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Chinese Academic Research on the History of Sino-Korean Relations: The Work of Chen Shangsheng

Introduction

"We always show our innermost thoughts to each other like a jade jar reflecting the cold moon" 肝膽每相照, 冰壺映寒月.

Xi Jinping, the president of the People's Republic of China, quoted this line from a poet of Joseon, Heo Gyun 許筠, during his lecture at Seoul National University on July 4, 2014 and mentioned that "It well fits the description of the friendship 友誼 between the people of the two countries of China and Korea."

Heo Gyun wrote the poem containing the line above to bid farewell to Wu Mingji 吳明濟, who was returning home back to Ming after fighting the Japanese troops alongside the Joseon army during the Japanese Second Invasion of the Korean peninsula in 1597 (Jeongyu jaeran). Wu Mingji collected hundreds of poems of Joseon during his time in Joseon and compiled them into a book titled *Anthology of Joseon Poems* (*Chaoxian shixuan* 朝鮮詩選) upon his return. This was then included in "Treatise on Literature" (Yemunji 藝文志) 8, volume 49 of the *Elaborated History of Korea* (*Haedong yeoksa* 海東繹史). *Anthology of Joseon Poems*, however, did not gain much popularity in China after that. It thus seems unlikely that president Xi read Heo Gyun's poem in person and quoted it during this historical lecture. Then where did he or those who wrote his speech discover this line?

In his 1997 book, *3,000 Years of Cultural Exchange Between China and Korea* (*Zhong-Han jiaoliu sanqian-nian* 中韓交流三千年), Chen Shangsheng 陳尙勝 uses the line quoted above as the title for a chapter describing the friendly relations between Ming and Joseon. He introduces the line as a "high-level summary and description of the pure friendship between the Chinese

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and Korean peoples" (Chen 1997b, 42). Given that his book summarizes the cultural exchange between China and Korea, perhaps it was this very book that brought the aforementioned line by Heo Gyun into the limelight.

Recently, Chinese historians have been making enormous achievements in their research. Of course, the thousands of years of tradition undergirding the study of Chinese history needs no explanation, and the accomplishments of the so-called New History 新史學 school after the twentieth century also boast a staggering amount. The advancements made in both the quantity and quality of the researchers as well as the articles published by them after the 2000s, however, are especially dazzling.

Amid this trend, there has also been an explosive amount of research on the history of the foreign relations of China during the traditional era. In tandem with the rapid rise of China, the work looking at the international order during what is called the glorious period, namely, premodern China, and examining the ideas, policies, and foreign relations of China during then has been undergoing at an extremely fast pace. Chen Shangsheng, whom this article will review, may well be the founding father and pioneer of the current research on the history of the foreign relations of China.

As of 2021, Chen Shangsheng has published seven books, edited nine academic books, and published over fifty articles. Among these, *3,000 Years of Cultural Exchange Between China and Korea* and *Collected Articles on the History of Sino-Korean Relations* (*Zhong-Han guanxi shilun* 中韓關係史論), both published in 1997, and *A Study on the History of Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations* (*Zhongguo chuantong duiwai guanxi yanjiu* 中國傳統對外關係研究), published in 2015, provide a comprehensive view on the exchange between China and Korea in the areas of politics, economics, military, and culture. Based on an analysis of the three books mentioned above, the present review will introduce Chen Shangsheng's research on the history of Sino-Korean relations and discuss its significance and something to be desired as well.

About Chen Shangsheng

Chen Shangsheng was born in 1958 in Anhui Province according to the biography provided by the School of History and Culture of Shandong University, where he has been teaching since 1985. According to the postscript written in 2015, where he briefly outlined the trajectory of his own research, Chen said that the research during the mid-1980s focused on the foreign policies of Ming, including the coastline defense system and the Ministry of Shipping 市舶司. Starting from the late 1980s, he expanded his research to the foreign relations of Qing prior to the breakout of the Opium War, which let him conduct comparative research of the entire maritime policy and foreign trade from early Ming to late Qing. This research culminated in the publication of *Closing and Opening*: *A Study on the Foreign Relations of Late Feudal China* (*Biguan yu Kaifang*: *Zhongguo fengjian wanqi duiwai guanxi yanjiu* 閉關與開放: 中國封建晚期對外關系研究) in 1993. After China and Korea established official diplomatic relations in 1992, he focused his research on the history of Sino-Korean relations given the geographical advantage of Shandong and the active exchange with many Korean scholars. The end products of this research are the two 1997 books reviewed in this article, *3,000 Years of Cultural Exchange Between China and Korea* and *Collected Articles on the History of Sino-Korean Relations*.

