

China's Northeast Project and Trends in the Study of Koguryŏ History

Yeo Hokyū^{*}

Introduction

While the three East Asian countries have on the one hand recently advocated the building of a regional community designed to ensure coexistence and co-prosperity, they have also focused on strengthening traditional nationalism in order to secure national unity and grasp the reigns of regional leadership. Ultra-nationalists in Japan have long been less than adverse to distorting history in order to beautify the exploitative nature of Japanese imperialism. China has also begun to engage in the distortion of history, even going as far as attempting to incorporate segments of Korean history into its own.

In this regard, it will be impossible for the three East Asian nations to establish peaceful cooperative relations as long as such distortions of history remain rampant. Furthermore, unlike Europe, where the concept of the nation was formed during the modern era, the three East Asian nations possess relatively strong ethnic identities that developed as a result of a history that has unfolded from early on at the nation (nationality) level. Under such circumstances, attempts by one country to emphasize its own nationalism while distorting the history of its

^{*} Professor, Humanities Division History, Hanguk University of Foreign Studies

neighbors, are bound to lead to mutual distrust.

In order for the three countries in East Asia to establish a peaceful cooperative relationship, mutual trust must be cultivated between the parties. Such mutual trust can begin to be formed by establishing a historical perception which respects the identity of the other two states. In this optic, China's distortion of history can be regarded as an important issue which has fundamentally shaken the very foundation of Korean history, harmed Sino-Korean relations, and further, damaged cooperative relations in East Asia.

This study represents an attempt to analyze trends in the studies on Koguryō history being conducted by Chinese scholars, and to reveal the actual state of Chinese distortions of history. To this end, the background to China's historical distortions will be examined, and the logical fallacy of its distortions of history proven. Such an endeavor will help to not only restore the foundation of Korean history, but also contribute to reestablishing mutual trust between Korea and China.

China's Theory of a Unified Multiethnic State and Trends in its Study of Koguryō History

The development of the theory of a unified multiethnic state

Looking at recent studies on Koguryō history conducted by Chinese scholars, one can begin to see that the majority such studies have been based on the logic of 'China being a multiethnic state not only in the contemporary era but traditionally as well'. Thus, as China was a unified multiethnic state consisting of various ethnic minorities, the history of these ethnic minorities, as well as any history carried out within the territory of China, can be included within the scope of Chinese history. This theory of a unified multiethnic state has its roots in the reality of China, a 'multiethnic state', consisting of the Han Chinese and 55 other ethnic minorities.¹

The establishment of the Chinese government in 1949 was followed by the subsequent incorporation as official members of this new entity of various ethnic minorities who possessed historical experiences clearly different from those of the Han Chinese. As a result, a debate emerged over the means which should be used to establish the scope of Chinese history. For example, if China decided based on the historical perception rooted in the traditional civilized-uncivilized (華夷論) dichotomy to include solely the dynasties which emerged in Central China, then the spatial range of Chinese history would have to be rearranged accordingly, and China would have no choice but to deal with the history of each ethnic minority as an independent history.

With this in mind, the argument was made to the effect that the scope of Chinese history should be set up based on the present territory of China, and not the territories possessed by past Chinese dynasties.² Proceeding in such a manner not only insulates against possible changes to the spatial scope of Chinese history, but also ensures that Chinese history can be perceived as the common history of the *Zhonghua minzu* (中華民族, a Chinese term that refers to the notion of a Chinese nationality that transcends ethnic divisions, with a central identity to China as a whole. It includes peoples who have historically interacted, contributed, and assimilated to various extents with Chinese civilization. It can be literally translated into the “Chinese nation.”) and as the history of a multiethnic state; thus in the process overcoming the propensity towards a favoring of Great Han Chinese ethnicity rooted in the perception of history based on the ‘Chinese’ dynasties (皇朝史觀). Therefore, the histories of numerous ethnic minorities which would have been excluded under the perception of history based on the traditional notion of civilized-uncivilized (華夷論) worlds, have been incorporated into Chinese history on the grounds that their histories unfolded within what is now Chinese territory.

Furthermore, the growing structuralization of the socialist system during the late 1950s in frontier areas led to increased criticism of local and Han chauvinism—two sentiments which stood in the way of the formation of the theory of a unified multiethnic state— as narrow-minded

forms of nationalism that in effect prevented the unification of ethnic minorities. To this end, the perception of relations between the dynasties in Central China and non-Han Chinese (ethnic minorities) as a struggle between China and non-Chinese ethnicities, and the concurrent emphasis on the history of minorities' struggle for independence was criticized for overindulging in narrow-minded nationalistic sentiments.³ Furthermore, studies which perceived relations between the Han Chinese dynasties and adjacent nation states as Chinese domestic matters rather than inter-state relations began to be widely conducted.⁴

As such, by applying the current reality of a unified multiethnic Chinese state to past history, the outline of a theory of a unified multiethnic state was established that includes as part of Chinese history the histories of numerous ethnic minorities currently incorporated into China, as well as any history which occurred within its present physical sphere. Of course, not every Chinese scholar has agreed with this logic. For instance, Sun Zuomin (孫祚民) criticized efforts to apply a limitless retroactivity to this 'unified multiethnic state', pointing out that while the Han Chinese dynasties represented China prior to the establishment of the Chinese government, other ethnic minorities had in fact maintained their independence.⁵

As such, a serious debate emerged as to whether the scope of Chinese history should be set up based on China's current territory; this scope should, based on the traditional perception of history, be limited to the Han Chinese dynasties in Central China; and whether relations between the Han Chinese dynasties and surrounding ethnic groups should be regarded as domestic or international matters. However, this debate was subsequently placed on the backburner as a result of the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution (文化大革命). To this end, the main actors involved in the Cultural Revolution did not place much importance on academic research, and more importantly, they did not perceive the ethnic issue as a central item on their political agenda.

