

BOOK REVIEW

Jan BARDSLEY and Laura MILLER (eds.). *Manners and Mischief: Gender, Power, and Etiquette in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 284 pages. ISBN 978-0-52026783-1. 24.95 USD.

Any time we use proper manners—whether we exchange a simple greeting or perform a secret handshake—we confirm our status as part of a community of shared values and behavior. And while manners usually seem so natural and automatic that we need not be aware of them, they suddenly loom in significance whenever we venture outside of familiar cultural territory. Wasn't I supposed to eat the garnish? Did I really just drink from my finger bowl? Most people have experienced such moments of uncertainty at formal social occasions where participants are expected to follow rules and forms that are far removed from daily experience. And when we visit another society, manners can become completely opaque. How should I express my friendly intent using words and gestures that may not translate into the host culture? Should I just “be myself” or try to imitate the behavior of the locals? Questions like these force the foreign traveler into an uncomfortable awareness of the constructed nature of social occasions.

Such personal discomfort takes on a deeper dimension when we consider how discrepancies of power or status often cause standards of decorous behavior to be applied unevenly, even maliciously, across cultural lines. In this sense, manners are not merely a set of skills to master and perform in social settings, but a window into the value structures that permeate a society, shaping the daily behavior of people, defining expectations, and influencing social policies and political action. Sattareh Farman Farmaian, for example, remarks with some bitterness on how the Iranian prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh was mocked by the Western press for receiving visitors in pajamas when he was unwell, whereas British prime minister Winston Churchill was considered “endearing” for very much the same behavior (190). The sneering at Mossadegh's “poor” manners forms part of a discourse of belittlement that culminated in the CIA's engineering of the 1953 coup that led to the ouster of a man now hailed as the “first liberal leader of the modern Middle East” (de Bellaigue 2012, 3).

At the other end of the Asian landmass, Japan is a country that has captured the Western imagination for both the refinement and the daunting opacity of its manners. Many people might quail at the prospect of negotiating the nuances of polite speech and body language in Japan. And colloquial expressions such as *shitashiki naka ni mo reigi ari* (manners have their place even among friends) might lead us to think that any encounter with Japan will require us to navigate an unending series of formal social moments. Fortunately, such fears are at least somewhat overstated, as the novelist Tanabe Seiko suggests in jovially turning the old saying on its head: “*shitashiki naka ni mo tenuki ari*” (corner-cutting has its place even among friends) (240). Still, Japan is undoubtedly a society in which cultural

and linguistic forms presuppose an awareness of one's position as defined by one's relation to others within the context of specific social moments.

In *Manners and Mischief: Gender, Power, and Etiquette in Japan*, editors Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller assemble eleven essays that shed light on various loci of Japanese etiquette and decorum. The volume serves as a follow-up to their 2005 collection entitled *Bad Girls of Japan*, which considered "bad" Japanese women ranging from geisha to shoppers to cartoonists in the context of the social and historical forces defining their transgressive status. *Manners and Mischief* extends this line of analysis by considering the ways ideas about manners, and particularly etiquette guides, define the rules for proper behavior for Japanese men and women from a variety of time periods. The publisher declares the book a "snapshot of Japanese society," but it is really more of a collage, jumping through topics and time periods with the most attention given to modern Japanese society and popular culture. While the book occasionally takes a lighthearted approach to its subject (Hello Kitty graces the jacket), all of the essays are written by established academics and contain full scholarly apparatus. At the same time, they are reasonably accessible for a general audience, and no reading knowledge of Japanese language is assumed.

This volume's strength is its collection of diverse topics spanning several historical periods. The organization is generally chronological, beginning with a chapter on the *Tale of Genji* and concluding with an analysis of visual arguments about manners in the twenty-first century. We gain a complex and multifaceted view of manners and etiquette in Japanese society by leaping from the reading of literary classics into the dressing room of *onnagata* kabuki actors and on to the modern topics of rehabilitating *oyaji* (men past their prime) and advising the lovelorn. Each of the essays reflects careful work on the part of its author and crafts a clear claim on its topic.

