

Women's Life during the Chosŏn Dynasty

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Introduction

The Chosŏn society was one in which the yangban (aristocracy) wielded tremendous power. The role of women in this society was influenced greatly by the yangban class' attempts to establish a patriarchal family order and a Confucian-based society. For example, women were forced, in accordance with neo-Confucian ideology, to remain chaste before marriage and barred from remarrying once their husbands had passed away. As far as the marriage system was concerned, the Chosŏn era saw a move away from the old tradition of the man moving into his in-laws house following the wedding (男歸女家婚 *namgwiwŏgahon*), with the woman now expected to move in with her husband's family following the marriage (親迎制度 *ch'in'yŏng jedo*). Moreover, wives were rigidly divided into two categories: legitimate wife (*ch'ŏ*) and concubines (*ch'ŏp*). This period also saw a change in the legal standing of women with regards to inheritance, as the system was altered from the practice of equal, from a gender standpoint, rights to inheritance, to one in which the eldest son became the sole inheritor. These neo-Confucianist inspired changes contributed to the strengthening of the patriarchal system during the Chosŏn era. As a result of these changes, Chosŏn women's rights and activities became increasingly restricted.

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During the Chosŏn dynasty women fell into one of the following classifications: female members of the royal family such as the queen and the king's concubines, members of the yangban class the wives of the landed gentry, commoners, the majority of which were engaged in agriculture, women in special professions such as palace women, entertainers, shamans and physicians, and women from the lowborn class (*ch'ŏnin*), which usually referred to the yangban's female slaves. The lifestyle which these women could expect was in large part dictated by the social class to which they belonged.

However, despite these different lifestyles, the Chosŏn government's woman policy remained inordinately concerned with those women belonging to the yangban class. Nevertheless, the education received by women who belonged to the ruling class did have an effect on those women who belonged to the other classes.

A wide body of research exists on Chosŏn women-related topics.¹ This study, which is based on the results of these previous studies, deals with the following three subjects: First, how the Chosŏn ruling class used the Confucian-based moralistic *naewoebŏp* (內外法 a law which prohibited free contact between men and women) to control women, and how the status of women vis-à-vis marriage, inheritance, and ancestral rites changed during the Chosŏn era as a result of the emergence of the *chongbŏp*, which was a male-oriented moral system governing family relations. Second, this paper will also delve into the various social statuses which women enjoyed during the Chosŏn era, and more succinctly, into the lifestyles which women from each of these classes led. Third, the nature of the women engaged in special professions, and of these jobs themselves, will also be addressed herein.

Strengthening of Regulations Governing Women and Changes in Women's Status

Regulation of women's everyday lives

The *sadaebu*, the class from which the founders of the Chosŏn dynasty emerged, identified the breakdown of public morals as one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Koryŏ dynasty. This belief led to, as part of an effort to usher in a new era of gender relations based on neo-Confucianist ideals, the establishment of several regulations governing women's lives and their lifestyles. As part of these restrictions which were imposed on yangban women during this period, women were prohibited from visiting the temple monastery, from hosting shaman rituals, had their dressing style regulated, and were prohibited from engaging in direct contact with members of the opposite sex. These four regulations, which were part of the Chosŏn ruling class' attempts to establish a new neo-Confucianist order, were closely related to one another. The *naewoebŏp*, which was based on the notion of rigid gender roles, in which men were considered to be the "woe" while women were the "nae", was strengthened as a result of the imposition of behavioral codes that restricted men's sphere of influence to matters outside of the house, and conversely, women's to internal family matters.

The imposition of such restrictions on women's lifestyles was especially pronounced during the reign of King Sejong (1418~1450). During this period, women were prohibited from visiting the temple monastery, and conversely, monks from paying visit to a widow's residence.² Moreover, the Sejong era also saw women from the *sadaebu* class have their right to visit areas of worship (*sinso*) situated in both the capital and outlying areas curtailed. The head of the household of any women found guilty of breaking this edict was punished accordingly.³

The *naewoebŏp*, which imposed stringent restrictions on inter-gender contact, represented the first stage of an attempt to embed the notion of chastity within the mindset of Chosŏn women.⁴ The *Kyŏngjae yukjŏn*

(經濟六典 Six Codes of Governance), which was compiled during the reign of King Sejong, outlines how women from the yangban class were permitted to interact with their immediate family (parents and siblings) and their paternal and maternal relatives (uncles and aunts' families within 3 degrees (*ch'on*) of relations).⁵ This regulation, while not immediately implemented, had the effect of seriously curtailing women's activities outside of the household as well as inter-gender contact. Even more severe restrictions were imposed on those women who belonged to the royal clan. Some other potential measures which were discussed during this period included the following: men and women should not travel along the same roads, should not meet at the market, and should occupy different quarters at all times.

Such regulations were further strengthened during the reign of King Sŏngjong. According to the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* (經國大典 National Code) compiled during the reign of King Sŏngjong, "Any women who visits a temple ... Any woman from the *sajok* (yangban) class who attends a festival in the mountains or by the riverside, or who conducts a (*yaje sanchŏn* or *sŏnghwang samyoje*) ritual ceremony, shall will receive 100 lashes."⁶ The imposition of such regulations would seem to indicate that festivals in the mountains or by the riverside were a popular form of entertainment for women of the yangban class both in Seoul and in outlying areas. The continued influence of Buddhism, which had been deeply entrenched during the Koryŏ dynasty, is visible in the fact that even during the early period of the Chosŏn dynasty women were free to visit temples or engage in ceremonial rites for various shaman gods, such as the house god. However, over time such practices were thoroughly weeded out as part of the new neo-Confucianist order which was being created.

The rigid *naewoebŏp* also imposed severe restrictions on women's activities outside of the household. As a result of this law, women from all classes but the lowest were forced to hide their faces with an outer garment whenever they left the house, with different garments being used to identify a woman's social status. In keeping with this, women from the

yangban class were forced to wear *changot* (hood), while commoners had to don a *ssuge chima* (shawl). Yangban women were forced to get around on horseback or in a palanquin and assure that their faces were never exposed to passersby. Such palanquins were also used by female entertainers whenever they left the house and palace women when the king would set out on a journey or get married.

As mentioned above, this *naewoebŏp* also altered families living arrangements and created independent living areas, with women's quarters (*anchae*) separated from the men's (*sarangchae*) by a fence. As a result, the notion of the need to separate men from women at an age as young as seven became widespread, which in turn resulted in isolating women from men and vice versa. Moreover, the perception of men as superior to women (*namjonyŏbi*) also gained ground rapidly during this period.

The ruling class of the newly formed Chosŏn dynasty identified the breakdown of women's morals as one of the main causes of the social chaos which led to the demise of the Koryŏ dynasty.⁷ To remedy this situation, King Sejong ordered that the *Samgang haengsildo* (*Conduct of the Three Bonds*), which was completed during the 16th year of his rule, be compiled.⁸ This move towards regulating women's lives was further strengthened by the compilation of the *Naehun*, which was designed to educate the women of the palace and of the *sadaebu* class, at the behest of Queen Sohye during the reign of King Sŏngjong. Moreover, during the 16th century, the *Sohak*, which taught the basic tenets and morals of neo-Confucianism needed to be a good member of society, became increasingly prominent. This *Sohak* emphasized the natural order of general gender relations by stating that just as a loyal subject should not worship two kings a virtuous woman should obey only one husband. Over time several books such as the *Yŏsasŏ ŏnhae* and *Sasojŏl*, which spelled out proper etiquette for women, were published. Several books written by members of the *sadaebu*, which portended to educate women on how to preserve their chastity before marriage, be good daughters-in-law and wives, and forge good family relations, were also published. In general,

the main objective of women's education was to establish the ideal characteristics which a neo-Confucian 'virtuous' woman should possess. Furthermore, women were taught solely: the basic life skills needed to run a household; the rules which governed their relations with the three most important people in their lives, their fathers, husbands, and sons (*samjongjido*); the four fundamental virtues which they should possess: virtuousness (*puđok*), a proper talking style (*puŏn*), delicate features (*pujong*), and domestic skills (*pugong*); as well as weaving and cooking skills. The main crux of women's education was thus to teach the behavioral codes needed to become the ideal Confucian woman within a patriarchal family structure, a structure which was eventually applied at the national level.

Women who preserved their chastity were rewarded in many different ways. For example, while women from the yangban class saw their families designated as honorable families, commoner families found themselves exempt from corvée labor. Meanwhile, in the case of the lowborn women, these were given the opportunity to gain commoner status (*myŏnchŏn*). Such awards placed extra pressure on women to maintain their virtue and to obey their parents and parents-in-law. Although officially no exact standards existed as to what constituted a virtuous woman, many different types of female virtues were rewarded. This ideology and the *naewaebŏp* were particularly emphasized in the aftermath of the Hideyoshi invasions of 1592 as well as the first and second Manchu invasions (1627-1636), all of which resulted in the drive to be a virtuous woman reaching new extremes, with some women going as far as taking their own lives once their husbands died. As a result, the number of virtuous women increased significantly during the latter period of the Chosŏn dynasty, as did the number of stories involving such women which became popular.⁹

The chastity ideology, which was one of the most important implements used to control women during the Chosŏn dynasty, was further strengthened in order to ensure the purity of the paternal lineage under the expanding patriarchal system. This notion of the 'virtuous

woman' can also be uncovered in the writings of the *sirhak* (Practical Learning) scholars who were active during the latter part of the Chosŏn dynasty. The scholar Yi Ik, whose pen name was Sŏngho, proudly proclaimed that this notion of the virtuous woman was one of the greatest virtues of the Chosŏn dynasty.¹⁰ Another *sirhak* scholar by the name of Pak Chi-wŏn, whose pen name was Yŏnam, also identified this notion of the virtuous woman as one of the four greatest virtues of Chosŏn during his visit to China in his capacity as an envoy.¹¹ Thus, a woman's refusal to remarry after the demise of their husband was identified by such scholars as an outstanding virtue.