Research on the history of relations amongst Chinese nationalities began to be carried out following the termination of the Cultural

Revolution. The activation of research on the history of relations amongst Chinese nationalities, which was grounded in the theory of a unified multiethnic state, occurred in earnest following the restoration of practical thought (實事求是) during the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Du Rongkun (杜榮坤) and Bai Cuiqin (白翠琴) in particular, conducted comprehensive analyses of the relationship between the Han Chinese dynasties and surrounding ethnic minorities based on the theory of a unified multiethnic state.⁶ These two researchers argued that the surrounding ethnic groups, as permanent members of the unified multiethnic state that had been in place in China for some 2000 years, had greatly contributed to the development of Chinese history through their close relations with the Han Chinese dynasties. Furthermore, they asserted that the development of Chinese history had by and large been characterized by amicable relations with these minority groups, with war and other struggles representing the exception rather than the rule. To this end, they emphasized the fact that research on ethnic minorities should be conducted as part of the current tasks of attaining national integration and unification.

Sun Zuomin challenged this notion that this unified multiethnic state had existed since ancient times, arguing instead that this entity was rather the result of more modern historical developments.⁷ Sun Zuomin's opinions were supported by other scholars such as Wang Peihuan (王佩環) and Ouyang Xi (歐陽熙). Wang Peihuan for one, perceived that the framework of the unified multiethnic state formed during the Qing dynasty was finally concretized in the modern era after having gone through numerous wars and fusions during the 2000 years of historical developments that took place since the Qin (秦) and Han (漢) dynasties.⁸

Weng Dujian (翁獨健) pointed out that the application of the qualifier term 'unified' in effect rendered the task of embracing the history of non-Han Chinese dynasties as an equal part of Chinese history an impossible one. To this end, Weng suggested that the qualifier term 'unified' be replaced with the notion of a 'multiethnic Chinese state'. Tian Jizhou (田繼周) and Wu Liangkai (吳量愷) also asserted that the history of

ethnic groups that were presently incorporated into China would naturally fall outside of the scope of Chinese history if the notion of a 'unified state' was emphasized. To remedy this situation, and encompass the histories of all ethnic groups, the focus would have to be placed on the notion of a 'multiethnic state'.⁹

Although this seemingly boundless historical retroactivity when it came to the notion of a 'unified multiethnic state' was assailed within certain quarters, the holding of three different academic conferences during the 1980s on the topic of the history of relations amongst nationalities in China¹⁰ is symbolic of the growing popularity of the perception of the history of relations amongst nationalities in China (history of international relations) based on the theory of a 'unified multiethnic state' during this period.¹¹

Trends in the study of Koguryŏ history up until the early 1990s

The debate over the incorporation of Koguryŏ history into China's was strongly influenced by the theory of a unified multiethnic state. Koguryŏ (Chinese: Gaogouli 高句麗) was classified as a part of the Chinese nation as far back as the early 20th century by Chin Yufu (金毓黻), who claimed that the people of Koguryŏ were not only one of the ethnic minority groups found in Northeast China, but that Koguryŏ was in effect a Chinese dynasty that had been established in that particular region.¹² Nevertheless, the perception of Koguryŏ's history as a part of China's own did not begin to gain solid traction until the late 1980s.¹³ As Chinese academics have been recently forced to admit, the majority of publications that dealt with the general history of China, specific periods of Chinese history, Chinese historical chronologies, as well as atlases, which were released up until the early 1980s, identified Koguryŏ as a part of Korean history; and as one of the Three Kingdoms of ancient Korea, along with Paekche and Silla.¹⁴

Koguryŏ was generally regarded as having been populated by members of the Yemaek tribes (濊貊族), and exchanges between Koguryŏ and

China were regarded as falling within the scope of the history of international relations.¹⁵ The wars waged by the Sui (隋) and Tang (唐) Dynasties against Koguryō were also perceived as attempts to invade an independent state.¹⁶ Even those individuals who, in accordance with the theory of a unified multiethnic state, regarded Koguryō history as a part of China's, stressed that, based on China's modern territory¹⁷ or even its territory during the Qing dynasty,¹⁸ this claim could only be applied up until the relocation of Koguryō's capital to Pyōngyang.

As mentioned above, suggestions that the history of Koguryō be incorporated into Chinese history, suggestions which were anchored in a perception of the history of nationality relations in ancient China (history of international relations) that was based on the theory of a unified multiethnic state, began to gain traction in the mid-1980s. For instance, in 1985, Zhang Boquan (張博泉) identified Koguryō as 'a regional administration of Central China's Han Chinese dynasty which had been established within the latter's territory, and had never expanded beyond the scope of China's physical sphere'.¹⁹ Following the path laid out by Zhang Boquan, Geng Tiehua (耿鐵華) and Fan Li (範梨) identified the man named Gao Yi (高夷), to whom reference is made in the *Wanghuixie* (王會解篇) section of the <*Yizhou shu* (逸周書, The Lost Book of Zhou)>, as the founder of Koguryō. Moreover, they also emphasized Koguryō's link to China,²⁰ by postulating that Gao Yi had originally hailed from Shang (商).²¹ It was during this period as well that a book introducing the history of Koguryō as part of Chinese history made its way into Korea.²²

