciation (for alphabetizing purposes) of many of these characters, those that cannot be found in a dictionary. We likely will arbitrarily assign a pronunciation on the basis of the phonetic element.

Variation and confusion also are encountered frequently in place names and in office terminology. Proving error in these areas is relatively simple. In a majority of cases, however, it is rather a question of accepted alternatives or of euphemism. The royal house of Yi Korea was known both as Chŏnju and Wansan; the Kim family of Kwangju is just as often tagged Kwangsan. The Chief State Councillor was formally yŏngŭijŏng but more often was called yŏngsang or susang. In this situation too we decided to code what we saw. The computer is a far more finely honed instrument for making equations than the human encoder.

Results. Several useful preliminary orderings of the input data have been obtained. These have been important principally for the assistance they offer in the ongoing effort to fill out and perfect the data. One product, however, a listing of the 14,600 successful candidates in Korean alphabetical sequence, has been shared more widely than only with the Harvard-Yenching Library and is currently being used by other researchers in Europe, Korea and the U.S.

But no comprehensive analysis or sophisticated manipulation of the data has yet been attempted. Nor will it be until we are satisfied that we have gone as far as we readily may in correcting the data and supplementing it from other sources. The major concerns that Pref. June-ho Song and I share are with the lineage background and geographic distribution of successful candidates. Eventually we hope to have the computer construct lineage trees on the one hand and computer-graph maps showing candidate residence concentration on the other. But these are remote goals. At this point in time we must content ourselves with modest beginnings, such as an outline of the role of residents of the northern Korean provinces in the civil examination and governmental processes.

The Case of Northern Korea. It is popular wisdom that inhabitants of Korea's three northern provinces of Hwanghae, P'yŏngan and Hamgyŏng were discriminated against in the civil examination process throughout the Yi Dynasty and thus that there were no real yangban (traditional privileged class) in the north. But it now can be demonstrated that this geographical segment of Yi society, comprising about twenty-five percent of the country's total population, was given an opportunity to satisfy its minimal social-political aspirations through access to the civil examinations. Admittedly no northerners were permitted to rise to the highest levels in the central government, yet all those who took the final civil service degree did receive appointments to important duty posts. This fact lends still greater significance to the phenomenon that, by the end of the 19th century, northern residents had become proportionately more successful in passing the civil examinations than were their southern compatriots.

It has become possible only recently to attempt to analyze the local place of residence of successful candidates for the higher civil service examination degree in the Yi Dynasty. We now know the county or city of residence of all but a few of the nearly 9,000 successful candidates from 1650 until the traditional examination system was abolished in 1894. Specifically, residence is available for over 96% of candidates between 1650 and 1673 and for all but four or five candidates among the more than 8,200 who received degrees from 1675 on. From about 1600 to 1650, however, the percentage of known residences declines to about 75%, and before 1600 the residence data remains incomplete and irregularly available, the more so the further back in time one goes. The question of civil examination candidates from the three northern provinces must be set in this framework of data availability.

Among 1,913 successful higher civil service examination candidates from 1392-1499, the first century or so of the Yi Dynasty, only 7 are known to have resided in the north. Further investigation undoubtedly will reveal more, but almost certainly the number will remain small, less than 5% of the total I should think. Between 1500-1599 only 36 among nearly 2,400 are indicated as northern residents, still only 3 or 4% of these whose residences are known. For the 17th century the number is 185 (7.5%), but in the 18th century almost 14% of successful candidates resided in the northern provinces and in the 19th century 15.4%. During Kojong's reign, in the last thirty years during which the examinations were held, the percentage is 22.8%, close to one of every four successful candidates.

It is apparent, then, that by the end of the Yi Dynasty the percentage of northerners who were successful in the civil examinations came to essentially equal their proportion of the total population. And when allowance is made for the fact that residents of the capital city, Seoul, and its immediate environs accounted for perhaps half of the total number of successful candidates, it may be suggested that northern residents did better than any other part of the country. In that perspective, the total of 1,281 northern residents among 7,410 total passers after the year 1700 becomes not one in six but fully one in three, and the 20% figure for the 19th century is tantamount to two in five non-Seoul candidates. More significantly, the ongoing northern success in the civil examinations was a rising tide: P'yŏngan province's gain, for example, meant a corresponding loss in the southern provinces. The early Yi Dynasty's apparently discriminatory preference for southern candidates had disappeared and, in a startling reversal, the northern candidates came to out-perform their southern countrymen.

A closer look at the distribution of successful candidates among and within the northern provinces is instructive. Among the three provinces, first of all, Hwanghae (surprisingly, it seemed to me) had the worst passers-to-population ratio: it produced 11.5% of the north's successful candidates from 22.2% of the population. (This and other population percentages given below are based on the 1789 census.) Hamgyŏng province had a somewhat better record, showing 19.3% of the passers with 27.2% of the population. P'yŏngan province, on the other hand, with just over half the north's population, boasted just under 70% of those who earned degrees.

