
In the minds of all those in the field of Korean studies one work certainly stands out as the definitive introductory text to Korean history: Lee Ki-baik’s *A New History of Korea* [Han’gupsa sillon], which made its English appearance in 1984 with the masterful (partial) translation of Edward W. Wagner and Edward J. Shultz. Nothing before or since quite measures up, and I hardly stand alone in asserting that no text has appeared on the horizon to seriously threaten its position as the standard general text for approaching Korean history.

Yet there have been challenges, and quite rightly so, for despite its manifold strengths *A New History of Korea* has its weaknesses. For one, it is no longer “new”. The march of contemporary events in Korea and elsewhere and the wealth of more recent scholarship have made it increasingly deficient in scope and breadth. True, in a later rewriting with additions, which appeared as *Korea Old and New: A History* (1990), Prof. Lee updated portions of the premodern (before ca. 1864) portion of his history while the modern era was covered by a team of scholars in Korea and the United States. But the primary object of this new treatment was to offer a more detailed analysis of modern Korea while simplifying the traditional. In the preface to *Korea Old and New*, Prof. Wagner even conceded (whether or not one agrees) that his earlier translation of Lee Ki-baik’s history had been too detailed in its description for a western audience. *Korea Old and New*, as almost all subsequent histories of Korea (far too many to mention here), have focused most of their energies on modern Korea, a period which has enjoyed far and away the greater attention of foreign scholarship. The long-in-the-works Cambridge history of Korea, which promises broad coverage of traditional Korea, has encountered troubled waters since the recent passing of Prof. James Palais, its chief editor, and one laments that it may never see the light of day. In the wake of more contemporary spats over aspects of ancient East Asian history, a recent series of workshops attended by Korean and foreign scholars have also attempted to muster an academic response to the need for a history of premodern Korea aimed at a non-Korean audience. Though such efforts have yet to produce a history they testify to the recognized need for such a text. Michael Seth (assistant professor of history at James Madison University) has attempted to provide his answer to this need with *A Concise History of Korea from the Neolithic Period through the Nineteenth Century*.

It is an ambitious undertaking. Relatively little original scholarship has been published in western languages on the traditional period of Korean history. Further, only a small percentage of the rich primary source material for premodern Korea is available in English (the most glaring lacuna being the *Samguk sagi*, which has only appeared in Russian translation, though the *Paekche annals* have recently been published in English). Yet as recent debates, if one may put it politely, over the history of Koguryô have shown, the traditional history of Korea is still highly
relevant. Indeed, just as Prof. Seth has sought to demonstrate in his earlier studies of education in Korean society, can one really appreciate at all the contemporary issues facing Korea, or any country, without a grounding in its traditional past?

Writing a general survey of the premodern history of the Korean peninsula would be a challenging undertaking for a Korean, to say nothing of a westerner, especially one whose training is not in the premodern era. Though this reader can greatly admire Prof. Seth’s courage and determination in setting out on this task—and admire the result as well, many of the book’s weaknesses originate in the fact that he is not by training a historian of premodern Korea.

Seth devotes about half of his work to the history of Korea through the Koryo dynasty, with the second half dealing with Choson through 1876, a date regularly taken as the beginning of its modern period by its opening to the outside world. Naturally, in light of extant source material and the resulting secondary scholarship, much more historical coverage is afforded to Choson, where Seth includes useful discussions of such things as women, slaves, and outcasts and crime and punishment.

Seth has certainly produced a highly accessible history of premodern Korea. Perhaps its greatest weakness is its failure to utilize much of the vast new scholarship on premodern Korea that has come out in recent years. In his treatment of Silla history, to take one example, Seth could afford especially to take recent scholarship into account. Unfortunately the vast bulk of this scholarship is only in Korean, something that would no doubt require greater effort to synthesize, but it is an effort that must be taken to produce a truly solid history. To take one case, Seth asserts with puzzling confidence that the ch’ŏngjinje (able-bodied land system) of the middle era of Silla was “an attempt to establish state control over all land” (p. 53), when in fact the exact nature of ch’ŏngjinje is not known, much less its intent. Or on another, more minor, point, the author asserts that the ninth century Silla king is not known, much less its intent.