During the early 1990s, Sun Jinji (孫進己), a specialist on the history of Northeast China, developed a new line of reasoning as to why Koguryō history should be incorporated into China's. Sun stressed that long-term historical ownership rather than present borders should be the criteria on which the incorporation of Koguryō history into China's is based. Specifically, Sun claimed that the original territory of Koguryō, and the lands it subsequently expanded into, was within the jurisdiction of the Han dynasty's prefectures and counties, and that Koguryō was in effect a regional administration under the control of the Chinese dynasties

throughout its existence; that is, from its foundation to its collapse.²³

Such claims on the part of researchers to the effect that the comprehensive history of Koguryō should be included as part of Chinese history resulted in the emergence of a growing number of papers from the early 1990s onwards which attempted to prove that Koguryō was a regional administration, and that its people were an ethnic minority that existed within China's sphere.²⁴ Furthermore, from the late 1990s onwards, the history of Koguryō also began to be included as a part of China's in various books dealing with the history of Northeast China.²⁵ However, the debate over the incorporation of Koguryō history into China's remained to a great extent outside of the public realm as late as the early 1990s.²⁶ Rather, the type of assertions recently made by Chinese researchers over the need to incorporate Koguryō history into China's for the most part emanated from a certain limited number of individuals. On the whole, Chinese academia continued to regard this issue as an 'academic taboo'.²⁷

Considering the fact that the theory of a unified multiethnic state was established shortly after the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, and that this new Chinese government, based on this theory, began from early onwards the process of incorporating the histories of other ethnic minorities into its own, the recent trend towards incorporating the history of Koguryō into China's can be regarded as somewhat of an anomaly. Therefore, the question becomes that of why China did not apply the theory of a unified multiethnic state to the history of Koguryō until the early 1980s? Furthermore, why didn't Chinese academics go public with this desire to incorporate Koguryō history into Chinese history, and how do we explain the fact that only a limited number of Chinese scholars were conducting such studies at the individual level as late as the mid-1980s?

Although nothing more than a hypothesis, a strong case can be made for the following scenario having come into play: First, the political situation in Manchuria, which is located in Northeast China and once served as the center of Koguryō's activities, remained relatively stable

until the 1980s. Moreover, China's relationship with North Korea, which borders on this area, was also proceeding smoothly. Under such circumstances, China did not feel any need to recklessly go against North Korea, which draws its legitimacy from being the successor to Koguryō, and incorporate the history of Koguryō into Chinese history. Second, although the majority of Koguryō's territory now belongs to China, China was well aware of the fact that the genealogy of the Koguryō people was not only closely related to that of the Korean Nation, but also to that the successor to Koguryō: Korea, a country lying outside of China's physical sphere.

However, the reestablishment of Sino-Korean ties and growing political crisis in North Korea occasioned by the collapse of the socialist camp resulted in growing unrest within the ethnic Korean community in China from the 1990s onwards; which in turn had the effect of turning Manchuria into a source of instability for the Chinese. Faced with this situation, the Chinese government immediately set about trying to stabilize the political situation in Manchuria by aggressively responding to the changes in the political situation on the Korean peninsula. The implementation of the China's Northeast Project can thus be interpreted as China's response to these changes in the political environment. An analysis of the process through which China's Northeast Project came into being lays bare the ultimate goals of this endeavor.

The Implementation of China's Northeast Project and the Change in Its Perception of Koguryō History

Implementation of China's Northeast Project and the Background thereof

A committee of experts formed to oversee the Serial Research Project on the History and Current Status of the Northeast Border Region (東北邊疆歷史與現狀系列研究工) –hereinafter referred to as “China's

Northeast Project'- met in Beijing from February 28 to March 1, 2002, at which time they announced a 5-year plan for the China's Northeast Project.²⁸ As we can see from the structure of this organization,²⁹ China's Northeast Project is a national project centering on the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that also includes elements from within the Communist Party, administrative agencies, as well as research institutes from the three Northeast provinces of Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang.

With regards to the implementation of the China's Northeast Project, special attention needs to be paid to two events which occurred in 1996: First, the decision was made in Beijing to have the Research Center for China's Borderland History and Geography Studies housed within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (hereinafter referred to as "Borderland History and Geography Studies") compile the "*Compilation of Papers on Koguryō History in Ancient China* (古代中國高句麗歷史叢論)". The compilation of this work resulted not only in the holding of several large-scale conferences on the topic, but also had the effect of creating a concrete linkage between Northeast China-related research institutes such as Tonghua Normal University's Koguryō Kingdom Ruins Research Center, Northeast Normal University's Research Center on Minority Nationalities and Territory in Northeast China, the Shenyang Research Center for Asian Studies, and the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences' Research Center for Koguryō Studies.³⁰ In this regard, "*Compilation of Papers on Koguryō History in Ancient China*" can be regarded as the event which marked the starting point for China's Northeast Project.

Meanwhile, a special edition of the <*Journal of Tonghua Teachers' College*> on Koguryō history was published in Vol.1 of 1996(1996-1) to celebrate the establishment of the Koguryō Kingdom Ruins Research Center.³¹ The majority of the papers found in this journal dealt with the incorporation of Koguryō history into Chinese history in accordance with the theory of a unified multiethnic state. As a result, the move toward incorporating Koguryō history into China's began to gradually seep into the general consciousness. Furthermore, the publication of the

“*Compilation of Papers on Koguryō History in Ancient China*” not only resulted in the popularization of studies incorporating Koguryō history into China’s, but also created opportunities for the three Northeastern provinces to pool their research efforts together. As such, the year of 1996 can be earmarked as that in which China began the full-fledged implementation of its Northeast Project.

Under such circumstances, a National Academic Conference for Koguryō Studies hosted by the Jilin Academy of Social Sciences’ Research Center for Koguryō Studies and Tonghua Normal University’s Koguryō Kingdom Ruins Research Center was held in June 1998.³² The Research Center for China’s Borderland History and Geography Studies’ Ma Dazheng(馬大正), who had been in charge of the “*Compilation of Papers on Koguryō History in Ancient China*”, was one of the most prominent participants in this academic conference. The leading role in organizing this conference was played by the Tonghua Normal University’s Koguryō Kingdom Ruins Research Center, which as mentioned above, had also been at the forefront of the publication of the special edition of the <*Journal of Tonghua Teachers’ College*> dedicated to Koguryō history. As such, China’s preparations for the actual implementation of its Northeast Project, which had begun in earnest in 1996, had by this point reached their zenith.