Status of women within the institution of marriage

The overall objectives of the institution of marriage during the Chosŏn dynasty were two-fold: to carry out ancestral rites and assure the succession of the paternal lineage. As such, all decisions pertaining to a marriage were made by the household and not the individuals themselves. Thus, marriage, which was perceived as a union of two families rather than two individuals, was seen as an opportunity to increase the family's standing.

The ages at which people could marry were first regulated during the 9th year of King Sejong. At this time, women were expected to marry between the ages of 14-20, and families with unwed daughters over the age of 20 were punished accordingly.¹² The setting of an age range in which people should be married was based on the *Zhuzi Jiali* (朱子家禮 Family Rituals of *Zhu Xi*) which spelled out proper family etiquette. *Zhu Xi* maintained that women should be married between the ages of 14~20, while men should wed from the ages of 16-30, a belief which found its way into Chosŏn law in the 22nd year of King Sejong when 14 and 16 were set as the minimum ages in which women and men could respectively get married. This range was reduced during the reign of King Sejo, with women now permitted to marry at 13 and men at 14.¹³ However, it was once again raised in accordance with the *Kyŏngguk*

taejŏn, to reflect the standards set in *Zhuzi Jiali*, with women now allowed to marry at 14 and men 15.¹⁴

As mentioned above, traditional Korean wedding customs saw the groom move in with his in-laws after the wedding ceremony (a custom which was referred to as *namgwiŷŏgahon* or *solsŏhon*).¹⁵ As such, once the wedding ceremony, which was held at the bride's house, was completed the newlyweds would move in with the bride's family for a period of a year or more. However, this custom, by allowing the children to be raised by the wife's family, posed an obstacle to the desired goal of bringing about a patrilineal society; moreover, as women remained within their own families even after marrying, the possibility of them gaining additional power could not be ruled out.

Those advocating the need for a *chongbŏp* system also clamored for changes to be brought to existing wedding customs, and for the implementation of a new custom in which wives would move in with their husbands' families after marriage (the so-called *ch'inyŏng* system). In *Zhuzi Jiali* four different types of wedding ceremonies were identified: *uihon*, *napchae*, *nappye*, and *ch'inyŏng*, with the latter being actively pursued by the Chosŏn ruling class practically from the moment the dynasty was founded. The pursuit of such a system can be perceived as having been part of the government's efforts to reform the existing institutions along the lines of those found in China. Chŏng To-jŏn was one of the main proponents of the belief that women had become arrogant towards their husbands as a result of this practice of *namgwiŷŏgahon* and that this custom should be replaced with the *ch'inyŏng* system.

The royal family was the first to directly implement this *ch'inyŏng* system, and encouraged the *sadaebu* class to follow suit. As such, the wedding of King Sejong's daughter Suksin and Yun P'yŏng was held in accordance with this *ch'inyŏng* system.¹⁶ However the *namgwiŷŏgahon* system, which was deeply embedded in Korean society, proved to be very hard to uproot, with the majority of the *sadaebu* class refusing to implement the *ch'inyŏng* system.

A variation of the *ch'inyŏng* system, which was known as a semi-

ch'inyŏng system because it combined attributes of the *ch'inyŏng* and *namgwiyŏgahon* systems, began to gain ground within Chosŏn during the reign of King Myŏngjong as a new kind of wedding custom. Under this semi-*ch'inyŏng* system, males were required to live with their wives' families for a mere two to three days.

The *ch'inyŏng* system became deeply entrenched within Korean society during the latter period of the dynasty. This led to the emergence of new sayings which emphasized the advantages of not living with your wife's family, such as 'anyone who has the basic essentials would be crazy to live with their in-laws' and 'your bathroom and your wife's family's house should be as far away from your own house as possible.' Meanwhile, widows' ability to remarry was also gradually usurped. Prior to the reign of King Sŏngjong, widow's remarriage had not been considered to be a serious social issue, as exemplified by King Taejong remark that, "why should men and women who have lost their spouses not be allowed to remarry".¹⁷ During the reign of King Sejo, the issue of a woman's remarriage was not considered to be serious unless it involved a woman's third marriage.¹⁸

The remarriage of widows only became a serious issue during the reign of King Sŏngjong, by which time the neo-Confucianist order had become more deeply entrenched, as it came into conflict with the Confucian ideal exemplified by the saying, "just as a loyal subject should not worship two kings, a virtuous women should obey only one husband." In July 1477 (8th year of King Sŏngjong), the king summoned 46 of the nation's most respected loyal subjects to take part in a discussion on the need to prohibit women from remarrying once their spouses had passed away. All but four of the merit subjects taking part in this discussion opposed the imposition of restrictions on widows' right to marry on the ground that this represented too severe a measure. Nevertheless, the king eventually sided with the four merit subjects who had come out in favor of prohibiting widows from remarrying on the grounds that, "starving to death is a trivial matter compared to a woman's loss of her chastity".¹⁹ As a result, the *chaeganyŏ chason kumgobŏp*- in which the descendants of remarried

women and of concubines could not be eligible for the government service examination (*saengwŏn* & *chinsa*)-was included in the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*.²⁰ This law was designed to put the descendants of women who had married more than twice at a disadvantage when it came to the securing of government office. As such, Chosŏn society attempted to prevent women from remarrying by mortgaging the ability of their descendants to succeed.

Later on this law was expanded so that any man who married a woman who had previously been married or anybody who arranged such unions would be punished as well. All of this had the effect of putting extra pressure on yangban families to "rein in" their women in order to prevent the collapse of their houses, which would surely occur if their access to high office was impeded.

In the case of women who married more than three times, these were included in the *chanyŏan* (a book in which the misdeeds of women from the yangban class were recorded). The need for legal regulations to deal with such cases had first been suggested during the reign of King T'aejong, during which time the decision was made to have a clause about these women included in the *Sok yukjŏn* (Supplemental Six Codes).²¹ Furthermore, during the reign of King Sejo, a suggestion was made that the family of a woman who married on more than three occasions should be considered as having committed a misdeed, and that their descendants be banned from holding public office.²²

The government's policy of regarding a woman's second and third marriages as a sin for which her descendants should be punished effectively prohibited women from engaging in this practice. Moreover, as a result of this policy, the woman's family took on the role of overseeing all of her actions in order to avoid any ill from befalling future generations. The government was able to make use of the family to indirectly control women's actions and their morality.

In the case of adultery or rape, women usually received more stringent punishment than the men involved.²³ While male adulterers who belonged to the royal family, or who were merit subjects or from the

yangban class usually had to pay a small fine when found guilty of such a crime, women found guilty of adultery were either beaten with a cudgel (*changyong*), had their status degraded to that of low-born, or made to engage in hard labor. Women from the yangban class found guilty of adultery were also included in the *chanyŏan*, which meant that their descendants would effectively be prohibited from holding office. Moreover, a man and a woman engaged in an adulterous relationship who were found guilty of having killed the woman's husband were both automatically put to death. However, a man found guilty of having killed his wife or her lover upon discovering them engaged in an adulterous tryst was considered to have acted in the heat of passion and not accused of any crime. Moreover, while a man that killed his wife upon finding out at a later date that she had engaged in an adulterous relationship was considered to have committed murder, the punishment meted out was usually a light one.

As far as rape was concerned, husbands could never be accused of raping their wives as sex was considered to be the husband's right and the wife's moral obligation. What's more, a yangban who forced himself on his slaves was also not considered to have committed rape, which resulted in such women often becoming little more than chattel for the yangban.

During the Chosŏn dynasty divorce was also used as a mechanism through which the continuation of the patriarchal family structure could be assured. The right to grant a divorce was limited to the state and the husbands themselves.²⁴ With the exception of very special cases, the break up of a couple usually involved the husband throwing his wife out of the household to fend for herself. Such one-sided instances of divorce usually occurred when the wife had been found to have engaged in an adulterous relationship, to have physically assaulted her husband, or to have committed one of the seven sins which wives could not commit (*chilgŏjiaek*). Moreover, such divorces were regarded as having been caused by the woman's failure to faithfully carry out her obligations as a wife. The decision to grant a divorce was usually made by the head of the household at the request of other family members, rather than by the

husband himself.

Divorce during the Chosŏn dynasty was usually governed under the so-called "seven sins" for wives contained in the *Ta Ming Lu* (大明律 The Great Ming Code) and by the *sambulgŏ* (三不去 three instances in which a husband could not divorce his wife). The seven sins for women were: disobeying one's parents-in-law; failure to produce a male heir; adultery; excessive jealousy towards other women in the household; serious disease; stealing; and talking excessively. These so-called 'sins' were another means through which the patriarchal system was reinforced. The most common of these seven sins were the disobeying of one's parents-in-law and the failure to produce a male heir. As such, the introduction of these seven sins became the lightning rod which was used to weaken the position of women.

On the other hand, there was no means through which a wife could secure a divorce from her husband. While there were officially certain circumstances under which a wife could be granted a divorce from her husband, such as when a husband was absent from the household for a prolonged period of time, or a husband physically abused his wife, in reality, such instances were very rare. Thus, as mentioned above, the only parties which could bring about a divorce were the state and husbands.

During the Chosŏn dynasty the position of wives and concubines was rigidly enforced. A woman who was recognized as a man's principal wife had her position guaranteed by the state. However, her status could only be recognized when an official marriage ceremony had taken place and the union had been approved by both households. Any woman whose union did not meet the above-mentioned criteria was considered by the state to be a concubine and this even if the couple had children together. As such, the legitimacy theory, under which there could only be one sun in the sky, one king in the kingdom, and one head of the household, was also applied to women, in that, only the principle wife could have a bowl set for her during ancestral rites. As such, under this neo-Confucianist based social order, the position of the first wife was legally guaranteed by the state. The position of those women who married the first son of a

family and bore him a male heir, or of women who married the first son of the stem family (*chonggachip*), was considered to be even more secure.

