

Goguryeo Society and Its Economy

Kim Chang-seok

The power group that led the founding of Goguryeo became the top governing class, and the Gyaeru-*bu* (桂婁部) royal family from whence the kings had come since the time of Jumong (朱蒙) was at its apex. Remaining local leaders and their own vassals were organized into centralized government officials or local potentates, depending upon the extent of their power.

The commoners who were in charge of production were directly subordinate to the village leaders (渠帥) and were ruled by the orders of the community within the *eumnak* (邑落) communities, but as agricultural productivity rose and social classification accompanied such rise, their level of independence increased notably. Non-Korean tribes such as Malgal (靺鞨), Georan (契丹), and Seonbi (鮮卑) were all subdued while their ethnic uniqueness continued; they were utilized in times of military or economic need.

The economic tradition of hunting and foraging was strong in Goguryeo in the early days due to the fact that it contained much mountainous terrain and few plains, but agriculture gradually became a major industry. Goguryeo was able to financially operate itself through levying taxes on the commoners who were making a living in production.

Goguryeo had as its neighboring states strong nations such as Han China, Wiman Joseon, and Buyeo during its formation. Especially after Han China's conquest of Wiman Joseon, the key point in Goguryeo's growth was how reacted with the Han Empire in China. This is because Goguryeo had to repulse the central force that was an obstacle to its national growth on the one hand yet needed to adopt advanced culture in order to consolidate its structure on the other. Goguryeo began diplomatic relations with Great China from the late second century B.C. onwards, which can be divided into four broad stages from the perspective of international trade. Internationally traded items diversified and the arena where exchange occurred, as well as the variety of trade goods, increased particularly in the fourth century to the middle of the sixth century.

Keywords: Goguryeo, class, lands, taxes, trade, homin (豪民), haho (下戶), general public, nobi (奴婢), sigeup (食邑), poll taxes, household taxes (戶租), chaekguru (幘溝婁), fur items.

Introduction

After several local entities located at the middle region of the Amnok River using iron-based utensils experienced growth, clashes, destruction, and conglomeration, the Goguryeo dynasty was formed. The primary group that led this entire process naturally became the highest voice in Goguryeo society, and that primary group included dynasty founder Jumong (朱蒙), the subsequent kings, and the Gyaeru-*bu* (桂婁部) royal family. Other local leaders and their own vassals were incorporated into the central circle of politics and administration or remained local potentates, depending upon the size of their power.

The economic status of the general public, whose role was to undertake general production, also shifted in the wake of such formation. During the period of *eumnak* (邑落) communities, they were directly subordinate to village leaders (渠帥) and were ruled by the orders of the community, but as agricultural productivity rose and social classification accompanied such a rise, their level of independence was notably heightened. The original *haho* (下戶), who were actually tenants (the term “*haho*” had such meaning in ancient China), lived in the *eumnak* and were transformed and incorporated into various classes, including wealthy *homin* (豪民), or ordinary members of the general public, or even the *nobi* (奴婢, private servants). And other than these, Goguryeo also assimilated alien tribes such as the Malgal (靺鞨), Georan (契丹), and Seonbi (鮮卑) as well, which were all subdued separately in groups and were specifically utilized in times of military or economic need.

Social changes were definitely influenced by industrial developments and reformation of the taxation system. Although Goguryeo had many mountains and rocky areas rather than plains suitable for planting, it soon overcome its traditional nature of being a collective-economy and developed agriculture as its main production means. The taxation levied upon the general public who were in charge of agricultural production helped Goguryeo establish its own stable financial system. The public, i.e., the common people, was the most important resource, so the government had to make sure that they did not fall into the clutches of nobles or high-ranking officials by becoming their subordinate workers or *nobi*. Such efforts were represented in a form of the government’s own aim to establish a central ruling authority.

Class Order

The ruling class of Goguryeo could be understood as having included the King, the royal family, the class members of the *daega* (大加, leader of a *bu*), and the middle and junior ruling members.

The founder of the dynasty, Jumong, and his successors, constituted the royal family of Goguryeo. The Gyaeru-*bu* (桂婁部) group produced kings, and the queens were usually from the Jeolno-*bu* (絶奴部). In the early periods, the throne was succeeded by a king's brother, so both younger and older brothers of the king were actually potential heirs with powerful voices. But such a facet diminished as the tradition of succession from father to eldest son became more dominant in later times.

In the early days, the King was merely the foremost representative of the five *bu* (regions) which, with in cooperation with each other, co-founded the Goguryeo dynasty. Yet as the *eumnak*-bounded villages went through significant social changes, and as foreign campaigns were being launched, the king's own power and ruling authority became much more powerful. During the reign of King Taejo (53-146), the King's political voice was enlarged, and the dynasty managed to add a few more administrative layers to itself during the reign of King Seocheon (270-292) (Noh Tae-don 1988: 36-38). The *daega* of the royal family, and the leader of the Sono-*bu* (消奴部), who had been the most dominant ones in the area before the Jumong faction came along, were still calling themselves as Gochuga (古雛加) figures, and remained as influential figures until the mid-third century, but in reality they were no match for the king. The Gyaeru-*bu* royal family was the most powerful entity inside the Goguryeo realm, representing the dynasty itself, ruling its land and subjects, and actively leading foreign negotiations and armed campaigns.

The leadership at the highest level of authority, which included the king as well, was referred to as the *daega* group. There is a comment made inside the Goguryeo article, "Dongi" (Eastern Barbarians) of the Wiseo (魏書, Book of Northern Wei, *Weishu* in Chinese) in *Samgukji* (三國志, The History of the Three Kingdoms in China, *San-kuo-chi* in Chinese) regarding these *daega* during the time frame before the third century.