Based on the above preparations, the Research Center for China’s Borderland History and Geography Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Northeast Normal University’s Center for Research on Minority Nationalities and Territory in Northeast China jointly setup the ‘Northeast Workshop on the Study of China’s Borderland History and Society’ (hereinafter referred to as the “Northeast Workshop”) in July 1999.³³ The establishment of the Northeast Workshop was celebrated with the holding of the ‘Academic Conference on the Study of Minority Nationalities and Territory in Northeast China’ that same month.³⁴ During this particular conference, scholars essentially took turns criticizing studies conducted by the two Koreas and Japan for not recognizing the history of Northeast China as a part of Chinese history.³⁵

Furthermore, all the participants in the conference agreed on the fact that Koguryō was a regional administration of the Chinese dynasties.³⁶

Thereafter, China concentrated its efforts on carrying out the groundwork needed to incorporate the history of Koguryō into Chinese history and on spreading the general consensus needed to be able to implement the China's Northeast Project. To this end, the Research Center for China's Borderland History and Geography Studies published a <*Compilation of Papers on Koguryō History in Ancient China*> in February 2001³⁷, at which time they suggested that the study of China's borderline history in the Northeast continue to be the main focus of the project in 2001.³⁸ In other words, 'The Study of China's Borderland History and Society', which had been carried out in conjunction with Northeast Normal University, was expanded, with the approval of the central government, to become a large-scale project that encompassed Communist Party committees, administrative agencies, and research institutes located in the three Northeast Chinese provinces.

To concretize this project, the Research Center for China's Borderland History and Geography Studies, in conjunction with the Jilin Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, held a 'Symposium of the Workshop on the History and Current Status of the Northeast Border Region' in June 2001.³⁹ This symposium attracted leaders as well as specialists from the three northeast provincial committees of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as well as from related universities and affiliated research institutes. While this symposium's agenda officially revolved around the search for measures to advance studies on the history of Northeast China and deal with its actual circumstances, practically all the main tasks discussed were directly related to the Korean peninsula. A main topic for discussion was that of the history of ancient kingdoms, with special attention paid to the history of Koguryō.

As such, the implementation of the China's Northeast Project was officially announced in 2002, some six years after preparations had begun in 1996. These long-term preparations made it possible for the actual

implementation of the China's Northeast Project to proceed at a rapid pace. The relevant research tasks were selected a mere month after the official announcement of the onset of the China's Northeast Project, with 14 of the 27 basic research tasks being directly or indirectly related to the history of Koguryō. In addition, China held a large-scale academic conference entitled "The 2nd Academic Conference on the History and Current Status of the Northeast Border Region and Koguryō Studies" in July 2002.

While the history and current state of the Northeast China borderland area was addressed during the 1st session of the conference, separate discussions were held on the issues related to Koguryō history during the 2nd session.⁴⁰ During the 1st session, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences's Wang Luolin (王洛林), in his capacity as the director of the China's Northeast Project Support Team, presented a paper in which he outlined the importance of the China's Northeast Project and of the relevant tasks. Wang asserted that North and South Korean scholars had distorted the history of Koguryō and Parhae, which he regarded as local administrations of Chinese dynasties, and emphasized the fact that Chinese scholars should increasingly focus on studying the history of Koguryō and Parhae.⁴¹

During discussions on China's perception of its borderland history, Zhang Bibo (張碧波) made the claim that the dynasties and territories established by the Han Chinese in the past should be regarded as being an inherent part of the historical legacy of ensuing Chinese governments and territories, and that as such, there was a need for the scope of Chinese history to be based not on China's current territory, but rather on a specific point in time.⁴² Zhao Yongchun (趙永春) also stressed the need to include the minorities currently encompassed within China's territory as a starting point when setting the scope of Chinese history, a scope which should also include the spaces in which they once operated, as well as the sphere of activity of those minority groups who existed at that time but had since been destroyed.⁴³ These assertions are rooted in such scholars' intentions to even incorporate the history of Koguryō following

the relocation of the capital to Pyōngyang in Chinese history.

During the 2nd session of the conference, scores of papers regarding Koguryō history were presented, with the majority of participants agreeing that Koguryō was a regional administration situated in China's border region during ancient times. Meanwhile, as part of his effort to include Koguryō history into Chinese history, Sun Jinji (孫進己) even went as far as to, based on Chinese territorial domains during the Han and Tang dynasties, identify the northern part of the Korean peninsula as a part of China's territory.⁴⁴ Liu Tzumin (劉子敏) suggested that as Kija and Wiman Chosŏn were in effect vassals of the Central Chinese dynasties, the entire history of Koguryō should be incorporated into China's.⁴⁵ As a result, the belief that the entire history of Koguryō should be incorporated into Chinese history, a belief based on an assessment of the scope of Chinese history that is grounded in the domains and territories under the control of Chinese dynasties such as the Han and Tang at an arbitrarily selected point in time, began to gain traction amongst Chinese scholars.

In August 2003, the Office of the China's Northeast Project and Yanbian University's Institute for the Comparative Study of China-Korea-Japanese Cultures jointly hosted the 'Academic Conference on the Issue of Koguryō and Parhae History', during which time various issues such as those related to the incorporation of Koguryō history into Chinese history were discussed.⁴⁶ As part of his presentation, Li Dailong (李大龍) stressed the fact that it was in effect impossible to adopt international law, territorial theories, or modern borders as the standard upon which the decision to incorporate Koguryō history into China should be based. Here, Li emphasized that the traditional territories possessed by the Chinese dynasties should be the basis upon which the incorporation of the history of Koguryō into Chinese history should proceed. Thus, given the difficulty of incorporating the entire history of Koguryō into Chinese history based on the theory of a unified multiethnic state grounded in China's current territorial composition, these scholars in effect asserted the need to seek out a new approach to China's borderland history.

