

〈설립〉

Blaming the Victim: Reconsidering Queen Chinsǒng and the Decline of Silla

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[국문초록]

金富軾(1075-1151)이 1145년에 편찬한 유교 중심의 『三國史記』와 一然(1206~1289)이 처음 찬술하여 후대 편집자들이 수정했고, 불교의 영향을 받은 『三國遺事』 모두 신라 眞聖女王(재위: 887~897)을 부도덕하고 음탕한 통치자로 기억하고 있다. 이것은 기혼의 상대등 김위홍과의 불륜 그리고 당나라 여제 武則天(재위: 690~705)을 연상케 하는 타락한 행동들 때문이다. 10년이라는 짧은 그녀의 통치 기간은 기근으로 얼룩졌고, 3번의 반란으로 훼손되었다. 元宗과 哀奴의 난(889),

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後百濟의 건국자 甄萱(936년 사망)의 봉기(892)와 붉은 바지를 입은 도적 赤袴賊의 반란(896)이 그것이다. 그녀의 유명한 행실과 이런 반란들은 그녀가 통치하기에 부적당하고, 신라가 천명을 잃었다는 증거가 되었다. 그렇지만, 동시대에 재능을 발휘하지 못한 학자이자 관리인 崔致遠(855~908년 이후 사망)은 중국 당나라와의 공식 문서에서 그녀를 탐욕이 없는 자애로운 통치자로 묘사했다. 이 논문에서는 그녀와 김위홍과의 복잡한 관계와 신라의 쇠퇴를 알리는데 일조한 3개의 봉기를 둘러싼 상황을 분석하여 진성여왕을 동정적으로 묘사해보고자 한다. 진성여왕은 남자를 농락하던 여자이기보다는 그녀의 섭정처럼 활동한 10살 연상의 애인 김위홍에게 지대한 영향을 받았을 가능성이 크다. 게다가 일련의 반란들은 그녀의 악정에 의한 결과일 가능성은 낮고, 진골 귀족에 의한 신라 사회 지배에서 기인하는 고유의 빈약한 정권에서 나온 산물일 가능성이 더 크다.

□ 주제어

신라, 진성여왕(眞聖), 김위홍(金魏弘), 최치원(崔致遠), 골품제(骨品制)

Both the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms), completed by Kim Pusik 金富軾 (1075-1151) in 1145, and the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), begun by Iryŏn 一然 (1206-1289) and further emended by later editors, remember Silla queen Chinsŏng 眞聖 (r. 887-897) as an immoral and licentious ruler, due to her affair with her married senior grandee (*sangdaedŭng* 上大等) Kim Wihong 金魏弘 (d. 888) and other putatively depraved activities reminiscent of Tang empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690-705). Her short ten-year-reign was marked by

famine and marred by three uprisings: the revolts of Wǒnjong 元宗 and Aeno 哀奴 (889); Kyǒn Hwǒn 甄萱 (d. 936), the founder of Later Paekche 後百濟 (892); and the red-trouser bandits 赤袴賊 (896). Her reputed conduct and these rebellions serve as evidence of her unfitness for rule and Silla's loss of the mandate of Heaven.¹⁾ Her

1) Recent studies of Chinsǒng and the late Silla period include Kim Ch'anggyǒm 金昌謙, *Silla hadae wangwi kyesǔng yǒn'gu* 新羅 下代 王位繼承 研究 (Research on royal succession in the late Silla period) (Seoul: Kyǒngin Munhwasa, 2003); Chǒn Kiung (Jeon Ki-woong) 全基雄, "Chinsǒng yǒwangdae ūi hwarang Hyojong kwa hyonyǒ Chiŭn sǒrhwǎ" 眞聖女王代의 花郎 孝宗과 孝女知恩 說話 (The story of the hwarang Hyojong and the filial daughter Chiŭn in the reign of Queen Chinsǒng), *Han'guk minjok munhwa* 韓國民族文化 25 (April 2005): 199-230; this and other related studies were collected in Chǒn Kiung 全基雄, *Silla ūi myǒlmang kwa Kyǒngmun wangga* 新羅의 멸망과 景文王家 (The demise of Silla and the royal family of Kyǒngmun) (Seoul: Hyeon, 2010), esp. 129-162; Kwǒn Yǒngŏ 權英五, *Silla hadae chǒngch'isa yǒn'gu* 新羅下代政治史研究 (Research on the political history of the late Silla period) (Seoul: Hyeon, 2011), 216-282; Lee Kidong (Yi Kidong) 李基東, "9 segi Sillasa ihae ūi kibon kwaje: Wae Silla nŭn nongmin pallan ūi ilgyǒk ūro ssŭrǒjyǒnnŭnga?" 9세기 신라사 이해의 기본과제: 왜 신라는 농민반란의 일격으로 쓰러졌는가? (Basic issues in the understanding of Silla history in the ninth century: Why did Silla fall in one stroke of a peasant rebellion?), *Silla munhwa* 新羅文化 26 (August 2005): 7-19; Hwang Sǒnyǒng 黃善榮, "Silla hadae Kyǒngmun wangga ūi wangwi kyesǔng kwa chǒngch'ijǒk ch'ui" 新羅下代 景文王家의 王位繼承과 政治的 推移 (Succession to the throne in the family of King Kyǒngmun and political implications in the late Silla period), *Silla munhwa* 新羅文化 27 (February 2006): 23-44; Ha Yǒngae 哈영애, "Silla sidae Sǒndǒk, Chindǒk, Chinsǒng yǒwang ūi chǒngch'i ridǒsip pigyo yǒn'gu" 신라시대 섣덕, 진덕, 진성 여왕의 정치리더십 비교연구 (A comparative study on the political leadership of Silla queens Sǒndǒk, Chindǒk, and Chinsǒng), *Han'guk simin yullihak hoebo* 한국시민윤리학회보 21, no. 2 (December 2008): 27-50; Yi Kangsik 이강식, "Silla se yǒwang ūi salm kwa kyǒngyǒng" 신라 세 여왕의 삶과 경영 (The lives and

contemporary, the unfulfilled scholar-official Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (857-d. after 908),²⁾ however, remembers her as a benevolent ruler devoid of avarice. This paper seeks to portray Chinsŏng sympathetically by analyzing her complex relationship with Wihong and the extenuating circumstances surrounding the three uprisings that helped usher in the decline of Silla. Rather than being a man-eater, Chinsŏng was more likely dominated by her paramour Wihong, who, at fifteen years her senior, essentially served as her regent. In addition, the revolts were less likely the result of her misrule and more likely the fruition of endemic poor government stemming from the dominance of Silla society by the true bone nobility.

management of three Silla queens), *Kyŏngyŏng kwalli yŏn'gu* 경영관리연구 3 (January 2010): 93-118; Ha Ilsik 하일식, "Sŏndŏk · Chinsŏng yŏwang ūi chidoryŏk kwa sidae chokŏn" 선덕 · 진성여왕의 지도력과 시대 조건 (The leadership of Queens Sŏndŏk and Chinsŏng and conditions of the age), *Naeil ūl yŏnŭn yŏksa* 내일을 여는 역사 58 (January 2015): 217-230.

- 2) The *Samguk sagi* reports that Ch'oe went to Tang in 868, when he was twelve *se* 歲, suggesting that he was born in 857, Yang Zeng has advanced a compelling argument, based on earlier scholarship and using Ch'oe's own poetry and other literary sources from his collected works *Kyewŏn p'ilgyŏng chip* 桂苑筆耕集, that Ch'oe passed the Tang civil service exam in 874, when he was twenty *se*; thus suggesting that he was, in fact, born in 855. See Yang Zeng, "On Several Biographical Data of Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (855-908+): with a Focus on His Family Background and Important Years," *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 3 (2018): 307-317.