Regarding some minor points of style and organization, the maps included in the text serve little purpose beyond giving the most general outlines of traditional Korean states and their capitals. Many of the geographic features and ethnic groups mentioned in the text (and integral to the story) are left off the maps (the Yalu, Tumen, and Han Rivers, the various provinces, and the domains of the Khitan to name a few). The glossary of Korean terms in the back of the book is useful but could be made more so by the inclusion of hanja where applicable. But Prof. Seth’s history nimbly avoids most of the stumbling blocks of such histories. It is clear of Romanization problems and typos and benefits from a thorough indexing. Most importantly, it is written in a flowing and engaging style that makes it easy to read. It would clearly appeal to an undergraduate audience or the general reader being introduced to the history of premodern Korea. On a final note, Seth does well to weave into his narrative the mention of contemporary debates swirling around aspects of Korea’s ancient past. Discussing Parhae, for instance, he broaches the implications of Parhae history on Korean irredentist claims and the echo of Parhae has had and continues to have in the ears of Korean nationalists. In these brief discussions Seth comes across most clearly as an outsider looking in. There is nothing at all bad in this. It is just such writing that will have the most resonance with those other outsiders seeking an informed introduction to traditional Korea and its modern implications.

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One of the primary themes in the scholarship of Robert Buswell has been to draw attention to the role and place of Korean Buddhists as equal participants within a shared Sinic or East Asian Buddhist tradition. This book demonstrates that the eastward flow and permeation of Buddhism was not merely one way from India to China through Korea and into Japan but that Korean Buddhists influenced seminal developments, such as the Chan tradition in China and the Japanese Pure Land traditions, in East Asia, strongly suggesting that Korean Buddhism should be recognized in its own right as a country with innovative Buddhist traditions. The chapters in this volume illustrate well a scholarly belief or theory held by me and some of my colleagues: If there is a new development Buddhism on the Chinese mainland you may know for certain that it was important if Korean monks were there as active participants.

The book is comprised of seven chapters and an introduction. Each chapter is self contained with notes and a character glossary following each individual essay. In the introduction, “Patterns of Influence in East Asian Buddhism: The Korean Case,” Buswell summarizes the ways in which Korean Buddhists have influenced the development of the East Asian Buddhism. He treats not only the well known role played by Korean monks in transmitting Buddhism to Japan before Japanese monks began more direct contact in the late seventh and eighth centuries, but also how Korean Buddhists of succeeding generations continually redefined their position in the East Asian Buddhist world with doctrinal developments, innovative religious practice, and even financial support. He also encapsulates the primary contributions of each of the individual chapters.

In the first chapter, “Paekche and the Incipient Buddhism in Japan,” Jonathan W. Best provides several new insights on the well known and widely acknowledged role played by Paekche kings and monks in introducing Buddhism to Japan. His primary contribution lies in describing how Buddhism was used as a tool by Paekche leaders in developing not only cultural interaction but also, and perhaps primarily, a more intimate interstate relationship with the Japanese rulers. Best also prudently emphasizes the role of material culture in the process through a succinct discussion of temple architecture, thus demonstrating why this early interaction between Korea and Japan ultimately proved to be one of the two greatest cultural transformations of Japan—the other being the opening of Japan to the West.

The second chapter, “Kyōnghŏng in Shinran’s Thought,” is Hee-Sung Keel’s solid and well balanced study of Korean influence on Japanese Pure Land doctrine. His purpose is not only to show the extent to which Shinran(1173-1262) relied upon the Silla monk Kyōnghŏng(active late 7th–early 8th century) in his magnum opus, the Kyōgyōshinshō, but also to explore why Shinran would cite Kyōnghŏng as often as he does. Shinran quotes him more often than any other Buddhist thinker save Tanhuan(trad.476-542/ca.488-554) and Shandao(613-681). Keel’s conclusions attest to the need to acknowledge the collective influence exerted by Silla Buddhist exegetes on the Japanese Pure Land tradition.

In the third chapter, “Korea as a Source of Regeneration of Chinese Buddhism: The Evidence of Ch’an and So’n Literature,” John Jorgensen describes in great detail the process by which Korea began to enjoy a uniquely high and privileged status with respect to China during the Tang and Five Dynasties period. Jorgensen explains why Koreans of that time were held in such high esteem. It was not merely because of geographical proximity or shared culture, but more because of the way the Koreans became viewed through the lens of a transformed understanding and reading of Confucius, which privileged Koreans as preserving and maintaining the true teachings if they were ever lost in China. Jorgensen then shows how this was applied in several ways by Chan and Sōn Buddhists in China and Korea and other important figures such as Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn(857-d. after 908).

Chapter four, “Ch’ʌn Master Musang: A Korean Monk in East Asian Context,” by Bernard Faure, is an extremely engaging and comprehensive study of Musang(d. 762), the famed Reverend Kim who spent most of his monastic career in Sichuan. Where Faure’s study differs from previous analyses of this monk, who was one of the teachers of Mazu Daoyi(709-788), is that he emphasizes the political connections to the imperial court and local luminaries—not only Musang’s teachings and doctrines that can be pieced together and his position in the emerging Chan tradition. He also presents sophisticated conjecture on why Musang is completely missing from accounts of Silla’s nascent So’n traditions.

