

Review Essay

**Chosŏn Reconsidered**

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Yuanhong Wang. *Remaking the Chinese Empire: Manchu-Korean Relations, 1616–1911*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018. 300 pp.

Eugene Y. Park. *A Genealogy of Dissent: The Progeny of Fallen Royals in Chosŏn Korea*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019. 288 pp.

Recent years have seen enormous growth in English-language scholarship on the Chosŏn period and greater attention to early modern Korea from scholars of Edo Japan and late imperial China. Chosŏn-dynasty studies in English have expanded from being a narrow and somewhat claustrophobic field with only a few big names to including many new voices. Some scholars have focused on themes that have received little or no attention in English, or even Korean. Others have attempted new and original approaches to well-discussed topics. The two works reviewed here—*Remaking the Chinese Empire: Manchu-Korean Relations, 1616–1911* by Yuanhong Wang and *A Genealogy of Dissent: The Progeny of Fallen Royals in Chosŏn Korea* by Eugene Y. Park—are very different, with the former exploring diplomatic history and the latter social history, but both represent significant revisions of the earlier consensus. Together, they suggest a widening horizon of Chosŏn-dynasty studies in English.

Yuanhong Wang's *Remaking the Chinese Empire* is an innovative exploration of Sino-Korean relations during the Chosŏn period, perhaps the most extensively discussed subject in English-language Chosŏn studies. Indeed, it was already the subject of a scholarly monograph in the 1940s when there was otherwise very little research in English on Chosŏn (Nelson 1945). What was the relationship between Chosŏn and the Ming and Qing dynasties? Was Chosŏn part of the Chinese empire? Was it a colony or protectorate? Alternatively, was Chosŏn an independent state engaging in empty formality when it sent tribute missions to the Chinese capital? As Wang well describes, this subject attracted considerable interest in English as early as the 1870s, when it was a matter of significant concern for European and U.S. diplomats trying to establish the proper approach that they should take toward the Chosŏn state—and whether they should deal with Chosŏn indirectly via the Qing or directly, on a state-to-state basis. On the one hand, the Chosŏn monarch sent regular envoys to the Qing capital of Beijing where they participated in rituals that clearly declared their subordination to the Qing

empire; on the other hand, the Qing had essentially no role in the internal administration of the Chosŏn state before the establishment of somewhat more direct involvement between 1882 and 1894. It was difficult to express this dilemma with the range of terms then available. The problem is perhaps even more challenging now, as greater knowledge of the Chosŏn period has impressed upon us both aspects of the relationship: Chosŏn's independence from the Qing (such as late Chosŏn's Ming loyalism, whereby most of Chosŏn's *aristocracy* not only considered the Qing illegitimate but even thought that Chosŏn was the last true ritual heir of the Ming), and the fact that there was widespread support among Chosŏn's aristocracy, from the dynasty's founding until after its fall, for Chosŏn's subordination to an empire based in China.<sup>1</sup> Our current views are further complicated by the fact that Western advocates for Chosŏn's independence were themselves colonial powers and that Japan—the state that brought an end to Chosŏn's subordinate relationship with the Qing in 1894 only to use these circumstances to colonize Korea outright in 1910—was one of the stronger advocates for the view that Chosŏn's subordination to China was merely “a nominal title” (138).

Wang's approach to the subject is distinctly different from earlier studies. First, although he refers to the Chosŏn-Ming relationship, his focus is on Chosŏn's relationship with the Qing and with the Manchu khanate that became the Qing empire. Chosŏn has frequently been treated as a “model tributary”—a standard claim that Wang, in a sense, turns on its head, when he points out that Chosŏn was the first state with which the Qing pursued Ming-style diplomatic relations under the Ministry of Rites (as opposed to its very different interactions with the Mongol and Inner Asian states under the Mongol Superintendency). In fact, the Qing deliberately used its Ming-style relationship with Chosŏn to assert that it had inherited the right to govern China from the Ming. Thus, Chosŏn was not so much a model tributary; rather, first the Ming and then the Qing employed the “Chosŏn model” to govern its relationship with other states—in the case of the Qing, with the various Southeast Asian states with which it interacted under the Ministry of Rites. Wang understands Chosŏn as part of the Qing empire but clarifies that the Qing empire was structured according to the *Zongfan* political-cultural order, a phrase he uses instead of the “tributary system” in order to emphasize the extent to which the familial relationship between the Chinese empire and its subordinate “barbarian” states existed beyond the mere moment of diplomatic interaction in Beijing. The relationship included a far more widespread cultural and political framework whereby the Qing treated its barbarian subordinates as part of the imperial realm, even while making few attempts to actually exert its influence on their domestic affairs. Furthermore, as Wang argues, the Qing's *Zongfan* relationship with Chosŏn continued to be the dominant mode of the relationship after the rise of European international law between 1876 and 1894, despite earlier studies that emphasized the development of a new Qing imperialism in Chosŏn following