I. True-bone Dominance of Silla Government

Social status based on birth, as mediated through the bone-rank system (*kolp'umje* 骨品制), was the single most deciding factor in Silla society. Early on, it consisted of two bone-ranks and six head ranks. When the bone-rank system was first articulated in the sixth century, the royal Kim family comprised the holy-bone rank (*sǒnggol* 聖骨) and capital-based nobles primarily belonging to or related to the Kim family encompassed those of true-bone rank (*chin'gol* 眞骨). Nobles from these two groups comprised the council of nobles (*hwabaek* 和白), which grew increasingly unwieldy as Silla grew in size and other nobles were incorporated into the ruling structure, such as those from Kūmgwan Kaya 金官伽倻, which was annexed in 532. The council of nobles was headed by the senior grandee, a true bone who was also a proponent of royal prerogatives on the council since the position was established in 531.³⁾ Capital-based and some regional elites comprised those of head-rank six status (*yuktup'um* 六頭品). Although birth barred them from serving in the highest positions in Silla government, some, like Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn, sought to compensate by studying abroad in Tang 唐 China (618-907) and mastering Confucian teachings as scholars or Buddhist doctrines as learned monks. By the

3) Richard D. McBride II, "When Did the Rulers of Silla Become Kings?" *Han'guk kodaesa tam'gu* 韓國古代史探究 [Sogang Journal of Early Korean History] 8 (August 2011): 215-255.

mid-seventh century, the holy bone line had died out and was replaced by a strong line of true-bone kings. The middle period of Silla history (654-780), which was dominated by kings in the lineage of Kim Ch'unch'u 金春秋 (604-661)—King T'aejong Muyŏl 太宗武烈 (r. 654-661)—may be generally characterized by the royal Kim family's attempt to expand its authority, legitimacy, and autocratic power at the expense of the true-bone nobility. Head-rank six elites were able to serve as directors of the Chancellery (*chipsabu sijung* 執事部侍中), one of the most important offices in Silla. Directors of the Chancellery also participated in the Administration Chamber (*chŏngsadang* 政事堂), which Silla kings instituted following the precedent set in the early Tang period, to bypass the council of nobles, which was large and unwieldy and increasingly relegated to handling succession. The Administration Chamber seems to have been staffed by directors of government boards, such as the boards of war, rites, taxes, granary, and so forth. Although some head-rank six elites had more opportunity, directors of the Board of War (*pyŏngburyŏng* 兵部令) were typically true-bone nobles, had higher capital ranks, and often served as the senior grand councilor (*chaesang* 宰相), which headed the Administration Chamber.⁴⁾ The late period of Silla history (780-935) is character-

4) Richard D. McBride II, "The Evolution of Councils of Nobles in Silla Korea," *Tongguk sahak* 東國史學 59 (December 2015): 263-318; on the preeminence of the director of the Board of War, see Shin Hyeong-sik (Sin Hyŏngsik) 申澄植, "Silla pyŏngburyŏng ko" 新羅兵部令考 (A study of the director of the board of war of Silla). *Yŏksa hakpo* 歷史學報 61 (March 1974): 57-102; and Shin, "Silla ūi kukkajŏk sŏngjang kwa pyŏngburyŏng" 新羅의 國

ized by the dominance of the throne by capital-based true-bone nobles and fraternal competition and strife among such lords possessing hereditary privileges for power and position in Silla society at the expense of the royal family. In short, Silla monarchs wrestled with their close and distant relatives for control and influence in Silla government and society. During the ninth century, all of the highest positions in government were dominated by true-bone nobles of various Kim lines claiming descent from Silla kings both real and imagined. Although more and more head-rank six elites studied in Tang and returned with real bureaucratic experience, they were increasingly denied access to positions of actual power and authority. This ossification of Silla's ruling elite, limited to true-bone nobles surnamed Kim, was an important factor contributing to the dissatisfaction not only of true-bone nobles deprived of power, but also to head-rank six elites eventually turning their support and bureaucratic expertise to regional strongmen when they arose in the late ninth century.⁵⁾ Kim Wihong is a prime ex-

家的 成長과 兵部令 (State development in Silla and the director of the Board of War), in *Han'guk kodaesa ūi sinyŏn'gu* 韓國古代史의 新研究 (New research on ancient Korean history), by Sin Hyöngsik (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1984), 140-185.

5) Ha Il Sik (Ha Ilsik) 河日植, *Silla chipkwŏn kwallyoje yŏn'gu* 신라 집권 관료제 연구 (Research on the centralized bureaucratic system of Silla) (Seoul: Hyean, 2006); see also Ha, "Dynastic Crisis and the Ruling State in Silla in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Political Administration and Bureaucracy," in *State and Society in Middle and Late Silla*, Early Korea Project Monograph Series no. 1, ed. Richard D. McBride II (Cambridge, Mass.: Early Korea Project, Korea Institute, Harvard University, 2010 [2011]), 139-172.

ample of a true-bone noble surnamed Kim whose monopolization of political power in the late ninth century ultimately led to disaster for Queen Chinsǒng and the Silla royal family.

II. The Relevance of Kim Wihong

Kim Wihong 金魏弘 (d. 888) was a younger brother of King Kyǒngmun 景文 (r. 861-875) and an uncle to king Hǒn'gang 憲康 (r. 875-886). Wihong and King Kyǒngmun were sons of the *ach'an* 阿浪 (rank 6) Kim Kyemyǒng 金啓明, the son of Kim Cheryung 金悌隆, whose posthumous title was King Hǔigang 僖康王 (r. 836-838). Although Cheryung successfully fought his cousin and his supporters in the palace and was able to ascend the throne, his short reign was marred by discontent among his relatives who were both high ranking officials and competitors for the throne. He committed suicide in the spring of 838 when his senior grandee Kim Myǒng 金明 and the director of the Chancellery *ach'an* Ihong 利弘 raised troops in rebellion.⁶⁾ His older brother Kyǒngmun is best remembered in popular Korean lore as the *hwarang* 花郎 (flower boy) Kim

6) *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms), 50 rolls, by Kim Pusik 金富軾 (1075-1151), completed between 1136-1145; critical apparatus by Chǒng Kubok 鄭求福, Noh Choong-kook (No Chungguk) 盧重國, Sin Tongha 申東河, Kim T'aesik 金泰植, and Kwǒn Tǒgyǒng 權惠永, *Kuksa Ch'ongsǒ* 國史叢書 (National History Series) 96-1 (Seoul: Han'guk Chǒngsin Munhwa Yǒn'guwǒn, 1996), 10:124 (Hǔigang 3).

Ŭngnyǒm 金膺廉, who was given the opportunity to marry one of King Hōnan's 憲安 (r. 857-861) two daughters after delivering a positive report on the quality of Silla rule in the countryside. Because Ŭngnyǒm followed the advice of his monk mentor and married the king's less-attractive elder daughter, three auspicious things happened: first, he made the reigning king and queen happy; second, he succeeded his royal father-in-law to the throne; and third, he was able to make the beautiful younger daughter his consort as well. The *Samguk sagi* reports that Ŭngnyǒm was fifteen years old when this happened in 860, suggesting that he was born in 846.⁷⁾ Thus, his younger brother Wihong was probably born by about 850. The struggles his grandfather endured to obtain and hold the throne, as well as the scheming of relatives, would not have been lost on Wihong as he amassed power and prestige during the reign of his brother.

Wihong was the most powerful true-bone noble in Silla from at least the early 870s. While still probably in his early to mid-twenties, he dominated Silla's government as grand councilor, the pre-eminent member of the Silla king's Administration Chamber, which decided state policy. As the senior grand councilor, he held the de facto reins of power in the late Silla period until his death.

7) *Samguk sagi* 11:129-130 (Hōnan 4-5). Perhaps more significant to our purposes in this essay is another story about Kyōngmun: the Silla or Korean version of "the king has donkey ears" folk narrative. See *Samguk yusa kyōgam yǒn'gu* 三國遺事校勘研究 (Critical Edition of the *Samguk yusa*), edited by Ha Chōngnyong 河廷龍 and Yi Kūnjik 李根直 (Seoul: Sinsōwōn, 1997), hereafter *Samguk yusa*, 2:135-139 (Sasipp'al Kyōngmun taewang).

The “Basic Record of the Main Pillar of the Nine-story Wooden Pagoda at Hwangnyong Monastery” (*Hwangnyongsa ch'alchu pon'gi* 皇龍寺刹柱本記), an inscription dating to 871, reports on the renovation of the large multi-storied wooden pagoda at this monastery that functioned as the state palladium and central complex for Buddhist rituals directed for the benefit of the Silla state. It plainly names the *igan* 伊干 (rank 2) Kim Wihong as the Supervisor over the Work of Repairs to the Pagoda (*kam susōngt'apsa* 監脩成塔事), Probationary Director of the Board of War (*su pyōngburyōng* 守兵部令), and Manager of Important National Security Matters (*p'yōngjangsa* 平章事).⁸⁾ This final title is the position of the senior grand councilor and suggests that Wihong was the most powerful man in the Silla court.⁹⁾ The *Samguk sagi* reports that Kim Chōng 金正 (d. 874) was the senior grandee at this time, having served in this position from the first month of 862 until his death in 874. That Kim Chōng's name is not found on the inscription suggests that the senior grandee's power lay more in questions of dynastic

8) *Yōkchu Han'guk kodae kŭmsōngmun* 譯註古代金石文 (Translated and Annotated Ancient Korean Epigraphy), ed. *Han'guk Kodae Sahoe Yōn'guso* 韓國古代社會研究所 (Research Institute on Ancient Korean Society), 3 vols. (Seoul: Karakkuk Sajōk Kaebal Yōn'guso 嘉洛國史蹟開發研究所, 1992), 3:370.