As such, the launch of the China's Northeast Project has been followed by a steady identification of the history of Koguryō as one of the project's core research tasks, and by the holding of annual large-scale conferences on the topic. A significant development in this regard has been the emergence of a new logic through which the scope of Chinese history has been expanded by setting the arbitrarily selected point in time at which Chinese dynasties such as the Han and Tang were at their apex in terms of domains and territories as the basis upon which to incorporate the history of Koguryō, even that which developed in the central and northern parts of the Korean peninsula, into Chinese history. In other words, in order to be able to incorporate the entire history of Koguryō into Chinese history, Chinese scholars began to change the traditional standard upon which the extent of the scope of Chinese history had been based, namely, China's current territory.

Furthermore, the main actors involved in the China's Northeast Project placed great emphasis on the fact that surrounding countries' historical distortions represented the greatest challenge to the study of the history of Northeast China's border areas.⁴⁷ In this regard, the biggest obstacle were far and away the studies produced by North and South Korean scholars that identified Kojosōn, Puyō and Koguryō, and Parhae as falling within the scope of Korean history.⁴⁸ Moreover, they also made the bold claim that as China's previous identification of the history of Kojosōn and Koguryō as a part of Korean history had been grounded in the friendly ties it possessed with North Korea, ties which were forged through their struggle against American imperialism, this particular field of study had long been regarded as taboo.⁴⁹ However, the political situation was now such that such restrictions should no longer apply.⁵⁰ As such, these scholars made clear their willingness to forgo China's close ties with North Korea and incorporate the entire history of Koguryō into Chinese history.

The eventual goals of China's Northeast Project can thus be perceived as not being limited to the pursuit of social stability in Northeast China and the facilitation of China's reform and opening policy, but also include

those of strengthening its historical claims over the central and northern parts of the Korean peninsula,⁵¹ especially North Korea, and of expanding its political influence over Manchuria and the Korean peninsula,⁵² with the latter two objectives having been necessitated by the ongoing changes in the political situation in Korea and Manchuria. The veracity of this hypothesis is supported by the fact that the preparations for the China's Northeast Project were taken in 1996 at a time when the North Korean political system was engulfed in a crisis. Moreover, this argument is also supported by the changes in China's perception of Koguryŏ history before and after the implementation of its Northeast Project.

Changes in China's perception of Koguryŏ history

The change in Chinese academia's perception of Koguryŏ history before and after the implementation of the China's Northeast Project are clearly evidenced by a look at <*The History of Koguryŏ (Gaogouli) in Ancient China* (古代中國高句麗歷史叢論)> and <*The Sequel of the History of Koguryŏ (Gaogouli) in Ancient China* (古代中國高句麗歷史續論)>.

<*The History of Koguryŏ (Gaogouli) in Ancient China*>, which was identified in 1996 as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' main research tasks, was published in February 2001 following widespread exchanges with scholars from the three Northeast Chinese provinces.⁵³ Here, this volume, a compilation put together by a group of scholars as part of the process of establishing China's Northeast Project, can be regarded as providing useful insight into the main actors' perception of Koguryŏ history. This volume consists of sections on Koguryŏ ethnicity, politics, and the introduction of the findings of relevant studies. For the most part, it focuses on the origins of the Koguryŏ tribe and its relations with others, rather than on the territorial aspect. This particular *modus operandi* can be explained by the fact that this volume consists of studies compiled by Chinese scholars during or after the 1990s, by which time the efforts to incorporate the history of Koguryŏ into Chinese history

were well underway.⁵⁴

As is well known, not only did the territory of Koguryō straddle both China and the Korean peninsula, but Pyōngyang, the capital of Koguryō after 427, is clearly located in North Korea. Therefore, it is difficult to incorporate the overall history of Koguryō into Chinese history based solely on the theory of a unified multiethnic state under which the scope of Chinese history is set based on China's current territorial physiognomy. To rectify this situation, Chinese scholars began in the early 1990s to develop a new line of reasoning that called for the history of Koguryō to be incorporated into Chinese history not based on China's current territorial makeup, but rather on the origins of the Koguryō tribe and its relations with other powers. <*The History of Koguryō (Gaogouli) in Ancient China*> can thus be regarded as a compilation of studies rooted in the above-mentioned logic.

Identifying the main tribes of Koguryō as having been the Yemaek tribes, the authors of this book argued that these Yemaek tribes originally resided in the Shandong area, but had migrated to Northeast China during the late Yin (殷)- early Zhou (周) dynasties.⁵⁵ This attempt to maintain the existing Yemaek theory in place, while affixing the origins of these Yemaek tribes to the Chinese mainland, can be linked to similar theories developed from the 1990s onwards which identified the people of Koguryō as the descendants of Gao Yi (高夷),⁵⁶ the Gaoyang clan's (高陽氏) Zhunxi (顛頊),⁵⁷ the Shang (商) dynasty,⁵⁸ or Yandi zu (炎帝族, Yan clan).⁵⁹ Thus, we can discern Chinese intentions to place the origins of Koguryō tribes on the Chinese mainland in order to establish Koguryō as the original heir to Central Chinese culture while severing its link to Korean history. However, no historical documents or archeological materials have ever been uncovered which could support the assertion that the founding members of Koguryō hailed from the Chinese mainland. To this end, such an assertion should be regarded as little more than a groundless theory designed to sever the natural link between the history of Koguryō and that of Korea.