Chen Shangsheng was also in charge of the compilation of the National Diplomacy section (*bangjiao zhi* 邦交志) of the Official History of the Qing Dynasty Project (*Qing shi gongcheng* 清史工程), which was carried out as a national effort since the 2000s. This attests to his esteemed authority in the area of the history of China's foreign relations. Chen appears to have further expanded his research to include the entire history of foreign relations of premodern East Asia, particularly to the traditional foreign policy and diplomacy system of China, the Imjin War, and the triangular relations between China, Korea, and Japan during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. His 2015 book titled *A Study on the History of Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations* is the end product of this research. Chen also worked on the compilation of many academically accomplished books including *Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations*: *Theory, Institutions, and Policy* (*Zhongguo chuantong duiwai guanxi de sixiang, zhidu yu zhengce* 中國傳統對外關係的思想、制度與政策) (2007a), *Shandong Peninsula and Sino-Korean Exchange* (*Shandong bandao yu Zhong-Han jiaoliu* 山東半島與中韓交流) (2007b), *Confucian Civilization and Traditional Relations Between China and Korea* (*Rujia wenming yu Zhong-Han chuantong guanxi* 儒家文明與中韓傳統關系) (2008a), and *Confucian Civilization and Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations* (*Rujia wenming yu Zhongguo chuantong duiwai guanxi* 儒家文明與中國傳統對外關系) (2008b).

Chen (2015, 308) had originally kept in mind how the book published by Hu Anguo 胡安國, the Confucian scholar during Song, which contained his research on the perspective of the Sino-barbarian dichotomy (*huayiguan* 華夷觀) in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), influenced the rulers and officials of Yuan and Ming by way of the civil service examinations and the imperial tutorial system (*jingyan* 經筵). Although I do not know whether China government has history lessons on leaders taught these days, Chen's wish has been fulfilled to some degree considering how the research reflecting his warm gaze was included in president Xi's speech.

On *3,000 Years of Cultural Exchange Between China and Korea* (1997)

As the title suggests, this book covers the entire period of cultural exchange between China and Korea across all areas. The following is a brief survey of the book's contents.

Chapter 1, "Intimate Official Relations and Frequent Private Trade," looks at major historical trends in Sino-Korean relations over time beginning from Gija Joseon 箕子朝鮮 to the late nineteenth century. Sino-Korean relations began when Gija 箕子 migrated east circa 1100 BCE during the late period of Shang Dynasty and after King Wu 武王 of Zhou invested him with the title of Lord of Joseon 朝鮮侯. Then, during the late years of the Warring States period, the migrants led by Wiman 衛滿 seized control over Joseon. In 108 BCE, Emperor Wu of Han defeated Wiman Joseon and established the Four Commanderies 漢四郡 in the northern area of the Korean peninsula. The cultural exchange between China and Korea was now in full swing. Goguryeo and the Three Han States 三韓 began importing Chinese culture via the Four Commanderies, while Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla actively engaged in foreign relations with China and competed to secure the support of the Chinese court in order to stay ahead of each other. Diplomatic exchanges that took place in this process became the channel through which China's advanced civilization and culture flowed into the Korean peninsula. Between the eighth and ninth centuries, maritime exchange between Silla and Tang was particularly active. Under the auspices of Tang's open foreign policies and special Silla-friendly policies, Silla sent a large number of students and Buddhist monks to Tang to learn its advanced culture.

The exchange between Tang and Silla took place along the sea route traversing the Yellow Sea. Silla settlements called Sillabang sprouted up in Tang along the Chinese coastal areas facing the Yellow Sea. Economic and cultural exchange in the private sector was very active as well. Goryeo established suzerain-vassal (*zongfan* 宗藩) relations with the Liao and Jin dynasties in northern China for reasons of political interests, but it also maintained a steady relationship with Song, thereby importing a great deal of advanced culture. Maritime trade 海商 was particularly active between the two states, enabling the transmission of knowledge and information in addition to commercial goods. The politically friendly relations between Yuan and Goryeo led to unprecedentedly active exchange of envoys as well as government officials, scholars, and merchants, which resulted in a flourishing cultural exchange even in areas of everyday life, such as astronomy, clothes and accessories, and food. Based on the common cultural elements shared between Ming and Joseon, the two countries carried out an extremely sophisticated level of cultural exchange. Ming gave countless Confucian Classics to Joseon and contributed to the development of Confucianism in Joseon. The coming and going of envoys invigorated cultural exchange between the two countries, including the composition of texts such as *Anthology of Brilliant Flowers* (*Hwanghwajip* 皇華集) and *Record of Courting Heaven* (*Jocheonnok* 朝天錄). Ming and Joseon also cooperated in the realm of military force. The two states carried out a joint defense against the Japanese during the early fifteenth century, and Ming sent a large army to defend Joseon during Toyotomi Hideoyoshi's invasion of Joseon during the late sixteenth century. As for Qing and Joseon, although the war between the initial stages of their relationship led to a suzerain-vassal relationship, it soon shifted to very friendly terms. Instead of economically exploiting Joseon or interfering with Joseon's domestic policies, Qing actively fulfilled Joseon's economic and cultural demands. The exchange between Qing and Joseon was in fact the only channel through which Joseon carried out any kind of economic and cultural foreign exchange during its virtually isolationist period.