While the position of principle wives was guaranteed by the state during the Chosŏn dynasty, serious measures were put into place to prevent these women from getting a divorce. In accordance with the *sambulgŏ*, the government identified three instances under which a man could not divorce his wife: when the wife had no household of her own to return to; the woman had duly carried out the required three year mourning period for her parents-in-law; and when the status of the family had been upgraded as a result of the wife's proper conduct of her roles. Moreover, the state refused to allow a man to divorce his wife and replace her with a concubine if the two had been through difficult times together. The government also refused to accept a divorce for what they deemed unreasonable grounds, even going as far as punishing the man in such cases, in order to protect the status of the principle wife. In essence, the state refused to allow a man to divorce his principle wife unless very special circumstances were involved, or to allow the man to lower his wife's status to that of a concubine. In addition, men holding government office who were found to have deserted their principle wives in favor of a concubine were stripped of their positions and exiled. However, given that men were allowed to have several concubines in addition to their wives, cases in which the wife was abandoned in favor of a concubine frequently arose. Thus, women had no choice but to put up with this kind of unjust treatment.

Status of women with regards to property inheritance and ancestral rites

Chosŏn women could not assume the role of the head of the household nor create a new branch of the family. Moreover, women's ability to inherit the family fortune and the right to conduct ancestral rites vacillated from period to period. During the early period of the Chosŏn dynasty, although the state attempted to limit women's ability to inherit in order to

strengthen the patriarchal society which it desired to bring about, inheritance rights between the genders remained for the most part equal. The reason for this can be traced back to the continued sway which Koryŏ-era customs, in which the maternal and paternal lineages were considered to be equally important, held during early Chosŏn.

The basic principle of equal inheritance rights was based on the belief that not only could children born of the same parents who exhibited different economic levels not get along with one another, but that such a situation ran counter to the natural order of things.²⁵ Slaves and land were considered to be the two main items which could be inherited. The need for measures concerning the inheritance of slaves began to be discussed during the reign of King Taejo. At that time, discussions centered around means of dividing slaves among the male children of the official wife and those born of concubines.²⁶ However, during the reign of King Taejong, these discussions were expanded to include the daughters of the principle wife as well as of concubines.²⁷ In this regards, women's status concerning inheritance was clearly spelled out in the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*:

Slaves should be divided amongst all the children of the household. The remaining slaves should then be divided amongst the children of the official wife; If any slaves remain once this second division has been carried out, these will be divided between the new head of the household, and the oldest child. If the official wife has no children, then slaves will be divided between the children of the concubines from the common class (*yangchŏp*). Should these common class concubines also have no children, then the slaves will be awarded to the children of lowborn concubines (*chŏnchŏp*). The inheritance of land will proceed in the same fashion. (*Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, Vol.5, *Hyŏngjŏn*, *Sachŏn*)

As seen above, the inheritance process was carried out in accordance with the principle of equal division between the children of a household.²⁸ However, in reality the system was set up in such way that while the new head of the household benefited the most, and the children of the principle

wife could share equally in the inheritance, the children of the concubines were in effect greatly disadvantaged in terms of what they could inherit. This equal inheritance system was adopted by the state at the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty as a means of preventing the over concentration of wealth or power and assuring a social balance among the yangban class.

Although the legal system was not in actuality always rigidly implemented, this system did allow women to inherit their fair share of their family's wealth even after they married. Therefore, both genders' ability to inherit meant that husband and wife shared equal rights and benefits when their spouse died. For example, the slaves of a wife who died childless were inherited by the husband; however, once he remarried, these slaves were returned to his first wife's family.²⁹ Nevertheless, women could not dispose of any of the items which she had inherited from her family without the permission of her husband.

Women's legal right to inherit was based on the notion of *Namgwiyŏgahon*, under which women's economic conditions were better and the position of the maternal side of the family was held in higher esteem. However from the 17th century onwards, women's ability to inherit was seriously curtailed as a result of the growing influence of the *ch'inyŏng* system, which was increasingly mixed with the traditional notion of *namgwiyŏgahon*, the development of patriarchal lineages, and the practice of bestowing the right to conduct ancestral rites solely to the first male heir of the household. Moreover, this resulted in decreasing women's economic burden. Beginning in the 17th century, by which time the yangban society had become further entrenched, this equal inheritance system became seen as an obstacle to the expansion of the yangban class' wealth. As a result, the yangban class began to focus more on their clan and attempted to strengthen their social status through the adoption of the male oriented inheritance system. As the influence of the *ch'inyŏng* system spread and a male oriented ancestral rites system was adopted, women's ability to inherit was severely curtailed, thus further increasing gender discrimination between men and women.

Let us now look at women's position vis-à-vis ancestral rites. The

notions of inheritance and the right to conduct ancestral rites were closely related. During the early period of Chosŏn, the practice of *yunhoe pongsa*, and *punhal pongsa* were commonly carried out.³⁰ *Yunhoe pongsa* was a practice in which descendants took turns conducting the ancestral rites. *Punhal pongsa* involved different descendants—sons, daughters, and grandchildren—being assigned the responsibility for specific rites. During the early period of Chosŏn, the yangban class tended to prefer granting the ancestral and inheritance rights to their own daughters than their stepsons. Until the 16th century, blood ties were much more important than the male-oriented family consciousness. As a result, daughters could conduct ancestral rites and were free to inherit their parents' estates. In fact, up until the middle of the Chosŏn dynasty there were many cases recorded in which daughters carried out the ancestral rites when a family had no sons. Thus, during the early period of Chosŏn, cases in which women were prohibited from inheriting or carrying out ancestral rites because of their gender were very rare.³¹

During the early period of Chosŏn, when the maternal lineages were considered as important as paternal ones, there were very few instances in which a family that had only daughters adopted stepsons in order to make them their heirs. A look at the annals (*sillok*) of the early Chosŏn period and family genealogy from the 15th century reveals that there were many such cases in which families chose not to adopt a stepson. However, this practice became more widespread following the implementation of the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, in which it was stipulated that the only person who could perform ancestral rites was the oldest male heir—such as sons or grandsons.³² As a result, women's ability not only to conduct ancestral rites but even to participate in them was curtailed.

This trend became even more pronounced during the 17th century following the establishment of the *yehak* (禮學 Study of Ritual) and the *chongbŏp* systems in the aftermath of the Hideyoshi and two Manchu invasions. Even during the latter period of the Chosŏn dynasty, when some debates over the basic family structure began to emerge, the *chongbŏp* system remained the basic principle governing the family

structure, while the male oriented heir system continued to be prevalent.³³ As the first son became solely responsible for the conducting of all ancestral rites, women and younger sons were effectively stripped of any responsibility regarding the conducting such rites. In the case of the children of concubines, their lot was even worse as they could no longer even participate in such rites.

In the preface to the *Punjae munsŏ*, written by the members of the Puan Kim family in 1669 (the 10th year of King Hyŏnjong), one can find a reference which reads as follows: “As daughters become members of their husbands’ families following their marriage, it is important for them to obey their husbands. This is why the virtuous ones clearly spelled out the differences between men and women in the *yebŏp*. However, there are many instances these days in which members of the *sadaebu* class allow their sons-in-laws or maternal grandchildren to conduct ancestral rites. Unfortunately, these individuals tend to not properly abide by the ritual schedule; and when they do carry such rites out, they do so with an insincere heart. Therefore, sons-in-laws or maternal grandchildren should not be allowed to conduct ancestral rites”. Meanwhile, the book also spelled out openly discriminatory practices which were used when it came to matters related to inheritance, “While it is only natural that parents love their daughters as much as their sons, how can they be expected to leave their belongings to their daughters, who will not only not take care of them when they get old but also not conduct ancestral rites for them after they pass away. As such, daughters should be granted approximately one third of their parents’ fortune, an amount which is deemed to be reasonable.”³⁴ Although in some areas certain families continued to allow their sons and daughters to take turns performing ancestral rites, the practice of allowing only the first son to conduct ancestral rites became more and more generalized as time went by.

Lifestyle of women within each social class

Social status was the main determinant of the kind of lifestyle which Chosŏn women could lead. Although all women got married, bore, and raised children, the lifestyles and types of labor which women were subjected to varied according to their social status. Women during the Chosŏn dynasty were divided into the following classes: members of the royal family, of the yangban class, commoners, and slaves.

Female members of the royal family

During the Chosŏn dynasty, the following women resided within the palace: the king's grandmother, mother, and wife, as well as the wife of the heir to the throne, and the king's and prince's daughters and concubines.³⁵ The central figure among these women was the queen, who was not only the king's wife but also regarded as the mother of the nation. The woman who would become queen was first selected to be the wife of the heir to the throne, becoming the queen when her husband ascended to power. However, in cases where a second wife was chosen to replace a queen who had passed away, she was immediately bestowed the title of queen without ever having to carry the title of 'crown princess.'

During the period in which a proper wife to the heir to the throne or for the king was being sought, no one was allowed to marry. For example, such a prohibition on marriage was imposed during January of the 17th year of King Sŏngjong's reign when a bride was being sought for the crown prince. "As my son Yi Yung has already reached the age of eleven, the time has come to find him a bride. As such, until such a bride is found women between the ages of eight and fifteen are prohibited from getting married."³⁶ This prohibition usually applied to women from the *sadaebu* class between the ages of eight and seventeen, with the exception of the female member of the Yi clan. Once the decision had been made to find a bride for the king or crown prince, a temporary office (*Karye togam*) was established to oversee the actual selection of the bride and the wedding ceremony itself. The characteristics which the ideal candidate for the position of wife of the crown prince should possess were: a clean family background; virtuousness; and a pleasant appearance, of which

virtuousness was by far the most important. Furthermore, beauty was not considered to be the most important attribute and a rigid screening process was employed through which visits were paid to the girls' families and the girls were summoned to the palace for inspection.