Each of the *daega* employed a *saja* (使者), *choeui* (皂衣), and *seonin* (先人). The list of such personnel, which pretty much resembles the private vassals of high-ranking *gyeong* (卿) and *daebu* (大夫) officials, is report-

ed to the king. Such personnel are not allowed to sit at the same table with those who serve the king.

The fact that, although they were equipped with personnel who had basically the same nature to those who were assigned to the king, they were not allowed to present them or have them recognized at the same level clearly suggests that they were indeed in a position inferior to the king's. Goguryeo, just like any other ancient dynasty, was based upon several local entities which had been around since the Bronze era—before they started to continuously clash, subdue, and merge with each other. Added to that, the dynasty also included some foreign groups from the outside its boundaries as well.

In the process of assimilating several local groups into 5 essential leading groups, the local leaders were also incorporated into the new structure at various levels depending on their previous status and positions. The term “*daega*” had a wide range of meaning; it referred to the appointed successor to the throne (including potential successors as well) from the Gyaeru-*bu* House, leaderships of the other 4 Houses as well, and also leaders of other minor local groups. They constituted the highest echelon of the Five Houses' league, which were in themselves as a whole the central core of the Goguryeo dynasty. They carried traditional connections in terms of blood ties and locality, which had been established since the Bronze era. The *Saja* (使者), *choeui* (皂衣), and *seonin* (先人) serving them were in many cases local leaders whose groups had been assimilated earlier.

The *daega* group was the highest leading entity of Goguryeo. They lived at the Capital, and based upon their traditional authority regarding personnel and materials, they demonstrated an impressive ruling power. They conducted independent negotiations with the Han (漢) Commanderies and participated in armed campaigns with their own forces. The fact that the Gyaeru-*bu* group maintained their marital relationship with the Uh Clan or Myeongim Clan within the Jeolno-*bu* House suggests that they intended to preserve their political and societal privileges, and had formed a marital network in order to do just that (Lee Ki-baik 1959: 88; Kim Gi-heung 1996: 209). But as the king's ruling authority was strengthened, the *daega*'s traditional power was reduced, and they slowly transformed into the king's supportive vassals and nothing more. They were named with many official titles like *Jubu* (主簿), *Jwa · Uhbo* (左-右輔), and *Guksang* (國相), etc. (Noh Tae-don 1999: 147).

In the aforementioned Goguryeo part in the Samgukji, there is a mention of class composition.

The Great Houses of the Capital do not concern themselves with agricultural activities. The number of persons who are well-fed without being burdened with work are over 10,000. The *haho* transport rice, vegetables, and salt from distant areas and deliver them to the nobles.

The “Great Houses” mentioned here refers to the wealthy houses including the *daega*. According to this comment, the powerful comprised a population of over ten thousand. This figure probably would have included the middle and minor class leaders as well. Such non-senior leaders should have been in most cases persons with specialties in the area of dynasty defense or administrative management. They were called the *soga* (小加).

The *soga*, who were middle or minor-level leaders, did not directly engage in agricultural activities and instead lived upon their own private economic bases or received a salary from the government for their services. General Ondal (溫達), who is famous for his marriage to a certain princess, is also believed to have been part of this group. At first, he was undoubtedly outside the marital network which involved the royal family, but after he was recognized for his impressive achievements in the campaigns, he was allowed, barely, to marry the princess. The high-ranking officials, including the *daega* of the *Jeolno-bu* group which had delivered queens for generations, severely objected to this marriage, and expressed their objection by publicly denouncing Ondal as a mentally handicapped fool coming from an obscure background (Lee Ki-baik, 1967). Although the less powerful middle and minor-level leaders were clearly separated from the *Daega* figures due to class differentials, they were able to achieve partial elevation in their social status as well through demonstrating their own special knowledge and capabilities in terms of military and administrative issues, or marriages arranged between them and the noble families. But at the same time, it was also possible for them to be demoted to an even lower position such as when they failed to achieve victory or were politically purged.¹

1. In the year 35, 15th year of King Daemusin’s reign, a person named Gudo, who was the leader of the *Sono-bu* House, stole another man’s wife, concubine, and the man’s properties and beat those who tried to stop him. Gudo was arrested, and reduced to a commoner (庶人) for his crime (Vol. 14 in “Goguryeo bongi” of *Samguk sagi*, 15th year of King Daemusin’s reign). In another example, a man named Eulpasso, who was named prime minister by King Gogukcheon-wang, was from a ruined noble House, and had been in agriculture himself for a living (Ch. 4, Vol. 16 of “Goguryeo bongi” in the same book, 13th year of King Gogukcheon’s reign).

The subjects of the king's rule included the general public, the *nobi*, and subordinate groups. "Record of Buyeo" in *Samgukji* has a line saying "while there were (wealthy) *homin*, there were also the *haho* (the general public) who were *nobok*-like (奴僕, like private servant) figures."² The situation of persons at this level inside Buyeo would not have been that different from the situation of those of Goguryeo, especially in the villages during the early days. The question is the nature of these "*homin*." The letter "*ho*" (豪) implies that they were the prominent figures, with much more power and authority than ordinary people. But *Samgukji* was written by a Chinese, and it is entirely possible that, although the writer of the text perceived a certain group to be an internally and also homogeneously wealthy one, there were indeed various layers inside the population that were all indiscriminately and mistakenly referred to as *homin*. Such layers of personnel should have included the leaders of the *eumnak*, personnel directly assigned to them, wealthy peasants and merchants, and handicraftsmen.