Chapter 2, "Economic Exchange Between China and Korea," covers trade between the two countries from the Spring and Autumn period to the late nineteenth century. Although officially the two countries exchanged tribute (*jogong* 朝貢) and return gifts (*hoesa* 回賜), the exchange was actually official trade conducted in the form of barter. Between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, maritime trade by way of the Yellow Sea was particularly active,

and after the Chinese dynasty established Beijing as its political center, trade by land via Liaodong never ceased. Spontaneous trade along the border area downstream of the Yalu River also continued to take place. The Silk Road connecting China, Central Asia, and India tends to pique the public's interest, but during 1,000 years, from when the Chinese dynasty settled in Beijing up to 1894, the route connecting Gaegyeong or Seoul to Beijing through Liaoyang boasted a tremendous volume of traffic and transported goods.

Chapter 3 is titled "The Exchange of Scientific Technology Between China and Korea" but introduces many examples of the transmission of a wide range of material culture—from everyday tools to high culture—from China to Korea as well as examples of China's influence on the further development of that culture in Korea. The examples encompass practically all areas of material culture including astronomy, astrology (*yeokak* 曆學), the manufacture of astronomical observation tools, mathematics, crops including rice and cotton and related agricultural methods, the manufacture of agricultural tools, medical technology and texts, the manufacture of paper, writing tools such as brushes and ink, type and printing technology, various kinds of dishware including earthenware, porcelain, and lacquerware, cotton weaving methods, manufacture of cold weapons and gunpowder weapons, shipbuilding technology, military strategies, and books on military tactics.

Chapter 4, "The Exchange of Scholarship, Thought, and Culture Between China and Korea," looks at the exchange of key dimensions of culture, from thought and ideas to state institutions. The use of Sinograph 漢字 in Korea allowed Korean intellectuals to directly read texts written in Sinograph and led to the acceptance of Chinese academic thought. China's intellectual class also read Korean texts written in Literary Sinitic 漢文 and as a result was infused with a large amount of scholarly information and thought. The majority of Korean textual culture, the many schools of Confucianism that were established as ruling ideologies early on in the history of Korea such as the Confucianism of Han and Tang and the study of nature and principle, and criticism against them including the main ideas of the Practical Learning School 實學 and the Enlightenment School 開化思想 during the transitional times of the modern period, mostly came from China. The high regard for history was also no exception. Additionally, Western studies were introduced into Joseon mainly in the form of Literary Sinitic translation that had been done in China.

Chapter 5, "The Exchange of State Institutions, Religion, and Ritual Culture Between China and Korea," covers state institutions and religion as well as rituals. Since the establishment of the Four Commanderies of Han, a bureaucratic apparatus influenced by the political system of China was formed and maintained in the Korean peninsula. Goryeo and Joseon were particularly influenced by all areas of Chinese bureaucracy, from the central and local Chinese bureaucratic systems to the military and the censorate. Korean legal culture was also strongly influenced by China, such as the specific articles of the penalty code (*hyeongnyul* 刑律) and the way both the legislative and judicial power was concentrated in the monarch. China and Korea resembled each other in the way they surveyed land and population, which were the basic elements of agricultural production as well as the collection of taxes. Common features also existed in the specific way land was distributed to officials, the production and distribution of salt, the school education system, and the civil service examination system by which officials were selected. China's influence could also be seen in public rituals, such as the Five Rites of the state, and private rituals such as Familial Rites, and further in attire, housing, transportation, and folk culture. Religious sentiment including Buddhism and Taoism were also influenced. What is worth noting is how Chen points out that the political system and ritual culture (*yesok* 禮俗) of China and Korea both shared the same objective: the centralization of power. Both countries institutionalized the prioritization of society over the individual and used religion and ritual culture to emphasize this across all realms of everyday life, which is a striking feature that distinguishes this culture from other cultural spheres.

Chapter 6, "The Exchange of Literature and Art Between China and Korea," presents cases of literary and artistic exchanges. Both countries created literary work based on Sinograph and Literary Sinitic and even show similarities in terms of form as well as aesthetic criteria. Although literature and art are accumulations of the cultural tradition of the people of each country, Chen saw that the resemblance was even stronger because of the continuous cultural and artistic exchange between both countries. His discussion of literature includes both poetry and novels, while his discussion of art includes paintings, calligraphy, music, and dance, among others.

The unparalleled strength of this book is that it encompasses virtually all areas of research that historians deal with. From politics and economic systems to the food, clothes, and housing, from the highly academic ideas to the religious sentiment of the people, from intricate scientific technology to

customs of common folk, Chen Shangsheng spots common features between China and Korea in almost all cultural elements, and argues that the majority of these elements in Korean history derive from or were influenced by China. As the title of the book shows, the period Chen covers spans 3,000 years, from Gija Joseon to the late nineteenth century.