9) See *Yōkchu Han'guk kodae kŭmsōngmun* 3:368; see also, Chōng Kubok 鄭求福, Noh Choong-kook (No Chungguk) 盧重國, Sin Tongha 申東河, Kim T'aesik 金泰植, and Kwōn Tōgyōng 權惠永, trans. and annotated, *Yōkchu Samguk sagi* 譯註三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms: annotated translation), 5 vols., *Kuksa Ch'ongsō* 國史叢書 (National History Series) 96-1-96-5 (Seoul: Han'guk Chōngsin Munhwa Yōn'guwōn, 1996-1998), 3:352 n. 76.

succession; but the day-to-day wielding of political power resided with the grand councilors who were led by the senior grand councilor.¹⁰⁾

Wihong's preeminent position in the Silla court in the 870s is corroborated by the inscriptions on two stone monuments composed by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn. First is the "Inscription on the Stele of the White Moon Concealed Light of the White Moon Pagoda of the Reverend Nanghye at Sǒngju Monastery in Namp'o" (*Namp'o Sǒngjusa Nanghye Hwasang Paegwŏl Pogwangt'ap pimun* 藍浦聖住寺朗慧和尚白月葆光塔碑文), which was erected in 890. Second is the "Inscription on the Stele at Sungbok Monastery in Kyǒngju" (*Kyǒngju Sungboksa pimun* 慶州崇福寺碑文), which was erected late in the reign of Chinsǒng (887-897). In the two passages from the inscription that follow, Wihong is referred to as "Grand Brother Minister of State" (*t'aeje sangguk* 太弟相國), attesting to his exalted position at the court of King Kyǒngmun:

In the winter of the twelfth year of the Xiantong reign period [871] ... [when the Great Master] was unexpectedly received in an audience with the king, the late king (*sǒndaewang* 先大王) bowed in his crown and ceremonial attire¹¹⁾ and made him his mentor. The royal mistresses (*kunbuin* 君夫人), heirs (*seja* 世子), and My Grand Brother Minister of State (*t'aeje sangguk* 太弟相國) [He was posthumously honored as Great

10) McBride, "The Evolution of Councils of Nobles in Silla Korea."

11) Crown and ceremonial attire (*myǒnbok* 冕服): This refers to a royal crown or diadem and ceremonial clothing.

King Hyesöng], and several noble sons (*kongja* 公子) and noble grandsons (*kongson* 公孫) encircled him and honored him in one accord.¹²⁾

咸通十二年秋 … 欵爾至轂下 及見 先大王冕服拜爲師 君夫人世子 既太弟相國
[追奉尊諡惠成大王]群公子公孫 環仰如一

Subsequently, he commanded the Grand Councilor, His Majesty's younger brother, to hold a Buddhist memorial service (*chae* 齋) at the immaculate ancestral temple,¹³⁾ and as a proxy for the king he was caused to hold an audience at the royal tomb.¹⁴⁾ How beautiful. The family lineage of the king flourishes¹⁵⁾ and his brothers were excep-

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- 12) *Chōsen kinseki sōran* 朝鮮金石叢覽 (Comprehensive collection of Korean epigraphy), modern compilation edited by Chōsen Sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Japanese Colonial Administration of Korea), 2 vols. (Keijō [Seoul]: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1919), 1:72-83, esp. 77; Yi Chigwan 李智冠, ed. *Kyogam yōkchu Yōktae kosūng pimun: Silla p'yōn* 校勘譯註歷代高僧碑文: 新羅篇 (Stele inscriptions of successive eminent monks corrected, translated, and annotated: Silla), Han'guk Pulgyo Kūmsōngmun Kyogam Yōkchu kwōn 한국불교금석문역주권 1 (Seoul: Kasan Pulgyo Munhwa Yōn'guwōn, 1994), 154-166, esp. 160-161.
- 13) Immaculate ancestral temple (*ch'ōngmyo* 淸廟): This is an ancestral temple altar (*myojik* 廟稷), where sacrifices are held for a person of pure and noble virtue, or this refers to a solemn and clean temple or shrine for offering sacrifices to one's ancestors (*chedang* 祭堂).
- 14) Royal tomb (*hyōn'gyōng* 玄扃): Literally, "dark crossbar," this refers to a royal tomb.
- 15) The family lineage of the king flourishes (*kyesu yangyu* 鷄樹揚莖): The compound *kyesu* 鷄樹 (cock trees) refers to the trees of Kyerim 鷄林 (Cock Grove) and the ancestors of the king. The words express the meaning that the king's family lineage flourishes.

tional.¹⁶⁾

遂命太弟相國 致齋清廟 代謁玄扃 懿乎 鷄樹揚蕤 鵠原挺茂

Wihong eventually became the senior grandee as well when his nephew King Hǒn'gang 憲康 (r. 875–886) ascended the throne in 875.¹⁷⁾ He served in this capacity until his paramour cum wife (Chinsǒng) ascended the Silla throne.¹⁸⁾ The *Samguk sagi* reports that Chinsǒng was the younger sister of King Hǒn'gang. Hǒn'gang's given name was Chǒng 晁, and he was installed as heir apparent in 866,¹⁹⁾ suggesting that he was probably born in about 862, no more than a few years after his father King Kyǒngmun had assumed the throne. The *Samguk sagi* reports that Hǒn'gang's successor, King Chǒnggang 定康 (r. 886–887), whose given name was Hwang 晃, was the second son of King Kyǒngmun, but the dynastic chronology in the *Samguk yusa* improbably asserts that he was the brother of King Minae 閔哀 (r. 838–839).²⁰⁾ The *Samguk sagi* quotes

16) His brothers were exceptional (*yǒngwǒn chǒngmu* 鵠原挺茂): This means that the wagtail's (*chǒngnyǒng* 鶺鴒) flourishing on the hill surpasses all others. The wagtail is an expression for brothers or peace and affection among brothers, and the phrase *yǒngwǒn chǒngmu* means the prosperity of brothers is exceptional. See *Shi jing* 詩經, “Xiaoya” 小雅 (Lesser Odes), “Chang dui” 常棣 (脊令在原 兄弟急難). See *Chōsen kinseki sōran* 1:120–124, esp. 122; Yi Chigwan, *Kyogam yǒkchu Yǒktae kosǔng pimun: Silla p'yǒn*, 232–240, esp. 235.

17) *Samguk sagi* 11:130, 132 (Kyǒngmun 2, Hǒn'gang 1).

18) *Samguk sagi* 11:132, 134 (Kyǒngmun 14, Hǒn'gang 1, Chinsǒng 2).

19) *Samguk sagi* 11:131 (Kyǒngmun 6).

the “Letter Accepting the Royal Emblem” (*Nap chǒngjǒl p’yo* 納旌節表) composed by Ch’oe Ch’iwǒn to clarify the relationship between Chǒnggang and Chinsǒng: “My older brother king Chǒng [Hǒn’gang] suddenly passed away on the fifth day of the seventh month of the third year of the Guangqi 光啓 reign period [July 28, 887], putting behind his blessed reign. Because my young nephew Yo 嶢 was not yet a year old, my older brother Hwang [Chǒnggang] temporarily took control of this frontier country [Silla]. But not even one year passed before he left the world for a distant place, giving up this bright age.”²¹⁾ For this reason, I conservatively suggest that Chinsǒng was born about the year 865. Thus, Wihong was probably at least fifteen years senior to Chinsǒng and, when he was in his mid-to-late thirties, he was at the height of his power and control of Silla when Chinsǒng ascended the throne.

In the *Samguk sagi*, Kim Pusik asserts that Chinsǒng’s personal name was Man 曼, but recognizes that extant letters and memorials composed by Chinsǒng’s contemporary Ch’oe Ch’iwǒn reports her given name was T’an 坦.²²⁾ As we have seen, the excerpt from the “Letter Accepting the Royal Emblem” intimates that Chinsǒng was not initially considered a viable candidate for the throne. Rather, she ascended the throne as an expedient because her older brother Hǒn’gang’s son Yo, born in about 886, was too young to be king. Chǒnggang’s early death one year after ascending the throne was

20) *Samguk yusa* 1:84 (Wangnyǒk Chǒnggang wang).

21) *Samguk sagi* 11:134 (Chinsǒng 1).

22) *Samguk sagi* 11:134 (Chinsǒng 1).

not anticipated. He was probably in his early to mid-twenties, having been born sometime between 862 and 865. The most stable power controlling and guiding the Silla court, however, was Wihong. To cement his complete control over the royal family, he had engaged in intimate relations with his niece Chinsǒng long before she assumed the throne. On this point, the Silla annals for the second year of Chinsǒng's reign report: "The Queen, from her youth, had intimate relations with the *kakkan* 角干 (rank 1) Wihong, and up to this point he constantly entered the palace to carry out business."²³⁾ The account of Queen Chinsǒng in the *Samguk yusa* reports that Wihong was the husband of Queen Chinsǒng's wet nurse Lady Puho 覺好夫人.²⁴⁾

Although it is certainly possible—if not probable—that Wihong was married to a woman bearing that name title, it is unlikely that Wihong's consort was merely Chinsǒng's wet nurse. The *Samguk yusa* account downplays Wihong's actual position at court and inaccurately presents him, along with Lady Puho and three or four others, as merely "favored retainers" or "favored ministers" (*ch'ongsin* 寵臣).²⁵⁾ Wihong certainly was favored at court, but this was more likely due to his prior influence over the royal family in political matters since his brother's reign. His intimate relationship with the young queen, who was in her early twenties when she ascended the throne merely emphasized his dominance of the Silla

23) *Samguk sagi* 11:134 (Chinsǒng 2).