Linda H. Chance opens the volume with "Genji Guides, or Minding Murasaki." This chapter provides an excellent, concise, and well documented history of the reception of the *Tale of Genji*. Chance's central assertion is that the many handbooks to and abridgements of the text are a form of vigilance that attempts to control the reader, particularly in diverting attention away from *Genji*'s critique of gender. This claim seems a slightly strained attempt to tie the chapter to the volume's larger topic of manners and etiquette guides, and few readers will be surprised to learn that each age interprets literary classics in the light of its own values. But Chance fortunately considers the merits of the *Genji* guidebooks as well their restrictive potential, and she notes a number of instances where we cannot easily interpret the commentator's views on issues of gender and power. Her chapter, while only loosely related to the volume's topic, is nonetheless a valuable introduction to the many different readers *Genji* has gained in the millennium since its composition.

Some of the other chapters, particularly from the first part of the book, have enough topical connection to illuminate a subject from multiple perspectives. One example is Maki Isaka's "Box-Lunch Etiquette: Conduct Guides and Kabuki *Onnagata*," an analysis of femininity as enacted by *onnagata*, male Kabuki actors

who perform female roles on stage. These actors maintain their role as women in their dressing rooms, following the prescriptions for female behavior noted in guides like “The Words of Ayame” (*Ayamegusa*). By connecting the Buddhist concept of *shugyō* (training) to postmodern theory, Isaka demonstrates that womanliness in Japan has been constructed through certain types of behavior that are received or asserted to be definitively feminine traits, that “what you do equals who you are” (61). Thus in Edo-period Japan, femininity was performed by women who read conduct guides as much as it was by *onnagata*.

Isaka’s analysis of femininity as the careful practice of textually defined behaviors makes an intriguing contrast with Kelly M. Foreman’s chapter, “The Perfect Woman: Geisha, Etiquette, and the World of Traditional Japanese Arts,” which describes the fluid and purposely unstated guidelines for behavior in the *karyūkai*, the world of arts as studied and performed by geisha. Foreman explains that geisha are defined by their identity as artists, obedient followers of *iemoto* who head a particular style of musical performance or dance. This absolute obedience to an artistic teacher creates in geisha a second nature of deferential behavior, which should not be misunderstood as servility toward the customers who interact with geisha at parties known as *ozashiki*. Rather, the interactions between geisha and customer are governed by a complex set of rules and expectations that are expected to be intuited by customers who share with geisha the bonds of studentship under *iemoto*. Thus there have been no guidebooks defining the nuances of proper *ozashiki* behavior. As geisha and their customers now rarely share the bonds of discipleship under the same *iemoto* and initiation into the *karyūkai* from customer to customer is on the wane, geisha now need new ways of communicating the rules of proper behavior to their customers.

Foreman’s perspective from within the world of the geisha is complemented by Sally Hastings’ “A Dinner Party is Not a Revolution: Space, Gender, and Hierarchy in Meiji Japan,” which gives some attention to the social function of geisha, particularly the danger they posed as rivals to “respectable” women at Western-style dinner parties in the Meiji period. These events, many of which were held at the Rokumeikan, a rococo-style edifice constructed by the Japanese government in 1883, were in a way a cultural protest against the unequal treaties that hampered Japan’s efforts to join the international community. While the end of the Rokumeikan era has previously been attributed to a nationalistic reaction to this unrestrained display of Western manners, Hastings shows how Japanese people turned away from Western dinner parties due to their unsettling effect on traditional gender roles and social hierarchies. Geisha used their talents at entertaining to take the spotlight from the wives and daughters of elite families, some of them even marrying Meiji political figures such as Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru. Hastings demonstrates that the Rokumeikan era came to a close because men like these refused to give up the company of geisha and because “Japanese families were unwilling to let members of the younger generation select their own marriage partners” (108).

This assessment of conflicts in the Japanese attitude toward Western social forms is counterbalanced by Gavin James Campbell’s “Mortification, Mockery, and

Dissembling: Western Adventures in Japanese Etiquette,” an analysis of Western travelers’ anxiety about Japanese manners. Campbell first presents the supreme condescension of Victorian diplomats and visitors in Japan, thereafter comparing their attitudes with sentiments expressed in postwar tourist guides. These texts are marketed to the open-minded traveler seeking “rare authentic experiences,” yet they reflect a sub-current of anxiety about the difficulty of penetrating the barrier of surface etiquette or *tatemaie* in Japanese culture (82). Campbell draws on a variety of sources to demonstrate how contemporary travel writers castigate Japanese culture as a hollow performance and blame the Japanese people for failing to satisfy the emotional needs of travelers. Such writers, Campbell concludes, reveal more about their own neuroses than about Japan itself.