Most of the large trends in Korean history were indeed undeniably influenced by China. This view, however, sharply diverges from the mainstream view that emphasizes the internal development of Korean history. After liberation, Korean historians had a tendency to overly highlight the distinctive internal development of Korean history in order to overcome colonial historiography's dependency theory of the Korean civilization (*tayulseongnon* 他律性論). By the same token, historians have viewed Korea's acceptance of Chinese culture as rather a "subjective acculturation" to it. By emphasizing first and foremost the initial influence of Chinese culture before any independent acculturation would have taken place, this book lets the reader reflect upon how Korean historians have underestimated or nearly disregarded the influence of China until now.

At the same time, the book does not feel particularly uncomfortable to read as a Korean reader since it does not solely focus on the superiority of China or espouse Sino-centrism (*junghwa juui* 中華主意). Chen also introduces examples of cultural elements flowing from Korea into China, such as the clothing style called Mamigun 馬尾裙, which was popular in Ming during the fifteenth century, and the *Precious Mirror of Eastern Medicine* (*Dong-ui bogam* 東醫寶鑑), which was published in Joseon and read widely in China after the eighteenth century, and explains that the cultural exchange between China and Korea was not unidirectional. Overall, the Sino-Korean relations are described as being conducted on extremely friendly terms. The most frequently used noun and adjective throughout the entire book may well be "friendship" (*uui* 友誼) and "friendly" (*uho jeok* 友好的), respectively.

Because this book was published many years ago, however, and due to the gap in the advancements made by research in China and Korea, there are a number of areas that differ from the general consensus among Korean historians in terms of factuality. A typical example is the issue of Gija Joseon 箕子朝鮮.

This book emphasizes the fact that many elements of Korean culture were influenced by China from very early on. The period of 3,000 years as specified in the title of the book, implies that the book traces back to when Emperor

Wu of Zhou seated Gija 箕子 as Lord of Joseon. Chen quotes the sentence "Gija led 5,000 people to Joseon including poets and writers, ritualists and musicians, physicians and pharmacists, fortune tellers and astrologers" from the *Comprehensive Mirror of the Eastern Land* (*Dongguk tonggam* 東國通鑑) several times along with another sentence he frequently quotes from the "Treatise on Geography" (*dili zhi* 地理志) of the *Book of Han* (*Han shou* 漢書), "Once Gija moved to Joseon, he taught people manners, music, farming, and weaving." Chen refers to these quotes to emphasize the transmission of culture such as literature, ritual, customs, medicine, and art as well as agricultural and textile techniques to Joseon. The general trend of Korean academic circles, however, is to deny the existence of Gija Joseon all together. As if aware of this fact, Chen (1997b, 4) asks "If early historical documents including the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) and the *Book of Han* record the fact that Gija went toward the East (Jizi donglai 箕子東來), how else can these records be explained if this facts is not true?" Korean academic circles, on the other hand, focus on the fact that these records first appear during the Han dynasty, almost 1,000 years after the period of Gija. The prevailing understanding is that the Chinese who migrated to the Commanderies of Han including Lelang Commandery cited "ancient wise men" to fabricate their origins or that Han, which was looking to conquer Gojoseon, spread the story of the migration of Gija in order to argue their preemptive right of that area.

As I have mentioned earlier, Chen Shangsheng selects and presents friendly aspects and examples among the wide variety of scenes that existed throughout Sino-Korean relations. For example, when referring to the envoys Ming sent to Joseon, he emphasizes that Ming practiced the so-called literary diplomacy (*changhe waijiao* 唱和外交) by sending civil officers that were good at composition and introduces the *Anthology of Brilliant Flowers* as the result of such efforts. Records in the *Veritable Record of Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shilu* 明實錄) in fact write that Joseon was a perfectly deferential vassal state (*fanguo* 藩國), that is, a country of propriety (*liyi zhi guo* 禮儀之國), and suggest that the relations between the two countries followed ritual and were mutually beneficial and reciprocal and also without any significant conflict. However, my analysis of the envoys dispatched from Ming to Joseon between the Yongle and Xuande eras (1403-1435) during the early fifteenth century show that 94% of the envoys sent from Beijing to Seoul were eunuchs. Moreover, they repeatedly harassed the government as well as the people of Joseon with their excessive demands.

The historical records of Ming nevertheless say nothing of such rude behavior of their own envoys (Jung 2017; 2019b). Qing-Joseon relations experienced many ups and downs, but Chen chooses to present only the friendly scenes. The food aid the Kangxi Emperor sent at the news of the poor crop in Joseon during the late seventeenth century or the way Qing had a draft of the "Chronicles of Joseon" in the *History of Ming* copied and sent to the Joseon government for their opinion in advance during the early eighteenth century are such examples. But as we know well, the relations between Qing and Joseon did not always go smoothly. The devastating second Manchu Invasion in 1637 was a shock to Joseon's core, and preparing the enormous annual tribute (*sepye* 歲幣) stipulated in the resulting peace treaty was a major problem for the Joseon court for years (Hong 2014).

