Turning toward Edification

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In 1790, King Chŏngjo recalled the history of the Han Ivory Troops as he was preparing to engage in the sacrificial ceremonies to the Ming emperors. The Ming migrants in question had accompanied the Hyojong court from Mukden to Chosŏn, where they settled at the foot of the palace of Ŭi-gung, which was Hyojong’s birthplace. Yet despite this proof of their loyalty, they were organized as an ivory troop under the command of the Military Training Agency and were required to support themselves through fishing. Even worse, Chŏngjo complained, they were forced to wander about without financial support and were so utterly mistreated as to be cast in educational martial arts displays in the role of squads of Japanese soldiers—most shameful, Chŏngjo claimed, for the descendants of Chinese officials.

His description of them would hardly have shocked Chosŏn officials during the seventeenth century, who found no problem in describing Ming migrants as submitting to the edification of the Chosŏn monarchy, in much the same manner as Jurchens, Japanese, Dutch, and others. Nor would their fishing (a standard activity for submitting-foreigners) or their association with Japan (during the reign of Injo they had been joined in the Military Training Agency by Dutch and Japanese soldiers) have concerned the seventeenth-century court. Yet, in 1790, Chŏngjo considered all these features as quite unacceptable. Ideological changes during the eighteenth century altered the position of Ming descendants, as they became exemplars of Chosŏn’s emerging Ming loyalist ritualism. This in turn was related to more general changes in Northeast Asia, as the Qing empire, in particular, increasingly divided its subject peoples into state-determined categories and treated their loyalties and cultural identification as immutable.

Late Chosŏn Ming Loyalism

During the eighteenth century, the Qing empire, no longer threatened by any serious possibility of a Ming revival, could turn its attention toward consolidating
its legacy. Although during the seventeenth century it had been dangerous to express continued loyalty to the Ming, by the reign of the Qianlong (r. 1735–1796) emperor, the Qing regime had become sufficiently confident of its position to espouse the Ming loyalist cause as its own, labeling those Ming turncoats who had continued their official careers under the Qing as “twice-serving” or “duplicitous” ministers (*erchen*). Alternately, the substantially Liaodongese Hanjun (Han Martial), who had been a core component of the Qing conquest elite, were not similarly accused of duplicity but were reorganized and clearly distinguished on the basis of their genealogies from Manchu or Mongol banners. Indeed, both Manchus and Mongols were redefined under a Qianlong emperor who saw himself as the sponsor of both. Mongols were to worship Chinggis, use the Mongolian language (which was actively sponsored by the Qing court), and serve in Qing-sponsored banners, while Manchus were also defined by their language, their skill in mounted archery, their attachment to the Manchu homeland, and their practice of Manchu shamanism. The Qing court took an active role, especially, in defining Manchus, preventing them from abandoning their state-mandated Manchu identity, and assimilating with the majority Han Chinese culture. Thus, the Qianlong emperor did not treat Ming loyalty as being in conflict with loyalty to the Qing, as the Ming was merely one of several cultural and dynastic traditions that Qianlong had inherited.

Chosŏn also experienced an ideological shift during the eighteenth century. Whether or not Chosŏn’s Ming restorationists had been sincere in their military preparation during the seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century all hope of a Ming restoration had been abandoned except within popular rumor and conspiracy theories. In practice, Chosŏn became a notably compliant subject state of the Qing. However, Ming loyalism did not lose its emotional or ideological appeal in Chosŏn for the monarch or for sajok aristocrats, even though the Qing empire itself embraced its own form of Ming loyalty. In fact, Chosŏn intellectuals increasingly reimagined Chosŏn as the last remaining bastion of the Ming empire and of a Chunghwa legitimacy that had elsewhere been destroyed by the Qing invasion. As a result, Chosŏn’s loyalty to the Ming was expressed during the eighteenth century primarily through shrines, public and private, raised to honor the fallen Ming, and through rituals to the Ming that most of Chosŏn’s sajok aristocrats were convinced could not be practiced properly anywhere else.

A notable feature of this ideological shift was a renewed attention to the ritual commemoration and historical reassessment of loyal martyrs. Similar to the commemoration of Ming loyalists in the Qing empire under the Qianlong emperor, Chosŏn monarchs including Sukchong, Yongjo, and Chŏngjo took
an active role in honoring those who had been purged or executed for loyally resisting the authority of the Chosŏn dynasty, including the officials who had defended Nosan-gun (r. 1452–1455, renamed Tanjong under Sukchong) when he was deposed and then executed by his uncle Sejo, and the loyal officials who had refused to abandon their loyalties to the Koryŏ monarch.

Similarly, numerous shrines were established to commemorate the Imjin War and the Pyŏngja Manchu invasion—whereby, following Yi Uk’s analysis, the fading memories of these conflicts were “ritualized” and kept as part of public memory. This ritualization of course was primarily concerned with key Korean participants in these wars, such as the great admiral Yi Sunsin, and the monk-soldier Yujŏng (1544–1610). Shrines had also been established following the Imjin War to honor, in some respect or another, Ming soldiers who had served in it. Many of these shrines saw revived use beginning in the late seventeenth century. Among them, the most prominent was perhaps the Sŏnmusa (Shrine to Martial Might) in the capital, established in 1598, which honored two Ming officers who were thought to have provided especial aid to Chosŏn. These were Xing Jie (1540–1612), who served as Ming minister of the Board of War during the war, and, after 1604, the inspector-general (jinglüe) Yang Hao (?–1629), who as military official had been enormously popular in the Chosŏn court. Although the Sŏnmusa seems to have been maintained only as a minor shrine throughout the seventeenth century, it attracted renewed royal interest beginning in the early eighteenth century. In P’yeongyang, the Muyŏlsa (Shrine to Martial Passion) was established in 1593 in honor of Shi Xing and was later expanded to include such notable Ming officers as Li Rusong, Yang Yuan, Li Rubai, and Zhang Shijue. The shrine seems to have been largely neglected, however, until in 1709 Sukchong noted the lack of regular rituals at the Muyŏlsa as a serious deficiency in the ritual calendar and established regular rituals coordinated with the more general Ming loyalist ritual of the court. Throughout the country, small shrines to Guan Yu were established by Ming soldiers, notably two in the capital, the Nammyo (Southern Temple to Guan Yu) in 1598 and the Tongmyo (Eastern Temple to Guan Yu) in 1602. Although controversial at the time of its construction, beginning in the 1690s the Tongmyo also became a place where Chosŏn monarchs would themselves formally honor the Ming military effort. During the Imjin War, the Minch’ungdan (Altar for Pitying the Loyal) was raised in honor of Ming soldiers who had died in battle. Although it had fallen out of use by 1636, sacrifice at the altar was once more revived in 1668.

The politics of ritual commemoration was intimately involved in the competition for power between the state as represented by the monarchy and the
civil aristocrats who monopolized the leading positions within the bureaucracy, but sought also to exert their power independently without regard to the royal court. Thus, by the late seventeenth century, the powerful Noron subfaction of the Sŏin, and especially the disciples of Song Siyŏl (1607–1689), had begun to advocate for the establishment of a shrine to the Wanli and Chongzheng emperors themselves in a site under the control of their faction. Song Siyŏl had retired to Hwayang in Ch'ŏngju, Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. In accord with his emulation of Zhu Xi, Song Siyŏl ascribed to the landscape within Hwayang meanings associated with Zhu Xi and other aspects of the Chinese past that he particularly admired. Notably, he carved the calligraphy of Ming emperors into the rock face. A line from the *Analects*—“Do no move if not in accord with Ritual” (K. *pirye* *pidong*, Ch. *feili* *feidong*)—was inscribed, together with four other pieces, in the Chongzhen emperor’s own calligraphy. Before Song’s death by poison at the order of the monarch in 1689, he instructed his disciple Kwŏn Sangha to establish at the site both a school, the Hwayang school (Hwayang sŏwŏn), and a shrine to the Wanli and Chongzheng emperors, the Mandongmyo (All-Streams-Flow-to-the-East Shrine). This caused considerable controversy among officials of the Noron and Soron subfactions of the Sŏin, but eventually the shrine received support from Sukchong and was completed in 1703, with sacrifices being made there from 1704 onward. However, in the same year, Sukchong asserted the supremacy of the Chosŏn court through the establishment on palace grounds of a shrine to the Ming Wanli emperor, the Taebodan (Altar of Great Gratitude), also called the Hwangdan (Imperial Altar).

Sukchong made relatively little use of the Taebodan, but his two successors, namely Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776) and Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1860), made it an essential part of the palace calendar. Yŏngjo, notably, expanded the rites at the altar in 1749 to include the first and last Ming emperors—the Hongwu emperor (honored on the tenth day of the fifth month) and the Chongzhen emperor (honored on the nineteenth day of the third month)—to supplement rituals already offered to the Wanli emperor on the twenty-first day of the seventh month. He also placed far greater emphasis on his personal involvement in these rituals than did Sukchong, performing rituals in person at the altar itself or facing it from a palace nearby during all but five years of his reign following 1749. This practice of regular personal worship was also maintained by his successor, Chŏngjo, who further entrenched Ming loyalist ritualism as an essential aspect of the Chosŏn state.