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Hŏ (2009) and Pae (2014).

Qing military intervention in 1882. Wang shows that much of the language of *Zongfan* relations continued to be a vital aspect of how the Qing interacted with Chosŏn, to the extent that “provincialization”—the complete assimilation of Chosŏn into the Qing empire—though discussed, never gained much support in the Qing court.

A difficulty for all who write on this topic is the translation of the key terms, which do not correspond well with modern European terminology and became sources of controversy even among European diplomats of the nineteenth century. For the Qing empire, Chosŏn was a *fan* 藩—a term that can be directly translated as “hedge,” “fence,” or “vassal.” It was left to those knowledgeable in Western international law to sort out whether *fan* was best understood as a province, a protectorate, or a colony, and, if a protectorate, what sort of a protectorate. Indeed, one of the pleasures of *Remaking the Chinese Empire* is the skill with which Wang sorts out the history of disputed translations. Particularly challenging terms are *Zhongguo*, *Zhonghua*, and *Zhongxia*, which are now usually translated as “China” and are clearly ethnic or national terms. Of course, it is possible to dispute who belongs in the category of “Chinese,” but otherwise the terms are relatively uncomplicated. Today, for example, it would be inconceivable for the Canadian government to declare that, because China had lost sight of proper Confucian morality, Canada was the true *Zhongguo*. Yet Chosŏn aristocrats and others in early modern East Asia did make very similar claims, for though *Zhongguo* could refer to what would now seem to be an ethnic category, it could also be used, as Wang points out, with a “politico-cultural meaning,” referring to the states under *Zhongguo*’s general authority, and a “territorial meaning,” referring to the regions directly administered by the Qing (12). The politico-cultural meaning was especially vulnerable to being contested. At the risk of sounding like a nineteenth-century missionary, I agree that there is some value in translating *Zhongguo* not as “China” but as “the Middle Kingdom.” Indeed, the name is generally translated into Manchu, the original language of the Qing emperors, as *Dulimbai gurun* (Country in the middle).

Despite his skillful analysis of the key terms of *Zongfan* discourse, Wang does at times confuse the ethnic and politico-cultural meanings of *Zhongguo*. For example, he points to the Manchu khan Nurhaci’s calls to the populace to maintain their Manchuness against the spread of *Nikan* (Han Chinese) culture as a sign that “the Manchu regime could have become *Zhongguo* even if it had remained in Manchuria and not crossed the Great Wall” (32). Yet Nurhaci makes no reference to *Dulimbai gurun* but, rather, to the cultural and economic practices of the Han Chinese—a specific association with *Zhongguo* for people in the twenty-first century, but not necessarily to Nurhaci four hundred years earlier.

Elsewhere, Wang does not fully account for the fact that the Chosŏn’s aristocracy contested *Zhongguo* legitimacy. For example, he notes, but does not develop, the fact that Chosŏn’s aristocracy rejected diplomatic relations with the Qing in the 1630s, because they felt that their moral duty involved “‘revering China and expelling the barbarians’ (*chon Chungguk yang ijŏk*) in accordance with the doctrine of

revering the Zhou dynasty (*chon Chu ŭiri*)” (39). Wang simply glosses this as a position taken by the aristocracy because of their Confucian “social and political principles,” but one could rather argue that the two groups of people—the Manchu ruling house and Chosŏn’s aristocracy—were alike in supporting “China” (*Zhongguo*) but had sharply differing views of who could justly inherit the tradition of *Zhongguo*. Later, when Wang does discuss some of the complexities of Chosŏn’s response to the Qing in the eighteenth century, he focuses on those whom South Korean scholars now refer to as members of the “School of Northern Learning” (*Pukhakp’a*)—that is, those who were explicitly critical of Chosŏn’s hostility to the Qing and desirous of greater exchange (92–98). As a result, Wang downplays, somewhat more than is reasonable, the discordance between the Qing and Chosŏn in their understandings of *Zhongguo*.