The selection of a bride for the crown prince was carried out in three stages, with three candidates remaining during the final stage. The girl who was eventually selected was then summoned to the palace where she was educated about palace etiquette and how to become a queen.³⁷ Once this training was completed, the official marriage was performed, and the girl took her place as the wife of the heir to the throne. The queen was responsible for what was known as the *naewoemyǒngbu*, in which the *naemyǒngbu* consisted of the king's concubines, court ladies (*sanggung*), and palace women, while the *woemyǒngbu* consisted of the wives of other members of the royal family, children of the crown prince, and the wives of the civil and military officials. As such, the queen occupied the top position in terms of the females who made up the royal household.

The queen's role was considered to consist of being the representative example of what a Chosŏn woman should be, promoting proper virtue, and inspecting the *naemyǒngbu*. The queen was not only the mother of the nation but the standard to which all other women should aspire. Moreover, the queen should lead an aesthetic life based on the virtue of frugality. Furthermore, this constant need to appear as the image of female virtue placed severe limitations on the queen's personal life. The most important obligation of the queen was that of taking care of her husband's family and bearing a male heir. However, regardless of whether she bore an heir or not, the queen was buried with other members of the royal family following her demise.

Meanwhile, the king's concubines (*hugung*) were divided into eight different ranks: *bin*, *kwiin*, *soŭi*, *sukŭi*, *soyong*, *sukyong*, *sowŏn*, *sukwŏn*. The ranks of the king's concubines can be seen in Table 1. There were two ways in which a woman could become a royal concubine: by being favored by the king, or by being selected through the same rigid process used to find a queen. In cases where the queen did not have any children,

many such royal concubines were selected.³⁸

The selection of the son of a royal concubine as the crown prince automatically raised the status of his mother within the royal household, with such women usually granted the status of *bin* and bestowed the honorific title of *kung*. All in all, seven such instances in which the son of a concubine became the crown prince were recorded, which resulted in

Table 1. The ranks of the royal concubines during the Chosŏn dynasty
(*Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, “*Naemyŏngbu*”)

Chŏng 1-p’um (senior 1 st grade)	Chong 1-p’um (junior 1 st grade)	Chŏng 2-p’um (senior 2 nd grade)	Chong 2-p’um (junior 2 nd grade)
Bin	kwiin	soŭi	sukŭi
Chŏng 3-p’um (senior 3 rd grade)	Chong 3-p’um (junior 3 rd grade)	Chŏng 4-p’um (senior 4 th grade)	Chong 4-p’um (junior 4 th grade)
soyong	sukyong	sowŏn	sŭkwŏn

seven women being bestowed the title of *kung*. These women were the mothers of kings Wŏnjong, Kyŏngjong, Chinjong, Changjo, Yŏngjo, Sunjo, and the last crown prince Yŏngch’in. The king’s concubines lived in separate quarters while he was alive, but moved in together after his demise.

The queen’s main living quarters was known as the *naejŏn* but were also called *chungjŏn* (literally central palace), reflecting the fact that her quarters were located deep within the heart of the palace. Examples of the queen’s quarters included the *Kyotaejŏn* in the *Kyŏngbok* Palace, *Taejojŏn* in *Ch’angdŏk* Palace, and *T’ongmyŏngjŏn* Palace in *Ch’anggyŏng* Palace. In general, the roof of the queen’s quarters did not exhibit the dragon-shaped tiles found in other palace buildings. Such a practice was carried out to signify that these quarters were the place where the dragon (the king) engaged his mate.³⁹ The queen had to follow the established courting process whenever she was favored by the monarch, with the dates on which the couple slept together selected in advance. On these pre-selected days, the highest ranked court lady ordered the palace women to prepare the bed for the royal couple. The quarters in which the royal couple slept consisted of nine rooms, with the royals sleeping in the central one. The room in which they slept remained unadorned, and the palace women were expected to remain on stand-by in the adjoining rooms until the royal couple left their sleeping quarters.

The most important activities which the queen oversaw were the picking of mulberry leaves and weaving, which were considered to be the main activities in which female labor was engaged. The queen hosted a

ceremony known as the Royal Sericulture Ceremony (*ch'imjamrye*), in which she took the lead in promoting to other women how the above-mentioned two activities should be carried out. As part of this ceremony the queen would visit a mulberry garden named the *ch'aesangdan* where she, along with all the other women from the *naewoemyŏngbu*, would proceed to pick up mulberry leaves and feed them to the royal silkworms. Once this process was completed, the queen would proceed to complement her retinue for their hard work and award them with prizes of food and other necessary goods.⁴⁰ The queen would also lead by example when it came to weaving as well.

The queen was also responsible for the hosting of a gala attended solely by women, which was known as the *naeyŏn*, during which time she proceeded to educate her guests about proper female etiquette. In her leisure time the queen would also pen several books; examples of these include: the *Naehun*, written by Queen Sohye, and the *Hanjungnok*, written by Lady Hyegyŏng.

Of all the queen's roles, by far the most important was that of being the mother of the king's children. Under the neo-Confucianist society which prevailed during the Chosŏn dynasty, the single most important duty of every woman was to bear a son. In order to assure that a suitable heir was produced, the dates on which the royal couple could engage in sexual intercourse were selected in advance, and the queen began to educate her offspring even before he/she was born. After giving birth, a nanny, selected through a rigid process, was assigned to take care of the child's upbringing. In cases where a queen was unable to bear a son, she was expected to take the sons of a royal concubine and raise them as her own.

The queen was expected to follow proper etiquette at all times, which meant that her ability, as well as that of the royal concubines to go outside of the palace were limited to those special occasions where such a trip was called for. Exceptions to this rule were made in cases where a female member of the royal family became gravely ill and treatment was only available outside of the palace grounds. Life in the palace was not always simple and required a certain degree of patience. For instance, in some

extreme cases, members of the queen's family were killed as part of a political shake-up. The lives of queens such as the Queen Dowager Inmok and Inhyŏn were indeed victimized by such palace intrigue.

On occasions where a crown prince was too young at the time he ascended to the throne, the oldest surviving queen dowager, usually the king's mother or grandmother, was assigned to oversee the handling of the king's affairs.⁴¹ Whenever a dowager was present in the king's quarters she was separated from the men in the room by a screen in accordance with the Confucian belief that men and women should be separated. Instances in which a dowager was assigned to an underage king were quite frequent during the Chosŏn dynasty.⁴² The following women played the role of dowager during the Chosŏn dynasty: Queen Chŏnghŭi, the wife of King Sejo and grandmother of King Sŏngjong; Queen Munjŏng, the wife of King Chungjong and mother of Myŏngjong; Queen Insun, the wife of King Myŏngjong; Queen Chŏngsun, the grandmother of King Sunjo; Queen Sunhŏn, the wife of King Sunjo; Queen Sinjŏng, the mother of King Hŏnjong and the step-mother of King Kojong. The political power which these dowagers exercised was quite significant.

Female members of the yangban class

Women from the yangban class, whose members usually held high office, were granted titles and ranks in accordance with their husbands' status.⁴³ The wife of a *Tangsangwan* was granted the title of *Puin*, while the wife of a *Tanghagwan* was referred to by title of “-in”. The ranks and titles bestowed upon women of the yangban class can be seen in <Table 2>.

These days, on the ritual paper which ordinary people use in connection with rituals for their female ancestors, the women are referred to as ‘*yuin*’, a title which was first granted to the wives of Chosŏn officials of the 9th grade.

The most important duties for women from the yangban class were

preparing for the ancestral rites and accommodating any guests who

Table 2 *Woemyǒngbu* during the Chosŏn dynasty (*Kyǒngguk taejŏn*)

Rank	1-p'um (1 st grade)	2-p'um (2 nd grade)	Chǒng 3-p'um (senior 3 rd grade) Tangsangwan	Chǒng 3-p'um Tanghagwan	Chong 3-p'um (Junior 3 rd grade)	
Title	Chǒnggyǒng buin	Chǒng buin	Sukbun	Sukin		Sukin
Rank	4-p'um (4 th grade)	5-p'um (5 th grade)	6-p'um (6 th grade)	7-p'um (7 th grade)	8-p'um (8 th grade)	9-p'um (9 th grade)
Title	Yǒngin	Kongin	Ŭiin	Anin	Tanin	Yuin

might visit the house. According to the *Kyǒngguk taejŏn*, “Any person who holds a government position of the 6th grade or higher is allowed to hold ancestral rites for the previous three generations of his family; however, anyone who holds an office of the 7th grade or lower can only conduct ancestral rites for the previous two generations. Meanwhile, commoners may only conduct ancestral rites for their parents.”⁴⁴ As such, a person’s ability to conduct ancestral rites was dictated by their social position. However, as time went by the practice of holding such rites for four generations of one’s ancestors became increasingly common among the yangban class, even spreading to the common class to some degree as well. Thus, women were responsible for hosting 10 or more such ancestral rites a year on average.

The belief that ancestral rites should be conducted by the eldest son resulted in tremendously curtailing the rights of daughters and their families to conduct such rites. As a result, families without sons even went as far as to seek out a surrogate mother in order to assure the continuation of the family line. Another common practice was to adopt a son. Thus, as we can see, the most important duty for every woman from the yangban class was to produce a male heir in order to assure the continuation of her husband’s line, of their ability to conduct ancestral rites, and to be able to pass down the family fortune after they passed away. As the production of a son was seen as the key task which a woman should carry out in order to complete her filial duty, the position of women who were unable to produce a son was rendered tenuous.⁴⁵ Moreover, as women were for all intents and purpose barred from taking

part in any social activities, their sons and grandsons successes' inherently became their own. Thus, the only way a woman could guarantee her position in society was to produce a son.

The sex education which women received was for the most part concerned with methods of producing a son. As women were largely held responsible for a family's failure to produce a son, they went to great lengths to assure that they did in fact do so. The production of a daughter was for the most part met with sadness, and women who had only daughters were treated as if they were criminals.