In chapter five, “Wǒnch’ʌk’s Place in the East Asian Buddhist Tradition,” Eunsu Cho examines the life and work of Wǒnch’ʌk(613-696), another monk like Musang who lived and died as an expatriot in China, but whose intellectual contributions may be seen and recognized in Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan Buddhism. Cho’s suggests a new theory that the primary importance of Wǒnch’ʌk to East Asian Buddhism is not his well known position as one of the two primary disciples of Xuanzang(ca.600-664), along with Kuiji(632-682), but rather his influence on the nascent Huayan (Kor. Hwaom, Jpn. Kegon) tradition. She outlines what she sees as Wǒnch’ʌk’s invention of hermeneutic techniques later developed and deployed by Fazang(643-712), the first great systematizer of Huayan thought.

The sixth chapter, “The Korean Impact on T’ien-t’ai Buddhism in China: A Historical Analysis,” is Chi-wah Chan’s comprehensive study of the all the Korean monks who contributed to the development of Tiantai Buddhism from the sixth through the eleventh centuries. Although the monks who went before the tenth century are remembered by the tradition, those who went during the tenth and eleventh centuries–Chjong(930-1018), Uit’ong(927-988), and especially Ch’egwan(970)–made significant contributions to the renewal and development of Tiantai in China.

In the seventh chapter, “Uich’ʌn’s Pilgrimage and the Rising Prominence of the Korean Monastery in Hang-chou during the Sung and Yuan Periods,” Chi-chiang Huang provides a stimulating look at Huiyinsa, a unique monastery located in Hangzhou, the Southern Song capital. He describes how this important monastery acquired its popular nickname “The Monastery of Korea” [Gaolisi] and the concerns that many Chinese scholar officials had because a key monastery in
the Song capital was tied by patronage to the Koryo royal court as a result of Úich’ŏn (1055–1101), who came to study with Jingyuani(1011-1088), the Huayan master and abbot of Huiyinsi. For several generations after Úich’ŏn’s visit, Huiyinsi continued to received patronage from the Koryo court, thus showing the birth of a large network of monks and patronage linking the two countries—even at a time when Song China was suspicious of Koryo because of its tribute relations with the Khitan Liao to the north—and which spanned dynasties into the succeeding Yuan period.

My only quibble is the use of the now outdated Wade-Giles system for the Romanization of Chinese. This is but a minor issue and does not detract from the important contribution made by this volume, which is a welcome addition to the field and should prove an invaluable resource in courses on East Asian Buddhism and Korean Buddhism, especially because it is now available in paperback. The idea for this book emerged from a conference titled “Korea’s Place in the East Asian Buddhist Tradition,” which was held at UCLA in September 1995. I was fortunate enough to attend the conference as a young graduate student, and I am equally pleased that the exceptional scholarship produced for that occasion, buttressed by other work, is now available for all.

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For decades, most, if not nearly all, of the security-related literature on North Korea tended to cover the same basic and very predictable ground. Empirically, we would hear about the difficulty of analyzing the North Korean regime due to a lack of access, to the unreliability of data, or to the sheer opaqueness of the system. Of course, this did not stop scholars and others from pontificating on the inner workings of the North Korean political system and state. This is not to say that such analyses were necessarily unwarranted or misguided. Certainly, there was and there continues to be a very important need to analyze, understand and explain the behavior of the North Korean regime and the dynamics of the system. Unfortunately, the predictability—really, staleness—of the majority of extant analyses are not merely a product of empirical obstacles. Another, arguably, much larger obstacle is the near-total lack of theoretical vision and insight among these studies, the source of which is not difficult to identify. It is, quite simply, the overwhelming dominance of a state-centric and realist approach.

Realism, as Roland Bleiker, author of Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation, explains it, revolves “around an image of international politics as dominated by nation-states”, which exist within an international environment characterized by “... one key structural feature, anarchy: the absence of a central regulatory authority”(p.xxxviii). Anarchy, we are told, makes the world an inherently dangerous and threatening place; more important, it supposedly makes the intentions (and character) of states transparent. This is because, in an anarchic world, intentions are manifested through observable behavior, i.e., foreign policies. Based on this assumption, most observers have concluded that the fundamental nature of the North Korean state is crystal clear: it is a dangerous and aggressive “rogue” that cannot be trusted and that only responds to and is deterred by superior power. To think otherwise, realists tell us, is to be naïve and even stupid; to act otherwise is potentially disastrous.