I visited the Tongmyo shrine in Seoul in 2005, when the calligraphy that the Qing had hung there in the 1880s was still present. After a brief scan, I was impressed by the extent to which the calligraphy seems to have been deliberately chosen to cause no offense to the Chosŏn court and aristocracy by focusing not on the Qing but on the Han empire and the three Han commanderies established in northern Korea in 108 BCE. I am thus sympathetic to Wang’s claim of the continued importance of *Zongfan* discourse. Still, I often wonder how much of the language of *Zongfan* discourse, as used during the nineteenth century, was genuinely a continuation of eighteenth-century diplomatic norms and how much it involved reworking past precedents to support new needs—something that European colonial powers did quite frequently as well.

As mentioned, *fan* can be translated as “fence” or “hedge”; thus, it could be seen as referring not to familial relations but to defense—a sense I got quite strongly from Wang’s description of Qing officials concerned by the loss of such *fan* as Ryūkyū or Vietnam. Of course, the language of defense is by no means alien to modern imperialism. In general, I was not convinced by all of Wang’s attempts to distinguish Qing activities in Chosŏn from the imperialist activities of European powers. For instance, he claims that the extraterritoriality of Chinese settlements in Chosŏn during the 1880s—though widely described as an example of the imperialist tendency of the Qing during this period—were in fact part of a reciprocal relationship that probably also allowed Koreans to establish extraterritorial settlements in China. Indeed, he describes one case in which Koreans did benefit from this extraterritoriality. He concludes, “If extraterritoriality were to imply imperialism, one would have to conclude the Qing and Chosŏn practiced imperialism on each other” (175). This point is well taken, but in view of the creative and abusive use of treaties by imperial powers during this period, I wonder if the fact that there were no significant Korean merchant settlements in China might be more meaningful than Wang allows. For that matter, Wang finds an example of the continuation of the *Zongfan* system in the justifications used for the Qing’s abduction of the regent and father of the Chosŏn king, the Taewŏn’gun, in 1882, and thus distinguishes that abduction from similar imperialist activities of European powers (160). The Qing court used two historical precedents as justifications for this action,

including the exile of Korean monarchs by the Mongol Yuan during the fourteenth century, and, more dubiously, the Qing's "dethroning" of the last king of Annam's Lê dynasty. Considering how frequently European powers also claimed historical justification—I think of the British monarchy's creative use of Indian history in the title "Emperor of India"—this concern on the part of the Qing for historical justification for its intervention into Chosŏn does not necessarily distinguish it from European imperialist powers.

In contrast to Wang, Eugene Y. Park explores a subject that has attracted no attention in English and very little in Korean, namely, the history of the descendants of the Koryŏ royal house during the Chosŏn period, in *A Genealogy of Dissent: The Progeny of Fallen Royals in Chosŏn Korea*. This book is the third of Park's monographs concerned with the social history of people slightly outside of Chosŏn's aristocracy. His second monograph, *A Family of No Prominence: The Descendants of Pak Tŏkhwa and the Birth of Modern Korea*, is a truly impressive work. As Park takes genealogies seriously, and thus views them critically, as sources, he succeeds in that work in exploring the development of his own ancestors, a descent group of marginal status and uncertain antecedents, from the seventeenth century (when they first appear in solid records) until the present day. The book contributes greatly to our understanding of people of intermediate social status in the late Chosŏn, and opens the door for the use of genealogies, commonly associated with patriarchal and elite-centered history, for escaping just such a patriarchal and elite-centered perspective. In the epilogue to *A Family of No Prominence*, Park mentions a range of Pak Tŏkhwa's descendants who established themselves in the United States, and describes how the descendants of Koreans of intermediate social status in that country have been exploring their own genealogies in new, less elite-focused ways. That admittedly short book is nevertheless a masterpiece of scholarship, combining emotional engagement and scholarly rigor, which shows many possible paths forward for the rest of us, academics and private scholars alike.