Chen Shangsheng (1997b, 71) also highlights the friendly relations between China and Korea in terms of economic exchange. For instance, he writes that the trade that took place between Goryeo and Yuan was on equal terms, in which the value of the tribute Goryeo sent to Yuan was approximate to the gifts Yuan sent to Goryeo. This, however, has never been proved as a fact. For a start, Goryeo struggled to meet the demands for the enormous annual tribute (*segong* 歲貢) during the initial stages of its relations with Mongol. Although this annual tribute was discontinued after the 1280s and the tribute Goryeo sent were only ritual gifts, it is yet to be proven that Mongol consistently sent return gifts back (Jung 2020a; 2020b). Joseon-Ming relations were not much different. In addition, although Chen (1997b, 73) writes that "The value of the gifts the Qing court bestowed upon the foreign envoys were never lesser than the total value of the tribute sent by the envoys to the Qing court," this does not include the annual tribute that existed early in Joseon-Qing relations. Furthermore, according to Jeon Haejong's (1970, 160) comprehensive research, Joseon incurred great losses from the tributary relationship it had with Qing. Chen's argument is likely the result of his uncritically accepting the Sinocentric emphasis in the historical documents placed on the practice of giving more and getting less (*hou wang bo lai* 厚往薄來).

Above all, while this book examines the cultural exchange between China and Korea and emphasizes the resulting cultural similarities between the two, there is not enough interest in or description of the subjects doing the transmission and acceptance. Who carried it out? This question goes unanswered with the exception of Gija during the ancient period and Ssanggi 雙冀 during early Goryeo. Since no reference is made to a subject carrying out the exchange, this naturally leads to a gap in any sufficient explanation of motive. Did China aim to assimilate Korea, or did Korea act spontaneously? If the latter was the case, what was Korea's reason for doing so? Of course, the Chinese systems were likely more advanced, but this simple explanation does not suffice. Shouldn't there be more investigation of the characteristics and objectives of the systems and culture of China and how they were accepted by people throughout the history of Korea?

Finally, because it covers such a vast range of topics, the book does not provide a satisfactory comparison of the context in which each cultural element was exchanged. This is the flipside of the aforementioned book's strength. In the area of central bureaucracy or state rituals, including the rites of the royal household, it would not have been difficult to accept and apply Chinese culture at all. The intellectual class of Korea is generally believed to have been more proactive in this area (Choi 2013, 2017). However, Chen tends to overestimate China's influence by including areas such as clothes, food, housing, and folk culture. He would have been able to provide a more sophisticated explanation if he had stratified culture into several areas: areas that more readily became synchronized with China such as state rituals; areas that accepted the overall system but modified specific rules to accommodate Korean particularities such as the penal code; and areas of deep culture unique to Korea, where China was virtually irrelevant.

Of course, the shortcomings I have outlined above are by no means significant enough to overshadow the tremendous strength this book has. Rather, they can be seen as future research tasks Chen Shangsheng has left for his fellow researchers.

On *Collected Articles on the History of Sino-Korean Relations* (1997)

This book is an edited collection of ten articles Chen Shangsheng wrote on the history of Sino-Korean relations. The book covers nearly 2,000 years, from the second century to the late nineteenth century, and deals with a broad range of topics, but each individual article meticulously analyzes extremely detailed material and presents important agenda for each topic area. In the

book's preface, Chen Shangsheng lists the following research questions running through the articles: 1) What was the basic tendency of the foreign relations of Korean dynasties vis-à-vis China? 2) How did the cultural backgrounds of China and Korea as well as the practical gains at stake influence the development of Sino-Korean relations? 3) How was the status of Korea formed and established within the Sinographic cultural sphere? 4) How was traditional Chinese culture modified as it spread to Korea? 5) What influence did premodern Korean intellectuals have on Chinese culture? and 6) How did China and Korea react and strengthen their alliance in face of the advances made by Western forces? To investigate these questions, Chen focuses mainly on the transitional periods in the histories of both countries, including the Unified Silla period, the Yuan-Ming transitional period, the Ming-Qing transitional period, and the opening of the ports during the late nineteenth century.

The titles of the articles featured in this book are presented below in lieu of more detailed analyses of the articles.

1. Diplomatic Competition in the "Divided Era": Review of Sino-Korean Relations in the "Wei, Jin, Nan, Bei Chao Period"
2. The Open Policy of the Tang Dynasty and Its Influence on Tang-Silla Relations
3. The Sillaese Settlements in the Tang Dynasty
4. Silla within "the Chinese Cultural Circle": Seen Through the Cultural Exchange between the Tang Dynasty and Silla
5. Goryeo and the Assimilation into the Culture of Chinese Institutions
6. The Qi Family and Sino-Korean Relations during the Early Ming Dynasty
7. A Survey of the Sea Routes of the Early Ming Dynasty
8. The Conflict between Confucianism and Reality: A Study of the Joseon Dynasty's Policy of Shipwrecked Chinese Traders during the Early Qing Dynasty
9. Refusing Theology and Accepting Science and Technology: A Study of the Spread of Chinese Translations of Western Learning in the Joseon Dynasty
10. Li Hongzhang and the Signing of Treaties with the West to Open the Ports of Joseon

On *A Study on the History of Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations* (2015)

This book is an edited collection of nineteen important articles Chen Shangsheng wrote on the history of Chinese foreign relations up until the nineteenth century. The book encompasses major topics across all areas, from the thought, policies, and institutions of Chinese foreign relations as well as the figures who lead them. Considering the status Chen holds in Chinese academic circles, it would not be an exaggeration to say that this book demonstrates the most cutting-edge research that has been conducted to date on the history of Chinese foreign relations.