This very brief explanation of realism and its influence on studies of North Korea is a necessary starting point for understanding and appreciating Bleiker’s Divided Korea. For Bleiker directly and forcefully challenges the conventional “wisdom” of state-centered, realist thinking and analysis. Indeed, the title of his introductory chapter, “Rethinking Korean Security,” makes this point clear. In this chapter, Bleiker tells us that a fundamental rethinking of prevailing interpretations of North Korea and of Korean security issues is necessary if we ever wish to develop a basis for lasting peace on the peninsula. The big question, then, is how to do this. According to Bleiker, the answer is clear. It requires, first and foremost, the presentation of “new conceptual perspectives on existing security dilemmas”(p.xxxviii). For Bleiker this means, in part, the embrace of a “critical” or constructivist approach, one that takes into account the importance, even centrality, of identity formation.

The issue of identity formation is the focal point of the first three chapters of Bleiker’s book. In chapter one, the author examines the emergence of, or, more appropriately, the social construction of two antagonistic and essentially antithetical identities on the Korean peninsula during the Cold War period. “To be South Korea means, above all,” notes Bleiker, “not to be Communist.” And “to be North Korean means not to be part of a capitalist and imperialist order”(p.10). Of course, there is nothing surprising about this observation; indeed, it borders on the banal. Bleiker’s larger point, however, is that, once created, identity constructs have a fundamental impact on the world. In the case of security relations between the two Koreas, the impact is clear. As the author explains it, “the prevailing identity constructs have helped to legitimize the very militarized approaches to security that have contributed to the emergence of tension in the first place”(p.15).

In chapter two, aptly titled “The Persistence of Cold War Antagonisms,” Bleiker extends his discussion to the post-Cold War period. Here, he examines the reasons for the striking resilience of Cold War political structures on the Korean peninsula. The persistence of what he calls “a small but highly volatile Cold War enclave surrounded by a world that has long moved away from a dualistic ideological standoff” is, at first glance, a puzzle(p.17). Why have security relations on the Korean peninsula remain essentially static in era of immense change? The
answer, to Bleiker, cannot be found through an analysis of military-strategic considerations alone, but must instead look to issues of identity construction. The discussion in this chapter is central to Bleiker's overall argument, for key to the social constructivist framework is the notion that identity constructs are not mere reflections of deeper political and ostensibly objective military-strategic processes, but are, instead, integral to (and constitutive of) these processes. In other words, in chapter two, Bleiker's main objective is to tell us how the “antagonistic identity constructs” of which he speaks have served to sustain and reproduce an environment of hostility, distrust, and unremitting tension between the two Koreas. A key part of his analysis is a focus on continuing state control over cross-border relations. Both states, according to Bleiker, “have been able to promote and (to continuously) legitimize an unusually narrow approach to security issues ...”(p.18), and both states, despite some contradictory signs, have continued to thoroughly demonize the other as irredeemably dangerous and threatening. This reflects, Bleiker asserts, a type of pathological illness(p.23) wherein entrenched antagonistic enemy constructs have infected virtually every aspect of life within both Koreas. Like a cancer, moreover, getting rid of entrenched identity constructs is not easy; this is especially true when few people either recognize it or know how to treat it, which, Bleiker suggests, is the case in both Koreas.

The significance of identity constructs extends well beyond the two Koreas. Indeed, in the case of Korean security, geopolitical considerations have played a key role. This is the main theme of chapter three, “The Geopolitical Production of Danger.” In this chapter, Bleiker shows how “Korea's security dilemmas became intertwined with Cold War international relations and how the ensuring identity constructs continue to shape politics on and toward the peninsula long after the collapse of the Soviet Union”(p.36). Simply put, a main point of this chapter is that, in the West and especially in the United States, the prevailing and deeply entrenched image of North Korea as an evil, rogue state has played a central role in perpetuating the Korean security dilemma. To grasp Bleiker's logic, it is important to understand that image or identity constructs are more than just words or convenient labels. Rather, they are fundamental (but often unacknowledged) frameworks of interpretation. Ironically, from a realist perspective, the construct of a rogue state suggests that North Korea is different from other states, that the DPRK leadership is not motivated by the same basic security concerns that govern the behavior of other, “normal” states. To Bleiker, the assumption that North Korea is not “normal” is a serious problem: in particular, it absolves other states—most notably, the United States—of any responsibility in perpetuating insecurity on the peninsula and in the region. On this point, Bleiker is very clear. As he puts it:

If one steps back from the immediate and highly emotional ideological context that dominates security interactions on the peninsula, the attitude and behavior of North Korea and the United States bear striking similarities. Both have contributed a great deal to intensifying each other's fears. Both have also drawn upon their fears to justify aggressive military postures. And both rely on a

strikingly similar form or crisis diplomacy. America's Korea policy, particularly under the administration of George W. Bush, bears a stunning resemblance to Pyongyang's much-vilified nuclear brinkmanship tactic, for Washington too relies on the projection of threats in order to win concessions from its opponent ...