*A Genealogy of Dissent* is a more ambitious work and explores a much larger descent group, whose history extends to a period before the founding of the Chosŏn dynasty. After Yi Sŏnggye (usually referred to as T'aejo) took power in 1392, much of the Koryŏ royal house was purged, only to have some branches of the house revived later to serve as ritual heirs to the Koryŏ royal family and to preside in sacrifices at the Sungŭijŏn, an official shrine established to honor the Koryŏ monarchs. As memories of the Koryŏ royal house ceased to worry the Chosŏn court, the Kaesŏng Wang descent group expanded, both through reproduction and by the addition of new branches of perhaps doubtful legitimacy, with some members rising to the ranks of the civil bureaucracy. Although the Kaesŏng Wang were more prominent than the descendants of Pak Tŏkhwa, they were far from the heights of Chosŏn society, and they do reveal a very different image of Chosŏn in contrast to that provided by more prominent descent groups.

Sadly, the genuine value of this aspect of the book is obscured by a very poor structure that almost seems designed to prevent any argument from emerging. In the prologue, Park declares the purpose of his book as follows:

The post-Koryŏ plight of the Kaesŏng Wang raises a number of historically meaningful questions. Above all, why did the Chosŏn royal house massacre members of the formal royal house only to reinstate them? As the Wangs recovered from a population bottleneck, how did descent lines of varying shades of social status emerge? How did the fate of a long-departed dynasty come to serve as a medium for dissent centuries after the 1392 dynastic change? And what impact did such forces of modernity as colonialism, nationalism, industrialization, and urbanization have on the Kaesŏng Wang as an increasingly heterogeneous collective? (2)

Let me get the third question out of the way in advance: “How did the fate of the long-departed dynasty come to serve as a medium of dissent long after the 1392 dynastic change?” Although this question is clearly the basis for the very title of Park’s book, the simple answer is that it did not serve as a medium of dissent. At no point does the author successfully establish that the memory of the Koryŏ period had any actual relationship to dissent after the very early Chosŏn. To be sure, Park describes pro-Koryŏ stories told in early twentieth-century Kaesŏng (37–38), but those hardly constitute significant dissent on their own. At times, Park quotes literary works that reveal nostalgia for Koryŏ and refers to historians who, writing long after the dynastic transition, defend the legitimacy of the final monarchs of the Koryŏ dynasty who were overthrown by Yi Sŏnggye, but he errs if he imagines that either the poets or historians were in any way attempting to undermine the legitimacy of the Chosŏn dynasty. In fact, by the sixteenth century, commemoration of the Koryŏ royal house was fully part of court ritual and lacked any association with disloyalty. So, the third question rests on a false premise.

Returning to the first question, it is indeed potentially meaningful to ask why the Kaesŏng Wang were purged and then restored (and actually sponsored by) the Chosŏn court. Park’s discussion of this topic, in the first chapter, “Death and Resurrection, 1392–1450,” forms perhaps the best chapter in the book. Covering the reigns of the first four kings of the Chosŏn period, the chapter explores the surviving evidence for the massacre that occurred in 1394 after an accusation of treachery against members of the Kaesŏng Wang and continued until 1398, by which time most members of the descent group seem to have either died or concealed their origins. Park then explores the decision by T’aejong (r. 1400–1418) in 1413 to intervene on behalf of a member of the Koryŏ royal house, a man with the non-elite (or perhaps even Mongol) name Kŏŭromi, who was the son of a concubine and a descendant of Koryŏ’s King Hyŏnjong (r. 1009–1031). Although the discovery of this remaining member of the Koryŏ

royal family initially resulted in a court investigation involving the torture of those involved, in the end T'aejong ordered that his ministers stop calling on him to execute the distant descendants of the Koryŏ royal house. Although this order did not immediately end calls to persecute the remnants of the Koryŏ royal house, it was the beginning of the end, and indeed under T'aejong's successor Sejong (r. 1418–1450), a number of Kaesŏng Wang gained significant status. The descendants of not only Wang Kŏŭromi but also other Kaesŏng Wang gained positions in officialdom and roles as representatives of the fallen Koryŏ monarchy, even while the Chosŏn court sponsored commemorative activities related to the fallen Koryŏ royal house.