Chen Shangsheng's critical awareness can be seen in the "A Modest Opinion on the Research for the History of Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations," which serves as the introduction of the book.

First of all, Chen (2015, 6-7) defines his research topic, traditional Chinese foreign relations, as indicated in the title of the book. He argues that the current three-stage periodization—the ancient period up to the Opium War in 1840; the modern period, from 1840 to 1900; and the contemporary period, onward from 1901, the point at which Qing completely discarded traditional rituals related to the tribute system—should be replaced by a new comprehensive framework that combines the ancient and modern period into a single category of traditional Chinese foreign relations. The traditional period can then be defined by the tribute system, while the period beginning from the contemporary period can be defined by the diplomacy system (*bangjiao tizhi* 邦交體制).

Chen analyzes the trends in the research on the history of foreign relations and points out that it has tended to focus only on major events, such as Zhang Qian's 張騫 travel to the West, Xuanzang's 玄奘 journey to India, and Zheng He's 鄭和 voyage to the Indian Ocean, which has led to an extremely fragmented narrative without a systemic structure. He argues that scholars should examine the course taken by the foreign policies of the Chinese dynasties and the similarities and differences between the foreign policies of each dynasty as well as their surrounding environment from a broader perspective. To that end, Chen (2015, 4) emphasizes that the tribute system, which shows the general pattern of foreign relations adopted by Chinese feudal dynasties, should be the focus of the research on ancient Chinese foreign relations.

In addition, Chen (2015, 8-9) makes it clear that this research is a timely response to the current task ahead of them, which is that together with its rise, China "needs a theory of foreign relations characterized by the features of its own civilization." Thus, he emphasizes that the research of traditional foreign relations should aim to discover useful material to refer to in building a theory of foreign relations for contemporary China.

With this task in mind, this book overall stresses how China has been relatively open to its surrounding countries and how friendly the relations with them have been, contrary to what has been generally believed to be the case. Each article in the book provides an overall analysis of the thoughts and ideas, institutions and policies, investiture-tribute relations, and the agents of China's traditional foreign relations. Let's take a look at some of them which could be relevant to this review.

Chapter 2, "The Basic Ideology of Traditional Foreign Relations of China," for example, emphasizes the basic thoughts and principle underlying the friendly foreign relations China has maintained since the pre-Qin 先秦 period. Although China had a strong sense of the Sino-barbarian dichotomy (*hua-yi lun* 華夷論), it pursued a universal world view that "all under Heaven (*tianxia* 天下) must be one." It was the duty of the Son of Heaven, who had received the Mandate of Heaven, to build that ideal world. To that end, the emperor should prioritize moral principle over economic gain and thus "give more and get less" (*hou wang bo lai* 厚往薄來) and "cherish men from afar" (*huairou yuanren* 懷柔遠人) so that he could demonstrate his virtue and excellent character to the barbarians (*yidi* 夷狄). He should treat his surroundings by the way of the true king (*wangdao* 王道), not by the way of the hegemon (*badao* 覇道) even when he was stronger; and seek to bring in neighboring barbarians under his power by rules of propriety (*li* 禮), the institutional device to maintain order of all under the heavens.

Chapter 3, "The Distinction Between Inside and Outside, and the Periodization of the History of Ancient Chinese Foreign Relations," presents Chen's opinion regarding the basic issue of the "boundaries of China (as a concept)" and how to divide the history of China's foreign relations. Chen defines the history of China's foreign relations as a history of interconnectedness and exchange of the Chinese people (*Zhonghua minzu* 中華民族), which in turn comprises the ethnic groups within the boundaries of China. In other words, Chen argues that the research should encompass all the relations the surrounding nations and regimes appearing in Chinese history had with the areas beyond China in addition to the foreign relations of Chinese feudal dynasties. By the same token, Chen views the periodization based on the feudal dynasties of China as inappropriate and instead uses the early sixteenth century as a point of demarcation following the flows of world history. The first stage is from the pre-Qin period to the middle of the Ming dynasty, and the second period is from the middle of Ming to the Opium War in 1840. The first period can be further divided into before and after the battle of Talas in 751. While the earlier era demonstrates the prosperity of the Chinese society and active exchange via the continental route, the latter era is characterized by active exchange via the sea route. The second period is when China passively reacted to the challenges of Western colonizers. This period can also be subdivided into before and after the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689.