In effect, the establishment of these ritual practices, although directed toward the vanished Ming, constituted an elevation of Chosŏn and the Chosŏn
Ritual Transformation

monarchy. During the debates concerning the initial establishment of the Mandoongmyo and Taebodan, Soron officials had asserted that the rites implied an unjustified appropriation of the prerogatives of the Ming emperor by a subordinate lord (chebu). Kwŏn Sangha countered that by performing them, they were following in the tradition of the state of Song, which itself had continued the rites of the Yin dynasty, and of the state of Qi, which had continued the rites of the Xia. He cited Confucius’s description of those two subordinate states, Song and Qi, as the final heirs to the rites and manners of the two dynasties of the Xia and the Yin. Chosŏn was a subordinate, but just as Qi had exclusively inherited the rites of the Xia and Song the rites of the Yin, and indeed as Confucius’s own state of Lu had inherited the rites of the Zhou, so Chosŏn also was the exclusive heir of the Chunghwa tradition as represented by the Ming.

This marked a transition, to use Hŏ T’aeysŏng’s terminology, from the Chunghwa Restoration Consciousness to the Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness (Chunghwa kyesŭng ŭisik). In other words, Chosŏn officials abandoned their fantasy of plotting to restore the Ming and instead simply treated Chosŏn as the sole legitimate heir of a grand Chinese/Confucian tradition. This should not be seen as a move to some sort of protonationalism, as such narrow particularism was still alien to Chosŏn thinking, and the possibility of the revival of a legitimate realm within the geographic confines of China had not yet been completely abandoned. At no point did Chosŏn sajok seek to establish a particularist Chosŏn identity that could be separated from the broader Chunghwa tradition as a whole. Still, Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness was without question directed primarily inward, toward the self-identity of Chosŏn’s monarchy and sajok aristocracy. The practice of rites to the Ming was predicated on the assumption that no other country in the world could now appropriately perform them. Moreover, Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness did involve a general reconsideration of Korean history, with people such as Im Kyŏngŏp (1594–1646), who had been considered a traitor by Injo when he was alive, being transformed into a glorious hero of anti-Qing struggle during the reigns of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo. Indeed, aspects of Korean history with no obvious connection to the Ming, such as Koguryo’s defeats of the Sui and Tang and the story of Kija’s travel to Chosŏn, were brought into a broader narrative confirming the existence of an independent Chunghwa tradition in Korea, while the courts of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo made a point of honoring early Korean dynasties, notably Koryŏ and Silla, even as they asserted their special connection to the Ming.
Rectification of Names

These new intellectual trends strongly influenced Chosŏn’s responses to submitting-foreigners. Despite the ostensible Ming loyalty of the seventeenth-century Chosŏn court, court officials in Chosŏn had seen no problem in categorizing the descendants of Ming refugees, together with Jurchens, Japanese, and Dutch, as submitting-foreigners. In the decades following the establishment of the Taebodan, however, the court reimagined the Ming migrants, often considered as a nuisance and a threat when they arrived, as loyalist refugees fleeing to the last remnant of the true Ming tradition in Chosŏn. On the one hand, their presence in Chosŏn confirmed the state’s own self-image, and on the other, their categorization as submitting-foreigners came to be seen as scandalous and a serious flaw to be rectified. As a result, during the reigns of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo, those submitting-foreigners who could assert Chinese origins were recategorized as “Chinese descendants” (Hwain chason), “imperial subjects” (Hwangjoin) or the “descendants of imperial subjects” (hwangjoin chason), with the term “imperial subject” eventually becoming the standard. This recategorization gave them a social status equivalent to intermediate status groups such as chungin specialists and low-ranking military officials.\textsuperscript{20}

Before the eighteenth century, Chinese in Korea had been referred to by a variety of terms, not all of them particularly laudatory.\textsuperscript{21} Tang person (Tangin) was probably the most common, although, especially under Qing influence, Han person (Hanin), an equivalent to the Manchu category Nikan and the preferred term within the Qing empire, was also used with some frequency. Central Dynasty person (Chungjoin), Superior Country person (Taegugin), and Celestial Dynasty person (Ch’onjoin) were also common, although even a term as seemingly positive as Celestial Dynasty person could appear in passages otherwise hostile to the Ming people in question.\textsuperscript{22} “Imperial subject” (Hwangjoin) came into use during the reign of Yŏngjo to specify descendants of the Ming residing in Chosŏn. Literally meaning “Imperial Dynasty person,” it referred to subjects of what was then considered by Chosŏn to be the last imperial dynasty (Hwangjo), namely the fallen Ming. The initial uses of the term “imperial subject” were nearly always in connection with Ming loyalist ritual, especially at the Taebodan. For instance, in 1725, Yŏngjo asked, while discussing the Mandongmyo, which imperial subjects other than members of the Chŏn family (the descendants of Tian Haoqian) had received official employment. He was answered by Hong Hoin (1674–?), who said that Yi Tongbae, former magistrate of a special county (hyŏllyŏng), and Yi Myŏn, former subarea commander, both of them descendants
of Li Rumei, had also received official employment. In 1735, Yongjo expressed joy at the good news that Chŏn Tūgu, the son of Chŏn Manch’u, had shown skill in archery, and so he pushed him directly toward the palace military examination. In 1736, Yongjo intervened to have another member of the Chŏn family, Chŏn Ch’iu, provided with a position in the special guards (pyŏlgunjik), a royal guard established by Hyojong and staffed in part by Ming migrants.

Yongjo’s active interest in Chosŏn imperial subjects grew after 1749, the year that Taebodan rituals were expanded to include the Hongwu and Chongzhen emperors. In the third month of that year, for instance, Yongjo also called for civil and military officials who were the descendants of imperial subjects or of “loyal and chaste” (ch’ungjŏl) Chosŏn people to be granted pensions or employment by the Board of Personnel or the Board of War. As part of this process, he ordered all descendants of imperial subjects who were enrolled in the military and in possession of a bow or musket to assemble with their weapons before the Ch’ŏngyang gate of the royal palace. After bringing them before him, he called for the employment of imperial subjects who demonstrated military skills as ritual guards for the Imperial Altar. All this was done in the space of a few days. As the result of the show of talent provided by the imperial subjects in question, Chŏng Naeju, an extraordinary cavalry officer (pyŏlmusa) within the Military Training Agency, was raised above the senior third rank for his success in the archery trials, and two soldiers from the Han Ivory Troop, Wang Tuhwi and Wang Hŭngsŏk, were allowed to advance immediately to the final palace military exam on account of their success in musketry trials. Additionally, Yongjo ordered the promotion of the Chinese company commanders (Hanin ch’ogwan) Chŏn Manha and Chŏng Ikchu. A few days later, during the fourth month, Yongjo ordered that ritual guards should be selected especially from among the descendants of those Ming people who had followed Hyojong from Mukden and were then residing in Őŭi-dong.

Initially, positions were offered primarily to the descendants of Ming refugees who had obtained some significant bureaucratic position within the Chosŏn court upon arrival, with some consideration for talent and ability. The case of Ho Tup’il is an especially interesting exception, revealing the increasing categorization of imperial subjects as a type to be rewarded for their connection to the Ming, with little regard for skills or qualifications. In 1725, during the first year of Yongjo, The Chosŏn Veritable Records informs us that Ho Tup’il, a ninth-generation descendant of late Song official Hu Anguo (1074–1178), but by then living in Pukch’ŏng in southern Hamgyŏng Province, memorialized to the court his desire to take a position in the Mandongmyo, so as to show his sincere
desire not to forget China (Chungguk). Hwang Cha (1689–?), a civil official, responded to Ho’s request by saying that this would indeed be in accord with the desire of both Hyojong and Sukchong to maintain the greater meaning of the Spring and Autumn Annals, as well as the original purpose of the Mandongmyo. But was Ho T’up’il employable? The account of The Veritable Records suggests that there was considerable doubt in this regard. Yŏngjo tried to sweep these doubts aside: “How could a descendant of a high official of the Superior Country not become a brilliant general?” As Ho was an imperial subject (hwangjoin), Yŏngjo demanded that the local magistrate in southern Hamgyŏng place him under the special care of the state, and that an investigation be made to see if any of his family had some notable skill in either civil or military matters. As for Ho’s abilities, the Journal of the Royal Secretariat also records Yi Sŏngnyong’s (1672–1748) much less enthusiastic description of Ho T’up’il as a man who, “though not utterly vicious or stupid,” was nevertheless both incapable in military matters and illiterate, and thus not really employable by the Chosŏn court. There was no evidence, other than hearsay, for the claim that Ho T’up’il was descended from a prominent official, and indeed Ho’s family maintained that their documents had all been burnt. Still, Yi Sŏngnyong did not think that Ho could be simply abandoned, as to do so would hardly be in accord with the principle of “succoring those who have come from distant regions.” Ho T’up’il had a cousin, a resident of Maengsan in interior P’yŏngan Province, who was literate and capable in military matters, so Yi Sŏngnyong suggested him as a possible alternative.