A man named Eulbul, who later became King Micheon, once served as a hired worker for a man named Eummo who lived in Sushil-chon during his hideout from the king. The term "*Yongjak*" (傭作) refers to hired farming in which one provides manpower in exchange for a little land or a certain amount of grain. At the time, Eummo did not know who he had hired, and treated him rather harshly, as described, "having him log all day without breaks, and throw tile pieces into the lake so that the frogs would not cry in the night."³ Persons like Eummo, who had the financial ability to hire someone, would have been a *homin* at that time. The cooperation of the *homin* was crucial in the government's efforts to establish local administration, which would oversee general taxation and manpower mobilization.

In that sense, it must be said that the *homin* should not necessarily be classified as the "ruled." Considering their relationship with the government, they were indeed closer to being the 'ruled' part as the government levied taxes upon them and required them to deliver physical services, but they were also requested to take partial charge in controlling and leading the general public with their financial abilities, and also took part in the traditional authority as *eumnak* leaders. Yet surely, as the central government's authority continued to grow, the *homin* authority was degraded and their inner composition diversified.

2. Vol. 30 of *Wiseo*, "Buyeo" in *Samgukji*: "邑落有豪民 民下戶 皆爲奴僕" (宋本).

3. See Vol. 17, Ch. 5 of "Goguryeo bongi" on King Micheon in *Samguk sagi* for more details.

The general public was engaged in many areas of production including agriculture, handicrafts, fishing, and logging. Such were the primary base of the economy which would provide the dynasty with manpower and materials. The ordinary persons of *eumnak* before the third century were essentially *haho* who were positioned basically at the same level as *nobi*. They were not enlisted in actual field duties for campaigns, but they were indeed required to supply the troops with necessary grain stock. During the time when community-based traditions still remained strong, the leaders ruled and also extracted the general public in a group-wide fashion, and such a method would have made such persons appear as *haho*-like subordinates.

The *haho* figures who provided the “ones who do not work” with food and sea-products were also assigned to the central nobles to cultivate their land and submit materials, but they were designated as public people. Their actual existence featured diverse cases. There were independent peasants equipped with small private warehouses called Bugyeong (just as described in the “Record of Goguryeo” in *Samgukji*), and there were persons under control of the great houses for living. And there were also more desperate cases of impoverished peasants who had nowhere to go but to turn themselves into the aforementioned hired farmers. There is a relevant episode to all this.

In October, the King was hunting in Jilyang when he came across a person weeping. The King asked the person why he was crying, and the response was that because of the bad harvest that year, he could not find any hired working job this year and had no way to feed his mother, much less himself. The King was deeply saddened by the man’s plight, and ordered clothes and food to be bestowed upon him as the first step to a much broader order engulfing all the impoverished and desperate persons including elders and handicapped all over the country. He also ordered that grains accumulated by the government would be loaned to the people during March till July, to be recollected in October. His generosity pleased everybody. (Vol. 16, Ch. 4 of “Goguryeo bongi” on the 16th year of the reign of King Gogukcheon in *Samguk sagi*)

As social diversification was in progress, the traditional order which sustained the *eumnak* communities was also being dismantled. That led to the birth of some wealthy *homin*, and also many other ruined peasants who had to turn into hired farmers working or renting utensils to engage themselves in agricultural

production. The article above shows us the condition that they were in during the late second century. According to this article, we can see that although they were still being recognized as the king's subject commoners, they were about to collapse right down to the level of the subordinate work forces such as *nobi*. Their downfall would have immediately affected the government's financial income. The said order in the article to immediately implement relief programs, which also included grain-loaning plans, was the government's attempt to prevent that from happening. The general public was being transformed from being community members of the *eumnak* into being direct subjects of king and government, thus the government maintained protective policies of the public.

The *nobi* were at the lowest level of the public. Ways of becoming such figures were diverse. They became *nobi* by being captured in war, or being punished for some crime, or being punished for not paying their debts, or simply because their parents were *nobi* (Noh Tae-don 1973: 238-243). In the early days of Goguryeo, the armed campaigns and conflicts which went on between local entities, the merging process and the subsequent Three-Dynasty War all led to a massive increase in the number of POW-*nobi* figures. Wars were even engaged in order to acquire more persons as potential *nobi* workers. In other cases, ordinary persons also fell into the hands of the great houses or *homin* after their financial status was bankrupt, eventually becoming *nobi* workers as well.

The *nobi* were not ordinary citizens. They were owned by masters and were considered to be the lowest-class members throughout the society. But their economic and social status, their role in production, and areas that they were involved in were diverse. They accompanied their masters when participating in a campaign (in the case of Silla),⁴ or they took part in preparing tributary materials.⁵ They did not exist in a group-like fashion like the examples of Greece or Rome's ancient slaves, and they did not occupy a huge role in agricultural production, which was undertaken by the general public and was only 'assisted' by the *nobi* population.

4. See Vol. 47, Ch. 7 of the Chronicles on Nulchoe and Binyeongja in *Samguk sagi*.

5. In 2002, there was a report informing us that the words "no" (奴) and "noin" (奴人) were identified on a wooden correspondence (木簡) which seemed to have been used in occasions of submitting tributes; this correspondence was excavated from the Seongsan Mountain Fortress in the Haman area, Gyeongnam province (Changweon National Cultural Research Center, 2004, *Hangugui godae mokgan*, Ancient Wooden Correspondence of Korea). This kind of artifact suggests that the *nobi* were taking care of the delivery of tributary items for their masters.

The people who were in a similar position with the *nobi* workers were the group-based subordinates. Goguryeo had assimilated many neighboring local entities during its development and such alien groups were granted semi-autonomous control regulated by their original leaders. They will be examined in the following section.