24) *Samguk yusa* 2:198 (Chinsǒng yǒdaewang Kōt'aji).

25) *Samguk yusa* 2:198 (Chinsǒng yǒdaewang Kōt'aji).

court. The *Samguk yusa* asserts that “because they arrogated power and bent government [to accomplish their ends], robbers and marauders swarmed in masses and the people of the country suffered misfortune.”²⁶⁾ Wihong had certainly been doing that, but he had been advancing his own prerogatives long before Chinsǒng ever ascended the throne. Because in matters of state Chinsǒng was probably dependent on her powerful uncle, with whom she had consummated intimate relations in her youth, after his sudden passing in 888, she posthumously granted him the regnal title Great King Hyesǒng” 惠成大王.²⁷⁾

III. Confucian Hypocrisy and Royal Indiscretions in Chinsǒng’s Reign

Kim Pusik does not know what to do with Silla’s queens in his annalistic narrative in the *Samguk sagi*. On the one hand, he acknowledges that Wihong had intimate relations with Chinsǒng when she was young and implies that they were not married at the time. On the other hand, he does not clarify the exact nature of the relationship between Wihong and Chinsǒng. Was he her spouse/official consort or merely her illicit paramour? If Wihong

26) *Samguk yusa* 2:198 (Chinsǒng yǒdaewang Kōt’aji).

27) *Samguk sagi* 11:134 (Chinsǒng 2); *Chōsen kinseki sōran* 1:77; Yi Chigwan, *Kyogam yōkchu Yōktae kosǔng pimun: Silla p’yōn*, 160-161.

was her spouse or official consort, then he certainly engineered her ascent to the throne because he controlled Silla's government. If he was simply her paramour, she could not have been the dominant partner in their relationship because she was only a princess when their intimacy was consummated and he was the senior grand councilor (if not also the senior grandee) holding the reigns of political power in Silla. That Chinsǒng was devoted to him seems probable, considering that she posthumously awarded him the title of king.

Kim Pusik's treatment of Silla's other two queens from the seventh century is likewise ambiguous. Although, unlike Chinsǒng, neither are castigated for improper behavior, Kim Pusik is clearly troubled because he must recognize that Silla had women serve as sovereigns. In his historian's comments at the end of Queen Sǒndök's 善德 (r. 632-647) reign, he alludes to three famous Chinese women who assisted their husbands in overseeing the state: (1) Lady Nüwa 女媧, who assisted her brother-husband in administering the nine provinces in China's high antiquity; (2) Han empress Lü 呂后 (241-180 b.c.e.), the wife of Han emperor Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202-195 b.c.e.); and (3) Empress Wu Zhao 武曩/曩 (Wu Zetian 武則天, 625-705), who was a court woman/concubine of Tang emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 627-649) and, eventually, primary consort of Tang emperor Gaozong 唐高宗 (r. 649-683). Kim Pusik acknowledges that they assisted their spouses and made decisions as if they were emperors. He also asserts that "the histories"—meaning Chinese official histories (*zhengshi*, Kor. *chǒngsa* 正史)—did not officially label

them as rulers, but only recognized Lady Lu as “High Empress Dowager” and Lady Wu as “Heavenly Empress Dowager.” His allusion to Empress Lü and Empress Wu’s participation in Chinese government is actually a backhanded compliment and a moral castigation, because these two women are remembered in Confucian historiography as meddling inappropriately in dynastic matters. Both wielded immense power after their husbands passed away, and Empress Wu actually did become emperor and founded her own short-lived Zhou 周 dynasty (690–705). Kim Pusik’s argument for why women are unfit to rule relies on Confucian-inspired metaphysical reasoning, perhaps better stated as traditional East Asian wisdom: “According to the laws of Heaven, *yang* is firm and *yin* is gentle; and according to the laws of humankind, men are honorable and women are abased. How can one permit an old woman to leave the woman’s quarters and determine the governmental affairs of state?”²⁸⁾ Kim Pusik goes on to assert, with some relief, that Silla’s having a woman occupy the throne was a result of an age of unrest and it is fortunate that the state did not collapse. Thus, the compiler of the *Samguk sagi* is clearly uncomfortable that the Silla royal family viewed women as viable occupants of the throne in any capacity.

Neither Queen Söndök nor Queen Chindök 眞德 (r. 647–654) is recorded as having an official consort.²⁹⁾ Unlike Queen Chinsöng,

28) *Samguk sagi* 5:63 (Söndök 16).

29) *Samguk sagi* 5:59 (Söndök 1), 63 (Chindök 1).

both women seem to have been fully mature when they ascended the throne. Why do they not have husbands or consorts listed in the extant historiographical literature? There are at least two possible interpretations: First, they had consorts, who were also probably close relatives in the Kim family, and Kim Pusik knowingly obscured the information because it was unpalatable or would be embarrassing to acknowledge to the broader imperial Chinese audience of his book because it violated accepted Confucian decorum. Or, second, these women understood, when they ascended the throne, that they would not personally provide male or female heirs to succeed them and, like Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) in Britain's troubled Tudor dynasty, purposefully did not marry to preserve an uneasy peace among noble lines competing for the throne.

In effect, the three Silla queens are liminal figures in Silla's dynastic history. Kim Pusik presents them as functioning like royal cyphers or placeholders who merely continue the dynastic family until a royal male is old enough to rule. In the cases of Sǒndǒk and Chindǒk, they represent the smoldering embers of the holy bone line of Silla royalty that made way for the dynamic new true-bone line of Kim Ch'unch'u in the mid-seventh century. Sǒndǒk's regnal title "Holy Ancestor, August Aunt" (Sǒngjo hwanggo 聖祖皇姑) seems to acknowledge her possessing holy bone status,³⁰ but does not

30) Lee Ki-baik (Yi Kibaek) 李基白 and Lee Kidong (Yi Kidong) 李基東, *Han'guksa kangjwa I: Kodae p'yŏn* 韓國史講座 I: 古代篇 (Lectures on Korean history, vol. 1: Antiquity) (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1982; rpt. 1985), 186.

present her as a “mother of state” capable of producing offspring viable to assume the throne. Kim Pusik’s treatment of Chinsǒng follows this mold, but rather than Silla’s entering its golden age of conquest and subjugation of its peninsular rivals due to its important alliance with Tang China—carried out by Kim Ch’unch’u under the auspices of Queen Chindǒk—the emasculation and deterioration of Silla’s political and military structure is made manifest.

The *Samguk sagi* narrative says that after Wihong’s passing, Chinsǒng “secretly brought into her palace two or three young, handsome men for licentious activities and conferred on these men important offices, commissioning them to handle state affairs. From this time sycophants had their way, bribes were publicly passed, and rewards and punishments were not fair. The discipline of the country collapsed and became loose.”³¹⁾ In reality, Wihong’s passing must have unleashed jockeying for power and political spoils among the different lines and branches of the true-bone nobility closely affiliated with the royal family.

The *Samguk sagi* briefly narrates that learned individuals disguised themselves and criticized the degenerate politics of the age. The *Samguk yusa*’s account of Chinsǒng fleshes out the narrative and preserves the method by which Chinsǒng’s government was critiqued, reporting that a figure named Wang Kǒin 王巨仁 from

31) *Samguk sagi* 11:134 (Chinsǒng 2); translation following Edward J. Shultz, Hugh H. W. Kang, with Daniel C. Kane, trans., *The Silla Annals of the Samguk Sagi* (Seongnam-si: Academy of Korean Studies Press, 2012; rpt. 2017), 377.

Taeya 大耶, present-day Hapch'ŏn in South Kyōngsang province, made an ingenious Sanskrit-sounding faux-Buddhist dhāraṇī (*ta-rani* 陀羅尼; spell, incantation) that implicated two *sop'ans* 蘇判 (rank 3) and three *agans* 阿干 (rank 6).³² Although the faux-spell, preserved in the *Samguk yusa*, does not provide specific names, both terms refer to relatively high capital ranks. The *sop'ans* had to be true-bone nobles and the *agans* could be either true-bones or head-rank-six elites because *agan* or *ach'an* 阿滄 (rank 6) was the highest rank a head-rank six person could receive. Younger nobles closer to Chinsǒng's age could have been extremely threatening to established true-bone nobles as well as the head-rank-six elites allied with them at court. These are the very kind of people who would seek to influence the young queen, and would have been viewed with suspicion by others in power.

Chinsǒng was probably in her early-to-mid-twenties—hardly an “old woman”—when Wihong passed away, so it is only natural that she would seek amorous companionship. Why should she be denied pleasures of the flesh when a male monarch could have relations with any palace woman of his choice—and reward someone who gained his favor by benefiting her family? It is Confucian hypocrisy to hold Chinsǒng to a moral standard not typically expected of male monarchs. Kim Pusik's description of Chinsǒng's “licentious behavior” of bringing handsome young men into the

32) *Samguk yusa* 2:198 (Chinsǒng yōdaewang Kōt'aji); *Samguk sagi* 11:134–135 (Chinsǒng 2).

palace to service her is reminiscent of the way Empress Wu is described after the passing of her husband Gaozong in the annals of the Tang dynasty.³³⁾ The crucial difference between Chinsǒng and Wu Zhao, of course, is that the Empress Wu was nearly sixty years old when her husband, the emperor, passed away and had adult children, while Chinsǒng was only in her early twenties and apparently had no offspring.