In the second part of his book, Bleiker provides suggestions on how to promote a more peaceful political environment on the Korean peninsula. He focuses on the importance of dialogue(chapter four)—and especially a dialogue that transcends state control. At the same time, in chapter five, Bleiker demonstrates a clear understanding of the immense difficulty of this task, not the least of which is overcoming the fear and distrust that dominate each side's image of the other. A major part of the problem stems from North Korea's fear of the outside world. Bleiker, though, also lays responsibility on the South Korean side, which sees reconciliation almost exclusively in South Korean terms. According to Bleiker, this is the problem with the South's “Sunshine Policy,” which, at its base, assumes that peace and unification can only emerge when North Korea opens up and embraces the values and virtues of democracy and market economics(p.93). Thus, while Bleiker sees the Sunshine Policy as a positive development, he suggests that it is not enough. What is needed, instead, is a “willingness to accept that a half-century of antagonistic identity practices has created differences that cannot be simply subsumed into one worldview; no matter how desirable this compulsion appears” (p.61). Differences, in short, need to be recognized and embraced by all sides. This is the basis for Bleiker's final substantive chapter, “Toward an Ethics of Difference.”

“The key”, Bleiker tells us, “is not to deny difference but to make it part of a new, more pluralistically defined vision of identity and unity that may one day replace the present, violence-prone demarcation of self and other”(p.100). This may sound utopian, but it is, perhaps, the only viable hope for lasting peace on the peninsula. Moreover, as Bleiker discusses in chapter six, there are signs of an “ethics of difference” emerging within South Korea. It will be a long, slow process, but one that is clearly possible of reaching fruition.

There is much to recommend in Bleiker's book. To begin, he provides one of the freshest analyses of Korean security in many, many years. For this reason alone, Divided Korea is well worth reading. Even more, though, Bleiker makes an important and, to my mind, necessary argument, albeit not because he is breaking theoretical (or empirical) ground. Indeed, Bleiker's theoretical framework is, in many respects, old hat—at least to those of us who are not stuck inside the realist cocoon. Still, only a handful of scholars or writers have applied a constructivist framework to an analysis of Korean security. (And, even fewer scholars have done so in as an accessible manner as Bleiker has done. In this regard, Divided Korea should be required reading for any student of North-South relations.) Bleiker's argument is important because it forces us to confront prevailing and largely unquestioned assumptions about Korean security, and it is important because it provides a new way of thinking about solutions to the problems of Korean security. Unfortunately, I fear Bleiker's
insights might be lost on or willfully ignored by those who need them the most—i.e. policy-makers and so-called security experts who benefit from a world of continued insecurity.

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Social scientists and historians approach the study of modern Asia from different perspectives. Economic development, social analysis, political dynamics and international relations have dominated much of the literature among the former, while writing historical studies and monographs have characterized the latter. Among academic specialists, a third approach has sought synthesis, as evident in the current volume. Obstacles to synthesis have been a lack of consensus on key concepts, as well as methodology. What to call the largest unit of analysis, and what are its boundaries and common features? Working concepts have included “economy”, “society”, “nation”, and the present “state”.

The notion of the state had a long legal and political usage until after World War II, when the concept of political system generally replaced it in American usage. Even today, “state” and “government” are commonly used interchangeably, as if to subdue and subsume the state by election and bureaucratic/constitutional regulation. To a globalist persuasion, “nation-states” (a compound term popular since the fifties signifying a more legitimate political entity than the state alone) are exclusive. Adding “nation” to “state” has the effect of providing a greater legitimacy because a nation is generally accepted to be a defined society. Yet states are the global units of international relations. They have representation in the UN and a plethora of transnational organizations, and are the subjects of a vast body of international law.

The transformation of traditional states into modern sovereign nation-states has been a central narrative of Asia since at least the Opium Wars. Japan completed the process much earlier than China—an empire whose state-form had governed effectively for nearly two millennia. The Meiji state built on Tokugawa foundations of centralizing power and peaceful society, while China faced an increasingly aggressive Europe at a time of dynastic decline. Timing and response to the Western challenge—and to each other—were determinants of the modern Asian states.