Yi Sŏngnyong’s initial statement is consistent with the usual rhetoric concerning submitting-foreigners and the responsibility of the Chosŏn court to succor those foreigners who had come from afar. By contrast, Yŏngjo’s response suggests the growing idea of a Ming descendant as a Ming loyalist type, even if that type had not yet solidified into the stable bureaucratic category that it was to become. Indeed, in 1731, the court decided to provide Ho T’up’il and his descendants with greater privileges. This support was modeled on the precedent already established by his fellow northerner Kang Shijue, the Ming migrant discovered by Pak Sedang and Nam Kuman during their term of office in Hamgyŏng Province in the late seventeenth century. Yet, in contrast to Kang Shijue, who was described by nearly all Chosŏn officials as both literate and skilled in military matters, Ho T’up’il’s general incompetence was still not in doubt. The only common aspect shared by Ho and Kang was Ming Chinese ancestry.

The true expansion of imperial subject status and the privileges attached to the descendants of Ming migrants occurred after 1751, when Yŏngjo went
beyond granting royal favors to a few fortunate and well-known Ming descendants. From that time onward, Yŏngjo increasingly treated Ming descent as an important category worthy of consideration in itself. This change in attitude also took place a year after the Equal-Service Tax Law (Kyunyŏk-pŏp) was brought into effect, and was closely associated with it. The Equal-Service Law was part of a policy pursued by Yŏngjo to spread the burden of the military tax equally across the population. Initially, at least, Yŏngjo had sought to extend the tax to encompass sajok aristocrats as well, but when this move attracted too much opposition, Yŏngjo abandoned it, instead extending the levy across the commoner population, while cutting the tax rate in half. To make up for the loss of revenue and to tax sajok to a somewhat greater extent, Yŏngjo also raised the land-tax rate, imposed a levy on students who failed qualifying exams, and raised a number of other minor levies. As discussed by Haboush and Kim Paekch’ŏl, apart from the practical problem of military tax reform, the Equal Service Law, and the concern for the common people implied by it, was also part of Yŏngjo’s own rhetorical self-representation as a sage king in the tradition of Yao and Shun, ruling selflessly on behalf of the people upon whom the very survival of the state depended.

As with other fiscal reforms during the late Chosŏn, the reform of submitting-foreigner status required the development of institutions capable of handling these reforms, and on generating new knowledge and records through which these forms could be put into effect. The challenge facing the Chosŏn court was, well into the eighteenth century, that the central state still did not know who properly belonged within the submitting-foreigner tax category. During the tenth month of 1751, while touring the birthplaces of earlier kings, Yŏngjo’s attention turned to the birthplace of Hyojong, and thus to the Ming migrants in the Ŭŭi-dong neighborhood, in particular the members of the Han Ivory Troops. One official, Nam T’aegi (1699–1763), pointed out as a matter of concern that the term “submitting-foreigner,” which ordinarily referred to those Jurchens and Japanese who had come to settle in Chosŏn, also encompassed all imperial subjects who resided in Kyŏngsang Province; these latter were so deeply resentful of the term “submitting-foreigner” that they would prefer to accept the burden of corvée labor and the heavier tax load of commoners than be included in that invidious category. Other officials in Yŏngjo’s presence noted the same trend. Yŏngjo’s response was to lament his own lack of sincerity toward the imperial dynasty. He reflected on the phrase in The Confucian Analects (Lunyû) “that there must be a rectification of names” and called upon the Board of Rites to investigate who was classified as a submitting-foreigner.
In a very short while, Yŏngjo received responses to his request. In the same year, the director of the Capital Guards (ŏyŏng taejang), Hong Ponghan, informed the king that, having consulted with provincial governments and broadly investigated documents within the Board of Rites, he was able to establish that the category encompassed non-Korean lineages, including former Pŏnhos, Japanese defectors, and Chinese who had entered during the Ming-Qing transition. In response to Hong Ponghan’s report, Yŏngjo once more demanded the rectification of names: henceforth, the term “submitting-foreigner” should be restricted to the descendants of Jurchens and Japanese, while the descendants of Ming migrants should be referred to as Chinese descendants (Hwain chason). Yŏngjo then decreed that, while Chinese descendants should continue to be under the administration of the Board of Rites, they should be freed from all personal taxes and military service requirements. This demand Hong Ponghan accepted as showing sage concern on the part of the monarch, but he also worried that if the transferal were in name only and included no financial contribution, then in the future other government agencies would look down on the status, and local administrations might think that they could expand their source of military tax without interfering in any way with the finances of the Board of Rites. To prevent such future corruption of Yŏngjo’s sage intentions, he advocated having Chinese descendants pay a small contribution in local products insofar as it could be collected without any great effort, so that, if in the future some Chinese descendants did have a complaint, the Board of Rites would at least know who was under their care and protect them from such extralegal exactions by local administrations. This revision Yŏngjo accepted, even as he called for officials in both the capital and the provinces to show greater vigilance in enforcing the tax-exempt status of Chinese descendants.39

Indeed, investigation revealed quite a number of prominent Ming migrant descendants recorded in The Compendium of Submitting-Foreigners (Hyanghwain sŏngch’aek), such as Yi Hwŏn, the fifth descendant of the Yŏngwŏn Marquis Li Chengliang, and the members of three Ming migrant families, namely the descendants of Chu Haichang, Tian Shitai, and Fan Zijian.40 Yŏngjo responded by freeing these families from corvée labor in perpetuity and demanded that the Hansŏng administration and the Board of Rites should carefully review the names within The Compendium of Submitting-Foreigners in order to transfer Chinese descendants into The Record of Chinese (Hwain-rok). This record was to be distributed to the provinces, to prevent Chinese descendants from suffering unjust exactions. Additionally, the descendants of Chu Haichang were freed from the base status that they had gained on account of
an ancestor marrying a low-status woman, while Yi Hwŏn was offered a new position in the military.41

From this point on, officials directed their concern to distinguishing both the designation and the tax obligations of Chinese descendants from the diverse peoples who were in possession of submitting-foreigner status. The Chosŏn bureaucracy did not, however, have the knowledge or records to make these distinctions easily. In 1754, Yi Ch’ŏnbo referred to a report from Kim Hanch’ŏl, the governor of Hamgyŏng Province, who worried that, in putting the new order of the Board of Rites into effect, the bureaucracies of the various local administrations were faced with the significant presence of unrelated families mixed in with submitting-foreigners and Chinese descendants. As a result, local administrations, required to collect a limited tax from submitting-foreigners and Chinese descendants, and fearing criticism for not doing so, imposed double taxation on a fair number of people, throwing the province into disorder. As this certainly was not the original intention of the monarch, Kim Hanch’ŏl recommended that the new policy be delayed until each local magistracy could complete a full investigation of the identity of submitting-foreigners and Chinese descendants within their county. Yi Ch’ŏnbo supported Kim Hanch’ŏl’s request, but warned that in some cases local magistracies might simply be looking for excuses to delay implementing the policy. He thus advocated following Kim Hanch’ŏl’s suggestion while also investigating and punishing any local official who seemed to be stalling.42

Despite the fact that both Kim Hanch’ŏl and Yi Ch’ŏnbo had been careful to distinguish submitting-foreigners from Chinese descendants, Cho Yŏngguk responded to them by providing the historical background of these two categories, pointing out that Chinese (Hwain) included both those Ming soldiers who came to Chosŏn during the ten years of the Imjin War and had then remained after the end of the war and those members of Mao Wenlong’s army who had wandered into Chosŏn. Submitting-foreigners, alternately, comprised those few Jurchens (yain) who avoided being removed by Nurhaci to Jianzhou, but who had stayed in Chosŏn. Cho Yŏngguk then added that much of the empty land within the Six Garrisons region in northern Hamgyŏng Province had once been inhabited by these same Jurchens. Cho’s brief historical background caused embarrassment to Yi Ch’ŏnbo, who apologized for discussing the matter without first informing himself properly.43 Yet Cho himself was no closer to sorting out the basic problem of distinguishing genuine submitting-foreigners and Chinese descendants from other categories of subjects. Indeed, a year later, Cho continued to express concern over the administrative problems associated with
submitting-foreigners and Chinese descendants during a general discussion of
the problems connected to tax collection in Hamgyŏng, including such issues as
the fraudulent imposition of taxes on nursing babies, and the number of public
slaves who had managed to falsely claim descent from Yi Sŏnggye’s ancestors.