This obsession with producing a son became enshrined in the quasi-religious notion of *kijasintang*. Yangban women were known to visit any temple or rock which was believed to have the power to grant them a male heir. As the patriarchal family structure became more deeply entrenched during the 17th century, women's obsession with producing a son reached epic proportions. While a son was perceived as being necessary for the continuation of the family lineage and the conducting of ancestral rites, daughters, who were unable to take part in any family ceremonies, were considered to no longer be a member of their families following their marriages.

A wife's ability to properly entertain her husband's guests was seen as the main determinant of a household's dignity. This practice of paying visit to other yangban households was one of the main forms of social interaction which existed within yangban society. Thus, taking care of such guests was seen not only as part of her household duties, but also as a means of assuring her husband's status within society and his ability to take part in social activities. As a result, women were expected to provide her husband's guests with a wide variety of seasonal dishes and wines.

Despite the fact that they were so busy carrying out their household chores, most yangban women took the time to read and write in order to further their self-cultivation. During the latter period of the Chosŏn dynasty, the number of women who could read *hangŭl* (the native Korean script) increased exponentially. These women acquired knowledge through educational books and developed their self-awareness by reading

novels. Due to the increase in the availability of novels from the latter period of the 17th century onwards, women from the yangban class were able to have access to them, thus complementing the Confucian texts which had long served as the only reading material available. In the Seoul area, there even opened bookstores which allowed women to borrow novels. Even those women who remained illiterate were able to enjoy themselves by attending public readings of novels or *p'ansori* presentations. The popularity of such novels and *p'ansori* was made possible by the development of commerce and the emergence of distribution outlets from the 18th century onwards. For women, the reading of books, which began with the reading of educational texts to acquire knowledge, eventually became a means through which they could pursue their own self-cultivation.

Popular novels with women during this period included: *Simch'ongjŏn*, *Chunhyangjŏn*, *Sukhyangjŏn*, *Ongnumong*, *Kuunmong*, *Sassinamjŏnggi*, *Pakssijŏn*, *Changhwa hongnyŏnjŏn*, *Hongkiltongjŏn*, *Samkukchi*, *Chemamujŏn*, and *Sodaesŏngjŏn*. The main themes of such novels included the exploits of loyal subjects, devoted sons and virtuous women, as well as moral lessons. While such novels did understandably have a heavy Confucian emphasis, they nevertheless satisfied these women's thirst for knowledge.

A few female authors, such as Sin Saimdang and Hŏ Nansŏlhŏn, were active during the early period of the Chosŏn dynasty. Sinsaimdang, the mother of the famous Confucian scholar Yi Yulgok, was widely renowned for not only being a great mother, but also for her poetry, calligraphy, and paintings. Meanwhile, Hŏ Nansŏlhŏn, whose life was wrecked by her children's early demise and her husband's adulterous behavior, also left behind many poems. However, during the latter period of Chosŏn, the number of yangban women who penned novels increased, as did the number of such books published. Despite the growing concern and opposition of men to this practice, yangban women continued to write and leave behind their works for their descendants. Examples of such women include: Im Yunjidang and Kang Chŏngildang. Im Yunjidang, who lived

during the reigns of kings Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo, left behind several pieces which exhibit the high degree of moral cultivation and the wide body of knowledge which she possessed.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, although she was born in a poor yangban household and lived an unfortunate life Kang Chŏngildang, who lived during the reigns of kings Chŏngjo and Sunjo, was able to educate herself to the point where she reached a level of enlightenment usually only achieved by Confucian scholars.⁴⁷

Another woman who developed a deep understanding of neo-Confucianism tenets was Chŏngbuin Andong Chang, whose achievements have been regarded as proving that a woman was fully capable of reaching the same level of moral cultivation as a man. She left behind a book entitled, *Ŭmsik timibang*.⁴⁸ At the end of the 18th century a book named *T'aegyo singi*, which was in essence an encyclopedia on the subject of prenatal education, was written by another prominent female named Yi Sajudang.⁴⁹ Moreover, Yi Pinghŏgak wrote a book called, *Kyuhap ch'ongsŏ*, which was based on the *sirhak* philosophy.⁵⁰ Examples of works penned by women during the latter period of the Chosŏn dynasty can be found in <Table 3>.⁵¹

Table 3 Women's works written in the late period of Chosŏn

Author	Dates	Title of the book
Im Yunjidang	1721~1793	Yunjidang Yugo
Nam Ŭuyudang	1727~1823	Ŭuyudang Yugo, Ŭuyudang Kwanbukyurangi
Sim Puyongdang	1732~1791	Puyong Sisŏn
Hong Hyegyŏnggung	1735~1815	Hanjungrok
Yi Sajudang	1739~1821	T'aegyosingi
Sŏ Yŏngsuhap	1753~1823	Yŏngsuhapgo
Yi Pinghŏgak	1759~1824	Kyuhapch'ongsŏ
Kim Samŭidang	1769~?	Samŭidanggo
Kang Chŏngildang	1772~1832	Chŏngildang Yugo
Hong Yuhandang	1791~ ?	Yuhanjip
Kwŏn Yuhŭi puin	?	Yuhŭi-ŭi Chŏngi
Pak Chuksŏ	? ~1851	Chuksŏ Sijip
Kim Kŭmwŏn	1817~?	Hodong Sŏrakgi
Nam Chŏngilhŏn	1840~1922	Chŏngilhŏn Sijip
Kim Puyongdang	?	Yunchodang Sigo

Kwŏn Yuhandang	?	Yuhandang Ŏnhaeng Sillok, Ŏnhaebon Ch'ŏnjusilŭi
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Although women from the yangban class could enjoy only limited social activities, an increasing number of them began to participate in the academic and artistic fields as time went by. Moreover, many of these yangban women who reached a high degree of scholarly achievement and of moral development left behind books.

Female members of the commoner and lowborn classes

The majority of women during the Chosŏn dynasty came from the commoner and slave classes. These women were actively involved in productive labor activities such as agriculture, housework, and weaving. In his <Usŏ> Yu Suwŏn argued, “Women from farmers’ families live very busy lives which involve not only their farming activities but also preparing meals and other housework, on top of which they are expected to weave clothes in the evenings.”⁵² The most common agricultural tasks carried out by women were that of pulling weeds from the rice fields and tending to vegetable gardens. Although the bulk of the tasks related to rice farming were carried out by men, women nevertheless had to help out with the sowing of the rice in the spring and its harvest in the fall.

In the case of those members of the commoner class engaged in agriculture who had to get by solely with the labor that their family could provide, the role of women was more prominent. Traditionally, women were the ones who tended to the family’s vegetable garden, a task which had to be carried out over a short period of time but nonetheless required much effort.⁵³ The *Nongsa chiksŏl*, which was a book about agriculture compiled during early Chosŏn, includes sections detailing women’s tasks, such as how to make pickled crab, preserve food, and make bean paste. This would seem to indicate that in farming households, the conducting of household chores was closely related to the agricultural schedule.

Weaving, which was considered to be just as important as agriculture, was a task which all women, regardless of class, had to carry out. The notions possessed by Chosŏn policymakers that ‘men should engage in

the field work while women weave', and that 'just as one cannot eat without farming, one cannot be clothed without weaving' are a clear example of the gender-based division of labor which existed at the time.

Women usually wove during their spare time or once their daily chores and agricultural work had been completed. As their time was very limited, women could not produce large amounts of cloth at a time, which meant that they basically had to weave every night. As cotton cloth was used not only to make clothes but was also collected as a tax, women often found themselves rushing to make sure that they would have enough such cloth when tax time rolled around. While members of the commoner class were obliged to pay the military cloth tax, those belonging to the lowborn class were expected to pay the so-called *sin'gong* (personal tribute) tax.⁵⁴ Thus, the importance of cloth, which served not only as a basic living material but also as a form of currency, cannot be underestimated. The fact that the state established standards by which the cloth produced should be judged, and used such cloth as currency, clearly indicates the contribution which Chosŏn women's weaving activities made to the development of the state.

The main materials which were weaved by women were cotton and hemp; meanwhile, silk was usually woven in factories which specialized in this practice. Women's contribution to the weaving of silk consisted of the raising of the silkworms until they made cocoons.

Another important task for women from the commoner and lowborn classes was that of bearing children. Women belonging to these classes exhibited a unique fashion style after giving birth which basically consisted of them exposing their breasts, a practice which appears to have been limited to women from the commoner and lowborn classes. Although it is unclear when such a practice began to take root, it appears to have been closely linked with the emergence of the preference for sons. This practice of bearing one's breasts after giving birth to a son and proudly breastfeeding the child in public, over time, became firmly entrenched within the culture of these classes. As such, the bearing of one's breasts came to be seen as a sign that a woman had carried out her duty of producing a male heir.

The lifestyle of women engaged in special professions

The main task of the majority of Chosŏn women was to carry out household chores. Moreover, women from the commoner and lowborn classes also had to engage in agricultural labor, with some even active in commerce. However, there were also some special professions in which women were engaged in, such as palace women, female physicians and entertainers, as well as shamans. Although these women were for the most part from the lowborn class, they nevertheless possessed skills which allowed them to engage in specialized professions.

Palace women

The term *kungnyŏ* was used to refer to the women who worked within the palace.⁵⁵ The rank or titles which these women could possess ranged from *Chŏng 5-p'um* (senior 5th grade) *Sanggung* to *Chong 9-p'um* (junior 9th grade) *Chubyŏngung*. Moreover, in addition there were other women who worked within the palace known as *nain*, who carried out the majority of the physical labor without being granted any titles.