Even more noticeable are the disproportionately heavy concentrations of candidates found within each of the three northern provinces. In Hwanghae, the towns of Haeju and P'yŏngsan supplied 43% of the passers although their

populations comprised under 18% of the provincial total. In Hamgyŏng province Hamhŭng city and Anbyŏn county contributed nearly half of the successful candidates (47.6%), while their combined population was only 14.7% of the provincial total. In P'yŏngan province the aspect of concentration was in one sense less marked but in another way it was dramatically more pronounced. The two leading producers of successful candidates were Chŏngju and P'yŏngyang, with 38.4% of the province's total of 1,044, whereas their populations were only 12.2% of the province's total. It was not the city of P'yŏngyang, however, but the town of Chŏngju just north of the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn river in North P'yŏngan province that supplied by far the largest number of successful civil examination candidates in all of the northern half of Korea. An incredible 282 of these envied men resided in Chŏngju, constituting 27% of the P'yŏngan total and 18.7% of the overall northern total. This was achieved, moreover, with less than 4% of the P'yŏngan population and less than 2% of the total northern population. The second-place city of P'yŏngyang can claim credit for only 119 passers, hardly more than Hamhŭng's 110. In rather sharp contrast, these two major northern cities held 7% of the northern population while supplying 15.2% of the overall northern total of final degree holders.

In a general sense one expects the concentrations of successful candidates in the north to be where they are actually found. In Hamgyŏng province they were concentrated in the major coastal cities and towns, while those in P'yŏngan are found most heavily in the crescent-shaped area ringing the West Korea Bay and centered on the mouth of the Ch'ŏngch'ŏn river. In these areas a fruitful agriculture, a bountiful ocean and thriving commerce could support larger populations and the leisure class that gave leadership to northern Korean society. At the same time, however, our statistical profile has revealed striking anomalies in the distribution of successful examination candidates that cannot be accounted for by economic geography. It is clear that other forces also were at work.

Certainly an important part of the explanation for the unbalanced geographical patterns of civil examination success may be found in the familiar fact of the predominance of a relatively few clans or lineages in the statistics of the degree holders. In summary, 32 clans produced 10 or more passers each, making up 865 out of the north's known total of 1,509, or 57.3%. Another 27 clans each earned 6 to 9 degrees, totaling 194 or another 12.8%. At the other end of the scale, 37 clans produced just two northern passers each, while a rather startling 145 clans are credited with only a single successful candidate residing in the north. In other words, among the 300-plus clan designations that identify northern candidates in the examination rosters, fully 60% apply to one or two candidates only. These clans provided 14.5% of the degree holders, while the 19% that were the most successful clans provided over 70% of the passers.

Once again the county-town of Chŏngju offers the best illustration of the imbalance just described. Of Chŏngju's 282 successful candidates 51 are from the single clan of the Yŏnan Kim, while the Paekch'ŏn Cho supplied 29, the Chŏnju Yi 27, the Suwŏn Paek 25, the Namyang Hong 20 and the Haeju No 18. Six clans, then, contributed 170 or 60% of the total, while 45 other clans are represented by one or more passers. To a lesser degree the other northern cities and counties that have the largest numbers of degree holders also have large representations by one or more clans. Hamhŭng had 30 Ch'ŏngju Han, 17 Chŏnju Chu and 11 Changhŭng Wi; Kasan had 9 P'ap'yŏng Yun and 8 Sunch'ŏn Kim; Kaech'ŏn had 13 Kwangju Yi and Anju had 25 Sunhŭng An. Ten of

Ch'ŏlsan's 20 successful candidates were Hadong Chŏng, 8 of Sukch'ŏn's 36 were Yŏnan Ch'a, 6 of Unsan's 15 were Suan Yi, 5 of Hoeryŏng's 11 were Haeju Oh.

It should be noted that most of the clans mentioned above for illustrative purposes are those with distinguished records of producing degree holders and government officials also from main lineages residing in the southern provinces. P'apyŏng Yun, Namyang Hong, and Ch'ŏngju Han are prime examples. There are a number of exceptions, however, and some of these are of particular interest. All 20 Chŏnju Kim degree holders resided in the north, mostly in P'yŏngan but a number also in Hamgyŏng. All 18 Haeju Ne lived in the north and, indeed, all of them in Chŏngju. 13 of 16 Tanyang Yi were northern residents, 23 of 25 Suan Yi, 11 of 12 Changhŭng Wi, 21 of 23 Chŏnju Chu.

One wonders, of course, how it came about that descendants of men whose original clan domiciles were in such southwestern towns as Chŏnju and Changhŭng, or in Tanyang in south-central Korea, or in the southeastern province of Kyŏngsang, came to reside and flourish in the north. There can be no single answer to a phenomenon that preliminary research shows to be a complex problem. A number of distinct patterns, however, are discernible.