The remaining chapters in *Manners and Mischief* analyze a cluster of topics involving life and popular culture in Japan today. In “The *Oyaji* Gets a Makeover: Guides for Japanese Salarymen in the New Millennium,” Jan Bardsley discusses the relatively recent advent of etiquette guides for men, showing how these books imply the need for men to master both Japanese and Western modes of socializing. Bardsley also discusses the recent phenomenon of domestically oriented and romantically passive “herbivorous men” (*sōshokukei danshi*) as an alternate model of male life satisfaction. Next, in “The Dignified Woman who Loves to be ‘Loveable’” Hiroko Hirakawa considers definitions of the successful female life by analyzing the largely negative reader reviews of Bandō Mariko’s best-selling *The Dignity of the Woman* (*Josei no hinkaku*). Hirakawa takes a frankly critical view of Bandō, asserting that she ignores the practical constraints of most women’s lives when she admonishes them to follow a strategy of accommodating men and projecting an air of lovability.

In “Making and Marketing Mothers: Guides to Pregnancy in Modern Japan,” Amanda C. Seaman investigates the changing attitudes reflected in pregnancy guides for Japanese women. In the Tokugawa era, emphasis was placed on how a pregnant woman’s behavior might influence her unborn child. The overuse of medicine or alcohol, for example, might harm the baby, while wearing pearls was thought to ensure a beautiful child. In the early Showa era, this sort of magical thinking was replaced by an emphasis on science and hygiene, with the purpose of ensuring women’s fertility in support of the expanding Japanese state. While those two periods emphasize women’s responsibility for their children’s well-being, in postwar Japan pregnancy has been redefined as a consumer experience. This reimagining serves both to soothe women’s anxieties about bodily changes but also has the somewhat paradoxical effect of reducing pregnancy’s significance as a threshold experience in women’s lives.

In the next two chapters, Janet S. Shibamoto-Smith and Hideko Abe analyze a type of writing loosely related to etiquette: advice columns. In “When Manners Are Not Enough: The Newspaper Advice Column and the ‘Etiquette’ of Cultural Ideology in Contemporary Japan,” Shibamoto-Smith analyzes responses to sixty reader-submitted letters appearing in the Life Advice Room (*Seikatsu no sōdanshitsu*) of the *Asahi Shinbun*. The advice givers were a rotating group of six celebrities who weigh in on the readers’ problems in areas such as love,

marriage, and family relationships. The answers tended to fall into several patterns advocating introspection and decisive action. They likewise showed some flexibility in gender roles yet retained traditional notions that women should be selfless in romantic relationships and should privilege motherhood over other life paths. The following chapter, Abe's "A Community of Manners: Advice Columns in Lesbian and Gay Magazines in Japan," examines four magazines to assess the role of advice columns in creating a sense of community among gay and lesbian people. Abe finds that these columns do so by providing practical guidance on getting along with the straight world while advocating ethical action. The fact that all respondents are lesbian or gay community members, whether they be respected figures or editorial staff, helps create "a common sense of shared principles, agency, incentive, and action" (212).

Finally, Laura Miller's "Behavior That Offends: Comics and Other Images of Incivility" provides an entertaining look at didactic images from a plethora of pop-culture sources such as etiquette guides, magazines, and subway posters. These visual texts present lessons on behavior that is to be avoided, such as applying makeup on the train, using careless or taboo language, or acting in a manner violating gender norms. Techniques such as humor and the substitution of animal characters for humans help to convey a message in a restrained and non-threatening manner. Yet for all their humor and charm, these images provide a glimpse into the ongoing negotiation about proper behavior in Japanese society.