To understand both the purge and the later rehabilitation of the Kaesŏng Wang, Park engages in some comparative analysis with other dynastic transitions that occurred at about the same time: namely, the transition from the Kamakura to Ashikaga shogunate in Japan, the Yuan-Ming transition in China, and the Byzantine-Ottoman transition in Asia Minor and the Balkans. These comparisons are potentially interesting, but the discussion ends weakly, with Park acknowledging that “much of the ‘data’ is inevitably qualitative and speculatively quantitative,” as is indeed revealed by the table in which he acknowledges that key evidence in many cases is doubtful or uncertain (18). This admission shows admirable honesty on Park's part but also causes me to wonder why he bothered with this table in the first place.

Ultimately, to answer this question, for either Chosŏn or the other states that Park discusses, a close analysis of the political dynamics of the new dynasty would be necessary. During any dynastic transition, the progeny of the earlier royal house could potentially become the focal point of a counter coup d'état in a way that is not true for the rest of the ruling class, and so can arouse the suspicion, rightly or wrongly, of the new royal house. This suspicion encourages a purge. However, a discouragement of a purge is the fact that the new dynasty, in nearly all circumstances, inherits much of its authority from the precedents set by the predecessor, which therefore cannot be entirely discounted. The question then, surely, is whether the new royal house is at all threatened by the earlier one. Under T'aejo, the Kaesŏng Wang could still have attracted the renewed loyalty of high officials and the support of the Ming. Although our surviving sources tend to make T'aejo seem reluctant to pursue a purge demanded by his high officials, and Park assumes that T'aejo was simply too weak to resist these demands (21–22), I am doubtful. On the one hand, T'aejo had much more to lose from a Koryŏ revival than his officials, though both he and his heirs had reason to play up his humane reluctance. On the other hand, his high officials had good reason to take a hard line on the Koryŏ royal house in court discussion, lest they be suspected of disloyalty by T'aejo (who may have been relatively weak but was hardly powerless and certainly was fully capable of having rivals executed). By the reign of T'aejong, however, there was simply very little danger that Wang Kŏŭromi—born to a concubine and a distant descendant of a Koryŏ monarch—would ever gain the support of either the aristocracy or the Ming emperor. Indeed T'aejong himself described his refusal to continue the purge quite clearly: “A monarch who, after a change of dynasties, nevertheless fears the

survival of the most distant descendants of [the previous royal house] and seeks to destroy them all, is acting like the most petty of rulers. How could I possibly act in such a manner?" (*T'aejong sillok* 26:46b–47a; *T'aejong* 13 (1413)/12/1<sup>2</sup>). Quite so. A distant royal descendant, as *T'aejong* correctly pointed out, was no danger to anybody, and this, above all, explains why the purge could come to an end.

As for Park's second question, about the reemergence of the Kaesŏng Wang descent group, and his fourth question, concerning the impact of modernity on the Kaesŏng Wang, these are broad, descriptive questions, which might be simply summarized as "What happened with the Kaesŏng Wang during the remainder of the Chosŏn period?" They could indeed become the basis of very interesting questions, and there are indeed many interesting themes—the formation of new branches of the Kaesŏng Wang, the continued royal sponsorship of the Sungŭijŏn, and so on—that emerge from a careful reading of this book. However, in what is for me the most disappointing aspect of the book, these interesting themes are obscured by the book's organization. Not only is it almost completely chronological, but key chronological divisions are determined (oddly, for a work on social history) by political events, and indeed by the reigns of monarchs.