Yŏngjo responded by pointing out that false identities (moch’ing) of that
sort were also found in aristocratic genealogies and were an extremely difficult
problem to solve. Cho agreed but still emphasised how difficult reforming sub-
mitting-foreigners status in northern Hamgyŏng could be. Because submit-
ting-foreigners made up such a large proportion of Hamgyŏng’s population, the
task of searching out and identifying Chinese descendants from among them
was extremely onerous. Worse, some of the most common clan seats associated
with Chinese descendants could in fact refer to Korean place-names, includ-
ing Tŭngju, which could refer to Dengzhou in Shandong but also to Anbyŏn
in Chosŏn’s Kangwŏn Province, and T’aewŏn, which could refer to Taiyuan
in Shanxi but also Ch’ungwŏn in Chosŏn’s Ch’ungch’ŏng Province. An in-
vestigation of records would doubtless classify the bearers of these clan seats
as Chinese descendants, even if they referred to Korean place-names, and Cho
worried that this would be a source of complaints in the future from those upon
whom double taxation was imposed as a result. He thus advised that careful
distinctions be made. Yŏngjo did not respond to his broader administrative
concerns but reiterated the importance of distinguishing imperial subjects from
submitting-foreigners.44

The creation of Chinese or imperial subject status did not eliminate concern
about submitting-foreigner status. In 1758, the Board of Rites noted the loss
of revenue from submitting-foreigners who were copying Chinese descendants
by not providing their tribute as before, as well as the excessive growth of the
category to include “the maternal descendants of maternal descendants.”45 A
month later, Yŏngjo responded by limiting inheritance to paternal and mater-
nal descendants (presumably eliminating the maternal descendants of maternal
descendants that had caused concern).46 He also recognized that, in an era where
all Chosŏn subjects had had their military tax burden reduced to a single p’il
of cloth, submitting-foreigners, who had already been paying only that levy to
the Board of Rites, might feel resentment at having received no tax reduction.
Court officials also mentioned that submitting-foreigners in Chŏlla Province
suffered excessive exactions, not only paying the military tax at the same level as
commoners, but even having duplicate taxes imposed upon the deceased to be
paid by their descendants. Yŏngjo deplored this burden placed on them, which
went against the high intentions of his ancestors who had established the status.
Regretting that he could not cut their payments in half, let alone completely eliminate their military tax burden, he demanded that a Compendium of Submitting-Foreigners be distributed to the provinces in the same manner as The Compendium of Chinese, with strict punishments levied against magistrates who allowed such unjust exactions to take place.47

Considering the problem of irregular taxation, it is not surprising that submitting-foreigners aimed to upgrade to Chinese status or, especially during the reign of Chŏngjo, imperial subject status. Although even many of the successful claims to Chinese status, such as that of Ho Tŏp’il, seem now to be of doubtful veracity, by no means were all claims accepted. The case of Pak Sŭngbok, a self-styled “submitting-foreigner of the Imperial Dynasty” living in Yŏngam in Chŏlla Province, is especially interesting in this regard. His case is included in a survey of improper petitions in a 1798 entry in Chŏngjo’s Record of Daily Reflection (Ilsŏngnok). Most of these (which included appeals on behalf of convicted murderers) were rejected out of hand, in some instances with an additional penalty, but a number were seen to be worthy of further consideration, among which was that of Pak Sŭngbok. His appeal was confirmed as improper, but some aspects concerned Chŏngjo, who ordered a more detailed investigation. He was concerned by Pak Sŭngbok’s complaint that, as a “descendant of submitting-foreigners of the Imperial Dynasty,” he felt that people of his sort were no longer being cared for as in the past. Chŏngjo ordered an investigation throughout Chŏlla Province of irregular taxation and corvée imposed on submitting-foreigners as alleged by Pak Sŭngbok. He also demanded that a survey be made of improper use of terminology, notably the inappropriate reference to Ming descendants as submitting-foreigners and to communities inhabited by Ming descendants as submitting-foreigner villages. As Chŏngjo said: “These days, the teaching of proper social distinctions has been declining, and those in authority no longer know how to foster the worthy. The damage has reached helpless submitting-foreigner villages. How can this not be most disturbing! It is utterly nonsensical to describe the descendants of imperial subjects who fled to our country as submitting-foreigners.”48

In response, an investigation was indeed launched, as a result of which the governor of Chŏlla Province, Yi Tūksin (1742–1802), emphatically dismissed Pak Sŭngbok’s claims. He declared baseless or largely baseless each of Pak Sŭngbok’s many accusations of corruption. Interestingly, he also rejected Pak Sŭngbok’s own claim to imperial subject status. Not only was Pak not a Chinese surname, but the magistrate in charge discovered earlier documents that suggested that Pak Sŭngbok and his family were of Jurchen origin—his ancestors had first
used the Jurchen clan seat of Hŭngnyong-gang (Ch. Heilongjiang), although they had later corrected it to Taewŏn, which could be either Jurchen or Ming Chinese. From this, Yi Tŭksin was able to assert that it was “clear without a doubt that Pak is falsely claiming [imperial-subject status].” The general survey of submitting-foreigners and imperial subjects throughout Chŏlla Province did not turn up any serious failure to rectify names, or indeed any unjust taxation, at least at the county level (some customary payments were demanded on the level of the commandery or island administrations). In Naju, imperial-subjects and submitting-foreigners were scattered about the islands and hills, and so there were no collective villages whose names were to be corrected. In Kobu, Imp’á, Okku, Muan, Hamp’yŏng, and Puan, those who called themselves submitting-foreigners lived scattered among other communities or in some cases formed their own villages, but when the governor asked about their ancestry, he discovered that they knew nothing at all about the subject. In Sunch’ŏn, Posŏng, Kimche, Haenam, Hŭngdŏk, Kwangyang, Kangjin, Hŭngyang, and Mujang, he found that the names of submitting-foreigner villages and imperial subject villages were clearly distinguished from each other. There were also people of foreign origin in Yonggwang, but, without any clear evidence of their ancestry, it was not possible to change the names of their villages to “imperial subject villages.” Throughout, the governor noted, there were reports of people who claimed imperial subject status but who had, like Pak Sŭngbok’s ancestors, the clan seats Hŭngnyong-gang or Taewŏn. Until the early seventeenth century the Chosŏn court itself had granted submitting-foreigners clan seats and Korean surnames, but this history seems to have been forgotten by the late eighteenth century. From the governor’s point of view, the proliferation of the same clan seat among people of different surnames made no sense, suggesting the “proliferation of lies.” Pak Sŭngbok, the governor concluded, “was of the same ilk” as other fraudulent imperial subjects.49

Although the decision went strongly against Pak Sŭngbok, whose case became the precedent for rejecting later baseless claims of the same sort,50 it also confirmed the term “imperial subject” or “imperial subject descendant” as the official designation for those who could establish descent from the Ming—and indeed other terms largely disappear from the official record. Even as the supposed descendants of Ming migrants, during the reigns of Chŏngjo and Sunjo, appealed their classification as submitting-foreigners, demanding instead to be referred to as imperial subjects, so the Board of Rites struggled, in much the same manner as before, to distinguish the false claimants to Ming migrant status from the legitimate ones.
The Formation of Imperial Subject Identity

Both ideological change within the state and the interests of the Chinese descendants themselves encouraged the creation and development of Ming migrant descent-groups and the emergence of imperial subject status as distinct from submitting-foreigner status. Ming migrants, when requesting imperial subject status, frequently claimed to have lost the vital documents. The Chosŏn court, in turn, exerted itself to evaluate their claims, investigating the records for any documentary evidence of Chinese ancestry. The category of imperial subject or Chinese, in other words, developed through the interaction between the fiscal and ideological needs of the Chosŏn court, on the one hand, and the desire for social improvement among Ming descendants, on the other. Conversely, to the modern scholar, the fact that the category needed to be created and clarified during the reigns of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo is a reminder that before that period the distinction between the two categories was not made consistently and that even in the vigorously anti-Qing political atmosphere during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Ming Chinese descendants were routinely ranked as equal to Jurchens and Japanese.

Angela Zito has described the grand sacrifice (dasi) during the Qing under the Qianlong emperor as producing “social bodies,” bringing ritual participants into hierarchies, and creating the relationship between the yang body of the emperor and the yin body of the other participants. As social bodies produced through key palace rituals involving the Chosŏn monarch, imperial subjects enjoyed social benefits that went far beyond tax advantages. Submitting-foreigners during the seventeenth century had in theory enjoyed the special concern of the state and exemption from personal taxes. Their marginal status, however, left them at the mercy of competing government agencies, each seeking to impose taxes upon them. In addition, they inherited their status on the maternal line in the same manner as the base born. By contrast, imperial subject status brought with it recognition of distinguished ancestry, a family background that accorded with late Chosŏn’s state ideology, and privileged access to military examinations. Although Ming migrants in no way rose to the ranks of civil sajok, their participation in Ming loyalist ritual gave them a position in the Chosŏn court hierarchy and brought them into a social relationship with the Chosŏn monarch that they had previously lacked. It also gave them an increasingly visible role in the Chosŏn court, from whose point of view the presence of Ming loyalist migrants on Chosŏn soil reflected its own self-identity as the last remnant of the true Chunghwa tradition.
During the early Chosŏn, Jurchen and Japanese submitting-foreigners had assembled before the Chosŏn monarch during visits to the capital and had even been organized as royal guards. Under Yŏngjo, instead of Jurchens and Japanese, descendants of Ming migrants were assembled before the monarch, often as part of the monarch’s participation in Ming loyalist rites at the Taebodan. Just as had been the case with the Jurchens and Japanese during the early Chosŏn, their presence served, as Kimura Takao has recently pointed out, above all to strengthen royal authority. At times, these assemblies would also involve a distribution of provisions to these descendants, presumably in nearly all cases people from the area of Ŭi-dong. Participation in these rituals continued to grow throughout his reign. For instance, in 1771, Yŏngjo, after a lengthy prostration before the altar, called the Ming descendants for review. Such royal visitations continued to occur under Chŏngjo also, frequently resulting in the widespread hiring of Ming migrants for the military bureaucracy.

