

The Historical Formation of China's Domain and Its Borders

역대 중국의 판도 형성과 변강

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For the past few years, research on East Asian history, including Chinese history, has been becoming more active in Korea. There is an internal motive for this, but more crucially, it is spurred by the ‘Northeast Project’, which began in China in 2002. The ‘Northeast Project’ has provided an opportunity to gain a new understanding about China, as well as new general ideas, introducing the concept of ‘border region [邊疆, bianjiang]’, which means ‘outlying territory near the border of the country.’ After the introduction of the ‘Northeast Project’, regular research about ‘China’ and ‘border region [邊疆, bianjiang]’ in the academic world began to be published.

The Historical Formation of China's Domain and Its Borders [역대 중국의 판도 형성과 변강, yeokdae jungguk-ui pando hyeongseong-gwa byeongang] was published by Hanshin University Press in 2008, supported by funds from the National Research Foundation of Korea. This is a product of the research on Chinese territorial formation and control of borders by thirteen historians, including Professor Byeong-woo Ahn, in the fields of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Mongolian history. It is representative of the research on the topic since the

publication of *Chinese Perception of the Border Regions and Border Conflicts* [중국의 변강인식과 갈등, jungguk-ui byeongang insik-gwa galdeung] in 2007.

The book is a collection of 13 papers, which are divided into two sections. The first section discusses territorial formation and borders [邊疆, bianjiang] in pre-modern China, and the second section examines territorial formation and borders [邊疆, bianjiang] in modern and contemporary China. The contents of the book are as follows:

Preface

Section One: Territorial Formation and Border Control in Pre-modern China

- The Scope and Domain of ‘Zheng [政]’ in the Pre-Qin State
by Kim Seok-woo [金錫佑] (Ph.D. from Sogang University, currently a Professor at Wonkwang University)
- Qin and Han’s Territorial Formation and Management of the Borders [邊疆, bianjiang]
by Lee Yu-seong [李裕成] (Ph.D. from Korea University, currently a Lecturer at Korea University)
- The Establishment of the Sun-Wu [孫-吳] Regime in the Period of the Three Kingdoms and the Change of Borders in Ancient China: Focusing on the Change of Borders in Jiangdong [江東] and Jiangnan [江南]
by Hong Seung-hyeon [洪承賢] (Ph.D. from Sogang University, currently a Research Professor at Hansung University)
- The Defense Strategy against Xixia [西夏] and Territorial Management of the Northern Song Dynasty in Shaanxi Wu Lu [陝西五路]
by Lee Gyeong-yong [李慶龍] (Ph.D. from National Taiwan University, currently a Visiting Professor at Sejong University)
- The East Asian Alliance System and the Territories of Khitan and Jin
by Yun Yeong-in [尹榮寅] (Ph.D. from UCLA, currently a

Professor at Youngsan University)

- Yuan's Princely Administration 'Jarghuchi [斷事官]' in Goryeo and Goryeo-Yuan Relations
by Ahn Byeong-woo [安秉佑] (Ph.D. from Seoul National University, currently a Professor at Hanshin University)
- The Formation and Change of Ming-Mongol Borders
by Noh Gi-sik [盧基植] (Ph.D. from Korea University, currently a Researcher at Northeast Asian History Foundation)

Section Two: Territorial Formation and Historical Influence on the Border Regions in Modern and Contemporary China

- Dispute between China and Vietnam to Control Liu Meng [六猛]: The Conflict of 'Historicity' and 'Nowness'
by Choi Byeong-wuk [崔秉旭] (Ph.D. from Australian National University, currently a Professor at Inha University)
- The New Government of the Mongol Territory at the End of the Qing China
by Lee Pyeong-rae [李平來] (Ph.D. from Mongol Science Academy Institute for History, currently a Research Professor at Hankook University of Foreign Studies)
- The Territorial Formation of the Republic of China and Tibet
by Park Jang-bae [朴章培] (Ph.D. from Sogang University, currently a Research Professor at the University of Incheon)
- The Territorial Formation of the People's Republic of China and Xinjiang[新疆]: The Uniqueness of Xinjiang and the Challenge of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps [新疆生產建設兵團] at Home and Abroad
by Park Seon-yeong [朴宣泠] (Ph.D. from Nanjing University, currently a Professor at Pohang University of Science and Technology)
- Research on the Eastern Territory of China – Focusing on the

Restitution of Heixiazi Dao [黑瞎子島] to China

by Choi Deok-gyu [崔惠圭] (Ph.D. from the Russia Science Academy Institute of History, currently a Researcher at the Northeast Asian History Foundation)

- An Investigation on China's Understanding of Its Borders – based on 'The Cultural Theory of Changbai Shan [長白山文化論]' by Yun Hwi-tak [尹輝鐸] (Ph.D. from Sogang University, currently a Professor at Hankyong University)

In the following are summarized the major points of each article.