This approach to the origins of the Koguryō tribe is closely connected

to China's perception of the fate of refugees from Koguryŏ following its collapse.⁶⁰ According to this book, the population of Koguryŏ was estimated at 700,000- 800,000 people at the time of its collapse. Chinese scholars have argued that of this total, 300,000 were forced to relocate to the Chinese mainland, while another 100,000 who migrated to Mohe (Parhae) and 10,000 who migrated to Tuchueh were also eventually incorporated into Han Chinese. On the other hand, these scholars maintain that when we subtract the 200,000 people who either died or relocated somewhere else, that leaves only 100,000 Koguryŏ nationals who were incorporated into the Korean nation.⁶¹ In conclusion, they asserted that the majority of Koguryŏ people had been incorporated into Han China.⁶² While there is no doubt that some Koguryŏ people were incorporated into Han China, it is also well-documented that those who resided in the highlands of Koguryŏ were eventually incorporated into Unified Silla and Parhae. As a result, the history and culture of Koguryŏ became, by way of Unified Silla and Parhae, the basis for modern-day Korean culture.

In addition, Chinese scholars have also argued that Koguryŏ had in effect established tributary relations with Chinese dynasties.⁶³ To this end, they stipulated, based on studies conducted during the 1990s, that Koguryŏ had since the Former Han (前漢) era been subjugated to the Chinese dynasties, and this until its collapse.⁶⁴ Moreover, they also claimed that the status of Koguryŏ as a local administration did not change even after the relocation of its capital to Pyŏngyang.⁶⁵ In addition, Chinese scholars went to great lengths to, in accordance with the principle of a unified multiethnic state, under which the study of the history of ethnic relations is grounded in the existence of amicable relations between the ethnic groups which populated that particular state,⁶⁶ stress the friendly and peaceful relations that existed between Koguryŏ and the Chinese dynasties.⁶⁷ What's more, under their particular optic, the military expeditions launched by the Sui and Tang dynasties against Koguryŏ were viewed simply as part of the process of unifying China.⁶⁸

Those who compiled this book focused, based on the concept of

tributary-suzerain relations, on Koguryō's status as a local administration of the Chinese dynasties. However, under the pre-modern East Asian diplomatic system revolving the notion of tribute-suzerain relations, the independence of the tributary state was recognized alongside the centrality of the suzerain. This traditional concept of tributary-suzerain was a totally different concept from the modern international law-based notion of a subjugated state, and one in which the tributary was regarded as an independent state. If we follow the logic of these Chinese scholars, then Paekche, Silla, and even Vietnam, all of whom received investitures from Chinese dynasties, should be incorporated into Chinese history.

Meanwhile, Chinese scholars have also taken to using certain elements of their territorial theories to their studies. To this end, they have asserted that Koguryō was founded within the Han dynasty's Xuantu Commandery.⁶⁹ This represents the most important element of Chinese scholars such as Zhang Boquan (張博泉)'s efforts to incorporate Koguryō history into Chinese history.⁷⁰ Of course, what they assert is far removed from the truth. Koguryō was not founded within the jurisdiction of the Xuantu Commandery, but after having forced the Chinese military stationed in the Xuantu Commandery to relocate to the Liadong area. Chinese scholars have emphasized this vantage point because not only does the area Huanren (桓仁) –Jian (集安) area, where they argue the origins of Koguryō lie, presently belong to China, but the Chinese Commanderies were also established in this region. Thus, this line of reasoning is in keeping with the theory of a unified multiethnic state, under which China's 'current territories' represent the standard on which the scope of Chinese history should be based.

However, this logic cannot be applied to the case of Koguryō following the relocation of its capital to Pyōngyang. Pyōngyang is not situated within China's current territorial sphere, but rather in North Korea. To remedy this situation, this book stressed the fact that Pyōngyang had in fact fallen under the jurisdiction of the Lolang Commandery. A look at the territorial scope of the Han dynasty's four Chinese Commanderies makes it evident that the original capital of Koguryō was in fact located

within China's traditional borderlands. However, perhaps concerned about the fact that its notion of a unified multiethnic state could not be applied to the case of Koguryō following the relocation of its capital to Pyōngyang, these scholars opted to cover their tracks and partially apply an approach to the determination of the scope of history that was based on 'past territories', in the process even reducing Koguryō's southern border situated on the Korean peninsula to the Taedong River, which they claimed was the actual border between Koguryō and Paekche

As such, this book represents a compilation of the studies conducted by Chinese scholars after the 1990s that were designed to use tribal origins and ethnic relations as the basis upon which Koguryō history should be incorporated into China's. That being the case, the development of a line of reasoning that could be used to incorporate all of Koguryō's history into Chinese history proved to be a most arduous of tasks. Most problematic for these scholars was the task of finding a way to incorporate the history of Koguryō following the relocation of its capital to Pyōngyang into China's. While it may appear from the outside that these scholars have successfully developed a logic which can be used to incorporate all of Koguryō's history into China's, they have in reality failed to come up with a line of reasoning which can consistently be employed in conjunction with the entire breadth of Koguryō history, especially as pertains to the history which unfolded following the relocation of its capital to Pyōngyang.