Indeed, military traditions according to which Ming migrants had been organized since 1637 continued to shape their institutional relationship with the state. Tian Haoqian’s descendant Chŏn Túgu continued to do well, gaining the position of provincial military commander (pyŏngsa) of Kyŏngsang Province in 1773, at the same time that another Ming migrant descendant, Hwang Sejung (whose ancestor was Huang Gong), acquired the position of chief commander (yŏngjang). Kang Shijue’s descendants also maintained their prominence, obtaining hereditary positions as sixth-rank military officers under Chŏngjo. According to a contemporary observer, although they continued to be based in northern Hamgyŏng Province, they made frequent trips to the capital, which no doubt raised their position considerably above their neighbors in the isolated frontier region of Musan. Beginning in 1764, the Chosŏn court facilitated the participation of imperial subjects in the military bureaucracy through the establishment of the Examination for the Loyal and Good (ch’ungnyanggwa), specifically instituted for the descendants of Ming migrants, as well as the descendants of loyal Korean subjects who had fallen resisting the Qing during the Pyŏngja invasion and were honored in the Hyŏnjŏsa (Shrine to the Wise and Chaste) and Ch’ungnyŏlsa (Shrine to the Loyal and Passionate). Indeed, note was made of imperial subjects who passed the examinations during the reigns of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo, including a descendant of Li Rusong in 1769, the above-mentioned Hwang Sejung in 1775, and a descendant of Kang Shijue in 1800.

The linking of imperial subjects with the descendants of loyal officials brought them into the mainstream of Chosŏn’s Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness. During the reigns of Yŏngjo and his successors, imperial subjects
and “descendants of loyal and good” (ch’ungnyang chason) Chosŏn subjects were made a constituent part of the Ming loyalist rites, often with special military examinations accompanying the rites. According to The Monograph of the Imperial Altar (Hwangdanji), a text from the Chŏngjo era, descendants of imperial subjects, descendants of loyal Chosŏn subjects, members of the royal family, and military and civil officials, arrayed according to rank, were brought in to participate, generally by standing at attention and bowing at set moments, either to the monarch as he passed before them or northward toward the spirit tablets of the emperors. Imperial subjects, along with the descendants of loyal Chosŏn subjects, participated in nearly all aspects of the Ming loyalist rite, from the inspection of the sacrificial utensils by the officiant (frequently the monarch or crown prince) through to the sacrifice itself, and the monarch’s departure. In The Veritable Records, most such cases are listed briefly, with a passing reference to the descendants of imperial subjects and loyal Chosŏn subjects participating in the rites, or perhaps being called into the presence of the monarch after the rites. The Journal of the Royal Secretariat often provides lists of all participants as well, dividing them between civil and military officials, along with their famous ancestor. In 1800, for instance, the Journal lists the people participating in the Ming loyalist rites, informing us that two civil officials of imperial subject status, both descendants of Huang Gong who had achieved the status of young scholar (yuhak), were brought before the monarch along with fifteen civil sajok, generally of a similarly low rank, who were descendants of thirty-six “loyal and good” Chosŏn subjects. As for military officials participating during that year, imperial subjects exceeded the descendants of the loyal and good in number, with forty being descendants of ten original migrants (including Kang Shijue, and the Chinese who accompanied Hyojong from Mukden), and twenty-two being descendants of thirteen loyal and good Chosŏn subjects. The association between imperial subjects and military matters was reflected in their placement during Ming loyalist rituals. According to the rule established by Chŏngjo, during the ritual inspection of the utensils, the imperial subjects stood to the west of the music platform facing north toward the shrine, while the descendants of loyal subjects were placed to the east of the platform, with both groups assembled in front of the civil and military officials. During the sacrifice itself, imperial subjects were placed to the west with military officials and members of the royal family, while the descendants of loyal subjects were placed to the east along with civil officials. This not only put them below the descendants of loyal Chosŏn subjects according to the usual civil-military hierarchy but also placed them in front of other more prominent civil and military
officials and included them in a central ritual practice of the monarch. Socially, it brought them into the company of the monarch and high officials—no small matter in a society as hierarchical as Chosŏn.  

The transformation of Ming descendants into ritual subjects of the Chosŏn court may also be seen in the reorganization of the Han Ivory Troops, the military unit in which many of the Ming descendants residing in Ŭi-dong had been enrolled. Located near the palace grounds in the eastern ward of Kŏndŏk-pang, just north of the main market street of Chongno, and associated with the monarchy beginning with Hyojong, Ŭi-dong had, as discussed above, attracted Yŏngjo’s interest early on. When he arrived for his initial visit in 1751, only five members of the Han Ivory Troops had heard in time to present themselves before the monarch. Yŏngjo asked them for their names and origins and was informed that they were P’ung Myŏngbok, a descendant of Feng Sanshi; Yang Sŏnggŏn, a descendant of Yang Fuji; Wang Suhan, a descendant of Wang Wenxiang; Yang Sehŭng, another descendant of Yang Fuji; and Pae Ikhwi, a descendant of Pei Yisheng. Upon establishing their names and antecedents, Yŏngjo turned his attention to their tax status, inquiring if they had to provide the local urban corvée of Hansŏng residents—the notoriously burdensome “ward corvée” (*pangyŏk*). He was informed that they were free of local corvée as well. He also inquired about the numbers of Ming migrant descendants in and around the Ŭi-dong neighborhood and was informed of the presence of more than forty Ming migrant households within the neighborhood and more than fifty outside, although those who had left Ŭi-dong often had to provide a certain amount of local corvée. Because Ŭi-dong was small and cramped, many had decided to leave. Yŏngjo was further informed that the population of Ming descendants in Ŭi-dong had grown since the time of migration from slightly more than twenty to over 150. In the end, this was not a very substantial number, even though households outside of the neighborhood do not seem to have been included.  

Under Chŏngjo, the organization of the Han Ivory Troops took a new turn. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in 1790, Chŏngjo outlined the history of these troops, seeing the category as utterly unbefitting the descendants of Ming migrants. He inaccurately suggested that this had perhaps been inevitable during the period immediately post submission to the Qing “when much had to be concealed,” with this statement forgetting or ignoring the fact that the Ming migrants of Ŭi-dong had come to Chosŏn with the full knowledge and cooperation of the Qing. Chŏngjo’s solution was to reorganize the imperial subjects militarily by renaming their command the Han Brigade (*Hallyŏ*), presumably as doing so removed the implication of commoner status, or even servile status,
inherent in ivory troops. The total number within the Han Brigade he set at thirty people, and while he continued to have them administered with the Military Training Agency, he had their rank and financing determined according to the precedent of the Agency Exam Passers (kukch’ulsin) among the palace guards and the Special Cavalry Brigade (pyölgidae) within the Capital Garrison of the Military Training Agency. Additionally, Chŏngjo took advantage of this reform to reorganize the Taebodan guards (sujikkwan). He lamented that, when the Taebodan had first been established, the guards had been drawn from the ranks of eunuchs, later to be supplemented by the base-born cleaning staff (subok) for tombs and temples. In place of such base guards, he ordered that three members of the Han Brigade be selected as guards at the Taebodan, thereby strengthening their connection to Ming loyalist ritual.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{Constructing the Nongsŏ Yi}

Such court involvement in the creation of an imperial subject identity can also be observed on the level of individual descent-groups. A notable example is that of the Nongsŏ Yi. The Nongsŏ Yi family were descendants of Li Chengliang, a prominent Liaodongese military official, likely of Hamgyŏng Jurchen ancestry, although he was remembered in Chosŏn as Korean in origin. Three of Li Chengliang’s sons, Li Rusong, Li Rumei, and Li Rubai, served against the Japanese during the Imjin War, with Li Rusong playing a particularly prominent role. As was discussed in chapter 4, during the seventeenth century, the descendants of Li Rumei had gained limited status in Chosŏn as military officials. As they were from the same family as a prominent savior of Korea during the Imjin War, they attracted regular court attention. Because they were residents of Kanghwa, Kanghwa magistrates were especially concerned about their well-being. During the reign of Yŏngjo, shortly after imperial subject status was instituted, Kwŏn Chŏk, the magistrate of Kanghwa Island, expressed concern that Yi Myŏn, a descendant of Li Rumei, was near starvation on Kanghwa Island, despite the earlier intercession of Yi T’aejwa under Kyŏngjong. Considering that Yi Myŏn’s ancestor Li Rumei had contributed incomparably more to Chosŏn than the ancestor of Chŏn Manch’u (an imperial subject then the focus of considerable court interest), Kwŏn Chŏk argued that he should be provided with proper employment, if only to prevent the end of Li Rumei’s line.\textsuperscript{71} Yŏngjo responded affirmatively to Kwŏn Chŏk’s request and, indeed, Yi Myŏn was given a range of military positions, including garrison commander of Wŏlgot in 1735,\textsuperscript{72} commander at the Five Military Commands (Owijang, senior 3),\textsuperscript{73} fifth minister in
the Office of Ministers without portfolio (ch’ŏmjisa), and commander at the Loyal Command (Ch’ungikechang). In addition to his military career, Yi Myŏn reinforced his status by regularly participating in the rites at the Taebodan, a salutary practice that was noticed by Yŏngjo himself. Such prominence benefited his descendants. His son Yi Hun was given the position of commander of the Five Military Commands (Owi t’ongjesa), became a member of the special forces unit (pyŏlgunjik), and attained the rank of senior fourth minister of the Office of Ministers-without-Portfolio (tongjisa chungch’ubu, jr.