Land Ownership and Taxation System

Goguryeo had many rocky mountains and little plain areas, as mentioned in the article below.

There are a lot of big mountains and deep valleys and very few plain areas and lakes. People live in the hillsides and valleys, drinking the water coming down from the valleys. The land is not rich. They concentrate their productive efforts on agriculture, but the harvested outcome is not enough to sustain them. So they are usually diligent and frugal when it comes to the issue of eating. (“Record of Goguryeo” in Wiseo, *Samgukji*)

Before the third century, when the Capital was at Gunnaeseong (國內城, today’s Tonggao in Jilin State, China) located in the middle area of the Amnok River, agricultural production still faced several difficulties. To compensate for the problems ultimately coming from small harvests they also invested their efforts in stock farming and forestry. As a traditional custom, the Goguryeo people annually held a memorial service to the gods of heaven and land on March 3rd with animals acquired in a countrywide hunting event (Vol. 45, No. 5 on the Chronicles of Ondal, *Samguk sagi*). This kind of occasion hailed back to the old days and also the customary ways of life which were prominent back then such as collecting and farming. Also, fruits or roots were important resources when agricultural production was still not sufficient. Salt and other sea produce also had to be delivered from seashore areas to the Capital, and such was not an easy thing to at that time.

To acquire and secure necessary food resources, Goguryeo also resorted to armed campaigns and plundering. In the early days they conquered East Okjeo (東沃沮) and stretched their legs to the Eastern coastal area of the Korean peninsula.⁶ As a result, they provided themselves not only with sea products, but also beautiful women on a regular basis, as below.

The country was small, and was being continuously picked upon by neighboring big countries. In the end, it fell into the hands of Goguryeo. Goguryeo named the masters of East Okjeo (Dong-Okjeo) regime as emissaries of the Goguryeo government and had them continue controlling the area while holding their own *daega* personnel responsible for supervising taxation which would be levied upon the area. Leather-based textile items, fishes, salt, and other marine products were transported from the area to the Goguryeo realm. They also sent beautiful women to Goguryeo, where they were rather maltreated as low beings like private servants or concubines. (Vol. 30, Ch. 30 of East Okjeo on “Wiseo” in *Samguk sagi*)

The fact that East Okjeo was required to submit not only local products but also living persons clearly suggests that the East Okjeo people were being considered as group-based subordinates compared to the Goguryeo people. The leaders of the original communities were held responsible for the actual taxation and transportation, while the *daega* personnel dispatched from Goguryeo central were responsible for overseeing the entire process in villages assigned to them. This kind of process was based upon the original, indigenous order of the conquered areas, and was proceeded in group levels in an indirect yet considerably painful (for the conquered aborigines) fashion.

Other local entities such as Dong (Eastern) Ye (東濊), Haenginguk (荇人國), Gaemaguk (蓋馬國), part of the Suksin (肅愼) tribe and the Seonbi tribe were all assimilated in a group-based fashion. Entities which bore certain similarities in terms of tribes or culture to the Goguryeo people were gradually reformed and incorporated into the Goguryeo’s local ruling administration. But other entities like the Suksin (later Malgal) and Seonbi tribes, whose living styles or traditions were fairly different from those of the Goguryeo people, were hard to effectively assimilate, so they remained as group-based subordinates till the ending days of the Goguryeo dynasty and were required to deliver special items or armed troops when deemed necessary (Noh Tae-don 1999: 127-128).

In the early fourth century, after the Han Commanderies of China’s Nangnang-gun (樂浪郡) and Daebang-gun (帶方郡) units were abolished,

6. Vol. 15, Ch. 3 of “Goguryeo bongi” in *Samguk sagi* on the 4th year of the reign of King Taejo: “秋七月 伐東沃沮 取其土地爲城邑 拓境東至滄海 南至薩水.”

Goguryeo was finally able to seize control of this rich plain area and stabilize its agriculture to a level that would guarantee sufficient harvests. From this point forward, agriculture became the main production trend of the Goguryeo people. They also managed to inherit advanced agricultural technology from newly acquired areas, which led to significant advances in agricultural utensils as well. A huge iron-based *boseub* (an edge of a plough) utensil excavated in the Seoul Guui-dong area shows us the level of technology that the Goguryeo people were able to reach at the time.

As agricultural production increased, the people's perception of the concept of land ownership was changed, and the government's administration over land issues also began to be developed and tuned. People's interest in land ownership could be traced back to the very early days of this dynasty. The Jilsan (質山) area, which was the hunting ground of the king during the reign of King Yuri, was particularly interesting in that regard.

The King returned from a hunting trip in the Jilsan area which lasted for five days. Daebo (大輔) Hyeobbu urged the king.... The King became furious and dismissed Hyeobbu from office and had him take charge of the Gwanweon (官園). Ashamed, Hyeobbu exiled himself to the Southern Han area. (Vol. 13, Ch. 1 of "Goguryeo bongi" in *Samguk sagi* on the 22nd year of the reign of King Yurimyeong)

The Jilsan area was later bestowed as sigeup (食邑, "stipend village" or land bestowed on government officials for meritorious service) to the vassals who were instrumental in deflecting the troops of Han China. That means that the Jilsan area was originally under the ownership of the royal family or the government. The Gwanweon area should also have been under similar ownership (Kim Chang-seok 1991: 56). Such regions must have been newly acquired with the king's lead, allocated to the royal family directly, and the king must have been hunting in that area in a symbolic gesture of protocol, thereby giving recognition of his own authority over the land.