Chapter 4, "The Development and Basic Features of the Cultural Exchange between China and Other Countries before the Sixteenth Century," outlines the route and characteristics of cultural exchange between China and other countries prior to the sixteenth century, which Chen had defined as the first period of two in the previous chapter. Chen argues that during the 2,000 years following the pre-Qin period, the transmission of Chinese culture occurred in a coincidental, intermittent, and incremental manner. In this sense, the relationship between China and Korea was extremely unusual. Starting from tenth century at the latest, after Goryeo was founded in the Korean peninsula, Goryeo and Joseon ceaselessly maintained diplomatic relations with China and exchanged culture. In particular, after Goryeo decided in 1021 to send envoys to the Khitan three times a year, this practice was carried out for nearly 900 years until 1894, except for a total of around 100 years when it was paused from time to time (Jung 2018). This disproves the former conception that Sino-Korean relations were the model of China's foreign relations. Also, although Chen repeatedly emphasizes the superiority of Chinese civilization and the enormous influence Chinese culture had on the development of world history, he does not write that cultural exchange took place only in one direction. Instead, Chen presents cases where culture and civilization outside of China was introduced into China, for example, religion including Buddhism; scientific technology such as medicine, astronomy, and mathematics; and art such as music and painting; and mentions that they enriched the material culture and spiritual world of the Chinese people.

Chapter 5, "The Port of Dengzhou 登州港 during Late Tang and the Formation of the East Asian Trade Sphere," is where Chen skillfully uses evidence to prove his argument. First, he establishes that the tributary system theory cannot explain the mechanism of the premodern trade system and makes it clear that the East Asian trade sphere was formed by maritime trade after the ninth century. He then proceeds to analyze its formation by focusing on Dengzhou, which played an important role as the window of China in this trade sphere. After the late eighth century, international trade started to flourish around Dengzhou, where its local powers took the reins of the diplomatic relations with Silla and Balhae. In other words, the first formation of the East Asian maritime trade sphere was the result of the decline of the investiture-tribute system of Tang. Therefore, from the perspective of the history of Chinese foreign trade, it is difficult to use the concept of tribute trade or the tributary system theory to explain the mechanism of the East Asian trade system or see it as the defining feature of the East Asian economic system.

Chapter 9, "Barbarian Officials and Absconders," looks at cases of overseas Chinese being sent to Ming as part of the foreign diplomatic mission. From the early years of its founding, Ming implemented the sea ban 海禁 policy and prohibited its people from going overseas without permission. This meant that the Chinese visiting Ming as foreign envoys were, in principle, absconders. However, foreign governments sent them as envoys for their proficiency in the Chinese language as well as the potential advantage they had in negotiating with the Chinese government. In fact, the Ming court gave them preferential treatment as official diplomatic envoys in order to appease foreign countries. These individuals played a large role in forming and maintaining the international order with Ming at the center.

Chapter 10, "Ideal Preferential Principles and Realistic National Interests," seeks to understand the fundamental reason Ming came to the rescue and sent a large number of troops to Joseon during the Japanese Invasion of 1592. Previously, Chinese scholars have understood this as the superior country's expression of cherishing the small vassal country (*zixiao* 字小), while Korean scholars have emphasized that it was in order for Ming to preemptively stop the Japanese from invading the continent, neutralizing that threat before it ever reached Ming. Here, the author meticulously studies the discussion that took place at that time in the Ming court and argues that the decision to dispatch troops stemmed from the idea of cherishing the small vassal country at the initial stages of the war, but it was at the same time to secure the border areas of Ming. If the motivation was only the principle of cherishing the small country, then this would not explain why Ming did not dispatch troops when Japan invaded Ryukyu in 1609. The different influence Ryukyu and Joseon had on Ming's national security depending on their respective geographic location should be taken into account in considering the difference in Ming's response. Ultimately, national interests, particularly the safety of the dynasty, were the first factor in the decision whether Ming would provide aid to their vassal state's crisis. The investiture-tribute system functioned politically as the safety system and defense mechanism of Ming and Qing.

Chapter 11, "The Basic Characteristics of the Investiture-Tribute System During the Early Qing Period," compares the investiture-tribute system during the early years of Qing with that of Ming and summarizes its distinct features in the following way: first, the initial aim was to secure the safety of the country and stabilize the border areas. Second, it established tributary relations only with nearby countries. Third, neighboring states were fundamentally distinguished from subordinate tribes. The Board of Rites (Libu 禮部) was in charge of the former while the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Lifanyuan 理藩院) was in charge of the latter. Fourth, envoys were sent only to the three countries within the Sinographic cultural sphere—Joseon, Annam, and Ryukyu—which meant that the investiture-tribute system with these three countries played a direct role in the cultural exchange between China and these countries. Fifth, the tribute system during Qing was vastly more economic than that during Ming.

Chapter 13, "A Comparison between the Overseas Trade Policies of Ming and Early Qing," compares the policies on foreign trade of Ming with early Qing up to 1840 in the following five areas: foreign trade by the government, tribute trade, Chinese merchants' foreign trade activities, foreign merchants' trade activities in China, and tariff policies. The overall conclusion reached by Chen is that Ming focused more on the political influence exerted on foreign countries through the trade carried out by the government, especially the tributary trade with foreign countries, while Qing focused more on economic profit during foreign trade including that from tariffs.