In "The Scope and Domain of 'Zheng [政]' in the Pre-Qin State," Kim Seok-woo [金錫佑] examines the meaning of being 'autonomous' and 'independent' according to the degree of influence exerted by 'Zheng [政]', or 'governance', to define the relationship among pre-modern states. The author argues that if a region was characterized by independent domestic rule, then it could be considered to be both 'autonomous' and 'independent'. The article claims that if a region was governed under a separate Zheng [政], it should be considered to have been an 'independent' state, even if its king had been installed by the Chinese emperor or it paid tribute to China or even if it belonged to a Chinese administrative division such as *jun xian* [郡縣], *ji mi zhou* [羈縻州] or *tu si* [土司].

In "Qin and Han's Territorial Formation and Management of the Borders [邊疆, bianjiang]," Lee Yu-seong [李裕成] discusses how the border regions were managed during the Qin and Han periods in the process of the formation of their domains. The article explains the formation of the domains of Qin and Han and their management of border regions and the border defense system in the Western Han.

In "The Establishment of the Sun-Wu [孫-吳] Regime in the Period of the Three Kingdoms and the Change of Borders in Ancient China: Focusing on the Change of Borders in Jiangdong [江東] and Jiangnan [江南]," Hong Seung-hyeon [洪承賢] describes how the kingdom of Wu

[吳] under the Sun [孫] clan during the period of the Three Kingdoms established itself in the land of Idi [夷狄], which lay outside of the traditional Chinese domain. In the process of territorial expansion, this kingdom established a special administrative organization, *Buduwei* [部都尉], to rule Idi and it also functioned as a military outpost. As the area became “Sinicized”, the local administrative system of commandery and prefecture [郡縣, junxian] was gradually established. This article argues that peripheral regions, with their contact with China, came to be part of China, giving birth to the notions of Zhongxia [中夏], Dongxia [東夏], Xixia [西夏] and Nanxia [南夏].

In “The Defense Strategy against Xixia [西夏] and Territorial Management of the Northern Song Dynasty in Shaanxi Wu Lu [陝西五路],” Lee Gyeong-yong [李慶龍] notes that the Northern Song deployed military forces in strategic locations along Shaanxi Wu-Lu [陝西五路] area to defend against Xixia [西夏]. They also created buffer zones of 20 *li* [里: one *li* is approximately 0.393 km.] in width to prevent border conflict with different ethnic groups. This article also notes that the Northern Song drew the border with Xixia and demarcated it with signs and co-opted different ethnic groups into their military system.

In “The East Asian Alliance System and the Territories of Khitan and Jin,” Yun Yeong-in [尹榮寅] claims that from the 10th to the 13th centuries there was no unitary order based on a tributary system in Northeast Asia. Rather, countries of equal relations exchanged equal vows through which they recognized each other’s legitimacy and borders. Today’s China, however, considers the war between Khitan and Song to have been a civil war and a Chinese-internal conflict between different ethnic groups. The author offers the criticism that China is applying the borders of a contemporary nation state to the history of the past.

In “Yuan’s Princely Administration ‘Jarghuchi [斷事官]’ in Goryeo and Goryeo-Yuan Relations,” Ahn Byeong-woo [安秉佑] notes that the traditional Mongol institution, ‘Jarghuchi [斷事官]’, was also adopted to

Korea's Kingdom of Goryeo, which was within Yuan's sphere of influence at that time. However, the Goryeo King had actual sovereign power, and the Jarghuchi was unable to restrain or challenge the reign of the Goryeo King. Therefore, the Goryeo king actually had more leverage of control in the relationship between Yuan and Goryeo.

In "The Formation and Change of Ming-Mongol Borders," Noh Gi-sik [盧基植] argues that throughout the Ming era, the Great Wall served as a national boundary between the Mongols and the Ming Dynasty, the Mongols occupying the north of the Wall and Ming the south. The author criticizes China's contemporary claim that the land north of the Great Wall, where the Mongols lived, was the border region of the Ming solely on the basis of the anachronistic view that the Mongols at that time were part of the Chinese nation.

In "Dispute between China and Vietnam to Control Liu Meng [六猛]: The Conflict of 'Historicity' and 'Nowness'," Choi Byeong-wuk [崔秉旭] discusses the border conflict between China and Vietnam in the first half of the 19th century. In this conflict, China emphasized historicity while Vietnam emphasized current realities of the time and the presence of Vietnamese in the disputed area. To deal with this, China was well-prepared with historical books, administrative records and weapons, while Vietnam merely had weapons. In the end the territory between China and Vietnam, Liu Meng, was filled with simmering tension.

In "The New Government of the Mongol Territory at the End of the Qing China," Lee Pyeong-rae [李平來] examines the Qing Dynasty's last reform of the governance in the Mongol region before it collapsed. Those in Outer Mongolia, with their nationalistic tenets, opposed the reforms, as well as the development of pasture lands for other purposes, while the Mongol elite in Inner Mongolia became feudal landlords who supported the reforms. Because of this, the latter region became part of today's China.