To rectify this problem, China began shortly after the announcement of the launch of the China's Northeast Project to compile <*The Sequel of Ancient China's Koguryō (Gaogouli) History*>, which was subsequently published in October 2003. This book consists of three sections: theory, history, and the introduction of the findings of relevant studies. A theoretical section was introduced in order to rectify the faulty logic on which <*The History of Koguryō (Gaogouli) in Ancient China*> was premised. The section on Koguryō history consisted of two parts in which more aggressive arguments were employed to justify China's claim to Koguryō history. Meanwhile, after having introduced the notion of

‘suzerain-vassal relations (藩屬關係),’ the theory section delved into Chinese dynasties’ perceptions of Koguryō.⁷¹

The compilers of this book introduced a new logic through which based on the fact that the origins of the Shang people (商人) –referring here to the people of the Yin dynasty (殷人)- lay in Northern China, the argument could rightfully be made that the lands that eventually formed Koguryō’s territory had in fact been incorporated by the Chinese dynasties from the Yin (殷) dynasty onwards. Moreover, as Kija had migrated east during the final period of the Yin dynasty and received an investiture from Zhou dynasty, this area had in effect become a district controlled by a *zhuhou* (諸侯, feudal lord), or regional administration of the Zhou dynasty. Thereafter, during the Han dynasty, Wiman usurped Kija Chosŏn and became a *waichen* (外臣) of Han China, before being eventually incorporated into Central China following the establishment of the Four Commanderies. As such, by distorting the flow of the history of Kojosŏn so that it now became Kija Chosŏn – Wiman Chosŏn- four Han Commanderies, these scholars denied the independent nature of Kojosŏn history, and emphasized the fact that Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean peninsula had belonged to China from early onwards.

Furthermore, these scholars stressed that Koguryō was founded within the jurisdiction of the Han dynasty’s Xuantu Commandery, and that even when at its apex its territory fell within the realm of the Chinese dynasties established through the Kija Chosŏn – Wiman Chosŏn- Four Han Commanderies linkage. As such, they established a completely new perception of Koguryō history in which Koguryō became the historical offspring of the Kija Chosŏn- Wiman Chosŏn -Four Han Commanderies linkage. Thus, in order to be able to incorporate the entire history of Koguryō into China’s, these scholars developed a new logic in which the theory of a unified multiethnic state based on China’s ‘current territories’ was replaced by a focus on China’s ‘past territories’ in the form of the ‘Kija Chosŏn – Wiman Chosŏn- Four Han Commanderies’ linkage.

Of course, this logic was not developed through the sole efforts of the authors of <*The Sequel of Ancient China’s Koguryō (Gaogouli) History*>

alone. As mentioned above, China's current physical makeup represented the standard on which the theory of a unified multiethnic state used to determine the scope of Chinese history was established.⁷² However, as far back as 1981 Tan Qixiang (譚其驥) was suggesting that the Qing (清) dynasty (1750-1840) should be the period on which the scope of history should be determined;⁷³ meanwhile, Zhou Weizhou (周偉州) argued that the scope of Chinese history should be determined based on the territories under the control of China at a selectively identified point in time.⁷⁴ Around that same period, researchers from the three Northeast provinces of China began to raise their own objections to the use of the 'current territory of China' as the standard on which Chinese history should be based.⁷⁵ To this end, Sun Jinji (孫進己) argued that the entire territory of Koguryō had originally belonged to China's Four Han Commanderies.⁷⁶ These calls for the scope of Chinese history to be determined based on the territories under the control of China at a selectively identified point in time began to gain increased traction by the late 1990s.⁷⁷ In addition, claims also began to emerge to the effect that as the history of Kojosōn was in fact that of Kija Chosōn – Wiman Chosōn, both of which were local vassals of Chinese dynasties, the history of Koguryō that unfolded in these same areas should also be included as part of ancient Chinese history.⁷⁸ Such outlandish assertions gradually made their way into the general population as a result of the holding of academic conferences such as the Academic Conference on the History and Current Status of the Northeast Border Region and Koguryō Studies held in July 2002.⁷⁹

In conclusion, <*The Sequel of Ancient China's Koguryō (Gaogouli) History*> can be regarded as an attempt to incorporate the entire history of Koguryō into Chinese history by accepting the assertions made by researchers from the three Northeast provinces of China, and applying 'past territory' as the standard upon which the scope of the history of China should be determined. However, Attention should be paid to the fact that by identifying the history of Kojosōn as that of Kija Chosōn – Wiman Chosōn, which they perceive as local administrations of Chinese dynasties, these scholars have effectively transformed North Korea into

an ‘integral part of China’s territory’. By doing so, China has attempted to strengthen its historical claims to the Northern parts of the Korean peninsula, while completely severing the history of Kojosŏn and Koguryŏ from Korean history.⁸⁰

Based on the above line of reasoning, the authors of <*The Sequel of Ancient China’s Koguryŏ (Gaogouli) History*> described the Four Han Commanderies in the section of the book dealing with history as the direct precursors to Koguryŏ. In addition, this book expanded the descriptions of economics and cultural exchanges contained in the previous work, with the authors arguing that in terms of the relationship with Chinese dynasties, Koguryŏ was able to make use of the chaos on the Mainland to aggressively develop its kingdom. Furthermore, by including descriptions of the general cultural history of Koguryŏ, which included matters pertaining to education and religion, the authors of this book attempted to rectify the ‘problems’ associated with <*The History of Koguryŏ (Gaogouli) in Ancient China*>, a work which tended to lean excessively towards matters related to relationships. Thus, the authors made clear their intention to use territorial theories to incorporate all aspects of Koguryŏ into Chinese history.

Conclusion

China’s Northeast Project has been implemented as part of an effort to incorporate the entire history of Koguryŏ, which covers the central and northern parts of the Korean peninsula, into Chinese history and to expand its historical claims as well as its political influence over North Korea. As part of its efforts to maximize the scope of Chinese history, China has, as this project has unfolded, progressively abandoned its traditional focus on the notion of a unified multiethnic state based on the ‘current territory of China’ in favor of a determination of the scope of Chinese history that is based on the use of the point in time at which China’s territory was at its apogee, i.e. during the Han-Tang era. As such,

it has displayed a historical perception that is based on a form of extreme hegemony under which it freely changes its own standards vis-à-vis the scope of the history in order to achieve its current goals.