Although Korea had long been an independent kingdom, for example, her sovereignty was destroyed by Japanese colonialism.

The nine essays in the present volume examine some of the historic events and developments of Asian states, attempting to identify characteristics that differ from the Western counterparts. Several disciplines are represented, and a sampling of Asian states is undertaken. Editors Boyd and Ngo recognize the disciplinary gap between history and political science, and seek to bridge it with this set of comparative and cross-disciplinary analysis.

Perhaps among the social sciences, the field of political science has been most conscious of the importance of proper concepts. While contemporaries often deal in neologisms, the political tradition of discourse offers a number of historically relevant notions—including nation, state, citizenship, sovereignty, and territory. These provide a set of markers for their discussion framework.

The typical essay starts with a clarification of the concepts to be used, and then engages in dissection and analysis of a particular historical Asian state. The individual authors proceed to offer a synthesis of history and political concepts in understanding historical states, such as Japan, China, and Malaysia. These three offer hybrid forms with their own trajectories. Chalmers Johnson’s notion of “developmental state” is criticized as conceptualizing the state as promoter of economic development, when historically it has had far more transformative effects.

A theme of the book is to challenge aspects of state theory, including legitimacy and territoriality. The modern Japanese state, for example, evolved as a combination of nativist traditions and adaptation to global pressures, according to Mark Ravina. He emphasizes the dual nature of sovereignty—external and domestic. Japanese state-building required construction of a tradition—discovery of unique Japanese cultural forms. The composition and dissemination of the national anthem, Kimigayo, by 1888, marked the emergence of the modern Japanese nation-state. He also examined the debates on modernization of the currency, and the argument that acceptance of the international gold standard as well as the west’s system of weights and measures was necessary for Japan to conform to and be accepted into the dominant international system of sovereign nation-states.

Editor Richard Boyd’s essay describes an activist bureaucracy intervening and leading in the making of the modern state. He argues that administrative transcendence as well as bureaucratic sectionalism distinguish Japanese state making from its Western counterpart. The bureaucracy is no longer identified directly with the emperor since 1945, and its success in economic development has bestowed legitimacy to maintain a special and privileged place in the public mind. The administrative arm of the state competed with the military for dominance in prewar Japan, and with the economic miracle, it enjoys an eminent position in the state.

China represents another trajectory of the Asian state. R. Bin Wong, in his essay “Citizen, state, and nation in China,” notes how the state has been an explicit force in creating Chinese national identity. He claims that early twentieth century
China was schizophrenic, with two distinct sources of identity—late imperial identity; and a nationalism born of opposition to foreigners. Tension between the two forced the Republic to balance these two identities.

Jenn-hwan Wang considers Taiwan as nation-state, and thus provokes the recurring question of whether a state exists when few others recognize its existence as such. The Guomindang established Taiwan as a security state, and by 1993, Taiwan was undergoing a new stage of existence, based on cumulative formation of a Taiwanese identity separate from mainland Chinese. Democracy, interest politics and prosperity have accompanied the changes, and President Chen Shuibian has encouraged normalization of Taiwan as a country. The author also notes the central role of the U.S. in building up and helping to maintain the survival of Taiwan. Liberalization of politics has stimulated the sentiment for permanent political autonomy, and has generated threats from the mainland and a return to a crisis of survival for Taiwan.

If Taiwan is a potential nation-state in Asia, Tibet is less so. Ann Frechette looks at the Tibetan diaspora—refugees in Nepal resettlement camps—and how they are constructing rudiments of a nation-state in their exile, even engaging in a kind of foreign relations. She sees the basic state elements there as instructive to understanding other modern states, with foreign states as especially important in state making—as models and as supports. The national myth of returning to their homeland in Tibet has become a central part of identity and ideology there.

While Japan and China are solid cases of state making, and Taiwan has potential state establishment (albeit with a desperate battle for survival at the moment of its declaration), Tibet-in-exile illustrates an oxymoron—a state without territory—and perhaps highlighting the editors attempt to excise territoriality from the state. The article on Malaysia examines what the authors (Shamsul A.B. and Sity Daud) term a “nation of intent.” Their textual reference is Prime Minister Mahathir’s 1991 vision for 2020, and they compare it to existing conditions of ethnic pluralism.