Kim Pusik's statement that "sycophants" began to have their way at the Silla court is ironic and somewhat misleading because it suggests that Chinsǒng turned to outsiders and interlopers who took advantage of her. However, scholars have demonstrated that the highest positions in the Silla government—especially in the late Silla period (780-935)—were dominated by nobles bearing the

33) Empress Wu is alleged to have had affairs with a lowborn street peddler with a prodigious male member named Xue Huaiyi 薛懷義 (d. 694), whom she made a monk. See *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old History of the Tang), 200 rolls; comp. Liu Xu 劉煦 (887-946) et al. between 940-945; modern edition in 16 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 183:4741-4743; *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang), 225 rolls; comp. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072), Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061) et al. between 1043-1060; modern edition in 20 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 76:3479-3480. After him she reputedly was the lover of a Confucian physician Shen Nanqiu 沈南璆 (*Jiu Tang shu* 183:4743; *Xin Tang shu* 76:3483), which angered Xue Huaiyi, whom she ultimately had to eliminate. Toward the end of her life, she was attended by two handsome young brothers named Zhang Changzong 張昌宗 (d. 705) and Zhang Yizhi 張易之 (d. 705) (see *Jiu Tang shu* 78:2706). See C. P. Fitzgerald, *The Empress Wu* (Melbourne, 1955; rpt., London: Crescent Press, 1968), 129-136, 163-179; N. Harry Rothschild, *Wu Zhao: China's Only Woman Emperor* (New York: Pearson, 2008), 93-102.

Kim surname who were related in varying degrees to the royal family. This was the fundamental problem with Silla government: it did not endure because its ruling elite were not sufficiently differentiated and lower level elites did not enjoy enough of a stake in the success of Silla's government.³⁴⁾ What really happened is that, having lost Wihong's guidance and bullying power at court, other Kim family members who enjoyed some measure of prestige and hereditary privileges sought to influence the young queen. Wihong had dominated the court for nearly twenty years since at least 871, but his passing in 888 heralded unforeseen consequences in Chinsǒng's troubled reign. Silla splintered into regional domains led by rebel warlords during the 890s, but the signs and evidence of this impending predicament go back at least to the reign of her father King Kyǒngmun.

IV. Background to the Revolts giving rise to the Later Three Kingdoms

Blame for the rise of the period of the Later Three Kingdoms is conventionally laid at the feet of Queen Chinsǒng. Taking the *Samguk sagi*'s brusque treatment of Chinsǒng's reputed misbehav-

34) Ha Il Sik, "Dynastic Crisis and the Ruling Stata in Silla in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries."

ior and poor administration at face value, several scholars have willingly impugned Chinsǒng for the rise of banditry and successful rebellions by Kyǒn Hwǒn 甄萱 and Kungye 弓裔.³⁵⁾ We must bear in mind, however, that in the roughly 120 years between 768 and 887, the year Chinsǒng ascended the throne, there were at least twenty political upheavals, including significant rebellions by high-ranking Silla nobles such as Kim Hǒnch'ang 金憲昌 (822) and his son Kim Pǒmmun 金梵文 (825), as well as the self-made merchant prince Chang Pogo 張保臯 (d. 841 or 846), which are beyond the scope of this paper, but attest to the volatile conditions already existing in Silla.³⁶⁾

35) See, for instance, Pak Hansŏl 朴漢嵩, "Husamguk ūi sǒngnip" 後三國의 成立 (The establishment of the Later Three Kingdoms), in *Han'guksa 3: Minjok ūi t'ongil* 한국사 3: 民族의 統一 (Korean History 3: Unification of the Korean People), comp. Kuksa P'yǒnch'an Wiwǒnhoe 국사편찬위원회 (Committee for the Compilation of Korean History), (Seoul: T'amgudang, 1981), 614-650, esp. 614; and Cameron G. Hurst, "The Good, The Bad And The Ugly: Personalities in the Founding of the Koryŏ Dynasty," *Korean Studies Forum* 7 (1981): 1-27.

36) On the Kim Hǒnch'ang and Kim Pǒmmun rebellions, see *Samguk sagi* 10:121-122 (Hondok 14, 17). On Chang Pogo's revolt and death, see *Shoku Nihon kōki* 續日本後紀 (Addendum to the further chronicles of Japan), Kokushi Taikei 國史大系 series, ed. Kuroita Katsumi 黑板勝美 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1988), 11 (Jōwa 9 [842]/1) says that Chang Pogo died in the eleventh month of 841 (Jōwa 8: Munsǒng 3); *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡礼行記 (Record of a pilgrimage to Tang in search of the Dharma), by Ennin 円仁 (794-864), translated and annotated by Adachi Kiroku 足立喜六 and Shioiri Ryōdō 塩入良道 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1970), 1 (Kaicheng 4 [Jōwa 6, 839]/4/2), 4 (Huichang 4 [844]/7/9) seems to support this; see also Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: The Ronald Press Company,

The annals preserved in the *Samguk sagi* present extremely terse descriptions showing that Silla rulers faced a steady stream of epidemics, floods, droughts, and earthquakes. In Confucian historiography, these natural disasters are conventionally construed as evidence that the ruling dynasty is losing the mandate to rule. In addition, the increasingly trying circumstances were probably used by individuals plotting rebellion to gain supporters to their cause. King Kyǒngmun's reign was marked by epidemics and earthquakes: in 867 there was an epidemic in the capital, and on top of this there was a flood that caused the crops to fail. In 870 there was an earthquake, a flood, and an epidemic. Just as important, no snow fell in the winter, which also contributed to harsh conditions for the peasantry. In 872 there was an earthquake, and in 873 the people starved, which contributed to another epidemic. In these conditions, the *ich'an* 伊瀆 (rank 2) Kǔnjong 近宗 plotted rebellion and attempted a palace coup, but was unsuccessful, and he and his conspirators were executed.³⁷⁾ This Kǔnjong is not mentioned elsewhere, but because he is said to have possessed the high rank-title of *ich'an* (rank 2) in Silla's seventeen-level capital rank system, he was certainly a true-bone noble and most likely a member of the extended Kim family.

In the summer of 879, during the reign of Hǒn'gang, the *ilgilch'an* 一吉瀆 (rank 7) Sinhong 信弘 rebelled, but he was captured and

1955), 100, 377-378. The *Samguk sagi* 11:128 (Munsǒng 8), however, suggests this happens in 846.

37) *Samguk sagi* 11:132 (Kyǒngmun 14).

executed. In the spring of 887, during the short reign of Chǒnggang, the *ich'an* (rank 2) Kim Yo 金堯 of Hanju 漢州 staged a rebellion, but the court was able to dispatch troops to suppress it.³⁸⁾ Hanju was the northwestern prefecture of Silla, generally equivalent to present-day Kyǒnggi province, with chunks of the modern Kangwǒn and North Ch'unghch'ǒng provinces, and the North and South Hwanghae provinces in North Korea. Because of his high rank, Kim Yo was also likely a member of the Silla royal family posted to one of Silla's five minor capitals, Chungwǒn-gyǒng 中原京 (Central Plain Capital), present-day Ch'unghu 忠州, which was located in Hanju. Hanju possessed the relatively rich farmland in the Han River basin near present-day Seoul (Hansǒng 漢城) as well as Kaesǒng 開城, the stronghold of the Wang family that would found the succeeding Koryǒ 高麗 dynasty (918-1392).

The recurring cycle of drought that plagued Silla in much of the ninth century returned again in the summer of 888, after Queen Chinsǒng had fallen seriously ill in the third month of the year. The *Samguk sagi* says that her illness only abated after pardoning all prisoners not guilty of the death sentence and permitting sixty people to become monks. In the following year, 889, the prefectures and commanderies did not send their taxes, which were assessed in kind (i.e. rice and grain), to the capital—probably due to the severity of the drought the previous year. With the state's warehouses empty, Chinsǒng had no other recourse but to dis-

38) *Samguk sagi* 11:133-134 (Hǒn'gang 5, Chǒnggang 2).

patch commissioners to press the people in the provinces to pay. Exercising force to collect taxes was a contributing factor causing bandits to arise among the common people throughout Silla's domain. The adverse situation also caused some of Silla's prefectural officials or local true-bone nobles to rebel, leading the local farmers in dissidence from state control. Most important among these were Wǒnjong 元宗 and Aeno 哀奴, who were based in Sabǒlchu 沙伐州, the present-day city of Sangju 尙州 in North Kyǒngsang province. Because Sabǒlchu was the prefectural seat of Sangju 尙州, northeast of the capital region of Yangju 良州, Chinsǒng had to put down this rebellion in the Silla heartland. She ordered the *nama* 奈麻 (rank 11) Yǒnggi 令奇 to capture the rebels; but because they controlled the prefectural fortress, Yǒnggi despaired and did not attempt advance on them. A local village chief (*ch'onju* 村主) named Uryǒn 祐連, however, was loyal to Chinsǒng's command to put down the rebellion and capture the perpetrators. Although he fought hard along with the forces dispatched from the capital, he perished in the process. Chinsǒng ordered Yǒnggi to be executed for insubordination, and rewarded Uryǒn's family by installing his ten-year-old son as his replacement.³⁹⁾ Thus, Chinsǒng was able to maintain relative control in regions close to the Silla capital, but more remote prefectural areas were difficult to control because of the state's limited resources—and perhaps, more important, betrayal by officials.

39) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsǒng 3).

In 891, in Silla's northern minor capital of Pugwŏn 北原京, the bandit leader Yanggil 梁吉 dispatched his deputy Kungye, leading over a hundred horsemen, to attack villages loyal to Silla to the east of Pugwŏn in Silla's northcentral Sakchu prefecture 朔州 and more than ten commanderies and districts under the jurisdiction Silla's northeastern most prefecture of Myŏngju 溟州 in present-day Kangwŏn province. Yanggil eventually came to dominate the border areas of modern Kangwŏn, Kyŏngsang, and Ch'ungch'ŏng provinces (Silla's Sakchu, Sangju, and Myŏngju prefectures). In the following year, the bandit Kyŏn Hwŏn declared the founding of his own Later Paekche kingdom from his powerbase in Wansanju 完山州, present-day Chŏnju 全州 (in Silla's Chŏnju prefecture 全州). The commanderies and districts in Silla's southeastern Muju prefecture 武州 surrendered to him, making Kyŏn Hwŏn's domain conform roughly to present-day North and South Chŏlla province in the southwestern region of the Korean peninsula.⁴⁰⁾

Although Kungye's origins are debated by scholars, he was most likely an "illegitimate" Silla prince—the son of King Hŏnan (r. 857–861) by a concubine—who, after spending time as a monk in Hanju, threw in his lot with the disgruntled bandits led by Yanggil in the north. In the tenth month of 894, Kungye left Pugwŏn, traveled east, and entered Hasŭlla 河瑟羅, present-day Kangnŭng 江陵, in Silla's northeastern prefecture Myŏngju, leading more than six hundred followers. He subsequently named himself "general"

40) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsŏng 5-6).

(*changgun* 將軍).⁴¹⁾ In the autumn of the following year, 895, after amassing greater forces, he moved back westward, struck, and took over two commanderies Chǒjok猪足 and Sǒngch'ŏn 猩川. He also broke the Silla forces defending Puyak 夫若 and Ch'ŏrwŏn 鐵圓, and more than ten commanderies and districts under the jurisdiction of the Hanju prefecture.⁴²⁾ Kungye apparently broke with Yanggil, although he did not declare himself a king or establish a dynasty at this time, but he eventually made Ch'ŏrwŏn his capital after briefly using Songak 松嶽 (Kaesǒng).⁴³⁾

In the tenth year of Chinsǒng's rule, 896, brigands arose in the southwestern region of kingdom. The laconic description does not clarify whether these outlaws were associated with Kyŏn Hwŏn's Later Paekche state that had just been founded in Silla's southeast-

41) Kungye's biography in the *Samguk sagi* reports that Kungye had over 3,500 followers. Some scholars have argued that the discrepancy between the 600 followers mentioned in the Silla annals and the biography section may be explained as follows: Although he left Pugwŏn with 600 followers, his ranks had swelled to 3,500 when he arrived in Myŏngju. On this problem, see Hugh H. W. Kang, "The Development of the Korean Ruling Class from Late Silla to Early Koryŏ" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1964); Kim Chol-choon (Kim Ch'ŏlchun) 金哲煥, *Han'guk kodae sahoe yŏn'gu* 韓國古代社會研究 (Research on ancient Korean society) (Seoul: Chisik Sanŏpsa, 1975), 256. On Kungye's life, see Cho Insŏng 趙仁成, *T'aebong ŭi Kungye chŏnggwŏn* 태봉의 궁예정권 (Kungye's political power in T'aebong) (Seoul: P'urŭn Yŏksa, 2007) and Richard D. McBride II, "Why did Kungye claim to be the Buddha Maitreya? The Maitreya Cult and Royal Power in the Silla-Koryŏ Transition," *Journal of Inner and East Asian Studies* (Seoul) 2, no. 1 (2004): 37-62.

42) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsǒng 8-9).

43) *Samguk sagi* 50:467 (Kungye).

ern Chŏnju and Muju prefectures, or whether at this junction “southwestern” now refers to Silla’s Kangju 康州 prefecture centered on present-day Chinju 晋州 in South Kyŏngsang province. Because they distinguished themselves by wearing red trousers, the people called them the “red-trouser bandits” (*chŏkkojŏk* 赤袴賊). Silla’s defensive forces had been so decimated by earlier conflicts that the brigands plundered the prefectures and commanderies heading eastward and reached Moryang Village 牟梁里 in the western region of the Silla capital. They returned eastward after ransacking the houses of the people.⁴⁴ The following summer, in 897, Chinsŏng addressed her attendants and announced her intention to abdicate the throne to a “wise person,” her nephew Yo (Hŏn’ gang’s son, b. ca. 886), because the peasants have been impoverished and bandits have arisen throughout the country. Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn drafted a memorial to be sent to the Tang emperor in which she explains her reasons for giving up the throne. Because Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn drafted a number of letters and memorials during Chinsŏng’s reign, their relationship needs to be explored.

V. Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn and Queen Chinsŏng

Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn is traditionally regarded as one of the most im-

44) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsŏng 10).

portant Confucian figures in early Korean history. During the Chosǒn 朝鮮 dynasty (1392-1910), this scholar of the late Silla period (780-935) was enshrined in the state's Hall of Worthies (*chiph'yǒn chǒn* 集賢殿) and canonized as the second great Confucian of Korean history, after Sǒl Ch'ong 薛聰 (ca. 660-730), the son of the famous Buddhist exegete Wǒnhyo 元曉 (617-686). He is also a great example of a person from the periphery contributing to the cosmopolitan culture of the Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907), because he went to China, passed the civil service exam, served in the administration of the Tang emperor Xizong 僖宗 (r. 874-888), and became famous in Tang for his admonitory letters sent to the rebel leader Huang Chao 黃巢 (835-884) before returning to Silla in 885 bearing an imperial edict. Ch'oe's biography in the *Samguk sagi* says that, after his successful career in Tang, he hoped to realize his ideas on governmental reform in Silla. However, despite his best efforts, Ch'oe was not able to induce change in Silla government most likely because, as a head-rank-six elite, he lacked sufficient birth status and prestige in Silla society to realize his ideas.

Ch'oe's writings are an important source for this critical time in Silla history because the *Samguk sagi* quotes from several official writings for Silla rulers in the late ninth century. In one such memorial composed in 897, Chinsǒng officially announced her intent to abdicate to the Tang emperor in favor of her nephew Kim Yo 金曉, who would be remembered as King *Hyogong* 孝恭 (r. 897-912). Ch'oe has Chinsǒng report, in appropriately humble language: "In recent years, the peasants have been impoverished and bandits

have risen up. This is because of my lack of virtue. I have made up my mind to abdicate the throne to a wise person.”⁴⁵⁾

In the spring of 894, Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn presented a ten-point memorial on current affairs, which Queen Chinsŏng happily received. Ch’oe was raised to the rank of *ach’an* 阿飡 (rank 6), the highest capital rank possible for a head-rank-six elite.⁴⁶⁾ Chinsŏng’s choice to raise Ch’oe’s rank strongly suggests that she would have liked to implement his suggestions. However, there is no evidence that this happened and, perhaps, by this time, it was too late for the dynasty to turn back the tide of territorial division. Nevertheless, Ch’oe remained loyal to the Silla state and, in about 900, eventually retired to Haein Monastery 海印寺, in present-day South Kyŏngsang province. Ch’oe was probably intimately familiar with the concerns of Silla’s peasantry and common people and, due to his experiences in China, undoubtedly desired to suggest innovative measures like those attempted in contemporary Tang China, which also faced similar difficulties. In 890, he was governor of T’aesan commandery 太山郡太守 located in present-day Chŏngŭp in North Chŏlla province; and in 893 he was governor of Pusŏng commandery 富城郡太守, present-day Sŏsan in South Ch’ungch’ŏng province —both of which would fall eventually fall into Kyŏn Hwŏn’s hands. Ch’oe biography in the *Samguk sagi* reports that poor harvests and famines were frequent at this time.⁴⁷⁾

45) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsŏng 11); English translation following Shultz, Kang, and Kane, *The Silla Annals of the Samguk Sagi*, 380.

46) *Samguk sagi* 11:135 (Chinsŏng 8).