The field of Gisan (箕山) region (Vol. 13, Ch. 1 of *Samguk sagi* on the 24th year of the reign of King Yurimyeong), where a "genius" was recruited during the reign of King Yuri, was also located at the border of Goguryeo.⁷ These areas

7. According to texts such as "Yeolseonjeon" (列仙傳) and "Taepyeong gwanggi" (太平廣記),

were not entirely agricultural lands; collecting and hunting practices were also taking place. Some areas were cultivated to produce high-quality products like rice (Kim Chang-seok 2004a: 72-73).

Newly acquired lands were designated as lands owned by the royal family or the government, and some of them were allocated to some of the royal family members, high-ranking officials and other meritorious vassals in the name of *sigeup*. Such units were designated based upon *eumnak*, and bestowal of such units basically meant the transfer of taxation authority (in terms of both manpower and material) from the government to the ones who received the bestowal. And considering the nature of taxation of that period, taxation going beyond the permitted range (or a tolerable range) would have taken place often as well. The ones who received such *sigeup* must have had their subordinates and private vassals, such as *saja* (使者), *choeui* (皂衣), *seonin* (先人) manage the land, and also recruited the cooperation of the local *eumnak* leaders in the actual taxing processes (Noh Tae-don 1999: 145-146).

This kind of taxation fashion is very similar to the relationship which existed between leaders and the people of the *eumnak* during the *eumnak* community phase (mentioned earlier in this paper), and also to the taxation trend forced upon the East Okjeo region. So, as the *eumnak* communities continued to be dismantled and the leaders re-positioned, the ruling and managing trend inside the *sigeup* must have changed accordingly. This must have something to do with the fact that, after there had been a record made regarding the fact that the Gongnim (鵠林) area had been bestowed to Gonoja as *sigeup* in 293 (2nd year of King Bongsang's reign) for honoring the person's courageous deeds of deflecting the Seonbi tribe during the Moyong (慕容) Clan's invasion (Vol. 17, Ch. 5 of "Goguryeo bongi" in *Samguk sagi* on the reign of King Bongsang), there have been no further comments made about any subsequent cases of *sigeup* bestowals in historical texts. Salaries must have been paid for their services other than this kind of *sigeup*, but there is no record to consult. The government collected grains and textiles from the public as taxes, so official salaries must have included such materials.

Other than lands or materials given to them by the government, the nobles

there had been many cases in which exotic creatures, hundreds of years old, and covered with hair all over its body, are reported to have been appearing and disappearing around the border area, in Chinese ancient history (Souda Hiroshi 1997a).

and high-ranking officials originally had their own private lands as well. Certain people “did not work,” and had the necessary items delivered to them through *haho* transportation, and such was not only apparent in the government’s dealing with the group-based subordinates, but also in the nobles’ and officials’ collecting taxes from distant private lands. They could have directly involved themselves with such operations if the lands were close to the capital, but distant lands would have been managed, planted, and cultivated by the *haho*, hired workers, and the *nobi*.

The government’s taxation was targeted at agricultural products and manpower. Before the third century, taxation levied upon the residents of the *eumnak* were usually conducted in a fashion that was conducted over the East Okjeo area, which was levying taxes upon group units as a whole. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the *eumnak* communities had already been dismantled so taxation would have been levied upon new types of units, which happened to be the adult men from independent households. This was the early-day version of poll taxes (人稅), and discrepancies generated from household financial abilities or discriminating productive abilities were not accounted for in this kind of taxation.

But on entering the sixth century, the inner diversification in class terms inside the general public became much more complex, thus taxation efforts also had to mirror such change. So, households were rated according to their economic status, and different amounts of tax were levied accordingly while the list of taxation items also went through some “modifications.”

Ordinary people submit five rolls of hemp cloth and five *seok* (unit of measure) of grains. Profligates are allowed to pay taxes once in three years and submit only one roll of high quality hemp cloth per ten profligates. Every household is required to submit grain: A level 1 household should submit one *seok* of grain (rice), while the middle level (level 2) household should submit seven *du* (smaller unit of measure than *seok*), and the lowest level (level 3) five *du*. (Vol. 81, No. 46 of the “Chronicle of Goryeo” in Suseo, History of the Sui Dynasty 隋書)

The taxation system in the later days of the Goguryeo dynasty was comprised of poll taxes and household taxes, and the former included taxes for the ordinary people and also for the people who were “profligates” from their lands. Poll taxes were traditionally the heaviest burden to bear for the public. The nature of the so-called “profligates” is still a matter of debate, but generally it is under-

stood as a term which referred to nomadic, or half-agricultural half-nomadic tribe groups such as the Malgal tribes (Kim Gi-heung 1987: 5-30). They still retained their traditional community order very strongly at the time, and moved themselves from region to region as seasons passed by, so the government had to levy taxes through the unit leaders and had to recognize a total of ten people as one taxation unit. We can see the tax burden levied upon them was relatively minor as such figures were usually required to deliver manpower in case troop mobilization became necessary.

The household taxes were designed to levy taxes on independent households by collecting hulled millet, and to levy taxes differently according to the target households' economic status, which was evaluated and classified into three ranks. The famous "Chollak munseo" (村落文書, Village Document), a document that tells us of the ancient taxation in villages during the Unified Silla period, shows a total of nine ranks for household economic capability, suggesting that the rank system became much more complex as time went by from the original Silla period to the Unified Silla period. Also, the "Social Relief" program, which was established during the reign of King Gogukcheon, also shifted in nature from being a social relief policy to a semi-taxation system, by which the public was required to receive "relief grains," and after the harvest, repay the "debt" with interest.⁸

The mobilization of manpower was to input necessary manpower into armed campaigns or various social programs. The policy targeted males over the age of 15. Yet in case of troop mobilization, in the early days every man available and who could stand on his feet was recruited regardless of age if they were ready to fight, and the term of service was not fixed, leaving the possibility of an arbitrarily prolonged service term. But on the other hand, relative orders were addressed in the ordinance announced in 373 (3rd year of King Sosurim), so with the exception of times when war frequently occurred such as at the end of the Three Kingdoms, recruiting manpower for troop mobilization should have been executed within the boundaries of law (Kim Gi-heung 1991: 95-108).

