

## Book Notes

*Chokpo wa Chosŏn sahoe: 15-17-segi kyebo ūsik ūi pyŏnhwa wa sahoe kwan'gyemang* (The genealogy and Chosŏn society: the transformation of genealogical consciousness and social networks from the 15th to the 17th Century) by Kwŏn Kisŏk. Seoul: Taehaksa, 2011. 676pp.

In the city of Taejŏn (Ch'ungch'ŏngnam-to), one can find a peculiar garden, the *Ppuri* Park, which opened in 1997. The main attractions in this park are the 130 sculptures displaying the origins of the different family names in Korea. With the Korea Genealogy Museum established in 2010 within the garden, this park is the first in the world to be equipped with the appropriate elements pertaining to the theme of “filial piety” (*hyo*). With numerous visitors from all over the country, this park is considered as a successful enterprise taken by a local government (Chunggu Office, city of Taejŏn). The park held a *Ppuri munhwa ch'ukche* (Roots culture festival) this year for four days, from May 23 to 26, with the theme of *Taehanmin'guk sŏngssi iyagi, ppuri munhwa ūi hyangyŏn* (The story of family names in Korea, celebrating one's roots culture), and welcomed 170,000 visitors.<sup>1</sup> This example clearly shows that while on the one hand we see a rapid decline of traditional family relations and of the meaning of kinship in Korean society, on the other hand, there is still a strong sense of attachment to them, and many feel nostalgia for traditional family relations.

This book is a revision of the author's doctoral thesis submitted in 2010 and

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1. See <http://www.ccnnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=30528>. For the park, see <http://ppuri.djjunggu.go.kr>

deals with the genealogy (*chokpo*), a systematic record of family relations that sits at the core of the culture of family relations in Korea. The book more specifically focuses on the compilation process of genealogies during the Chosŏn era and traces the changes in the meaning of kinship (*ch'injok*) according to each period. The author mainly relies on the prefaces of the genealogies, which are analyzed in view of the following core questions: what were the objectives for publishing genealogies; what were the circumstances and process of publication; and who took part in this process. Whenever a genealogy was republished by later generations, the original preface was carried over into these later editions and labeled “preface from the old genealogy” (*kubosŏ* 舊譜序). Thanks to this practice, we know something about genealogies from the 15th and 16th centuries, very few of which have been preserved. Furthermore, many prefaces were also included in their author’s literary collection (*munjip*), from which many examples can be additionally extracted. The author has extracted over 100 examples, which he obtained the National Central Library (the institution with the largest collection of genealogies in Korea), from literary collections, and from documents held at Kyujanggak.

The book is divided into three main parts, and each part deals with a specific stage in the development of the *chokpo*. The first part relates to the period from the 15th to the 16th century, when the “collective documentation of lineage” first started. Prior to this period, diverse family lineage documentations of smaller scale existed, assembled according to the individual needs and interest of the compiler, such as family registries (*hojŏk* 戶籍) or family books (*kach’ŏp* 家牒). During this period, the genealogy was essentially cognatic (*naeoe chonghapo* 內外綜合譜), including both paternal and maternal lines. Furthermore, the publication was the result of individual efforts or at most of the cooperation between a few close relatives. Thus the genealogies from this period reflect how Koreans understood kinship at the time: although the concept of the genealogy had been accepted from China, the patrilineal kinship community that the book sought to reflect had not been formed yet. At the time, the genealogy was simply a product of blood ties among the most distinguished and powerful families of Seoul, emanating from a “cognatic distinguished family consciousness” (*naeoe myŏngjok ūsik* 內外名族意識).

The second part covers the late 16th century until the 17th century, when genealogies of relatives with the same surname (*tongsŏngbo* 同姓譜) first appeared. It is during this time that the consciousness of belonging to the same family, centered along the paternal line, first emerged through the efforts of a leading minority, and genealogies centered on the same family name were therefore preferred. As a result, the lineage format of the genealogy changed, and

a compilation of a record of descendants of the same surname began. Unlike the cognatic genealogies of the previous period, in these agnatic genealogies grandsons not in the male line began to be excluded or at least suppressed. The compilation of the genealogy became more sophisticated and structured; it became the collaborative effort of often distant kinsmen, while the participation of relatives of a different surname became at best symbolic.

Finally, the third part of the book examines the trends in the compilation and publication of genealogies during the 17th century. The number of such compilations greatly increased in the 17th century, something which was made possible by the existence of numerous older genealogies of a decent standard on which they could build. The same period witnessed an expansion of the regional spread of the families who compiled genealogies. Whereas the compilation of genealogies had previously been restricted to capital elites, starting in the late 16th century regional elites also started to compile genealogies, while there were also many cases of cooperation between the two groups. Besides a geographic expansion, we also see a widening of the social background of those who compiled genealogies: previously restricted to elites holding public office, in the 17th century lower-ranking officials also started to compile them. Behind this transition was the awareness of belonging to a family of the same surname, transcending region and social class.

As the author points out in his introduction, in the study of Korean history, genealogies have generally been treated as a tool rather than an object of study in their own right. Because of the possibility that later generations had embellished or even forged them, mainstream scholarship has always approached them with caution. As a result, there have been only a limited number of studies on the genealogies, which moreover focused mostly on explaining the kinship system and customs according to different periods, based on an analysis of the compilation methods and the concept of genealogy. Unlike these previous studies, the author directs his focus on the manufacturing of the genealogy, bringing together a wide variety of examples, which he subjects to a thorough analysis and classification. His work provides more concrete and detailed information on the distinct tendencies of manufacturing genealogies according to different periods during the Chosŏn era.

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