Unfortunately, the text of Ch'oe's recommendations have not been preserved in any form. Lee Ki-baik suggests that Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn's ten-point memorial advanced an educated head-rank six perspective on resolving government problems, and that practical Chinese and Confucian learning needed to be applied instead of the hitherto dominant blood-and-birth oriented true-bone approach to rule. He also speculates that Ch'oe's policies were probably picked up and advanced during the early Koryŏ period by Ch'oe Sǔngno 崔承老 (927-989).⁴⁸ In a similar vein, but with somewhat greater clarity, Chang Ilgyu suggests that the policies advanced by Ch'oe probably emphasized the Confucian concepts of humaneness (*in* 仁) and filial piety (*hyo* 孝), and that people possessing talent should be selected to serve in high positions in government.⁴⁹

When King *Hyogong*, Chinsǒng's nephew and successor ascended the throne, Ch'oe composed the "Memorial Expressing Gratitude for Succeeding to the Throne" (*Sasa wip'yo* 謝嗣位表) for him, which included something of an evaluation of Chinsǒng's rule and one long quote attributed to her (for a full translation, see the Appendix). The memorial is preserved in roll 33 of *Tongmun*

47) *Samguk sagi* 46:442 (Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn).

48) Lee Ki-baik (Yi Kibaek) 李基白, *Silla sasangsa yǒn'gu* 新羅思想史研究 (Studies in the intellectual history of Silla) (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1986), 222-246, esp. 232-234; Chǒn Kiung's views are generally similar to Lee Ki-baik's, see *Silla ūi myǒlmang kwa Kyǒngmun wangga*, 173-176.

49) Chang Ilgyu 張日圭, *Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn ūi sahoe sasang yǒn'gu* 최치원의 사회사상 연구 (Research on Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn's social thought) (Seoul: Sinsōwǒn, 2008), 244-252.

sŏn 東文選 (Selections of Refined Korean Literature). In the text, Ch'oe has *Hyogong* allude to natural disasters and land divisions that have plagued Silla. This is an obvious reference to continued bad harvests, drought, and famine, as well as the rise of the hostile states founded by Kyŏn Hwŏn and Kungye that repartitioned the peninsula into rival states.

Ch'oe portrays Chinsŏng (named T'an in the memorial) as eagerly desiring to establish good people and also states that her speech was profound. Ch'oe includes an extended passage showing that Chinsŏng reproached herself, took responsibility for problems facing the country, and ultimately decided to return the throne to her male family line. Ch'oe quotes her as acknowledging that Silla was in the midst of a great famine and that this unfortunate turn of events gave rise to petty thieves that bonded together into larger bandit groups. Ch'oe portrays Chinsŏng as having a very prescient understanding of bandit mentality. Silla's dire economic circumstances produced thieves and bandits who preyed on those that have and those that have not, destroying Silla's military strongholds and pillaging settlements. As the bandit leaders became braver and more secure in their refuges, they coated their original jackal-like rapacious behavior by attempting to appear as persons with noble aspirations. Chinsŏng hopes that if the Tang emperor recognizes her nephew as the rightful ruler of the domain, and bestows upon him the dragon-and-tiger shaped tally signifying kingship, the bandits will respect the power of Tang and flee to distant ravines to hide themselves.

Toward the end of the memorial, Ch'oe presents Chinsǒng's successor *Hyogong's* evaluation of his royal aunt. *Hyogong* says that Chinsǒng lacked selfish motives and had few appetites, suggesting that she was not venal, licentious or an overly sensual individual. In addition, he recognized that she was ill frequently, suggesting that she had a weak constitution, and that she enjoyed her leisure time. Considering the stresses that came unexpectedly to her with her brother's sudden passing in the summer of 887 and then abruptly being raised to the throne by her paramour Kim Wihong, and then Wihong's untimely passing early in her reign, it is not surprising that she will repeatedly ill. Finally, Ch'oe has *Hyogong* say that she spoke only when the time was right and her ambition could not be wrested from her. In all, Ch'oe presents her as a ruler steeped in Confucian learning, fully aware of the difficulties facing her country and willing to bear responsibility for some measure of the problems. Can this be the same person depicted in the *Samguk sagi* narrative? Granted that Ch'oe's memorial is an official communiqué that was filled with some measure of conventional rhetoric voicing support for the Silla regime, its confident evaluation of Chinsǒng cannot be dismissed simply as boilerplate prose because it acknowledges many of the actual problems and issues faced by Chinsǒng during her reign. Although both portrayals were composed by Confucian scholars and need to be viewed with some measure of critical appraisal, Ch'oe's more positive representation of Chinsǒng fits the facts we can finesse from the extant materials better than Kim Pusik's brief and nega-

tive portrayal of the last of the Silla queens.

VI. Conclusion

This essay has attempted to analyze the background conditions of Chinsǒng's ill-destined rule. Although Chinsǒng did preside over the country when disastrous revolts led by disenchanting elites divided the Silla domain, the underlying causes that finally came to fruition during Chinsǒng's rule were not directly her fault. Silla's ruling structure had lost the flexibility of the late seventh and early eighth centuries and had been ossified due to unilateral control by true-bone nobles, especially those related to the royal family, seeking to dominate the highest positions in government. Chinsǒng was never expected to be the ruler, and her father and two brothers that ruled before her had their share of revolts and attempted palace coups, which they were probably just barely able to suppress.

More important, Chinsǒng's early life was dominated by the looming figure of Kim Wihong, who, as senior grand councilor and later senior grandee, dominated the Silla court since at least 871 until his passing in 888. Because she had been sexually intimate with her powerful uncle long before she ascended the throne (or was considered a viable candidate for the throne), Chinsǒng's early reign was controlled by him, as he had directed the reigns of

her two older brothers. Wihong's passing was devastating and unleashed forces at court that the powerful noble had kept contained while he drove the reins of power in the Silla capital.

Conditions in the countryside steadily declined, and repeated years of bad harvests and famines sorely tested the peasantry. Local elites disenchanted with Silla rule found the common people easy prey to support their bids for power in the provinces. The novice queen, hamstrung by competing nobles at court, was no match for the banditry and uprisings in the 890s.

In contradistinction to the depiction of Chinsǒng in the *Samguk sagi* narrative as a licentious woman and poor ruler, Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn's memorials to the Tang court consistently portray her as a humble and model Confucian-oriented ruler. The "Memorial Expressing Gratitude for Succeeding to the Throne," composed by Ch'oe, preserves language attributed to Chinsǒng, which suggests that she was a conscientious young ruler who attempted to do her best in trying times. That she awarded Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn with the rank of *ach'an* (rank 6), the highest rank a head-rank-six elite could attain in Silla society, upon reading his ten-point recommendation to the Silla court in 894, suggests that she was open and willing to make necessary changes to strengthen and breathe new life into Silla's government. However, it is more likely that powerful counteracting forces at court were against sharing power with educated head-rank-six elites and making other innovations that threatened their hereditary privileges. In sum, Chinsǒng was more a victim of her gender and her trying circumstances, and it is

about time that the conventional view of the decline of Silla is revised so that her male true-bone relatives share more of the blame for Silla's decline and eventual demise.

[Abstract]

Blaming the Victim: Reconsidering Queen Chinsǒng and the
Decline of Silla

Richard D. McBride II

Both the Confucian-oriented *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms), completed by Kim Pusik 金富軾 (1075-1151) in 1145, and the Buddhist-inspired *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), begun by Iryŏn 一然 (1206-1289) and further emended by later editors, remember Silla queen Chinsǒng 眞聖 (r. 887-897) as an immoral and licentious ruler, due to her affair with her married senior grandee Kim Wihong 金魏弘 (d. 888) and other depraved activities reminiscent of Tang empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690-705). Her short ten-year-reign was marked by famine and marred by three uprisings: the revolts of Wŏnjong 元宗 and Aeno 哀奴 (889); Kyŏn Hwŏn 甄萱 (d. 936), the founder of Later Paekche 後百濟 (892); and the red-trouser bandits 赤袴賊 (896). Her reputed conduct and these rebellions serve as evidence of her unfitness for rule and Silla's loss of the mandate of Heaven. Her contemporary, the unfulfilled scholar-official Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠 (855-d. after 908), however, remembers her as a benevolent ruler devoid of avarice in an official communiqué with Tang China. This paper seeks to portray Chinsǒng sympathetically by analyzing her complex relationship with Wihong and the extenuating circumstances surrounding the three uprisings that helped usher in the de-

cline of Silla. Rather than being a man-eater, Chinsǒng was more likely dominated by her paramour Wihong, who, at fifteen years her senior, functions somewhat like her regent. In addition, the revolts were less likely the result of her misrule and more likely the fruition of endemic poor government stemming from the dominance of Silla society by the true-bone nobility.

