

Two months later, Ambassador Castro passed away. Among family members surviving him are his widow Dr. Jovita Ventura and children Karina and Alberto.

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### MIN TU-KI (1932–2000)

Professor Min Tu-ki, the founder of the study of modern Chinese history in Korea, died on May 7 of last year of a chronic illness, at the age of 68. Born in 1932 in Haenam, South Cholla, he was educated in Japanese under the colonial system, but his mother insisted that he learn the Korean alphabet at home. Attending Seoul University under difficult conditions during the Korean war, when classes were held in army barracks, he dedicated his life to scholarship on Asia, beginning with an interest in the Tonghak rebellion of 1894, but also in the Boxer Rebellion in China. At the same time, he heard lectures on Greek civilization and read the works of American anthropologists like Boas and Linton, which stimulated his interest in comparative social history. Since under the Cold War conditions of the 1950s, Koreans saw modern China only as a Communist enemy, it was indeed a heroic choice to study Chinese academically. Furthermore, even though collaborating with Japanese scholars was not a route to popularity in postwar Korea, Min did not hesitate to put scholarship ahead of narrow nationalism. This showed his courage, as well as the broad humanism of his character and his high professional ethics

He began his scholarly work with studies of the Salt and Iron Debates of the Han dynasty, but he soon returned to his fascination with the Qing dynasty, taking advantage of the Qing Veritable Records to begin pioneering studies of both Qing administration and the late Qing reforms.

Professor Min taught at Seoul National University from 1951 on, becoming a regular faculty member in 1969, a Doctor of Literature in 1974, and Chair of the Department of Asian History in 1977. He actively promoted the first monographic studies of China in Korea, while he developed new faculty positions and trained students in the field. He continued to publish on modern Chinese history, including books on Hu Shi, the late Qing reform movement, the 1911 Revolution, and “Men and Ideas in Modern Chinese History.”

Professor Min is best known to American scholars for his pathbreaking articles on the classical Chinese debates concerning the value of the *fengjian* [“feudal”] and *junxian* [centralized bureaucratic] systems of government. After reading the Yongzheng emperor’s vituperative denunciation of the *fengjian* system, Professor Min realized that this explosive issue not only was a leitmotif of classical Chinese political thought, but deeply influenced debates on reform of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Who could really serve the “public” [*gong*] interest better: the local gentry with their intimate knowledge of their region, or the detached official sent from the far-off center? Strong advocates of “local self-government” in the early Republican period clearly echoed the distant classical philosophers from the Song Liu Zongyuan through the Qing’s Gu Yanwu. By his analysis, Professor Min exposed a vital link between China’s bureaucratic past and her nationalist present, which has

stimulated the work of many American scholars, among them Philip Kuhn and John Schrecker.

When Min Tu-ki visited Harvard University on a Harvard Yenching fellowship in 1979–80, he inspired a multinational team effort to translate six of his most important articles into English. Those working with Professor Min on the project included Timothy Brook, Olive Homes, Philip Kuhn, myself, Choe Heije, Kim Hodong, and Kim Hongmyong. The book was published in 1989 by Harvard University Press as *National Polity and Local Power: The Transformation of Late Imperial China*. As a beginning Qing historian myself, I well remember Professor Min's patient, thoughtful, meticulous explanation of the subtleties of classical texts and their modern resonances. Professor Min moved with discipline and grace between the multiple worlds of East Asian studies. As Philip Kuhn has written, "Min, like the Chinese he writes about, [was] himself close to the experience of a premodern civilization passing through the agonizing reevaluation of its own culture under the pressures of the modern world. The view is both sympathetic and objective in a way that neither we nor the Chinese can attain." We will miss his wisdom greatly.

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