This palace women system was first adopted during the 6th year of King T'aejo at the suggestion of Cho Chun and Chŏng Tojŏn. The two introduced a structure which would govern the women who worked within the palace. This structure consisted of two women given the rank of *hyŏnŭi*, two the rank of *sukŭi*, three the status of *ch'andŏk*, three of *sunsŏng*, three of *sanggung*, four of *karyŏng*, four of *sagŭp*, and four of *sasik*. Moreover, within each of these ranks, there existed different grades (*chŏng 1-p'um* to *chong 9-p'um*).⁵⁶

In the third month of the 1st year of King Taejong, palace women who were employed in the *T'aesangjŏn* were granted ranks ranging from 3-*p'um* to 9-*p'um*.⁵⁷ During the reign of King Sejong, a palace woman system, in which various ranks and titles as well as the duties attached to each title, was established.⁵⁸ Moreover, during the reign of King

Sŏngjong, this palace women system was included in the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* as a

Table 4. Ranks and titles assigned to palace women during the Chosŏn dynasty (*Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, "naemyŏngbu")

Chŏng 5- <i>p'um</i> (senior 5 th grade)	Chong 5- <i>p'um</i> (junior 5 th grade)	Chŏng 6- <i>p'um</i> (senior 6 th grade)	Chong 6- <i>p'um</i> (junior 6 th grade)	Chŏng 7- <i>p'um</i> (senior 7 th grade)
Sanggung Sangŭi	Sangbok Sangsik	Sangch'im Sanggong	Sangchŏng Sanggi	Chŏnbin Chŏnŭi Chŏnsŏn
Chong 7- <i>p'um</i> (junior 7 th grade)	Chŏng 8- <i>p'um</i> (senior 8 th grade)	Chong 8- <i>p'um</i> (junior 8 th grade)	Chŏng 9- <i>p'um</i> (senior 9 th grade)	Chong 9- <i>p'um</i> (junior 9 th grade)
Chŏnsŏl Chŏnje Chŏnŏn	Chŏnch'an Chŏnsik Chŏnyak	Chŏndŭng Chŏnch'ae Chŏnjŏng	Chugung Chusang Chugak	Chubyŏnjing Chujing Chuwu Chubyŏngung

part of the *naemyŏngbu*.⁵⁹ The various ranks and titles bestowed upon palace women can be found in Table 4.

While no official system existed to govern this practice, palace women usually came to the palace from the ages of 4-6, at which time they began to pursue a vigorous training program. Although the royal family had originally intended to use girls from the commoner class as palace women, the resistance of this class to such attempts, which was exemplified by the practice of marrying off daughters at a very young age, meant that this was eventually changed to the usage of the daughters of government slaves. However, in the case of the palace women which were responsible for serving the royal couple, a different selection method was employed which involved the usage of girls recommended by senior palace women.

The official titles given to these palace women varied in accordance with the identity of their direct employer and their rank. In the case of women who held important positions, such as *chimil sanggung*, these were taught basic knowledge, including *han'gŭl*, *sohak*, and *yŏsasŏ*, as well as palace etiquette. Some of these girls who reached a high level of self-cultivation went on to establish the so-called 'palace literature' examples of which include *Kyech'uk ilgi* and *Inhyŏn wanghujŏn*.

As the system itself was never institutionalized, the number of palace women varied greatly from period to period. While the number of such palace women was rather small during the early stages of the dynasty, this grew over time to reach approximately 600. These women received a stipend, which varied according to their position and rank, as well as the basic living necessities. Furthermore, palace women who were selected as companions with the king or the crown prince had their status upgraded to that of concubine.

In general, these palace women worked 12 hours a day; however, on occasion they would have to work for 24 hours straight or conversely for only eight hours at a time. Originally, palace women were not allowed to wed, and with the exception of when they retired, were prevented from leaving the palace grounds. As such, the belief that natural disasters such as droughts occurred as a result of the excessive resentment which these palace women exhibited towards their lot in life spread throughout the kingdom. Thus, in order to avoid such natural disasters, the work duties of these palace women were reduced and some were even allowed to leave royal employ.⁶⁰ Those who were permitted to leave the royal employ were however forbidden from marrying, and any person found guilty of having such a girl as his concubine or of having engaged in an adulterous relationship was punished accordingly.⁶¹ Lesbianism, which was referred to as *taesik*, was a common occurrence among palace women.⁶² *Taesik* literally meant the sharing of each other's energy. King Sejong ordered that anybody found guilty of lesbianism be struck with a cudgel 70 times, with this number eventually increased to 100. Nevertheless, the practice of lesbianism remained prevalent, and in one extreme incident which occurred during the reign of King Sejong, Crown Princess Pong was caught having sex with a palace girl named So Ssang, which resulted in the princess being stripped of her title and the execution of her lover.⁶³

Female physicians

In the deeply Confucian Chosŏn society, which was exemplified by the

strengthening of the *naewoebŏp*, female physicians (*ũinyŏ*) were responsible for tending to other women when they fell ill.⁶⁴ There were two types of female physicians, those who worked within the palace (*naeuinyŏ*) and those who worked for the state-sponsored health clinics located in certain areas of the country (*hyeminsŏ*). The female physicians who worked within the palace were responsible for tending to the women of the palace; meanwhile, those who worked in health clinics were assigned to look after women of the commoner class. It goes without saying that rigid standards were applied when it came to the selection of the female physicians who were to work within the palace. Such female physicians continued to be employed within the palace until the very end of the dynasty.

These female physicians were however prohibited from going into private practice. Although they were allowed to examine patients, the female physicians nevertheless had to defer to their male counterparts when it came time to make a prescription. As male doctors were not permitted to touch a woman, the actual disinfection of infected areas was carried out by the women physicians, with the same holding true when a female patient required acupuncture. These female physicians also played the role of midwife.

This *ũinyŏ* system was first suggested by Hŏ To during the sixth year of the reign of King T'aejong. Hŏ suggested that a certain number of young girls should be trained to become physicians in the *Chesaengwŏn* (which was the name given to a certain type of medical facility during the Chosŏn dynasty). Moreover Hŏ argued that, "As there are many instances in which sick women prefer to die rather than be seen by a male doctor, we should select scores of young women and provide them with the necessary medical training so that we can save such women."⁶⁵

However, the number of such female physicians was increased in the aftermath of the implementation of the *naewoebŏp*. Moreover, as the demand for such female physicians grew in outlying areas, the *Chesaengwŏn* began to select young girls of 10 or older who exhibited a high degree of intelligence, and then dispatched them to these areas once

their training was complete.

These female physicians, who were subjected to an intense training program, usually received a stipend from the government twice a year. The reason why these female physicians who belonged to the *Chesaengwŏn* were paid twice a year was because they lived a rigorous life which involved constant studying and the looking after of patients on a daily basis.⁶⁶

As the *Chesaengwŏn* was merged with the *Hyeminguk* during the reign of King Sejo, the latter became responsible for the training of the female physicians. The *Hyeminguk* established a system under which the girls were rewarded when their grades were high, and conversely, punished when they were not (*ũinyŏ kwŏnjing Chokŏn*).⁶⁷ Moreover, the most outstanding students received a monthly stipend. The structure of this system made it such that these female physicians came to possess a large amount of medical knowledge and skills.

The education of these female physicians was further invigorated as time went by, with a more detailed education program put into place during the reign of King Songjong (*Ŭinyŏ Kwŏngwajo*). Under this new education programs, the female physicians were expected to master the following texts: *Injaejikjimaek* (仁齋直指脈); *Tonginch'imhyŏlch'imgugyŏng* (銅人鍼穴鍼灸經); *Kagamsipsambang* (加減十三方); *T'aepyŏnghyeminhwajegukbang* (太平惠民和劑局方); and the *Puinmunsansŏ* (婦人門產書). These female physicians were divided into three levels: the first consisting of the top two female physicians, who were referred to as *naeŭi* and received a monthly stipend; the second, the *kanbyŏngŭi*, consisted of 20 women, of which only the top four received a stipend; while the third, *ch'ohakŭi*, was made up of the remaining women. A woman who failed to develop an adequate level of medical skills by the time she was forty, was sent back to her place of origin and replaced with a new trainee.⁶⁸

Different means were used to encourage the female physicians to acquire a deep body of medical knowledge. For example, during the reign of King Yŏngjo, the female physicians working at the *hyeminsŏ* who were

found to exhibit a superior level of medical knowledge and skills were promoted to the palace.⁶⁹ On occasion, certain female physicians even had their social status upgraded to that of commoner. Such cases usually involved a female physician's successful treatment of a female member of the royal family.⁷⁰

These physicians carried out tasks which required a high degree of medical knowledge; these included the conducting of medical investigations in relation to legal cases, the administration of poison to female criminals, the investigation of crimes and of members of the *sadaebu* class luxurious wedding customs, as well as crimes committed within the palace or involving women from the *sadaebu* class.

While these female physicians can be regarded as having been professionals, their social status remained quite low because of their lowborn origins as either daughters' of government slaves or of *kisaeng*. Moreover, during the reign of the Yŏnsangun, these female physicians began to be mobilized as female entertainers. As a result, from that point on, female physicians often became entertainers during parties carried out within the palace. Such women who carried out the dual roles of physician and entertainer were referred to as *yakbang kisaeng* (*kisaeng* of the Medicine Room).

Female entertainers

The term female entertainer (*kinyŏ*) was used to refer to a variety of women who possessed specific skills such as dancing, medical know-how, or acupuncture.⁷¹ These female entertainers, who were from the lowborn class, were considered to be the property of the state. These female entertainers, as part of their duty of making men feel more comfortable and of livening up parties, were the only women who were allowed to openly come into contact with men. Because of their open usage of their sexuality, which earned them the nickname of *noryu changhwa* (a common flower which could be plucked from the streets), these women were held in contempt; however, they were also referred to as *haeŏhwa*

because of their ability to carry out conversations with men from the yangban class, and as such can also be regarded as having been the female “elite” of the Chosŏn dynasty.