8. There is a regulation regarding Goguryeo dynasty's penal system inside the section on Goryeo in *Juseo* (周書, History of the Bei-Zhou Dynasty) saying that those who were not able to pay their debts, either public or private ones, were under obligation to submit a child instead, for *nobi* work.

Foreign Trade

Goguryeo conducted trade activities with Chinese dynasties and governments since the Former Han dynasty period. For example, there is a tomb located at the middle area of the Amnok River with bronze utensils buried inside alongside the corpse. Considering the nature of the excavated artifacts, the person who was buried there must have been a local leader of a community, someone involved in diplomatic negotiations with the Chinese Commanderies or foreign trade with such entities. Also, civilian merchants seem to have been emerging around 0 A.D. The *homin* of Buyeo (夫餘) and the great families of Goguryeo which were mentioned in Chinese texts must have been wealthy, so these figures must have appeared as professional foreign traders and merchants as well.

The other subject of Goguryeo's foreign trade activities was undoubtedly the Chinese merchants. The records show Han-Chinese merchants visiting the Nangnang area for commercial reasons.⁹ The Han-Chinese coins excavated from the Western and Southern coastal areas of the Korean peninsula suggest that these areas served as major bases of trade and transactions at the time (Kim Chang-seok 2004b: 162-165), and the location itself also suggests that Chinese merchants visited multiple places via sea routes.

When Chaekguru (幘溝婁) was established during the reign of King Taejo (53-146) (Noh Tae-don 1999: 121-122), Goguryeo's trade relationship with China went through some changes.

Goguryeo became considerably arrogant, and never came back to or visited the Gun(郡) units again. So we had to build a small fortress at the Eastern border facing Goguryeo territory. If we put cloths and other materials (衣幘) there, they would come and pick them up every year. Now the barbarians call this place "Chaekguru." "Guru" means "fortress" in the Goguryeo language. (Vol. 30, No. 30 of "Wiseo" on Goguryeo in *Samgukji*)

This article shows that the previous trading practices, in which several local entities visited the Hyeonto-gun (玄菟郡) area and received official clothes and

9. Vol. 28, No. 8 of *Hanseu* 2: "郡初取吏於遼東 吏見民無閉藏 及賈人往者 夜則爲盜 俗秒益薄 今於犯禁 寢多 至六十餘條."

accessaries, were halted and instead a small fortress designated as “Chaekguru” was established for trade negotiations on a regular basis.

The Chaekguru was not a mutual trading place (like the *hosi*, 互市) which was usually established between the Chinese central government and other nomadic tribes. But there is a possibility that partial commercial trade accompanied diplomatic negotiations and that exchanges of protocol-related items which would have taken place there. The trade with the Hyeonto-gun unit were led by the Gyaeru-*bu* House (the Royal family). The trade results satisfied royal family members and other nobles and they were hungry for more Chinese luxuries. And the trades were also temporary, so isolating diplomatic item-exchange from dynasty-to-dynasty trade is pretty hard at this point.¹⁰

It is uncertain when Chaekguru was closed and its function halted. At the very least we could presume it was closed before Hyeonto-gun was dismantled and retracted. But Hyeonto-gun itself went through some ups and downs and was finally dismantled only in the late fourth century (Yi Byeong-do 1976: 158-161), so in regards to determining the time point of Chaekguru’s shutdown we should examine when the Hyeonto-gun unit lost its practical function, which was triggered by the establishment of Donggi Gyowi (東夷校尉) by the Seojin (西晉) regime in 274. This caused Hyeonto-gun, Nangnang-gun, and Daebang-gun to all lose their primary functions as intermediaries located at the border region (Yim Gi-hwan 2000: 24-31). Later, Hyeonto-gun was placed under the authority of the Gongson (公孫) Clan regime and the Zhao-Wei (曹魏) dynasty, and Chaekguru’s function and role must have diminished till it finally became obsolete in the late third century. At the same time, 291 was the last year that the Donggi communities ever sent emissaries to the Donggi Gyowi, and it seems that the Donggi Gyowi, which served as yet another intermediary between Donggi societies and Seojin dynasty, also lost its primary abilities in the late third and early fourth centuries. This was a time of chaos, the ending days of the Seojin dynasty, when the five dynasties of North China started their descent southwards.

10. The term “national (or government) trading” does not refer to exchanges of tributary items and presents, which were usually arranged out of the need for diplomatic negotiation, as “national trades” were definitely economic in nature. Yet they were conducted through official channels, so they were definitely different from civilian trades. The formerly used term “tributary trade” (朝貢貿易) is not an appropriate word, as the word “trade” has a certain modern nuance to it, and the adjective “tributary” does not serve well in clearly defining the nature of such trade. So, such trade should be referred to in other words, such as national or government trading.

After Nangnang-gun and Daebang-gun were dismantled respectively in 313 and 314, the East Jin (東晉) regime was established in 318, and after that Goguryeo was finally able to conduct negotiations with China without intermediaries. The existing formats of conducting trade through marketplaces arranged in the nearby area of the Donggi Gyowi or the Chinese commanderies or Chaekguru also had to change. During the period, when Chaekguru was still functioning both diplomatic negotiations and economic trade were conducted via the same places and routes. Yet in the new era, such distinctively different aspects were bound to be separated.

