

Abstract

**Formative Principles of Pre-modern Korean State:
Local Governance System in Centralized Koryo Dynasty**

Kim, Tae Eun
Dept. of Sociology
The Graduate School
Yonsei University

Two centralized pre-modern states had continued to exist in Korea since Koryo Dynasty was founded in 918. Ever since then, territoriality and political centrality of the state had been maintained in Korea until the downfall of Chosen Dynasty by the invasion of Japanese imperialism in 1910. Such existence of centralized states in Korea differs significantly from the history of Western Europe in which decentralization and localization was the predominant aspects of the Middle Age. State's territoriality and centrality had never been broken in Korea although there had been appeared decentralizing tendency of local power actors. However, fact-oriented historical studies on Korea has not payed enough attentions to the existence of this pre-modern state. Studies on socio-economic history also overlooked the existence of pre-modern state because they tried to adopt theoretical frames based on the Western experiences.

This study argues that understanding the formative principles of pre-modern state is critical in explaining Korean history. It has been assumed that pre-modern societies had fundamental limits to maintain state integration because infra-structures such as transportation and communication system were not fully developed. This study tries to explain how the Korean pre-modern state had been able to maintain a single state system in spite of the given infra-structural limits. This study adopts basic theoretical perspectives on state and pre-modern societies from Micael Mann to notice and explain various pre-modern states in pre-modern societies. Mann's perspectives on the state make us to overcome ahistorical and Western-biased

tendencies in current studies that extrapolate the experiences of modern states originated from Western societies into the historical past. However, Mann's explanation also partially shows a biased view to Western historical experiences. This limit is supplemented by Eisenstadt's work on 'historical bureaucracy' and Giddens' study on 'the formation of pre-modern state' related with literacy and development of records. Then I build up a hypothesis arguing that integration of locally based upper-classes into center state apparatus were able to keep up the territory-wide missive administration. I try to prove this hypothesis by examining the formation of local governance system in early Koryo era.

Local governance system in Koryo Dynasty were based on two principles developed in Korean history. They are the missive administration started in Unified Shilla from the 8th century and local politics in which clan heads had played leading roles which fostered during the interim period between the Unified Shilla and the Koryo (ie, Husamguk). The center government of Koryo Dynasty allowed local clan leaders to take charge of local governance as the missive administrators and gave them privileges to represent local interests at center. As a result, upper-classes in local communities had changed into civil officers of the center and integrated into the central ruling-class. While these state policies and institutionalisation had the effect to organize social relations based on lineage system, the structure at the top emerged to form an political arena where different lineages of upper classes from different regions compete one another to secure privileges of the central state. Thus, social status and privileges were re-produced through the positions in the central state, and therefore the center could have maintained integration among local ruling classes and could continue to exist.

Key Words: state infrastructure, state ruling-class integration, missive administration, local governance system.