There were three classes of female entertainers. These were the *kyŏnggi*, the female entertainers who belonged to the central government in Seoul, *kwan’gi* who belonged to local governments, and *yŏnggi* who were employed by the military. The *kyŏnggi* had to possess specialized skills and were usually assigned to entertain guests during palace events or welcoming parties for foreign envoys, during which time they were expected to provide sexual favors to the foreign guests. The *kwangi* were responsible for providing the entertainment at parties hosted by local governments and were expected to sleep with the local governors. On the other hand, the *yŏnggi* in essence carried out the role of “servicing” the troops. Within the ruling class, which was the main proponent of the need for the *naewoebŏp* and for women to be chaste, much debate emerged regarding the abolition of this female entertainer system. However, the system was never abolished, and the number of women involved continued to grow. During the reign of the Yŏnsangun, an office responsible for the management of these female entertainers was set up and tasked with finding quality candidates throughout the nation. Moreover, the large amount of finances needed to keep these women employed was secured by increasing taxes on the already over-exploited common class.⁷²

Some female entertainers lived together with males known as *kibu* or *kidung sŏbang*, who basically played the role of the husband in that they provided these women with the basic necessities, such as lodging, food and clothing.⁷³ The activities of such female entertainers who lived with *kibu* were usually limited to performing at parties and did not involve prostitution. Those female entertainers who did engage in prostitution were referred to as *yunyŏ*. While the *kibu* were originally from the lowborn class, as time went by there were an increasing number of government officials, military officers, and palace guards.

In order to entertain the people, these female entertainers needed to

possess special skills. As such, there were many women who possessed remarkable skills such as poetry, calligraphy, music, dancing, and comedy. Those women who combined such skills with outstanding physical beauty became known as *myŏngki*. Stories revolving around these female entertainers were common during the Chosŏn dynasty. These included tales of female entertainers who were famous for their loyalty, such as *Nongae*; of those who took good care of their parents; of female entertainers who remained chaste and conversely, those who laughed at men; and basically ruined their lives.

Over time, the classification of these female entertainers evolved to the point that by the time Kojong came to the throne they were separated into three categories, those who only performed at royal parties, those who secretly engaged in prostitution, and those who openly sold their bodies to men.⁷⁴

Female shamans

The *munyŏ* were female shamans who performed *kut* ceremonies or exorcisms.⁷⁵ These female shamans acted as intermediaries between the people and the various gods which existed in Korea.

During the Chosŏn dynasty, such shamans could be found throughout the nation; however, the female shamans which were allowed to enter the palace were known as *kungmu* or *kungmudang*, while those who remained in outlying areas were referred to as *naemunyŏ* or *naemudang*. The *kungmu* were regulated by a government office especially set up to oversee their activities known as the *Sŏngsukch'ŏng* and were responsible for the conducting of shaman rituals for the state or the royal family itself. These women registered with the *Sŏngsukch'ŏng* were mobilized to conduct ceremonies to ward off such natural disasters as droughts and floods, cure a member of the royal family, or bring luck upon the royal household.

Those female shamans who had access to the palace exercised a significant degree of power. As such, while the children of such women

could not upgrade their social status, the state made sure that they were nevertheless well taken care from a financial standpoint.

These female shamans were looked down upon within Chosŏn's Confucian society. During the reign of King Sejong, all shamans were expelled from the capital area.⁷⁶ Moreover, these women were heavily taxed,⁷⁷ and the state prohibited them from holding shaman rituals.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, as many people depended on these shamans for their religious fulfillment, and disasters, both personal and national, were all too common, these women could live within the capital area throughout the dynasty.⁷⁹

Another reason why the state could not completely do away with these female shamans was their reputed ability to cure contagious diseases. As such, while the state had no choice but to accept these women, they did everything within their power to minimize the social problems these women caused. One such measure which the state used to control these women was to force them, with the exception of the *kungmu*, to register with the *Tongsŏ hwalinwŏn* (a hospital which tended to those from the lowborn class) and actively cure the patients which were housed there.

Great fortunes could be amassed through such shamanistic rituals, and women were involved in the practice. According to the *Mongmin simsŏ* a shaman could be found even in villages which had only three houses.⁸⁰ The large fortunes amassed by these shamans from time to time emerged as social problems.

Conclusion

The *Sadaebu* class which founded the Chosŏn dynasty identified the decline in morality as one of the main reasons for the downfall of the Koryŏ dynasty. Thus, in order to usher in the neo-Confucianist and patriarchal society which they desired, the *sadaebu* strengthened several women-related regulations. These included prohibiting yangban class women from visiting temples, women's holding of shaman rituals, the

regulation of women's clothing, and the prohibition of contact between the sexes (*naewoebŏp*). As a result of these measures, women's ability to engage in social activities was severely curtailed, and their education was limited to the means through which they could become virtuous women.

As the male-oriented *chongbŏp* system became firmly entrenched, women assumed an increasingly subordinate role within the family. As far as marriage practices were concerned, the weakening of the *namgwiŏgahon* system and the growing importance of the male-oriented *ch'inŷŏng* system, meant that women were increasingly expected to live with their in-laws following marriage. Moreover, in accordance with the Confucian belief that "just as a loyal subject should only obey one ruler, a virtuous woman should obey only one husband," women's right to remarry was curtailed. Furthermore, the descendants of women who had remarried were prohibited from holding government office. While a traditional polygamy system was maintained, the prohibition of women's remarriage and the increased emphasis on the concept of the virtuous woman emerged as tools which could be used to oppress women by discriminating against them. This gender discrimination was undertaken as part of the patriarchal mindset which prevailed in Korea during this period.

As far as divorce was concerned, with the exception of special cases, men were free to abandon their wives, desert them, or otherwise abuse them at will. In the case of women found to have engaged in an adulterous relationship, to have beaten their husbands, or to have broken one of the so-called 'seven sins for women', these were unceremoniously thrown out of the household and forced to divorce their husbands. If a husband killed his cheating wife in the heat of passion, he was usually assessed a fine and sent on his way, while women who killed their husbands for having had an affair were executed for their crimes.

As far as the issues of inheritance and ancestral rites were concerned, very few differences existed between men and women during the early Chosŏn period. The continued influence of the traditional practice of placing heavy emphasis on one's maternal lineages which prevailed

during the Koryŏ dynasty meant that men and women were able to share equal rights when it came to inheritance and the conducting of ancestral rites during early Chosŏn. During the early years of the dynasty, sons and daughters took turn performing the necessary rites for their ancestors. In cases where a household had only daughters, the latter and their husbands were granted the right to conduct the necessary rites. However from the 17th century onwards, the conducting of ancestral rites was limited to the first son of a household, thus effectively curtailing women's rights to conduct such rites. Similar changes also took place with regards to inheritance, which resulted in further subordination of women to men by making them dependent on men for their property.

Women during the Chosŏn dynasty lived lifestyles which were based on their social status. Although all women were expected to marry and bear and raise children as their basic duty, the types of labor and lifestyle which they led varied in accordance with their status.

The female members of the royal family who lived within the palace also had different titles, such as the *taewang taebi* (the king's grandmother). The queen was by far the most important female member of the royal family. The queen was the representative example of what every woman within Chosŏn should aspire to and was perceived as the mother of the nation. Moreover, the queen was expected to take care of her elders, supervise the *naemyŏngbu*, and produce a male heir to the throne. However, even if she failed to produce a male heir, the queen was nevertheless buried with other members of the royal family after she passed away, and paid the according deference. The queen was also expected to oversee the holding of the Royal Sericulture Ceremony and weaving activities, both of which were considered to be the basic tasks of women. In addition, in cases where a king was too young to assume power, a dowager was entrusted to oversee the conducting of state affairs until he reached the age of maturity. Meanwhile, the king's concubines were classified- from Chŏng 1-*p'um bin* to Chong 4-*p'um sukwŏn*- in accordance with the standards set by the *naemyŏngbu*, who rated these women according to their contribution to the nation or based on the king's

affection for them.

As far as yangban women were concerned, these received titles from the *woemyŏngbu*, ranging from Chŏng 1-*p'um* (senior 1th grade) *chŏnggyŏng buin* to Chong 9-*p'um* (junior 9th grade) *yuin*, in accordance with their husbands' social position. The most important duties for women from the yangban class consisted of making the necessary preparations for the family's ancestral rites and properly accommodating their husbands' guests. While originally the number of ancestral rites which should be conducted was based on the husband's position, this practice broke down over time with each yangban household being responsible for the conducting of the required rites for four generations of ancestors, a practice which even spread to the commoner class. As a result, yangban women were responsible for at least ten rites a year. Moreover, a wife's ability to properly accommodate her husbands' guests was closely related to his ability to maintain his social position, and as a means of supporting his social activities. Therefore in order to maintain the dignity of the household by properly accommodating her husband's guests, a woman was expected to prepare a wide variety of seasonal dishes and wines. Despite all of the tasks which they were responsible for and the heavy burden placed on them, yangban women still found the time to engage in self-cultivation through the reading of books and writing.

Women from the commoner and lowborn classes were not only engaged in the regular household chores, but also in agriculture; with some women even going into commerce as well. While the main agricultural task of these women was the tending of the family vegetable patches they were also expected to help out with the sowing and harvesting. Furthermore, these women were forced to weave in the evenings in order to make the clothes which their family required. On top of all these activities, women from the lowborn class were also expected to help take care of their owner's household.

There were also women who were engaged in special professions, including palace women, female physicians, female entertainers, and female shamans. Palace women, who worked for the various entities

which existed within the palace, were usually brought to the palace when they were 4-6 years of age. These women were granted titles by the *naemyōngbu*, which ranked from *Chōng 5-p'um* (senior 5th grade) *sanggung* to *Chong 9-p'um* (junior 9th grade) *chubyōngung*. Although the royal family had originally hoped to select girls from the commoner class to fill these positions, the opposition to such a practice forced the government to use the daughters of government slaves instead. While some palace women eventually became concubines of the king or crown prince, prohibition of marriage led to a high degree of lesbianism being prevalent among the palace women themselves.

The female physicians were responsible for treating women under the Confucian society of Chosŏn exemplified by the *naewoebōp*. Those physicians employed within the palace were responsible for tending to the female members of the royal family, while those who were employed by local health clinics looked after women from the common class. These physicians were also responsible for conducting autopsies on women who had been murdered and for administering poison to convicted female criminals. Moreover, these women were also responsible for investigating allegations of extravagant wedding practices within yangban households and arresting female criminals belonging to the royal family or yangban class.

