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When truth is everywhere: the formation of plural identities in medieval Korea, 918-1170

Breuker, R.E.

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PREFACE

Korea in general and Koryŏ in particular are relatively neglected fields of historical study outside of Korea. Even in Korea, the study of Koryŏ is not very popular. This is unfortunate, because the Koryŏ period, which lasted for five centuries, has in various respects exercised an enormous influence on the history of the peninsula, not in the least since the Koryŏ dynasty was the first unified state on the peninsula. It has as such functioned as a charter state for subsequent states on the Korean peninsula, a state whose achievements, identity and historical memory played an important role in the creation of all subsequent communities on the peninsula. This study tries to bring this contribution of the Koryŏ dynasty to later states on the peninsula in focus by mapping and analyzing identity formation processes during the early to middle Koryŏ, roughly from 918 until 1170, the year the Koryŏ military took over the administration of the state.

Any student of Koryŏ history is severely dependent on the knowledge, expertise and insights of other scholars. I count myself lucky in having been assigned to Professor No Myŏnggho 盧明鎬 during my stay at Seoul National University after graduating at Leiden University. Professor No is not only an unrivalled Koryŏ specialist, but he was also exceedingly kind and patient in his supervision of my progress, which, truth be told, must have vexed him regularly. Without the years I spent at SNU this study would have been impossible and without the supervision and support of Professor No and my fellow students of Koryŏ during that time, this study would have shown many more flaws than it does now. Outside the lecture rooms, I benefited greatly from discussions with the scholars and students in whose research room I was given a desk. These discussions, as well as the endless goodwill shown to me in the form of proofreading my Korean essays and papers, invitations to informal seminars and inclusion in all kinds of activities made my stay at SNU not only rewarding academically, but also personally. There are too many people to mention, but I want to include in particular Dr. Pae Sŏngjun 배성준 (and the nationalism seminar), Dr. Ch'oe Yŏnshik 최연식 and Ch'oe Kyehwa 최계화. The seminars led by Professor Ch'oe Pyŏnghŏn 최병헌 also contributed greatly towards my understanding of Koryŏ.

I learnt about Koryŏ at Seoul National University, but about Korea and its history outside SNU's gates. Korea's recent history is a painful one for many people and I have to thank the friends who first took the time to go through a Korean history of Korea with me to instill a sense in me of the human face of Korean history. Yi Yunsŏn 이윤선, Ch'a Songhŭi 차송희, Kim Kyut'ae 김규태, and Kim Taegil 김대길 have made Korea home for me. Bouts of homesickness were quickly expelled in the company of Kim Kyŏngp'il 김경필, Im Suhŭi 이수희 and Yang Chŏngyun 양정윤. Cho Hyejŏng 조혜정 was always there and never too busy to correct my written Korean and Kil Yŏngu 길영우, finally, showed me the importance of listening to the beats of different drums.

Colleagues in the field also showed their support over the years, none more than Dr. Roald Maliangkay of Australian National University, who fulfilled a double role as a colleague and a friend. Dr. Lewis Mayo of Melbourne University provided exceptional support, perceptive

criticism and invariably inspiration and friendship.

The foundations of my academic education were laid in heated discussions with Vincent Breugem, Pepijn Sauer and Emiel Teunissen, who remain the touchstones of my views (academic and other) today. If anything, this thesis is in its own way a small contribution to those discussions. It is indebted to them more than to anything or anyone else.

Finally, I must thank my parents, brother and sister for the support they have shown over the years, not only during the at times stressful times while writing the thesis, but also before when I decided to study Japanese and Korean and later on, when I decided I needed to spend a prolonged period in Korea. The title of doctor that this thesis brings me, is perhaps different from the doctor's title I was once imagined to earn one day, but I hope nonetheless satisfactory.

This dissertation was only possible because of my wife, Imke, who quite literally stood at its beginnings and now stands at its completion. Without her, it would not have been written and Korea would have remained unknown to me. I dedicate this thesis to Imke, who knows why.