In the case of these clans with significant numbers of degree holders from both southern and northern lineages, it is clear that the forbears of the northerners were in residence there from a very early date, generally before the beginning of the Yi Dynasty. Recently a genealogy of the northern Yŏnan Kim lines was published in Seoul, and it identified nearly all of the 70 Yŏnan Kim northern residents as the descendants of a pre-Yi Magistrate of Kaesŏng (the Koryŏ Dynasty capital) who remained in the north. The Paekch'ŏn Che and P'yŏngsan Sin are other examples of clans that have their seats in Hwanghae province, in the north, and established important lineage groups in the north as well as in the south. In contrast the Munhwa Yu, although it had substantial clan populations in the north, could produce only two very late Yi Dynasty degree holders.

A second pattern to be noted is that of an originally southern clan that established its major branches in the north. The Chŏnju Kim, Chŏnju Chu and Tanyang Yi already have been mentioned; in terms of political stature the southern branches of these clans were of little or no importance. On the other hand, the Sunhŭng An, Ch'ŏngju Han, Hadong Chŏng, Namyang Hong, and Suwŏn Paek are examples of originally southern clans that remained much more powerfully established in the south and yet had major northern lineages.

The most interesting pattern, if one may use so orderly a term to describe so amorphous a situation, concerns that large number of clan designations that apply to one or two, or a small handful, of successful northern candidates. The first thing to note about this group is that, with relatively few exceptions, the clan seat is located in the south, usually the far southeast or southwest. Assuming, as I do, that the claim of these northerners to clans of southern origin is to be taken as genuine, then it must be concluded that migration from south to north took place at some earlier time. Just how early this might have been is extremely difficult to determine, and most likely there were several periods when such movement was pronounced. One is tempted to see evidence of an early and large-scale Chŏlla to Hamgyŏng migration in the fact of the emergence from Hamgyŏng of the Yi royal family, the Chŏnju Yi, and the presence in the same area of a number of other Chŏlla clans, some of which have been referred to above. It is equally inviting to attempt to trace migration routes from eastern parts of Kyŏngsang and Kangwŏn provinces along the coast northward into Hamgyŏng. Or to imagine similar movements through the Choryŏng Pass from Naktong River areas along the edge of Korea's mountain spine and eventually into P'yŏngan province.

But it seems most likely to me that these northern examination candidates may be traced to the organized transfers of people from the southern three provinces into the northern areas that took place in the 15th century. This would help account for the slow development of northern examination success in the first two centuries of the dynasty. At the same time, the arrival of these people in the north would not have been so early as to have made them forget their places of origin.

What I am suggesting, then, is that many of the southern clan designations that identify northern degree holders must represent the localities in the south where a candidate's forbears lived before migrating to the north in fairly recent times, for the most part shortly after the founding of the Yi Dynasty. This in turn suggests that in few cases would these settlers have been members of southern lineage groups with acknowledged privileged status. Instead, they must have been ordinary people, of ordinary social status -- commoners in other words.

In recent years we have been getting accustomed to the notion that access even to the higher civil service examination in the Yi Dynasty was not, after all, restricted to a single class, the so-called yangban. There were no such legal stipulations and in actual practice a significant number of cases have been identified where men of definitely inferior social status were able to take and pass these examinations. Surely the record of examination success by northerners that has been set forth here is further proof of the vital degree of openness that the examination system continued to display. As the centuries of the new dynasty passed, many ambitious lineage groups in the north were striving to acquire the education and emulate the life-style of the acknowledged elite of traditional Korean society, the southern yangban. Many of them succeeded in establishing themselves as genuine members of that elite, as northern yangban with their status anchored to a degree of examination success that may well have been the envy of their southern compatriots.

The significance of this suggestion has many facets. To begin with, it means that the northern component must be taken into account in formulating hypotheses concerning the formation and stratification of Yi social classes. Secondly, a fresh look must be taken at the discrimination that did exist, in the pattern of office-holding, so that we may better understand the dynamics of Yi politics. Thirdly, the importance of this phenomenon for determining the course Korea took in the period of transition from traditional to modern society must not be overlooked. In the light of the role of Chŏngju residents in late traditional Korea, the fact that the famed Osan School was established there early in this century takes on new meaning. We are aware of the great contributions being made to contemporary society in the Republic of Korea by those born in the north. Surely many of these must be descended from the northerners who won the higher civil examination degrees in the later years of the Yi Dynasty. It is even imaginable that the Premier of North Korea, who is identified as a Chŏnju Kim in recent hagiography, was thrust up by the forces I have been describing here.

The ultimate testing of the hypotheses put forward above must be done on the basis of still more effective and imaginative marshalling of data. In this endeavor, as in the related efforts to lay bare the workings of traditional Korean politics and society, the computer has an essential and quintessential role.

Harvard University
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