However, the interest of the Chosŏn court did not stop at simply benefiting the careers of Yi Myŏn and his offspring or encouraging their participation in Taebodan ritual. Rather, both Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo actively sought to form them into a descent-group worthy of their noble ancestor Li Rumei and to emphasize their status as a living connection to General Li Rusong, who had long received sacrifice at the Muyŏlsa in P’yŏngyang and supplementary honors in the Taebodan. Thus, in 1740, Yŏngjo asked the minister of the Board of Rites, Yi Kijin (1687–1755), whether the descendants of imperial subjects practiced ancestral sacrifices to their ancestors. Yi Kijin responded that Yi Myŏn had not yet made an ancestral tablet (sinju). When Yi Kijin visited Yi Myŏn on Kanghwa Island, he noticed that the family did not have the resources even to pay for the ritual of moving the ancestral tablet. Yi Kijin recommended that the monarch order the Board of Rites to pay for the ritual. In fact, Yŏngjo went so far as to have the tablet itself made for Yi Myŏn and to order the establishment of a shrine at which these rituals to Li Rumei and Li Chengliang could be performed. Via a diplomatic mission, Yi Chŏ, a cousin of Yi Myŏn, who also pursued a military career, was able to obtain an image of Li Chengliang, but this itself became a source of concern. Kim Yangt’aek (1712–1777), after participating in rituals at the Ch’ungnyŏlsa on Kanghwa Island, noted that Yi Myŏn lived nearby. Remembering Yŏngjo’s salutary example of providing salaries to Ming migrant descendants, he went to see him. There he discovered that Yi Myŏn, although possessing the portraits of both Li Chengliang and Li Rumei and offering sacrifices to them, nevertheless lived in a simple thatched hut. He asked that Yŏngjo order the provision of proper utensils and food, so that Yi Myŏn could practice the ancestral sacrifice properly.

This interest on the part of the Chosŏn court not only enriched Yi Myŏn’s family, but soon expanded it to include two new branches, both direct descendants of Li Rusong. The first of these new branches was discovered in 1755,
during the early period of the construction of imperial subject status. The man in question, Yi Hwŏn (later renamed Yi Wŏn), benefited from the discovery of his status by attaining the rank of company commander (ch’ogwan) with the Military Training Agency (Hullyŏn togam) without first taking the exams. He continued to rise in the ranks, attaining such positions as right naval inspector for Chŏlla Province (Chŏlla usu uhu, sr. 4), even becoming local magistrate (byŏn’gam) of Chinhae in Kyŏngsang Province. His son Kwangu (who was eventually renamed Hyosŭng) also attracted the interest of the monarch and served in military posts, holding, among other positions, that of magistrate of Kyŏnghŭng. They became, in other words, part of the same military sajok descent-group as the descendants of Li Rumei in Kanghwa.

Yi Hwŏn owed this preferment to the declared belief among Chosŏn officials that he was “a remaining descendant of Li Rusong” whose aid to Chosŏn “must never be forgotten.” The fact that he seems to have been a skilled soldier, however, no doubt also furthered his military career. Li Rusong’s shadow, extended indirectly, had already benefited the Kanghwa branch of the Nongsŏ Yi, but certainly direct descendants would have had a stronger claim. Yet the evidence for Yi Hwŏn’s ancestry seems to have been very weak indeed. Presumably, the connection to Li Rusong was based on the official record found within The Compendium of Submitting-Foreigners when Yi Hwŏn was first identified as a Ming migrant in 1755, although it is notable that, at that point, he was still described simply as a descendant of Li Chengliang. And even according to comments made by Chŏngjo himself in 1799, before Yi Hwŏn came to the court’s attention, he “was a plowman on a Ch’unch’ŏn mountain-side, living among herders and firewood gatherers. His selection for [military] office was based only on rumor.”

In fact, following their own genealogical account available to the Chosŏn during the late eighteenth century, the historical background of this family would seem to be much less certain than that of the Kanghwa branch. According to this account, Li Rusong, before heading out into the battle in which he was to fall, told his family that with the rise of the Manchu they should flee to Chosŏn, where they could avoid having their heads shaved by the Manchu, and where, on account of his good deed in saving Chosŏn, they would not be forced into any base occupations. Li Rusong’s son Li Xingzhong also fell in battle in 1644, but first managed to order his son Yingren to flee to Chosŏn, and indeed Li Yingren is described as arriving in Hansŏng in 1648, whereupon he refused all office, “as with his country destroyed and his family gone, what of fame and profit?” He then retreated deep into the Kŭmgang mountains, to Changjŏn-li in
Hwiyang in Kangwŏn Province, where he was allotted farmland by the Chosŏn court. There he became a recluse, and “to the end of his days, he did not change his Chinese speech, and his feet did not leave the village. In the days set aside to commemorate the Imperial Dynasty, he would climb up the mountain behind the house, look to the north and weep.”

This touching story suffers from being uncorroborated in almost any other source and also from being inherently improbable. Leaving aside Li Rusong’s prophecy of the Manchu rise, despite his dying in battle against Mongols in 1598, Li Yingren’s flight to Chosŏn is supposed to have occurred in 1648, long after historically verifiable migration there by Liaodongese had come to an end. In contrast to Li Chenglong, he would not have been recognizable by high Chosŏn officials either, since he was the child of a Ming official with whom they had no previous contact. There were, of course, no contemporary records of his presence in Chosŏn. Indeed, according to Yi Kyusang, writing in the eighteenth century, the Chosŏn court attempted to confirm the lineage of the Nongsŏ Yi by importing a genealogy from the Qing empire but was unable to find support for the stories found within Yi Hwŏn’s own lineage. Yi Kyusang assumed that this reflected genealogical fraud, not on the part of the Chosŏn branch, but on that of Li Chengliang’s descendants in the Qing empire, who, he believed, might have sought to protect themselves by hiding the evidence.

In fact, it is clear that the connection between Li Rusong and Yi Hwŏn and other members of the Nongsŏ Yi was one that the Chosŏn court worked very hard to cultivate, interfering heavily in the compilation of the genealogy itself. According to excerpts from the Nongsŏ Yi Genealogy found in The Traces of the Acts of Imperial Subjects, in 1754 Yongjo, after removing Yi Hwŏn from The Register of Submitting-Foreigners, brought him into his presence, when, coincidentally, Yi Hun was also there. Bringing the two together, Yongjo established the familial relationship, but contrasted the two, describing Yi Hun as one who had taken the military exams long ago, and Yi Hwŏn as a peasant from a mountain valley (hyŏmmaeng). To address the difference, he had Yi Hwŏn’s skills examined, and Yi Hwŏn did so well as to cause Yongjo to exclaim that “you, who have never held a bow, can shoot so well because you have received your ancestor’s nature.” Furthermore, in 1760, Yongjo said to Yi Hwŏn that Yi Hun’s son Yi Kwangsŏ’s appointment to the rank of messenger (sŏnjŏngwan) revealed that his family (including both the Kangwŏn and Kanghwa branches) had become military sajok. He then took this opportunity to inquire about the genealogical information that was available to them. When informed by Yi Hun that they had obtained a printed copy of their genealogy from China, Yongjo requested
that “in all further printings, please make Li Rusong your first ancestor (sijo), as he did so much for our country.”

The record in the *Journal of the Royal Secretariat* and *The Chosŏn Veritable Records* suggests a somewhat less smooth process, and less advanced knowledge on the part of the monarch, but with much the same royal interest in developing the genealogy. According to the *Journal*, Yŏngjo was still sorting out the precise genealogical relationship in 1768, when, in an exchange that resulted in improved employment for both Yi Hun and Yi Hwŏn, he asked Yi Hun if he was the descendant of Li Rusong. Yi Hun answered honestly that he was in fact the fifth-generation descendant of Li Rumei and the sixth of Li Chengliang. In 1771 (after Yi Hun’s death), Yŏngjo likewise discussed the matter with reference to Yi Hwŏn, confirming his status as a descendant of Li Rusong and placing great emphasis on the fact that his ancestor Li Chengliang had Korean origins. While Yŏngjo mentioned the contribution to Chosŏn of all three sons of Li Chengliang, he referred to them as “the three sons, including the Provincial Military Commander (K. chedok, Ch. tidu) who contributed so much to Chosŏn,” clearly emphasizing Li Rusong, who had attained that rank.

More important, the Chosŏn court actively involved itself in establishing appropriate rituals on behalf of Yi Hwŏn’s descendants, even as it was expanding its own personal role in the worship of Li Rusong. Early on in his rise to prominence, Yi Hwŏn was given ritual responsibilities involving an altar in honor of Li Rusong that was connected to the Sŏnmusa shrine and located in Noryangjin south of Hansŏng. Moreover, especially under Chŏngjo, the Chosŏn state actively worked to establish a shrine to Li Rusong under the direction of the Kangwŏn branch. During court discussions, Chŏngjo himself noted that he had heard that Yi Myŏn’s descendants lived in “a tiny house with a minute courtyard, barely capable of keeping out the wind and the rain, and much too small for the offering of sacrifice to Li Rusong.” In response, Chŏngjo had a new house purchased for them specifically to allow them to pursue ritual activities. Indeed, having been told by Yi Hwŏn that the lineage lacked an ancestral tablet for ancestral sacrifices, he had one produced for them, based on the erroneous assertion that Li Rusong received no sacrifices in China. The king also composed his own account of Li Rusong’s life and had it placed in the shrine to Li Rusong, called the Chedoksa (Shrine of the Provincial Commander) and located in Hansŏng. In fact, when Yi Hwŏn was in P’yŏngyang, Chŏngjo specifically had him offer rituals at the Muyŏlsa according to the practices of both the Sŏnmusa and the Chedoksa.