To outline the problem broadly: chapter 1 extends over the reigns of the first three kings of Chosŏn from 1392 to 1450; chapter 2 begins with the fourth monarch in 1450 and continues until the rise of political factions in 1589; chapter 3 begins with 1589 and ends with the death of the king Kyŏngjong in 1724; chapter 4 begins with the reign of Yŏngjo and ends before Kojong's reign in 1864; and chapter 5 covers the reigns of Kojong and Sunjong up to the colonization of Korea by Japan in 1910. Just like *A Family of No Prominence*, the book ends not with a conclusion but with an epilogue discussing more recent members of the descent group. But whereas the epilogue to *A Family of No Prominence* includes a strong call for a different approach to genealogical research, the epilogue to *A Genealogy of Dissent* has no argument or theme but simply lists members of the Kaesŏng Wang since 1910. Not only the chapters but also their subsections are determined by the reigns of monarchs. Although the subsections in chapters 1 and 2 are organized, as one would suspect, by key transitions in the development of the Kaesŏng Wang, all of the subsections in chapters 3 and 4 are determined by the reigns of kings, whereas the subsections of chapter 5 are determined by important political transitions during the reign of Kojong. Each chapter, and each subsection, begins with a historical overview of the period with generally no more than a brief reference, in the case of the chapter introductions, to the Kaesŏng Wang at the end. Furthermore, the material discussed within each subsection is also arranged chronologically according to the reigns of individual kings, and the reigns of kings themselves are also introduced by brief historical surveys. This structure is pursued rigidly. For example, in the case of Yŏnsan kun (r. 1494–1506), only one event related to the Kaesŏng Wang occurred during his reign, but Park nevertheless surveys the key events of his reign, lists that single event

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://sillok.history.go.kr>.

related to the Kaesŏng Wang, and then moves on to the next king (63). At no point does Park explain this structure, or say why the individual reigns of kings are significant for understanding the social changes of the Kaesŏng Wang.

It should be emphasized here that these paragraphs of historical summary are made up of information that is generally not connected to the Kaesŏng Wang at all, and indeed these summaries read, overwhelmingly, like the broad outlines that one might expect from a textbook. As a result, information concerning the Kaesŏng Wang is never organized or analyzed, making it very difficult to understand what, if anything, Park is attempting to argue. For example, chapter 4 begins with a three-paragraph introduction, with the first paragraph listing the key political events of the reign—the Yi Injwa uprising of 1728, the execution of Crown Prince Sado in 1762, the Policy of Impartiality under the eighteenth-century monarchs, the emergence of new factions during the late eighteenth century, and the decline of the monarchy during the nineteenth century. The second paragraph discusses the social historical developments of the period; not surprisingly, considering Park’s area of expertise, this paragraph reads much better and is far less hackneyed than the others, but it makes no reference to how the Kaesŏng Wang fit in with these changes. The third paragraph is concerned with ideological developments, and Park surveys the persistence of conservative orthodox Confucians and of the belief that Chosŏn was the only remaining heir to the Chinese tradition, the rise of so-called *Sirhak*, which Park (unsuitably, in my view) refers to as Reformed Confucianism, the entrance of “Western Learning” into Chosŏn and the spread of Catholicism, and the rise of a new religion called Tonghak (“Eastern Learning”) in 1860. The introductory summary makes no reference to the Kaesŏng Wang. Then, at the beginning of the first subsection (111), Park provides a survey of the reign of Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776), mentioning once more the Yi Injwa Rebellion, the policy of Impartiality, and the execution of Crown Prince Sado. Additionally, he mentions the new legal code under Yŏngjo, his policy of tax reform, and the fact that the court commissioned a number of important books, including the *Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea* and the *Supplement to the Five Rites of State*. Fortunately, the next paragraph provides a short summary of the activities of Yŏngjo with regard to the Kaesŏng Wang—though Park neither tells us the significance of Yŏngjo’s actions nor introduces an argument.

Park provides a similar survey at the beginning of the section on Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800) that describes Chŏngjo’s restoration of the honor of his father the Crown Prince Sado, the execution of aristocratic Catholics, literary reforms, limited encouragement of private commerce, and commissioning of some key publications. For Chŏngjo, Park provides no second paragraph outlining Chŏngjo’s approach to the Kaesŏng Wang. The third subsection lacks an introductory summary but includes Park’s usual paragraph-long introductions of each individual monarch—the rise of in-law families, the Hong Kyŏngnye uprising, and the purge of Catholics during the reign of Sunjo (r. 1800–1834); the purges of Catholics and the turmoil of the state under the juvenile Hŏnjong (r. 1834–1849); and, for the reign of Ch’ŏljong (r. 1849–1864), a

discussion of the irregular succession that brought him to the throne, the uprising against corruption in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, the great growth of Catholicism under his reign, and the emergence of Tonghak as a new religion.