Based on an examination of a wide range of material and superb analyses, the articles in this book provide a great deal of information and insight. Among them are analyses that provide a completely new understanding of the China's foreign relations, such as the assessment of the foreign relations of early Qing.

Although I am not qualified to discuss whether each and every one of the author's arguments are right or wrong, nor is there enough space here to do so, the question I would like to raise here is regarding Chen's usage of the term tribute system.

The first sentence of this book, "The so-called traditional Chinese foreign relations refer to the relations between China and foreign countries that took place according to the tribute system of the Chinese feudal dynasties," places the term tribute system up front. Then what exactly is the tribute system (*chaogong tizhi* 朝貢體制 or *fenggong tizhi* 封貢體制) as used by Chen Shangsheng himself?

Unfortunately, Chen does not specifically define the tribute system anywhere throughout this book. The closest he gets to defining it is by writing that "Foreign policies refer to the series of rules by which a dynasty or government deals with foreign affairs, and in academic circles, China's traditional systems of foreign affairs are generally called the tribute system or tributary states system." At the same time, Chen mentions criticisms of the concept of tribute system. He writes that "If we were to use a single term to rename the traditional system of China's foreign affairs, the 'Celestial Empire system' (*tianchao tizhi* 天朝体制) would be more appropriate than the term *tribute system*" (Chen 2015, 12-13). In several parts of the book, Chen repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the tribute system, such as "The majority of political, economic, and cultural exchange between China and other foreign countries took place according to the tribute system" (ibid. 25) or "Because the tribute system defined the basic structure of the Sino-barbarian order, it should hold the key position in the area of foreign relations studies" (ibid. 14). But he again also refers to the criticisms of the tribute system that have been raised among academic circles until now. For instance, he writes that "We need to treat the tribute system as a cultural cluster to examine its affiliated systems. The study of the tribute system often treats it as a whole that defined the traditional Chinese system of foreign affairs, which ignores to a considerable extent the differences between different dynasties in the system of tribute" (ibid.14-15). This is an undeniably contradictory argument.

In Chapter 12, he writes that it is inappropriate to classify the foreign policies of Ming and Qing by simplifying their forms as either "closed" (*biguan* 閉關) or "open" (*kaifang* 開放). Also, in Chapter 13, while criticizing Wan Ming's 萬明 way of typifying them only as open or closed, he writes that "She did not define the proper connotation of these concepts" (Chen 2015, 194-95). While Chen's criticism is quite reasonable, his own work does not seem to be completely free from this very critique.

In a comprehensive study of thousands of years of the history of China's traditional foreign relations, some degree of categorization and conceptualization is inevitable particularly in order to clarify the similarities and differences between each era and situation as well as the process of change, even if it carries the slight risk of generalization. In this sense, Chen's comparative analysis of the characteristics of the investiture-tribute system between Ming and early Qing up to 1840 is remarkable. However, I wonder if it was necessary to generalize and explain both into a single type using terms such as tribute institution (*chaogong zhidu* 朝貢制度), tribute system, and investiture-tribute system, which clearly have different connotations and meanings.

Earlier in my own studies, I have argued that the various bureaucratic institutions and practices seen as constituting the tribute system were in fact constructed from the extremely unique relationship between early Ming and Goryeo. In particular, many institutions and practices were created even earlier between the Mongol Empire and Goryeo. Goryeo then nudged the Ming court to appropriate the Mongol Empire's legacy of treating foreign countries as its vassals (Jung 2019a). I wonder if it is really unavoidable to simplify all the institutions and practices related to foreign relations, which showed large differences from period to period, and to describe them using a single term like the *tribute system*. The danger of doing so seems to outweigh the benefits.

Conclusion

In this review, I briefly summarized almost 30 years of Chen Shangsheng's research on the history of Sino-Korean relations and the history of Chinese foreign relations, based on three of his works. Given the vast amount of his research, I fear that despite my efforts to accurately introduce his research here along with my own criticisms of his arguments, this review may have nevertheless resulted in misunderstandings as well as inaccuracies, particularly in such a limited amount of space.

As I have mentioned earlier, Chen Shangsheng is virtually the founding father in the area of Chinese research on the history of Sino-Korean relations and the history of foreign relations of China within Chinese academic circles. Although some of the research introduced here are complete in and of itself,

they also present future research tasks to researchers of generations that would follow him.

The author emphasized the fact that the foreign relations of a certain period are related to the perception that era holds towards foreign countries as well as to overall state policies, and even to the entire international state of affairs. It is a well-known fact that the past 30 or so years during which Chen was active also coincide with the tumultuous state of relations between China and Korea. The relations between the two countries have even led to what is called historical disputes, showing how research on history influences real-life international relations. This may be the opportune moment to direct our attention to how Chen Shangsheng poured his efforts into understanding and introducing Sino-Korean relations as having been very friendly. It is my earnest wish that the communication between Chinese and Korean academic circles in the area of history becomes more active and invigorated, just as Chen Shangsheng hoped.

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