Such were the advantages to descendants and the court alike of a connection to Li Rusong that, by 1794, a third branch came to the attention of the court.
The person in question, Yi Hŭijang, was described as a descendant of Li Rusong and a local woman surnamed Kŭm, whom he had met during his long stay in Chosŏn during the Imjin War. This branch had supposedly fallen into obscurity on Kŏje Island in Kyŏngsang Province, until, under Chŏngjo, Yi Hŭijang was brought to royal attention as a degreeless military student (hallyang) with “some limited ability to read [literary Sinitic],” but who, “on account of not having reached adulthood, was as yet excluded from archery.” Yi Hŭijang’s ancestry also seems to have been quite obscure. To be sure, an imperial subject village (Hwangjoinch’on) on Kŏje Island had already been commemorated in a poem by the important Ming loyalist historian Hwang Kyŏngwŏn (1709–1787), possibly based on an encounter during his exile to Kŏje in 1761. That village was later associated with the descendants of Li Rusong, but Hwang does not mention that connection. It would seem most unlikely that Hwang at this point was aware of any such link, for, as an enthusiastic Ming loyalist, he most certainly would have mentioned had he known about it. Otherwise, in none of the official discussions of the discovery of the Kŏje branch of the Nongsŏ Yi in the 1790s was any evidence provided of a genuine tie between Li Rusong and the Kŏje branch, which had clearly not been of interest to the Chosŏn court previously, despite the immense prominence of their supposed ancestor.

Despite Yi Hŭijang’s inauspicious ignorance of writing and military matters, he passed the military examination in 1800. Chŏngjo considered this a cause for celebration, as the Kŏje branch, which had not appeared in any records since the Imjin War, had finally come into its own. The Chosŏn court, in other words, connected three families of mountain peasants and island dwellers of uncertain relationship with each other, to construct one unified military quasi-sajok descent-group. Ultimately, the formation of this descent-group was a reassertion of Chosŏn’s Imjin-era connection with the Ming, a connection that also had enormous benefits for the families themselves.

Court and Imperial Subject

The active involvement of the Chosŏn court in determining the genealogy of the Nongsŏ Yi had its echo in the Qing court of the same period, which also launched genealogical investigations to clarify the proper affiliation—Manchu, Mongol, or Han—of members of its banner armies. Of course, as Pamela Kyle Crossley points out, genealogy was a blunt instrument when used to untangle families formed by the diverse historical and social circumstances of Northeast Asia. While both the Manchu and Hanjun banners under Nurhaci and Hong
Taiji had been ethnically diverse and determined more by their lifestyle than their ancestry, by the eighteenth century the Qing court under Yongzheng and Qianlong pursued an active policy of sorting out members on the basis of genealogy. As the eighteenth century was also a period during which the Qing court actively sought to reduce the size of its Hanjun banners, those Hanjun who wished to remain within the banners felt pressed to assert a genealogy that linked them securely to the Jurchens of Nurgan, or at the very least established their position from among the original Nikan of Liaodong who had served Nurhaci early on in the conquest. For Manchus themselves, the Qing court reorganized and sanitized their clan affiliations, papering over the frequently arbitrary manner in which clan affiliations themselves had been formed under Nurhaci.111

The Chosŏn court under Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo were faced with a similar lack of good genealogical evidence. Whether in the case of the Chenam Wang family, or the Nongsŏ Yi, the actual past history of Ming migrant descendants did not fit well with the category of “imperial subject” that the Chosŏn court was in the process of constructing. Chosŏn monarchs nevertheless supported such weak claims as those of Yi Hwŏn in Ch’unch’ŏn, Yi Hŭijang of Kŏjedo, or Ho Tup’il in Pukch’ŏng, likely because the presence of Ming migrants on Chosŏn soil provided ideological support for their own royal authority. Perhaps the doubt expressed by some high officials (for instance, by Yi Sŏngnyong concerning Ho Tup’il, as discussed above) reflected a difference in the interests between civil officialdom and the monarchy—although of course the Chosŏn court itself was made up of high officials who were fully participant in the politics of ritual commemoration. The Chosŏn court as a whole pushed forward the process of ritual commemoration, re-creating the claimants to the status into descent-groups that could appropriately claim their status as imperial subjects, in the process of which they received the active support also of the imperial subject descent-groups themselves.

For example, in 1791, during the period of Chŏngjo’s rediscovery of the Nongsŏ Yi, an additional Ming migrant family was discovered in Kangwŏn Province, in this case in Anhyŏp, a county now contained within present-day Ch’ŏrwŏn. Two brothers, Sŏk Han’yang and Sŏk Hanjun, asserted that they were related to the Ming official Shi Xing (1538–1599), who in his lifetime had been somewhat controversial, but who, by the eighteenth century, was widely praised in Chosŏn for his role in directing military aid during the Imjin War. When asked by Chŏngjo for a more elaborate description of their origins, they answered that they were the descendants of Shi Kui, the younger brother of Shi Xing, who, along with a monk named Huizhen, had fled the Manchu by
entering Chosŏn through the abandoned four counties in the upper Yalu. From there Shi Kui and the monk passed through Mamp’o, eventually arriving at Anhyŏp, where they had gone into hiding. Shi Kui’s descendants had remained there. The two brothers presented to the court *The True Facts of the Choju Sŏk (Choju Sŏk-ssi kisil)*, written by a local Anhyŏp man named Yi Seyŏng.

Chŏngjo responded to this by reminding the court how greatly Chosŏn was indebted to Shi Xing, who had nevertheless died in prison. Chŏngjo initially expressed some faith in the truth of this story and had the two brothers participate in the Ming loyalist rites at the Taebodan. He worried, however, that direct descendants of Shi Xing might be discovered who would have a superior claim and so hesitated to establish a separate family shrine for them as had been done for the descendants of Li Rusong. Instead, he ordered that the Board of War provide them with post horses to allow them to travel to P’yŏngyang to pay respects at the Muwolsa where Shi Xing was enshrined. Depending on the nature of the genealogical evidence, they would either have a house purchased for them where they could continually provide sacrifices to Shi Xing, or alternately be given the status of a branch family, so they could practice somewhat less prominent rites, “for how could Shi Xing accept rites in a Central Plain that had fallen [to the barbarians]?”

The problem, however, was as Chŏng Sangu (1756–?), representing the Capital Guard Office and the Office of Robust and Brave Guards (*Changyongyŏng*), expressed, the evidence for the connection between the two brothers and Shi Xing was poor or nonexistent. As he pointed out, the evidence used by the Chosŏn court had amounted only to three texts: “True Facts Concerning the Choju Sŏk Descent Group, Remnant Subjects of the Imperial Ming” (*Hwangmyŏng yuyŏ Choju Sŏk-ssi sasil*), “Tale of Gentleman-in-Retirement Sŏk” (*Sŏk kŏsa chŏn*), and a letter supposedly written to a child of the descent-group called Sŏk Tohyŏn. Yet, when officials of those offices had sought to investigate the matter, they found that none of those texts could be confirmed in records either in Anhyŏp or in the Kangwŏn Provincial Office, where absolutely no information about any Sŏk descent-group could be found. Not only that, it was impossible to find any information about Yi Seyŏng, the author of the texts, whose cognomen (Chŏng Sangu informed the king) was the poetic “Old Man of the Foxglove Tree” (*Odong noin*). Upon asking the two Sŏk brothers themselves, it became evident that they been orphaned at an early age and had wandered about until they arrived in Yŏnch’ŏn, where they were adopted by a petty shopkeeper (*chŏmhan*) of the Sŏk family called Sŏk Ilhu—and so surely could not have had any good knowledge of the subject. As for the texts themselves, Chŏng Sangu
began his critique with the statement “your majesty has already read them?” seemingly implying that the books were obviously to be doubted.\textsuperscript{113}

Chŏngjo, while accepting that the evidence was weak indeed, nevertheless called for a strong effort to verify the connection, which if found would allow the family to participate in Ming loyalist rites. Very few imperial subjects had good evidence for their status, he conceded, mentioning as exceptions only the descendants of Tian Haoqian, who had a proper genealogy that confirmed their origins, and the descendants of Chen Fengyi, a man who had married into the Ming imperial family and whose family had in their possession an edict of the Wanli emperor, confirming their status as Ming migrants.\textsuperscript{114} Otherwise, such cases of actual documentation were extremely rare. After all, as Chŏngjo pointed out, the evidence for the direct descendants of Li Rusong had also always been initially quite weak, but had since, he thought, been established with some certainty. He thus ordered that no expense be spared in obtaining a genealogy of the Shi descent-group in Beijing.\textsuperscript{115}