The omission of Korea from consideration in the volume is unfortunate, because the building of two states out of one people would shed important light on some of the contributors’ concepts and themes. Another problem has been the reluctance to distinguish between actual sovereignty and claims of sovereignty. The articles on Tibet, Taiwan, and Malaysia emphasize a vision of the respective state that differs from reality. Wong also stresses the vision of common Chinese identity. These themes of identity and vision are better classified as “nation”, and are historically separate from “state”. Most surprising in the volume has been the neglect of constitutions and constitution-making. A constitution is how a state defines itself, its government and its vision, and is the foundation of its laws. The editors and authors could also have looked at the linguistic differences and similarities of key notions. The Chinese character for state, guo(국 in Korean, koku in Japanese), consists of three elements, for example—a wall, indicating “territory”; a mouth, representing “people”; and a halberd, for “defence.” Original meanings and the importation of Western political terms into Asia is a rich field to be explored.

The volume is a good start to the under-examined question of state-making in Asia, but needs a more rigorous theoretical framework to progress beyond description and occasionally idiosyncratic employment of conceptual apparatus.

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Nationalism in Korea has received much attention from scholars. In particular ethnic nationalism, the form in which nationalism in Korea usually appears, has long been seen as an important factor in how Koreans view the world. Often, though, accounts of Korean nationalism tend to exhibit the same essentialism, or the nationalistic desire to possess or bend the Korean case to fit with preconceived theories. Gi-Wook Shin’s study of ethnic nationalism in Korea tries to present a different view of ethnic nationalism by “focus(ing) on the blood-based notion of nation that prevails in Korea today” (p.16) and by recognizing the role of “ethnic nationalism as key organizing principle of Korean society”, but without making the case fit the theory and without lapsing into a bifurcated view of Korean nationalism. He proposes to do so by avoiding the category of intellectual history (a genre prone to decontextualized and, ironically, ahistorical descriptions of thought and concepts if handled improperly) and by focusing on an analysis of the historical and social conditions that led to the rise of nationalism in Korea. This approach, according to Shin, not only specifies the historical processes by which the nation came to dominate rival forms of collective or categorical identities in Korea, but also allows attention for marginalized voices; voices that lost the battle with the nation. In short, Shin claims that the nation in Korea is embedded, contingent and contested and this book is in fact an elaboration of this thesis.

Shin has divided the book into three parts, each of which possesses its own character. Because of the clear introduction, the three parts succeed in complementing each other; at no point does the author leave the reader wondering what direction the argument is going to take. The first part “Origins and development” shows in detail some of the historical processes by which the nation became to dominant form of collective identity in Korea. The author chose to divide his discussion in opposing pairs. Thus, pan-Asianism and nationalism, colonial racism and nationalism, international socialism and nationalism, North Korea and “Socialism of our style” and Ilmin ch’ujii 一民主義 and “Modernisation of the Fatherland” are discussed in opposition to each other. Although at times, the
Ethnic nationalism in Korea is a major study. It dispels some of the more fashionable and Eurocentric accounts of Korean nationalism that hold it to be “a collective fantasy or a paradox” (p.221), while simultaneously taking issue with the arguments that the rise of ethnic nationalism was in some way natural or logical. It lines between the different ideologies seem to be drawn too neatly, this impression is quickly corrected if one reads on. The neat division in opposing pairs is merely an analytical and rhetorical convenience; as the author warns us, these ideologies were active at the same time and at the same place, creating interactions difficult to entangle. While, for instance, pan-Asianism and nationalism worked against one another at times, so did nationalism and communism or socialism. Going into remarkable detail (remarkable, because the thread of the narrative is never lost), the author juxtaposes nationalism and rival forms of collective identity, showing how (and why) nationalism emerged as the victor. In sketching the historical (and contingent) emergence of nationalism, the author successfully challenges the established view that the split between nationalism and socialism/communism during the colonial period offered the historical conditions for the post-1945 division (p.78). As he argues in the next chapters, the style of socialism that ended up dominating North Korean politics was as nationalist and historically contingent as the ideology of South Korea. North Korea adapted to the changing international circumstances; Shin shows how historical experiences of the ‘30s and ‘40s crystallized into the nationalist juch’e 主體 ideology of the ‘60s. Since the theoretical contrast between ‘pure’ socialism and ‘pure’ nationalism is so great, this chapter in particular shows the importance of what the author has called ‘embeddedness’, the formative influence of historical experiences. The last chapter of part one deals with the role of ethnic nationalism in South Korea and shows how organic views of the nation were crucial in the establishments of different South Korean nationalisms.