Should Koguryō history really be regarded as part of Chinese history as Chinese researchers have recently asserted? Koguryō was an ancient kingdom which lasted for some 700 years. Connecting Koguryō history to that of Korea, attention needs to be paid to the fact that the various Yemaek tribes which formed in Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean peninsula were eventually integrated into the historical entity known as Koguryō. Furthermore, although some of the Koguryō people were eventually scattered across the mainland, the history and culture established by the Koguryō people has been passed down to the current Korean nation by way of Unified Silla and Parhae. As such, Koguryō was a kingdom which not only integrated the Yemaek tribes, but also established the foundation for the formation of the Korean nation.

The only successor to the history of Koguryō in East Asia is the modern nation of Korea. Koguryō culture, characterized by *toenjang*, *kimch'i*, and the *ondol* system, continues to be inherent to the modern Korean nation. The roundish flat-bottomed pottery developed during the Koguryō era eventually supplanted the circular-shaped pottery produced by Paekche and Silla as the foundation upon which the pottery of the Korean nation has been based. Therefore, when viewed from the standpoint of the formation of the modern nation-state, it is clear that the history of Koguryō should be included as part of Korean history. Thus, the attempts on the part of Chinese scholars to incorporate Koguryō history into China's history are based on nothing more than baseless assertions.

Koguryō's power continued to expand all the way up until its very collapse. In this regard, not only did it incorporate the local group that eventually spawned the Korean nation, but also turned some Mohe tribes (descendants of Yilou (挹婁)) into citizens of Koguryō. Furthermore, it also incorporated many other tribes, such as the Khitans, which nevertheless never became Koguryō citizens because of the fundamental

differences in their lifestyles. As such, Koguryō was a multiethnic state anchored around the Yemaek tribes that functioned as a cauldron that absorbed various of the surrounding tribes. In addition, from an international standpoint, Koguryō created an international culture by actively trading not only with Chinese dynasties but also with Japan, the Mongolian steppes, and the various states of Central Asia.

Given this reality, we should not look at Koguryō history solely from the standpoint of the modern nation-state. Such an approach makes it impossible to view Koguryō as the large-scale empire which governed a broad area that encompassed various tribes and cultures that it truly was. By removing the narrow standpoint of the modern nation-state and approaching Koguryō from a more macroscopic standpoint, the actual history of Koguryō can be perceived in a more complete fashion. Most of all, it is necessary to strive to understand the process through which Koguryō history unfolded as part of international politics in East Asia. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the positions of not only the Yemaek tribes at the center of the establishment of the Koguryō kingdom, but of other tribes as well. There is also a need to analyze in a multilateral manner the influence of its negotiations with surrounding states and tribes on Koguryō history. Once the above-mentioned factors are appropriately conducted, the international aspects, as well as the cultural diversity of Koguryō history, can finally be fully understood.⁸¹

Notes :

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- 24 Han Zhongfu, 1999, *ibid*; Ma Dazheng et al., 2001, *ibid*, pp. 321-339
- 25 Please refer to <*History of Qin-Han Dynasties* (秦漢民族史)> by Tian Jizhou, <*The History of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties* (魏晉南北朝民族史)> by Bai Cuiqin, <*History of Sui-Tang Dynasties* (隋唐民族史)> by Lu Xun (盧勛) et al., which were published during the late 1990s as part of a series on the ‘History of Chinese Minority Nationalities (中國歷代民族史叢書)’ put out by the Institute of Nationality Studies housed within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Also refer to *History of Northeast China* (國東北史) (consisting of six volumes, Jilin History

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〈국문초록〉

중국의 동북공정과 고구려사 연구동향

여호규 (한국외국어대학교)

이 글은 최근 중국학계의 고구려사 연구동향을 검토하여 역사왜곡의 실태를 파악하는 한편, 한국사의 기본체계를 정립하고 한중 양국의 상호 신뢰를 회복하는데 기여하기 위해 작성되었다. 최근 중국학계의 연구동향을 고찰한 결과 대부분의 중국학자들은 ‘중국은 현재뿐 아니라 자고 이래로 통일적 다민족국가였다’는 통일적 다민족국가론을 바탕으로 고구려사를 연구하고 있음을 파악했다.

더욱이 이들은 중국의 동북지역뿐 아니라 한반도 중북부에서 전개된 고구려사까지 중국사로 편입하기 위해 ‘현재의 중국영토’라는 통일적 다민족국가론의 기준마저 폐기하고, 과거 중국왕조의 판도가 가장 넓었던 불특정한 시점을 기준으로 삼아 중국사의 범주를 최대한 확장하려고 기도하고 있다. 동북아 국제질서를 중국 중심으로 재편하고, 북한지역에 대한 역사적 연구권을 강화한다는 현재의 목적을 위해 자신들이 설정했던 역사 범주의 기준마저 제멋대로 바꾸는 패권주의적 역사관인 것이다.

물론 고구려사는 근대 국민국가의 관점에서 본다면 누가 뭐라 하더라도 한국사임이 분명하다. 현재 동아시아에서 고구려사를 온전히 계승한 역사체는 한민족뿐이기 때문이다. 그렇지만 고구려사의 성격을 온전히 파악하기 위해서는 근대 국민국가라는 현재의 잣대로만 바라봐서는 안 된다. 고구려의 외연은 멸망하는 그날까지 끊임없이 확장되어 여러 종족을 포괄했으며, 주변국들과 활발히 교류하며 국제적인 문화를 이룩했기 때문이다. 그러므로 동아시아 국제정세와의 연관성 속에서 고구려사의 국제적인 면모와 더불어 문화적 다양성을 파악하기 위한 노력을 다각도로 기울일 필요가 있다.

주제어: 고구려, 중국학계, 통일적 다민족국가론, 역사왜곡, 근대 국민국가