Of course, for those claiming the status, the advantages provided by asserting Ming origins were of considerable material and social significance. Thus, people of submitting-foreigner ancestry tended to actively assert their status by demanding royal writs (\textit{wanmun}) confirming special tax protections, taking advantage of a court that was willing to suspend disbelief. For instance, a descent-group of submitting-foreigner status in Kangnŭng with the surname Yu has kept records of the process whereby, during the reign of Chŏngjo, they were able to achieve imperial subject status based on an entirely undocumented connection to a Ming refugee and an elite Song dynasty scholar-official family.\textsuperscript{116} Other families, though better positioned socially, also made such requests. For instance, during the reign of Chŏngjo, Ch’o Kak, a descendant of Chu Haichang residing in Myŏngch’ŏn in northern Hamgyŏng, with the undistinguished but civil-sajok and tax-protected rank of young student (\textit{yuhak}), requested that his status as an imperial subject (\textit{hwangjoin}) be confirmed on the basis of Yŏngjo’s decision in 1754. As his ancestors had participated in the rituals at the Taebodan, the court confirmed his status, despite what turned out to be a complete absence of documents in the Board of Personnel attesting to Chu Haichang’s arrival in Chosŏn.\textsuperscript{117}

Such expansion of the category of Ming loyalist descendants continued under Sunjo. For instance, in 1806, two other young students similarly demanded the right to participate in the rites at the Taebodan. The first was Pan Ch’unggyŏm of Kŭmhwa in Kangwon Province, who claimed that his ancestor, Pan Tengyun, had come to Chosŏn along with Mo Manren and Li Yingren, but had settled in
Kūmhwa, while Li Yingren had settled in Hwiyang. Pan Ch’unggyŏm’s account strongly emphasized his ancestors’ Ming loyalism, stating that Pan Tengyun’s father had fallen in battle, his mother “had committed suicide in order to avoid rape,” and Pan Tengyun himself had moved to Chosŏn to avoid cutting his hair in the Qing fashion. The other, Ch’ŏn Ilsi of Myŏngch’ŏn in Hamgyŏng Province, claimed he was a descendant of Qian Wanli, an Imjin War–era Ming officer who had settled in the area of Andong in Kyŏngsang Province. According to Ch’ŏn, Qian Wanli, heartbroken by the events of 1636–1637, had moved north and settled in Myŏngch’ŏn because its first written character, Myŏng, was the same as that of the Ming dynasty. Ch’ŏn, however, lacked documentation for this story, because most of the relevant texts had unfortunately been burned in a house fire. In this he did not differ from Pan Chunggyŏm, for although the Chosŏn court did find some records that established that Pan Tengyun and Qian Wanli were at least Chinese in origin, they could find no evidence of the Ming loyalist activities asserted by Pan Chunggyŏm, or any documents tracing their migration. The court nevertheless approved both of their requests to participate in the rituals at the Taebodan.

Indeed, the cases in question were not much different from other examples of status mobility during the reigns of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo. A feature of the politics of commemoration in Chosŏn, much strengthened during the eighteenth century, was the granting of ritual roles to the supposed descendants of heroes, martyrs, and royalty, as was the case with the T’aewŏn Sŏnu (the supposed descendants of Kija) or the Kaesŏng Wang (the descendants of the Koryŏ royal house), and the Ch’angwŏn Kong, who during the eighteenth century were treated (erroneously) as the descendants of Confucius. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, especially, it became common for base-born people without surnames to rise in status, claiming surnames and clan seats (not always in that order) and obtaining titles associated with commoners, often followed by military and even civil-sajok titles. These benefits did not, in fact, entitle them to take significant office or truly act as rivals to established sajok lineages. This also was not much different from similar demands by the descendants of filial sons and chaste women and of earlier monarchs (including those who claimed descent from Silla monarchs). As Kim Hyŏk argues, the very act of requesting special privileges through such royal writs revealed conversely that the claimant was of low or indifferent status. No true sajok, as it were, needed or wanted to make similar claims. Yet such documents did provide their recipients with an improved social position and tax status. In fact, not all families that could claim Ming ancestry rose via assertion of imperial subject status. People claiming
to be descendants of Qian Wanli in Sŏktae-dong in Tongnae, for instance, also rose from non-sajok origins, and in some cases base status, through low-level military ranks to low-level civil-sajok ranks by the early nineteenth century, yet, from my review of the family’s documents, it seems they did not make any claim to imperial subject status. In the end, those who pursued status advancement through an appeal to foreign origins were no different from their fellow Chosŏn subjects who were similarly accumulating the outward forms of sajok status.

In the case of Ming migrants, however, in improving their social status, they reworked their family histories and their ritual identity to accord more closely with that of the state-sponsored Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness. The Kŏje branch of the Nongsŏ Yi is once more informative. In 1800, when Chŏngjo welcomed Yi Hŭijang, of the Kŏje branch of the Nongsŏ Yi, to the ranks of officialdom, he had Yi Hŭijang offer sacrifice at both the Chedoksa and the Sŏnmusa, alongside Yi Hwŏn’s son Yi Kwangu (by then renamed Hyosŭng), who was the primary heir (pongsason) of the main branch of the Nongsŏ Yi descent-group. Yi Hŭijang obeyed the royal command but failed to please Chŏngjo. As Chŏngjo said:

I have heard that the household tally of the commander’s descendant Yi Hŭijang had a [Qing] era name on it. How could a scribe who carries the jade [of the official] be so pedestrian in his thoughts? He clasped that tally while prostrating himself at the shrine! He truly is an ignorant person. I do not know whether there was sweat on Hŭijang’s brow, but how could the commander, whose spirit flows through the land like water, have been pleased when he saw his descendant prostrate himself? Make one household tally and stamp it with the royal jade seal. Then call [his relative] Yi Hyosŭng and have him give the new household tally to Yi Hŭijang. Then have the petty functionaries in the Sŏnmusa take him to make another prostration at the shrine this very day, after which he should make another prostration within the family shrine. Henceforward, may the household tallies of such people, and the royal instructions concerning them, all follow this precedent.

As a matter of fact, this did indeed become the precedent, as may be seen when Kang Pungnam, a descendant of Kang Shijue, passed the exam and was provided with a household tally “as is usual for such people, without the [Qing] era name but with the kanji alone, following established precedent.” Yi Hŭijang himself survived the royal declaration that he was a pedestrian and ignorant man, as may be seen in continued court interest in his well-being as a descendant
of Li Rusong. More significantly, however, this passage reveals the process by which the monarchs themselves transformed the identities of the Ming loyalist remnants they claimed to be discovering. Whether or not Yi Hŭijang was really the descendant of an illegitimate union between Li Rusong and a Chosŏn woman, the Chosŏn court believed this to be the case, actively establishing the Kŏje branch of the Nongsŏ Yi as subordinate to the Kangwŏn branch represented by Yi Hyosŭng, making their continued employment in military positions a matter of state concern and encouraging their involvement in Ming loyalist rituals. Yet, Yi Hŭijang had been entirely unaware—indeed shockingly ignorant, from Chŏngjo’s point of view—of the Ming loyalist and anti-Qing ethos of which he was supposed to be a representative. Such a ritual identity had to be imposed upon him and other imperial subjects through royal command.

**What Had Changed?** It is impossible to find the origin in the emergence of imperial subject status in some unchanging Confucian admiration for China, as the term “submitting-foreigner” had been used to categorize Chinese and their descendants, along with Jurchens and Japanese, during an equally Confucian seventeenth century. It had become a source of difficulty, ultimately, only during the eighteenth century.

One should make note first of what had not changed. Imperial subjects were, like submitting-foreigners, distinguished from other Chosŏn subjects by a special tax status. As with submitting-foreigners during the early Chosŏn, imperial subjects participated in rituals focused on the monarch himself. As these assemblies did not occur after 1637, the development of imperial subject status could, in a sense, be seen as a revival. Additionally, like submitting-foreigners during the early Chosŏn and like Japanese defectors and Chinese deserters during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, imperial subjects were frequently organized into military units and given military titles.

What had changed was the narrative according to which Ming migrants were organized. Before the 1750s, they, like the descendants of Jurchens and Japanese, had been described as outsiders submitting to the edification provided by the Chosŏn and receiving in exchange succor and protection. Following the 1750s, they were still receiving the special protection and concern of the Chosŏn monarch, but not because they had come to Chosŏn to receive edification. As loyalists, they had already been edified and civilized, and for this very reason they were unable to endure life under the barbarian Qing. Rather than being a sign of Chosŏn turning away from assimilation, the new terminology meant that they were being formally assimilated into the evolving rituals of the Chunghwa
Inheritance Consciousness. Within a Chosŏn state organized according to the maintenance of clear status distinctions, the Chosŏn court actively assimilated Ming descendants by constructing a new status category for them. By the late eighteenth century, the descendants of Ming migrants were in no way a culturally or linguistically distinct group, and they had already intermarried extensively with the surrounding population. Just as the Qianlong emperor had to actively compel Manchus to use the Manchu language, to engage in mounted archery, and to marry other Manchus, so the courts of Yŏngjo and Chŏngjo had to remove inappropriate claimants to the category of “Chinese descendant.” As in the case of Yi Hŭijang, the court of Chŏngjo had to create a consciousness of Ming loyalism in the minds of those who were supposed to be the Chunghwa Inheritance Consciousness’s prime representatives.