The first part of this study offers such a wealth of detail that it is inevitable that one should find some things to quibble with. Ch’oe Nam-són 崔南善, for instance, was as much a nationalist as a pan-Asianist and the importance of Japanese examples for his construction of a pan-Asian, Korea-centric vision of history are not mentioned. The coming together of Korean “compromising” and “noncompromising” nationalists as a result of colonial racism is perhaps somewhat exaggerated (p.54); the opposition between colonial racism and pan-Asian nationalism seems slightly artificial at times; and the establishment of the Chindan hakhoe 真韓學會 was for an important part a reaction to Korean Marxists and socialists and not merely a response to colonial racism. These remarks do not go beyond quibbles, however. The main argument of part one stands, in my view, unchallenged; nationalism emerged in a historically contingent manner among the presence of viable alternatives.

Part two “Contentious politics” delves into the nation as the bone of contention. It describes and analyzes the “processes and politics of contention among various notions of the Korean nation.” If part one established that the emergence of nationalism was historically contingent, part two does the same for ethnic nature of Korean nationalism. In different chapters in which an individualistic/civic/universalistic notion of the nation is juxtaposed with a collectivistic/ethnic/particularistic one, modernist notions with anti-modernist (such as agrarianism) ones, the north with the south and the official with the popular, the author takes the reader along on a journey into modern Korean history in which nationalism occupies the central position. To his credit, however, the argument does not reduce post-war Korean history to a narrative of the emergence of ethnic nationalism. Shin persuasively shows how universalism dominated until after the 1905 treaty. Through an analysis of textbooks from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he shows that the ethnic nation was contested to a significant degree in the early years of modernisation (p.124). Turning his attention to the mainstream magazines of the colonial period, the author demonstrates how particularist nationalism only slowly rose to a dominant position in the late colonial period.

A particular valuable insight emerges in chapter eight, which is devoted to the question why, if both states embraced it, ethnic nationalism could not bridge the gap between the North and the South. Relying on theories from social identity psychology and sociology, Shin agrees with the conclusion that “judgments about both likeable and unlikeable in-group members are more extreme than judgments about out-group-members” (p.157). Transposed to the Korean peninsula, this insight (the black sheep effect) shows how the two states can simultaneously embrace the notion that they are one nation and that the other is a “national traitor” or a “puppet government”, because “downgrading unlikeable in-groupers may be a cognitive strategy aimed at preserving the group’s sense of positivity as a whole” (p.157).

Part three “Current manifestations”, finally, is yet another sort of investigation. It attempts to verify empirically the often heard argument that “Korean’s belief in ethnic unity will inevitably bring national unification in the near future” as well as the contrary argument that “ethnic consciousness” must be abandoned, for “it can be a barrier to unification” (p.185). It does so by looking at two contentious issues in which the nation is at the centre: unification and globalisation. Based on statistical surveys carried out in South Korea, the author argues that although beliefs in “common blood and ancestry are defining features of South Koreans’ national identity” (p.201), the subtleties inherent to these beliefs and the many variables (age, politics, social status and so forth) at play, make it impossible to determine whether ethnic nationalism will actually have an impact on unification. The last chapter deals with globalisation. Contrary to the often repeated complaint that South Korean nationalism negates meaningful globalisation, Shin finds that the two are actually “readily compatible and interactive” (p.220). Globalisation is multi-layered in the sense that in South Korea it has been used both as a means to increase international competitiveness and to strengthen national heritage and culture. The author effectively takes the sting out of the globalisation debate by recalling the similarities its rhetorical and instrumental uses have when compared to how Korea previously used the concepts of civilisation and modernisation to provoke change in Korea and how these originally transnational concepts have helped to intensify ethnic identity and national consciousness in Korea.

Ethnic nationalism in Korea is a major study. It dispels some of the more fashionable and Eurocentric accounts of Korean nationalism that hold it to be “a collective fantasy or a paradox” (p.221), while simultaneously taking issue with the arguments that the rise of ethnic nationalism was in some way natural or logical. It
takes seriously the phenomenon of nationalism instead of merely decrying it and
draws a genealogy of nationalism in Korea that is not only clear, which given its
complex history is a major achievement in itself, but that also shows how other
forms of collective identity battled it out with nationalism, lost and were marginalized. The volume is moreover well-written and accessible to expert and
non-expert alike. It is certainly required reading for anyone with more than a
passing interest in Korea. The only real difficulty I see in this study is that it
underestimates the (historical and contingent) roots of the discourses on nation
and identity in the pre-modern period; recent history is privileged in terms of
significance over distant history. Having said that, this detracts nothing of the value
of this study as a study of modern nationalism. It is erudite, original, multi-
disciplinary and balanced. The author shows on each and every page that he is
completely at ease with his materials and methods. And given that his materials
include newspapers, historical writings, archives, magazines, and textbooks from
pre-division Korea and from the North and the South, that they range from the
19th to the 21st century and that his methods include historical, sociological and
statistical analysis, this book is a rare achievement.

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