Porcelain items were part of the products that came from China. Recently, in the city Jian-shi (集安市), a blue porcelain piece made during the East Jin dynasty period was excavated from a stadium located inside the Guknae-seong fortress vestige, which was the capital of Goguryeo (吉林省文物考古研究所, Jilin Province Institute for Cultural Archaeological Research). The East Jin porcelain pieces or Yu-Song (劉宋) dynasty period porcelain pieces, which had until then been excavated in the Baekjae region, are significantly notable in terms of shape and design. In the past, there were also occasions in which East Jin porcelain pieces, presumably from the mid-fourth century, would be excavated in Jian area tombs. These porcelain artifacts must have been produced in China during the early stages of the Southern Dynasties period and imported into Goguryeo.

Considering the condition of the porcelain items when they were excavated, it seems very likely that they were used in memorial services. But using porcelain items only for such occasions would be impractical, so the reasonable presumption might be considering them to have been used in daily life and then, entering a certain period, came to be used in memorial services or funerals as well. There are not enough examples of Chinese porcelain to confirm this assumption, but the Chinese porcelain pieces that were used and favored by the nobles and royal family members who resided at the Guknae-seong fortress or Pyeongyang-seong (平壤城) fortress should have been luxurious, so it is not at all impossible that they would have been imported from China.

There is an interesting comment made by Yu Gyeong-suk (劉敬叔) who was from the Song dynasty of the Southern Dynasties (南朝).

There are martens in Goguryeo. And usually, there are some kinds of beast living inside a cave with the martens as well. Such beasts look very familiar as they assume a shape of a human body, and are three

Cheok(尺) tall. They sure are good at catching martens. They favor a small knife, so if someone wants to acquire the martens' skins, they usually put a knife outside the entrance to the cave for compensation. Knowing that, the beast would come out of the cave and put some marten skin beside it. Then the one who brought a knife would return and collect the skins, and the beast would take the knife after that.¹¹

This episode is introduced in a book named *Iweon* (異苑), which is a book of tales containing exotic and mysterious stories from the Jin (晉) and Song (宋) era (Kamida Nobuo and Yamao Yukihisa 1989: 3). The story itself might be fictional, but the nature of the story should not be considered entirely so. Throughout human history, there have been plenty of cases in which people had to conduct 'Silent Trade' in order to avoid third party intervention or outright violations of interest (Souda Hiroshi 1997b).

The marten skin mentioned in this episode does not seem like a Goguryeo item, but rather the so-called "Eubru-cho" (挹婁貂), which was a very famous item at the time. It had been a popular item since the third century, and it was very luxurious. The Eubru tribe which produced this kind of material lived in the forest, which suggests that the previous episode included in *Iweon* was a mystic description of the Eubru clan's cave lifestyle. There had been some misconceptions that the Eubru-cho was produced by the Goguryeo people, and that they lived inside caves with animals like marten. Such misconceptions could have been caused by the fact that the Goguryeo people were indeed involved in marten skin trade as intermediaries; they were able to spread stories regarding marten hunting.

Then how did the Goguryeo people acquire such items like the Eubru people's marten skin? At the time, Eubru was under the authority and control of Goguryeo. But Goguryeo did not have the power to forcefully request the skins without any kind of payment, so they traded with the Eubru people to acquire them. The knives featured in the *Iweon* story clearly suggest the existence of such trade and payment.

The Goguryeo people who had conducted marten trade with Eubru could have come from any class, and any occupation. It could have been civilian mer-

11. *Iweon* (異苑), Vol. 3: "貂出句麗國 常有一物共居穴 或見之 形貌類人 長三尺 能制貂 愛樂刀子 其俗 人欲得貂皮 以刀投穴口 此物夜出穴 置皮刀邊 須人持皮去 乃敢取刀."

chants, who visited the Eubru region with iron-based utensils or weapons, traded them for marten skin, and again sold the marten skin to people from the Chinese Southern dynasties. But such trade would have undoubtedly had to cover huge distances, and multiple local entities would have been involved, so instead of being circulative and professional merchants they would have been members of commercial expeditions organized by central governmental officials.

They could have also been representing the central authority of the Goguryeo government, dispatched government personnel to the Eubru region from offices in charge of foreign diplomatic negotiations and trade. They probably bought local items and sold them to Chinese people when sent to the Southern dynasties in China. Marten skin could have been produced into both ordinary and luxurious items. The royal family members or nobles of the Southern dynasties in China would have been eager to acquire these items even if it meant costing them a lot in terms of silk and porcelain, which were popular items in China as well. If these items were not favorites of the Chinese royalty or noblemen, they would not be so well described in tales such as *Iweon*. This kind of trade had nothing to do with the existing tributary relationship between countries or the accompanying tributes. It was commercial trade led by the government or the country. This marked the beginning of such trade, and it is a huge leap for the development of Koreans' ancient foreign trade and its trading system.

The former case in which commercial expeditions organized by government officials shows evidence of civilian activities. Civilian commercial activities were originally banned in China, but it is entirely possible that they were temporarily allowed in certain environments such as the Northern and Southern Dynasties' periods. Or, there were simply cases of smuggling, to say the least. Yet it was not the same civilian trade that was limited in space like that of *Chaekguru*. Larger areas were involved, multiple local entities were involved, and organized merchants were involved. It was indeed a step forward.

