

《Abstract》

**A Study on CHOSEON Kojong's Rule
during the Early Years of his Reign
(1864~1876)**

In December 1863, 12-year-old Kojong(高宗) rose as the 26th monarch under the nomination of Shinjeongwanghu(神貞王后). Because Kojong was still young, fragile, and has yet to receive training and education on becoming an emperor at the time of his enthronement, regency by the queen mother commenced, also based on precedent. With the end of regency by the queen mother in February 1866, political power was transferred over to Daewongun(大院君), Kojong's real father, and Kojong continued to concentrate on autocratic education while partaking in and collaborating with Daewongun in his policy-making decisions and progress. Between Kojong's enthronement and actual proclamation of his direct rule, the affairs of the state were governed by Daewongun. This allowed Kojong to devote himself to imbibing the qualities of an emperor amidst a relatively open and safe political power structure and to form Confucian democracy ideologies and autocratic perspective. In particular, Kojong exhibited a special interest in the welfare of his people, as indicated by his direct involvement in public welfare policies.

During the 10 years leading up to Kojong's reign (1864 through 1873), Daewongun took it upon himself to counsel the young emperor and oversee the political affairs of the land in his stead. Daewongun's rule targeted building a wealthy nation protected by a powerful army through absolute sovereignty via the royal family and the central government. Seeking a powerful centralized government authority, Daewongun appointed various members of Jongchinseonpa (宗親·壻派), whose influence had dwindled over the years, into office; gave

greater authority to Jongchinbu(宗親府); and reinstated Uijeongbu(議政府) and Samgunbu(三軍府) in an attempt to gain administrative and military control. In setting his plan in motion, Daewongun borrowed the authority of Shinjeongwanghu and Kojong to gain opportunities for participating in royal events and political affairs. Following regency by the queen mother, Daewongun officially received sovereignty from Kojong and began affiliating himself with the existing factions centering on Ahndong Kims(安東金氏) in a bid to stabilize the power foundation. Daewongun also increased opportunities for Jongchinseongpa members and Namin(南人) Bukin(北人) members to join the political arena and appointed them in high ranking government offices. He also gave greater authority to Mushin(武臣) groups to further strengthen his power. With this foundation in place, Daewongun continued to build palaces and government buildings to strengthen the royal family and the nation overall. He also implemented policies to suppress opposing regional forces to add stability to the provincial administration, arrange for the requisites for unobstructed conveyance and execution of central government commands, and to expand the nation's financial resources by consolidating the tax system and discovering new financial sources.

During the 1870s, however, Kojong began to see Daewongun's increased convergence of power and monopoly as a threat. Kojong believed that Daewongun's numerous political activities served the stability and security of sovereign authority and even entrusted Daewongun with authority of the monarch. Daewongun, however, refused to return sovereignty to Kojong and instead focused on expanding his own power base. Kojong then became apprehensive about Daewongun's actions and sought to restore his own sovereign power. Kojong surrounded himself with relatives, mostly from his maternal side, and worked on creating anti-Daewongun sentiments and atmosphere. At this point, Kojong received a private message from China, stating the Chinese

Emperor's return to power and the Chinese people's great anticipation for the emperor's return. This message served as an inspiration for Kojong, who in October 1873 took advantage of Choi Ik-hyeon(崔益鉉)'s appeal and announced his actual rule. The formation of Kojong's ruling system led to power struggles between Kojong and government officials who opposed Choi's punishment and between Kojong and pro-Daewongun forces. On the surface, government officials claimed they opposed Kojong's punishment of Choi Ik-hyeon because a state tribunal needed to be installed to conduct a detailed investigation into Choi's rebellious intentions but, in actuality, the officials wanted to deter Daewongun's withdrawal and maintain their hold on the government. This was a war between Kojong, who wished to relieve Daewongun and restore the sovereignty, and government officials, who were claiming the validity of the incumbent government in an attempt to protect their positions. In this struggle over national leadership, neither side gave way to the other. In the end, Kojong dismissed those officials who kept on insisting a trial for Choi Ik-hyeon and a newly structured Uijeongbu. With this, the conflict between Kojong and government officials that transpired throughout October and November 1873 was subdued and Daewongun retired from politics to complete the first phase in the buildup of Kojong's rule.

After restoring sovereignty, Kojong began to reform Daewongun's power basis and policies, maintaining Daewongun's power collective structure with the exception of few pro-Daewongun forces and placing relatives from his maternal side and Jonchinseonpa members in important governmental positions of power. In addition, Kojong retained those policies that contributed to the strengthening of the royal family's and the central government's authority, abolished taxes established under Daewongun's rule, and prohibited the circulation of Chinese currency to shut out Daewongun's financial resources. What's more, in a move to dismantle the military basis Daewongun had built up, Kojong restructured the

Samgunbu-oriented military operation system and the Ganghwadojinmuyeong(江華島鎮撫營), which had been enhanced under Daewongun's regime. Kjong also concentrated military forces and supplies to Muwiso(武衛所), which had been established to guard the royal palace.

However, these policies and actions by Kjong triggered resistance from Daewongun and numerous appeals for Daewongun's return to the capital city out of his retirement in Yangju(楊洲), destabilizing Kjong's political foundation during the early stages of his regime. In response, Kjong implemented strict punishment against those who submitted such appeals and even outlawed the submission itself, in an effort to stabilize his country. He also permitted the resignation of Yeonguijeong(領議政) Lee Yu-won(李裕元) under questions of responsibilities over political affairs, and inaugurated Jwuijeong(左議政) Lee Choi-eung(李最應) and Uijeong(右議政) Kim Byeong-guk(金炳國) systems. This was a move to eliminate Daewongun's justification for his return to the political arena through the appointment of Lee Choi-eung, a royal, and simultaneously win over Noron(老論), which centered on Ahndong Kims. Ordering the death penalty on those Confucian scholars who defied the emperor's ban of submitting appeals, Kjong made it clear that he would not recognize Daewongun's return from political retirement. Although this incident ended with Daewongun's return to the capital city and Kjong's order to send Confucian scholars into exile, Kjong's heightened awareness of Daewongun and pro-Daewongun forces as threats ultimately led to Kjong's intensified ruling of the nation based on a power structure surrounding close associates.