The female entertainers were trained by the state from a young age to develop certain specific skills such as music, dancing, medicine, and acupuncture. These women belonged to the lowborn class, with the majority consisting of the daughters of government slaves. Three classes of entertainers existed, with the *kyōnggi* consisting of those women engaged within the capital area, while the *kwangi* were active in provincial areas and the *yōnggi* served the military. Those female entertainers who possessed the most advanced skills in their particular discipline were selected to perform during royal ceremonies or government banquets; meanwhile, others' duties consisted of providing favors to local governors or servicing the military and members of the *sadaebu*. While these women were held in open contempt because of the

open usage of their sexuality, some of them were able to hold their own in discussions with Confucian scholars.

Female shamans were women who conducted exorcists and acted as mediums through which people could come into contact with the spirits. Large numbers of these shamans were active during the Chosŏn dynasty. The shamans who had access to the palace wielded a significant amount of power and were sought to hold ceremonies to do away with natural disasters such as droughts or floods and to curb the outbreak of contagious diseases. Although they belonged to the lowborn class, these women were able to amass significant fortunes. While the government attempted to do away with these women through such means as imposing excessive taxes and outlawing their activities large numbers of these women could be found throughout the dynasty.

The women who were engaged in special professions were from the lowborn class and were held in contempt by the (yangban) aristocracy. However, these women developed the specialties needed to carry out the duties which the times required of them.

Notes :

- 1 Choi Sook-kyung, "The establishment of the field of Korean women's historical studies and related tasks (*Hanguk Yŏsŏngsa Yŏnguŭi Sŏngripkwa Kwaje*)" *Citizens' Forum on Korean History (Hanguksa Simingangjwa)*, #15, 1994; Han Hee-sook, "Women in yangban society (*Yangban Sahoeŭi Yŏsŏng*)", IBID; Han Hee-sook, " Trends related to the study of Chosŏn women (*Chosŏnsidae Yŏsŏngsa Yŏnguŭi Ch'oesin Tonghyang*)", *Humanities (Inmungwahak yŏngu)*, Vol. 8, Research Institute of the Humanities, The Catholic University of Korea, 2003
- 2 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 43, February of the 11th year of King Sejong
- 3 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 52, June of the 13th year of King Sejong
- 4 Lee Soon-koo, " The development of the *Naewaeböp* during the early period of the Chosŏn dynasty (*Chosŏnch'ogi Naewaeböpŭi Sŏngripkwa Chŏngae*)" *Cheongkye Sahak*, Vol. 5, 1988

- 5 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 52, June of the 13th year of King Sejong
- 6 *Kyōngguk taejōn*, Vol. 5
- 7 *Taejo sillok*, Vol. 1, September of the 1st year of King Taejo; *Taejong sillok*, Vol. 8, December of the 4th year of King Taejong
- 8 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 56, June of the 14th year of King Sejong; *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 59, February of the 15th year of King Sejong
- 9 While there are 324 references to good sons (*hyoja*) in the *Sinjung dongkuk Yōji sūngram*, 16 references to good daughters (*hyonyō*), and 167 to virtuous women can also be found; meanwhile, in the *Tongguk Sinsok Samgang Haengsil*, 94 good sons, 54 merit subjects, and 426 virtuous women are praised for their actions during the Hideyoshi invasions (Park Joo, *Chosŏn's Policy Towards Women's Chastity (Chosŏn sidae'ui Chōngpyo chōngch'aek)*, Ilchokak, 1990
- 10 Yi Ik, *Sōngho Sasōl*, Vol. 7
- 11 Pak Chiwōn, *Yōlha Ilgi*,
- 12 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 37, September of the 9th year of King Sejong
- 13 *Sejo sillok*, Vol. 24, April of the 7th year of King Sejo
- 14 *Kyōngguk Taejōn*, Vol. 3
- 15 Jang Byung-in, *Marriage Customs and Gender Discrimination during the Early Chosŏn Dynasty (Chosŏnjōngi Honinjewa Sōngch'abyōl)*, Ilchisa, 1997
- 16 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 67, March of the 17th year of King Sejong
- 17 *Taejong sillok*, Vol. 30, November of the 15th year of King Taejong
- 18 *Sejo sillok*, Vol. 43, July of the 13th year of King Sejo
- 19 *Sōngjong sillok*, Vol. 82, July of the 8th of King Sōngjong
- 20 *Kyōngguk Taejōn*, Vol. 3
- 21 *Munjong sillok*, Vol. 1, April of the 1st year of King Munjong
- 22 *Sejo sillok*, Vol. 43, August of the 13th year of King Sejo
- 23 Jang Byung-in, "5. The regulation of adultery during early Chosŏn (*Chosŏnjōngi Kangtonge Taehan Kyuje*)", "6. The crime of rape during early Chosŏn (*Chosŏnjōngi'ui Kangganbōmjoe*)" *Marriage Customs and Gender Discrimination during the Early Chosŏn Dynasty (Chosŏnjōngi Honinjewa Sōngch'abyōl)*, Iljisa, 1997
- 24 Jang Byung-in, *Ibid*, p 264
- 25 *Sejong sillok*, Vol. 49, September of the 12th year of King Sejong
- 26 *Taejo sillok*, Vol.12, August of the 6th year of King Taejo
- 27 *Taejong sillok*, Vol.10, September of the 5th year of King Taejong

- 28 While the *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* dealt with the inheritance of slaves in detail, it did not address in depth the inheritance of other items. However as land was handled in the same manner, it is highly likely that other items were also dealt with in the same fashion.
- 29 *Sejong sillok*, Vol.97, July of the 24th year of King Sejong
- 30 Lee Soon-ko, *The Adoption of the Chongbŏp System during the Early period of Chosŏn and the Changes in Women's Status (Chosŏnch'ogi Chongbŏpŭi Suyonggwa Yŏsŏngjiwiŭi Pyŏnhwa)*, Academy of Korean Studies, PhD dissertation, 1994
- 31 Yi Munkŏn, who was exiled to Sŏngju during the 16th century, is known to have conducted ancestral rites not only for his maternal grandparents but also for his wife's parents. Yi and his 4 other siblings took turns conducting the 12 ancestral rites which they were responsible for every year. According to the <*Kijech'arye*>, which has been kept in the Haenam Yun family for generations, the siblings of Yun In-mi divided the various ancestral rites which they were responsible for amongst themselves for the period from 1680 to 1683. Kim Kyeong-sook, "Kijesawa Myoje", *Chronicles of life during the Chosŏn Dynasty (Chosŏnsidae Saenghwalsa)*, Vol.2, Yuksabipyungsa, 2000, pp.72-73
- 32 *Kyŏngguk taejŏn*, Vol.3
- 33 Ji Doo-hwan, "Understanding the Chongbŏp system established during the early period of Chosŏn (*Chosŏnjŏngiŭi Chongbŏpjedo Yihaegwajŏng*)", *T'aedong Kojŏn Yŏngu (Asian Culture Studies)*, Issue No.1, 1984
- 34 Kim Kyeong-sook, *ibid*, p.79
- 35 Kim Yong-sook, *Traditional Palace Customs during the Chosŏn dynasty (Chosŏnjo Kungjung P'ungsok Yŏngu)*, Iljisa, 1987
- 36 *Sŏngjong sillok*, Vol.187, January of the 17th Year of King Sŏngjong
- 37 Kim Yong-sook, "4. Royal Marriages (*Wangsilŭi Honsok*)", *ibid*, pp.214-224, 229
- 38 As Queen Hyoŭi was unable to bear a male heir, a woman by the last name of Pak was chosen to become a concubine of the first rank (*subin*) for King Chŏngjo, a union which eventually produced King Sunjo.
- 39 Hong Soon-min, *The History of the Palaces of Korea (Wuri Kungkwŏl Yiyagi)*, Chungnyunsa, 1999, pp 158-9
- 40 *Sŏngjong sillok*, Vol. 78, March of the 8th year of King Sŏngjong; *Chungjong sillok*, Vol. 18, March of the 8th year of King Chungjong; *Kwanghaegun Ilgi*,

- Vol. 150, march of the 12th year of the Kwanghaegun; *Kwanghaegun Ilgi*, Vol. 151, April of the 12th year of the Kwanghaegun
- 41 Kim Woo-ki, “Queen Munjǒng’s participation in politics and her ability to control the political situation (*Mungjǒng Wanghuūi Chǒngch’i Changyǒwa Chǒngguk Unyǒng*)”, *Compilation of Papers Related to History Education (Yǒksa Kyoyuknonjip)*, Issues 23-24, 1999; Lim Hye-ryeon, “The reign of Dowager Chǒngsun and changes in the political landscape during the early stages of the reign of King Sunjo (*Sunjoch’oban Chǒngsun Wanghuūi Suryǒnch’ǒngjǒnggwa Chǒnggukbyǒnhwa*)”, *Journal of the History of the Chosǒn Dynasty (Chosǒnsidae Sahakbo)*, Vol. 15, 2000; Lim Hye-ryeon, “The dowager system during the Chosǒn dynasty (*Chosǒnsidae Suryǒm Ch’ǒngjǒngūi Chǒngbigwajǒng*)” *Journal of the History of the Chosǒn Dynasty (Chosǒnsidae Sahakbo)*, Vol. 27, 2003
- 42 With the exception of the Yǒnsangun and Kwanghaegun, who were forced from power, the average lifespan of the 25 kings who ruled during the Chosǒn dynasty was 46 years. Certain kings, such as Tanjong, who died at the age of 17, Yejong, who died at the age of 20, and Hǒnjong, who passed away at the age of 23, died before even reaching the age of 30. Moreover, 8 monarchs died while in their thirties, and only five lived beyond the age of 60. Shin Myeongho, *Chosǒn Palace Culture-The Lifestyle and Etiquette of the Royal Family (Kungjung Munhwa – Chosǒn Wangsilūi Ŭiryewa Saenghwal)*, Dolbegae, 2002, pp 121-23
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