The primary characteristic of foreign trade which prominently appeared in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries was that the space for trade was enlarged, and the types of traded items were multiplied. But when the Sui (隋) dynasty unified China in the late sixth century and hostility had arisen between the Sui and Goguryeo, Goguryeo's trade was forced to change. Especially during the Tang (唐) China period, trade other than official trade launched by the government was all banned, and civilian trade had to proceed via smuggling.

Conclusion

We can see that Goguryeo society had certain turning points, such as the first century, third century, and sixth century in terms of economic development.

During the first century, the entities responsible for founding the Goguryeo dynasty were incorporated into five *Bu* units, and a unified channel for foreign diplomatic functions was established in the form of Chaekguru. In this period, the basic unit of the society was still the *eumnak* community, and the leaders ruled the *haho* in a group-based fashion. The same kind of ruling was also applied to royal family members, *Daega* figures,⁷ and meritorious military personnel⁸ controlling and managing the “*sigeup*” units and other economical bases.

During the third century, the *eumnak* communities began to be dismantled due to developments made in agricultural technology, and class diversification accompanied such social changes. Independent households broke free from traditional community order, and the central government newly took control of them via poll taxes. In this time period, group-based rule still existed in cases of controlling nomadic foreign tribes such as the Malgal and Georan. The government’s ruling authority continued to grow and it invested huge effort in keeping the subject public and from being assimilated into the private sphere. Trade with China also increased.

Such trends continued for a couple of centuries, and around the sixth century, such changes were finally mirrored in the government’s taxation system. Differences in each household’s economic ability were accounted for in taxation via the rank system (e.g., three-rank system). Agricultural utensil development, enhancement in agricultural technologies, and the expanse of a large-scale agricultural management using hired farmers and the *nobi* were all relevant factors behind this kind of social change. And after the late sixth century, the rise of Sui and Tang dynasties caused shifts in the international situation, and Goguryeo’s social and economic status also experienced certain changes and turbulence.

References

- Kim Chang-seok. 1991. “Tongil sillagi jeonjange gwanhan yeongu” (Study on the Farmlands of the Unified Silla Period). *Hanguksaron* (Theory of Korean History) 25.
- _____. 2004a. “Godae yeongyeok gwannyeomui hyeongseonggwa wangto

- uisik” (The Formation of the Concept of Territory and the Royal Domain in Ancient Times). *The 47th National History Conference*.
- _____. 2004b. *Samgukgwa tongil sillai yutongchegye yeongu* (Study of the Material Flow System in the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla). Seoul: Iljogak.
- Kim Gi-heung. 1987. “6-7segi goguryeoui jose jedo” (Taxation System of Goguryeo in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries). *Hanguksaron* (Theory of Korean History) 17.
- _____. 1996. “Sahoe gujo” (Social Structure). *Hanguksa* (History of Korea) 5. Seoul: National Institute of Korean History.
- Lee Ki-baik. 1959. “Goguryeo wangbijok go” (An Inquiry into the Clans of the Queens of Goguryeo). *Jindan hakbo* 20.
- _____. 1967. “Ondaljeonui geomto—goguryeo gwijoksahoeui sinbunjilseo daehan byeolgeon” (An Examination of the Tale of Ondal—A Glance at the Status Order of Goguryeo Aristocracy). *Baeksan hakbo* 3.
- Noh Tae-don. 1973. “Samgugui jeongchigujowa sahoe-gyeongje” (The Political Structure and Socio-Economy of the Three Kingdoms). *Hanguksa* (History of Korea) 2. Seoul: National Institute of Korean History.
- _____. 1988. “Goguryeoui seonglipgwa byeoncheon” (Formation and Transformation of Goguryeo). *Hanguk godaesaron* (Theory on the Early History of Korea). Seoul: Hangilsa.
- _____. 1999 “Buchejeui seonglipgwa geu gujo” (Formation of the Bu System and Its Structure). *Goguryeosa yeongu* (Study of Goguryeo History). Seoul: Sagyejeol.
- Yi Byeong-do. 1976. “Hyeontogun go” (A Study on Hyeonto-gun). Pp. 158-161 in *Hanguk godaesa yeongu* (Research on Early History of Korea). Seoul: Bakyongsas.
- Yim Gi-hwan. 2000. “3segi-4segicho wi.jinui dongbang jeongchaek—nang-nang-gun, daebang-gunuel jungsimeuro” (Eastern Policy of Wei and Jin in the Third and Fourth Centuries—Focusing on Nangnang-gun and Daebang-gun). *Yeoksawa hyeonsil* (Quarterly Review of History) 36.

* Foreign Sources

- Souda Hiroshi. 1997a. “Shi to ijin.” *Ijin to shi-kyoukai no chuugoku kodaishi*. Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan.

Souda Hiroshi. 1997b. "Oniichi to jaichi." *Ijin to shi-kyoukai no chuugoku kodaishi*. Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan.

Kamida Nobuo and Yamao Yukihisa ed. 1989. *Chuugoku shiseki kaidai jiten*. Tokyo: Ryugen Shoten.

Jilinsheng Wenwukaogu Yanjiusuo and Jianshi Bowuguan ed. 2004. *Guoneicheng—2000-2003 Nianjianshi guoneicheng yu minshu yishi shijuebaogao*. Beijing: Culture Relics Publishing House.

Kim Chang-seok received his Ph.D. in Korean history from Seoul National University (SNU). He is a research fellow at the Academy at Hanshin University and also lectures at SNU and Hongik University. His scholarly interest covers the economic conditions and culture of ancient Korea. He is currently studying international perspectives and worldviews of the Silla people by examining materials on trade and cultural exchange between Unified Silla, T'ang China, and Japan.