In "The Territorial Formation of the Republic of China and Tibet," Park Jang-bae [朴章培] discusses Republican China's perceptions of

Chinese territory and its actual domain. Qing expelled Western Mongol forces from Tibet in 1720 and ruled the area. This article analyzes the process of conflict among Britain, Qing and the Republican China over Tibet from the mid-19th century onward. The author claims that the Tibetans had the notion of “One Tibet” and that in the early 20th century, they were moving towards political autonomy, away from the influence of China. However, they were lukewarm to modern reforms and as a result, were annexed to China in 1951.

In “The Territorial Formation of the People’s Republic of China and Xinjiang[新疆]: The Uniqueness of Xinjiang and the Challenge of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps [新疆生產建設兵團] at Home and Abroad,” Park Seon-yeong [朴宣泐] deals with two issues: first, Republican China’s perception of its territories and its conflict with Xinjiang due to this perception and second, the formation and role of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps in stabilizing China’s territories. Park concludes that the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps took on the tasks of production, propaganda and the military, and this contributed to the stability and defense of the border regions.

In “Research on the Eastern Territory of China – Focusing on the Restitution of Heixiazi Dao [黑瞎子島] to China,” Choi Deok-gyu [崔惠圭] analyzes the process of the peaceful division of Heixiazi Dao [黑瞎子島] in November 2007. Heixiazi Dao is an island located where the Heilongjiang [黑龍江] meets the Ussuri River. The island had been the focus of border conflict between China and Russia for 78 years since 1929, but the two countries reached a peaceful agreement to divide the island by installing a border demarcation post in November 2007. The author concludes that the peaceful division of Heixiazi Dao [黑瞎子島] was possible because of friendly bilateral relations based on the common trust and interests between the two countries.

In “An Investigation on China’s Understanding of Its Borders – based on ‘The Cultural Theory of Changbai Shan [長白山文化論],” Yun Hwi-tak [尹輝鐸] criticizes activities by the Changbai Shan Cultural

Study Group, which was formed in 2002. The Changbai Shan Cultural Study Group characterizes the culture of Mt. Baekdu as embodying “the representative culture and spiritual symbol of Northeast China.” Through the Cultural theory of Chanbai Shan, they define Mt. Baekdu as being China’s ‘Changbai Shan [長白山]’ or Mt. Changbai, and the culture of Mt. Baekdu as being ‘the culture of the Chinese Nation.’ All these endeavors are designed to cut off Manchuria, which is connected to the Korean peninsula through Mt. Baekdu, from the historical and cultural heritage of the peninsula, and thus stabilize the Northeast border region of China.

Contemporary China’s perception of its borders and domain is embedded with the logic of an integrated multi-ethnic nation state. This vision considers any ethnic group that ever existed historically or exists today within the borders of today’s People’s Republic of China to be part of the peoples of China, past and present. Thus, their historical activities are considered to have been part of Chinese history, and the territory of every historical dynasty is naturally contained within today’s Chinese territory. Emphasizing that today’s Chinese is composed of 56 different ethnic groups, China is reaching back to its past history.

Korean academia has been critical toward China’s logic that it has been an integrated multi-ethnic nation state throughout its history. This book takes a critical approach from a historical perspective to the question of China’s formation of its domain and border regions. By looking only at one area or one era, we cannot derive the characteristics of China’s domain formation or rule of its border regions. The thirteen authors in this book examine the peculiarities and generalities of China’s domain formation and rule of its border regions through diachronic research.

The authors included in this book criticize a branch of Chinese academia that approaches Chinese history in the context of the modern nation-state and hence defines its past history and domain based on the

current state of borders and peoples. They view a historical perception based on 'nowness' as problematic, which defines peoples and territories based on the nation-states formed after the modern era, overriding the reality of the past periods that had no clear boundaries of ethnicity and territory.

This study attempts to find spatial and diachronic generalities and peculiarities in China's domain formation and rule of its border regions, taking a critical stance to the approach taken by some contemporary Chinese historians. By doing so, the authors reveal problems and logical contradictions of China's perception of its history, which we have been accepting without questioning.

While this book gives us deeper insights and new perspectives on China's domain and border questions, it also leaves us with some unanswered questions. For the regions and eras dealt with in this book, further on-going research is required, especially regarding the border questions involving the 14 countries that share a border with the People's Republic of China (PRC). China has resolved border disputes with its neighbors, sometimes diplomatically, sometimes with force. The PRC has resolved almost all territorial disputes with various countries, including superpowers such as Russia and India, as well as with Vietnam. Combining studies of China's past domain and borders with studies of China's contemporary border disputes and solution methods allow us to obtain a deeper understanding of these critical issues.