□ Keyword

Silla, Queen Chinsǒng, Kim Wihong, Ch'oe Ch'iwǒn, Bone-rank System

[Appendix]

Memorial Expressing Gratitude for Succeeding to the Throne
(*Sasa wip'yo* 謝嗣位表)

In *Tongmun sǒn* 東文選, roll 33. *Tongmun sǒn kwǒn chi sam-sipsam / p'yojǒn* 東文選卷之三十三 / 表箋. In *Han'guk kojǒn chonghap* DB 한국고전종합DB.

http://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=GO#/dir/node?dataId=ITKC_GO_1365A_0360_010_0220

臣某言。前權知當國王事臣坦是親叔。自臣亡父贈大傅臣晷及次叔臣晁。相次亡沒。叔權守蕃服。疾故相仍。至乾寧四年六月一日。懇推蕃¹⁾務。令臣主持。官吏叱黎。再三留請。臣亦固辭付託。未欲遵承。而乃阻群情。遙歸私第。臣顧惟冲藐。謬襲宗祔。俯冰谷以兢魂。仰雲天而跼影。中謝。

Your servant [King Hyogong] says:

The previous authority known to serve as ruler of this country was your servant T'an 坦 [Queen Chinsǒng] my father's younger sister. From your servant's deceased father, the posthumous Grand Mentor (贈大傅/贈太傅), your servant Chǒng 晷 [King Hǒn'gang] and his younger brother, your servant Hwang 晁 [King Chǒnggang] have all passed away in order, my aunt, by your authority, guarded our vassal service. By illness and accident, we have succeeded each

1) Reading 蕃 as 藩.

other on the first day of the sixth month of the fourth year of the Qianning reign period [4 July 897], she earnestly resigned from her vassal duties and caused me, your servant, to take charge. Government officials and the common people repeatedly implored [that I ascend the throne], and I, your servant, also firmly declined their request because I do not yet desire to comply and succeed [to the throne]. Therefore, [May Your Majesty,] blocking the passions of the multitude, return [it, the throne] to me from far way. I, your servant, humbly take into consideration my own utter insignificance and have erroneously inherited my family's ancestral altars (*chongp'aeng* 宗祧), and look down on a frozen valley with an apprehensive spirit. Looking up to cloud-filled Heaven, the reflection bends. Many thanks.

臣聞難進易退。乃君子之用心。徇公滅私。實古人之陳力。口誇者甚衆。躬行者頗稀。而臣叔坦志切立人。言深責己。以爲火生於木而火猛則木焚。水泛其舟而水狂則舟覆。當國大饑。■²⁾致小盜相尋。本恣豺狼之貪。漸矜鴻鵠之志。■³⁾以藏奸鼠竊。始聞胠篋探囊。乘勢蜂飛。遽見■⁴⁾城剽邑。遂使烟塵匝境。風雨愆期。群戎益熾於東陵。餘粒莫棲於南畝。加復龍虎節則去沉■⁵⁾壑。鳳凰使則來輟中途。有辱恩榮。莫伸誠款。■⁶⁾多違者。臺恐滋焉。慎思三命而恭。決計一辭而退。當蕃具寮墻進。庶族雲趨而泣請曰。天災所行。地分難免。

2) Filling the lacuna with 頻 following the collation note.

3) Filling the lacuna with 其 following the collation note.

4) Filling the lacuna with 分 following the collation note.

5) Filling the lacuna with 遠 following the collation note.

6) Filling the lacuna with 實 following the collation note.

以斯自咎。未見其宜。受帝命爲期。

I, your servant, have heard that it is difficult to advance and easy to backslide, which is the functional mind of the Confucian gentleman. Being swayed by the public and selflessness, in fact, the arrayed strength of people in antiquity, those who verbally boast are an extremely great throng, and those who personally practice are rather rare. And yet, your servant T'an's will was to eagerly establish people, and her speech was profound and she upbraided herself: "Considering the case of fire being produced from wood; and yet if the fire is ferocious, then the wood will burn. Water buoys up a ship; and yet if the water is violent, the ship will capsize. Our country is in a great famine. It has given rise to petty thieves searching for each other. They originally indulge in the avarice of jackals and wolves [evil person/vicious tyrant] and gradually boast the aspiration of a swan [person with noble aspirations]. Their lot are hidden vicious rats that steal. When [we] first heard that they had pilfered our deep purse, seizing the opportunity they swarm like bees. They hurriedly see to destroying fortresses and robbing settlements. Eventually they cause smoke and dust to surround the territory. Wind and rain do not come at the appointed time. Groups of armed bandits (Rong) increase and set [things] ablaze in the Eastern Tomb Mounds. Remaining granules cannot be planted in the Southern Fields. In addition, if you restore the dragon-and-tiger shaped tally, they will go immerse themselves in a distant ravine. When the phoenix-emblazoned [imperial] com-

missioners come they will be stopped in the middle of the road, they will be an insult to imperial favor, and they will not be able to extend sincerity! In fact, because there are many violations, I resolutely fear that they will increase! I have carefully considered your three commands and reverence them. I have decided to intend to at once take my leave and retire.”

Right then, all the officials in our country came forward as a wall and our royal family approached like clouds, crying, and entreated her saying, “Natural disasters are on the move, and land divisions are difficult to avoid. By means of this, reproaching myself, I do not yet see its appropriateness and will await to receive your Imperial Majesty’s command [to ascend the throne].

讓王爵非晚。又以慈踰十起。禮過三辭。叔坦謂臣。涕隨言下曰。顧茲一境。異彼三方。何則。改服章奉正朔。仰遵帝國。俯緝侯蕃。故昔玉皇賜詩先祖曰。禮義國爲最。詩書家所藏。又頃皇華元季方者。來紀雞林政事詩云。但美詩書教。曾無鞞鼓喧。古哲候靜理斯在。而今也郡邑遍爲賊窟。山川皆是戰場。豈謂天殃。偏流海曲。都因懵昧。致此寇戎。罪不容誅。理宜辭職。冀令一國興讓。唯在二人同心。引而進之。勿効疎受。臣以叔坦。少私寡欲。多病愛閑。時然後言。志不可奪。顯拒擁轡之請。終追脫屣之蹤。臣也作室資功。倚門承念。宋穆能賢之舉。存歿懸殊。謝安相任之機。始終加慎。而且董戎猶近。諸盜多乖。磨鉛而盤錯未除。漏網而兇狂益甚。至使水無芥艇。陸絕蓬輪。不獲早遣下僚。仰陳忠懇。齊橫島外馳魂餘慍之風。秦帝橋邊瀝膽朝宗之浪。臣伏限權叨蕃寄。莫能奔詣行朝。無任望恩兢懼之至。

I politely declined the royal rank title unwaveringly and, fur-

thermore, with compassion, it exceeded ten risings [by the crowd]. The rite exceeded the three declinings [of the throne; viz. the requisite behavior of declining the throne three times before accepting it]. My aunt T'an addressed the ministers, cried, and spoke the following words: "Looking back, this whole region is different than those three regions. The reason why is because [my country] changed our official court dress and adopted the imperial calendar. We look up to and abide by the [dictates] of Your August Country. We bend to and are woven in tight with the noblemen (or high officials) and barbarian countries. For this reason, the Jade Emperor bestowed a poem on our first ancestor, which said, "The etiquette of your country is superior. The *Songs* and *Documents* are preserved in [every] house." Furthermore, the imperial emissary Yuan Jifang came and [composed] a poem recording the governmental affairs of Kyerim [Silla], which said, "Not only do [the people of Silla] beautify the teachings of the *Songs* and *Documents*, but additionally there is no clamor of military drums [i.e. the country is at peace]. The calm rule of the ancient, wise noblemen resides in this place. And yet, now the commanderies and communities have all become dens of thieves. The mountains and rivers are all scenes of warfare. How is it that natural disasters tend to flow to the shores of [our country] Haedong? The whole reason is ignorance and stupidity that gives rise to these armed bandits. Their offenses cannot be tolerated and [they must be] punished. From the standpoint of principle, we should re resigned. I hope it will cause the whole country to be roused to humility [to concede,

to yield]. If there are but two people of the same mind, they will draw [others] and advance toward it. Do not imitate negligently receiving [my royal command].”

I, your servant, humbly consider that my aunt T'an lacked selfish motives and had few appetites. Due to her many illnesses [weak constitution], she was fond of her leisure time. She spoke only when the time was right, and her ambition could not be wrested from her. If I showed refusing the request to embrace this position of authority, in the end, I would chase after the tracks of casting off my shoes.

I, your servant, was made [the heir apparent] of the [royal] family, was supplied with merit, and relied on the gate [of my forebears; i.e. the grace of my parents]. I will undertake [my new responsibilities] with remembrance. As for [Duke] Mu of Song's (r. 728-720 BCE) being able to recommend the worthy, living and dying are widely different. When Xie An (320-385) had the opportunity to be nominated grand councilor, starting and ending were additionally eschewed. And yet, moreover, supervising military affairs is rather close/near, and all the thieves are very shrewd. Polishing the lead [writing memorials] and intricate matters are not yet removed. Leaking nets and ferocious behavior are even more severe. Later, employing water, there are no tiny boats and on land there have cut off luxuriant carts so that we cannot dispatch our lower-ranking officials in advance, and look up to and put on display our loyalty and sincerity. Outside of even and crosswise islands, we gallop as spirits on the winds of residual indignation. On

the edge of the Qin emperor's bridge I drip my gallbladder [exhaust my loyalty] in the billows of the court and imperial family.

I, your servant, humbly limit my authority and am unworthy of the honor of being entrusted with a barbarian [kingdom]. I am unable to hasten to the imperial court and I am extremely hopeful of your imperial favor and excessively apprehensive.