In my estimation, some of this introductory information is wrong, notably Park's discussion of the division between conservative Confucians and the so-called reformed Confucians. But the fundamental problem is that much of this information is not useful for understanding developments among the Kaesŏng Wang, and the information that might have been informative is not brought into a context where its connection to the subject matter of the book can be clarified. Park mentions Catholicism several times in chapters 3, 4, and 5, but only in the introductory summaries, subsection introductions, or reign introductions. Although there is considerable scholarship on late-Chosŏn Catholicism, it appears that the Kaesŏng Wang were neither Catholics nor anti-Catholics, so why mention the subject so frequently or, for that matter, at all? The development of Tonghak in no way involves any of the Kaesŏng Wang, nor does the death of the Sado Crown Prince. None of the books published under Yŏngjo or Chŏngjo (or, for that matter, earlier monarchs) are ever mentioned outside the introductory passages, nor are they of significance for understanding the Kaesŏng Wang, so why list them? Park mentions members of the Kaesŏng Wang who were honored for their resistance to Yi Injwa rebels (114), but he does not convincingly demonstrate this event's significance. He describes a number of "reformed Confucians," scholars who discussed Koryŏ history, but at no point does he explain why the fact that they were "reformed" was significant for their historical understanding of Koryŏ.

It is a pity that Park's book is not built on a different, more thematic structure, for he has assembled fascinating and valuable information. For example, in chapter 4, Park discusses efforts by Yŏngjo to elevate descendants of the Koryŏ royal house, and indeed the descendants of loyal Koryŏ ministers, to officialdom, and to help descendants of the Koryŏ royal house who suffered from low status. Woven into this subject are the efforts by Yŏngjo to provide direct support to the Sungŭijŏn and to the commemoration of Koryŏ legacies, culminating in a royal visit to the old Koryŏ capital of Kaesŏng. Park follows this interesting exploration, albeit somewhat awkwardly, with a discussion of the changing historiography of the Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition under Yŏngjo.

Yŏngjo and his successor Chŏngjo did indeed actively sponsor the descendants of such people as Korean loyal subjects and martyrs, Ming loyalists, and earlier monarchs. Although Park refers to some examples, he does not develop the discussion. The two monarchs were also unusually active in ritual matters and commemorative activities, the most obvious example being their personal involvement in rituals to the Ming. Their approach to rituals related to the Koryŏ dynasty, and their sponsorship of the descendants of Koryŏ kings and loyal ministers of Koryŏ, might well provide a new understanding of their reigns, but although Park lists many tantalizing details, he does not engage in any real analysis. Did eighteenth-century monarchs approach the Sungŭijŏn differently from earlier monarchs? I expect that they did, but even if there

was no difference, this would also be a fascinating discovery, one that would require me to considerably modify the conclusions of my own research. It is thus most unfortunate that the book is structured in such a way as to obscure any broader conclusions of that sort.

A slightly different problem is that Park provides no evidence that the changing historiography of the Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition played much of a role in the changing status of the Kaesŏng Wang, in my view presumably because the two phenomena were in fact completely unrelated. A better structure would have either allowed Park to prove me wrong or, more likely, would have made this incongruity more obvious, and might thus have encouraged Park to remove such superfluous material before publication.

Both Wang and Park's works are valuable contributions. Insofar as I note weaknesses in Wang's work, this is only to say that *Remaking the Chinese Empire* is not the final word on this perennial subject of debate—a welcome conclusion for Wang, I expect! As for *A Genealogy of Dissent*, I cannot recommend it to nonspecialists in Chosŏn history, for the simple reason that a fair amount of knowledge concerning Chosŏn is required to make sense of the text. I find this perplexing, as Park's own earlier book, *A Family of No Prominence*, provides a model for how the book could have been written. That being said, I can certainly recommend Park's scholarship more generally, and await with anticipation his next publication.

## References

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