

Note from the Editor

For the first time since June 2016, we are presenting a theme issue. In 2015 Jonathan Best had organized a panel for the annual Kyujanggak Symposium on Korean Studies that reexamined the historiography of the Silla Annals of the *Samguk sagi*. Following the presentations at the symposium, Professor Best then guest-edited five articles for a theme issue that challenged the conventional historiography of the *Samguk sagi*, using insights gleaned from archeology and other sources to provide new ways of understanding the chronology of events in Silla's history.

This theme issue, guest edited by Javier Cha, also started with a panel; I first witnessed the contributors' incipient ideas about Korean periodization issues at an Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting panel in 2014. The ideas were further developed at a Hong Kong University workshop in 2016. When Professor Cha proposed to submit the papers to the *Seoul Journal*, we were very happy to again have the chance to publish on a very important and timely historiographical topic. This time the papers look at the issue of periodization of Korean history from various angles.

The way we look at Korean history shifts across time and place. Following a small boom in research on periodization in South Korea in the 1990s, it is high time to take stock and see how our perceptions have shifted again. The insights presented here are not meant to present a new paradigm, but rather to make us rethink the categories used to make sense of history. Since the papers are expertly introduced by Prof Cha in his guest editor's introduction, I will say no more here.

The two other articles that complete this issue are from quite different fields of history. Richard McBride analyzes two texts attributed to the famous Silla monk Ŭisang. Known as the founder of the Hwaŏm tradition in Korea, he is perhaps most closely associated with the symbolism and exegetic system of that school. Yet as McBride shows, during the Silla and Koryŏ periods there was also

a tradition that associated him with the vows for rebirth in the Pure Land, usually thought of as a popular tradition. Analyzing two vow texts attributed to Ŭisang, McBride shows that they bear the imprint of the Koryŏ Dynasty, and the need by the religious community at the time to associate places and practices with famous masters from the past.

Finally, Hyoung Wook Park's article analyzes the ambivalent responses to hepatitis B in South Korea during the Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan eras. Prevalence of hepatitis B has famously been associated with Korean drinking culture: The sharing of soju cups was often assumed to transmit the disease. Though proven by medical research not to be a factor in transmission, cultural anxieties continued to shape government and medical responses. It is perhaps fitting then that this issue closes with John DiMoia's review of Sonja Kim's *Imperatives of Care*, a book that deals with another aspect of the intersection of culture, government, and medicine, in this case the gendering of the field of medicine during the colonial period.

Starting with this issue, we welcome two new members to the editorial board: Balázs Szalontai, who is an expert on North Korea, and Erik Mobrand, who works on modern South Korean politics. I would like to welcome them on board and look forward to their contributions to the journal. I would also like to thank Ruediger Frank, outgoing board member, for his years of dedicated service to the journal.

Sem Vermeersch
Editor-in-chief