The uniformly high quality of the scholarship in all of these essays makes one feel boorish for making any negative comments. Fortunately, there is not much to complain about. The largest area of concern is the book's definition of topic. The notion of "manners" that appears in the title and ostensibly unifies the eleven essays collected is really too narrow a category. As mentioned above, Linda H. Chance discusses literary history, not etiquette. Likewise, Amanda C. Seaman's essay on pregnancy guides devotes more attention to normative conceptions of pregnancy than to issues of decorum in behavior toward or by pregnant women. In a similar sense the essays on advice columns by Janet A. Shibamoto-Smith and Hideko Abe address the topic of manners only obliquely. Advice columns most frequently deal with questions of life satisfaction and not how to create or preserve propriety in relationships. As Abe freely admits, these columns "are not about etiquette per se" (212). Thus, *Manners and Mischief* effectually addresses a broader and more loosely defined collection of topics than it sets out to do.

In fairness, the editors take pains to create as much cohesion in the volume as possible. For one thing, their introduction helpfully introduces the concept of *kata* or form as a dimension of polite behavior in Japan. In this sense some of the chapters that seem to stray from the topic may in fact be addressing various *kata* in Japanese society. In a literal sense, members of a society practice "formal" behavior when they identify with some specific *kata* and adapt their thinking and behavior accordingly, but if we construe this concept too broadly we again wind up far away from questions of decorum and etiquette. Laura Miller also tries to make her chapter into something of a conclusion for the volume by referencing the other chapters as they relate to specific images she discusses. While this effort does not

resolve the differences in how individual authors approach the notion of manners, it does help show how the topics they address remain relevant in contemporary Japanese society.

One smaller criticism is that some essays contain mistakes in the romanization of Japanese words. Certainly, all books will contain a few errors, but in two of the essays the pattern is persistent enough to be troubling. When, for instance, the word *kiyosa* (清さ; purity or cleanness) is rendered as *kiosa*, readers who do not know Japanese will be unable to find the mistaken romanization in the dictionary, an eventuality that would at least distress them and at worst diminish the author's credibility (128). Many such errors deal with the length of vowels, with *fukyū* (普及; propagation or spreading) being incorrectly rendered as *fūkyū*, for instance (163). Perhaps this problem reflects more about how the language barrier still lingers in Western scholarship on Japan than about the quality of this collection of essays. Still, the reader would wish all of the authors to treat Japanese terminology with the same care that they give to their own English prose, which is consistently correct and polished. Here we should note that half of the non-Japanese contributors to this book do handle Japanese words without committing any errors in romanization and that the Japanese scholars write in flawless English.

These minor gripes aside, *Manners and Mischief* is a fine book that will interest many general readers and be useful to scholars interested in this area of Japanese studies.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jessica Ching-sze WANG. *John Dewey in China: To Teach and to Learn*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2007, 152 pages. ISBN 978-0-7914-7204-0. (Paperback). 24.95 USD.

Scholars of comparative philosophy have increasingly become interested in intersections between classical American pragmatism and Confucianism. Most of the scholarship in this area (e.g., Hall and Ames 1999; Tan 2003) has focused on compatibilities between the thought of John Dewey and Confucius, with at least one consequence of the comparative analysis being the suggestion of the coherence and plausibility of Confucian democracy. The focus on Dewey is a natural choice, for Dewey visited and lectured in China for two years (1919-1921)—in the midst of the May Fourth Movement—a time at which many in China were eager to learn of social and political frameworks that might offer correctives to their own. Although her book is not the first to examine Dewey's visit to China, Wang's timely treatment advances upon existing scholarship (e.g., Ou 1970; Keenan 1977) by showing that Dewey was in China not just to teach, but to learn; the cultural and philosophical exchange between Dewey and China was mutual. Thus, contemporary scholarship seeking to blend American and Chinese forms of philosophy and culture will find in Wang's book an incisive historical treatment indicative of the promise of such efforts.

Intellectual historians will appreciate Wang's treatment of the somewhat complex relationship between Dewey and his disciple, Hu Shih. Without this relationship, Dewey's visit to China might very well not have happened. Hu was a student of Dewey's at Columbia University, where he studied thanks to a scholarship drawn from the indemnity funds following the Boxer Uprising. Hu was back in China at the time that Dewey was on a sabbatical leave from Columbia at the University of California-Berkeley (1918-1919). Taking advantage of their proximity to East Asia, Dewey and his wife, Alice Chipman Dewey, decided to visit Japan. As a part of the visit, Dewey arranged to lecture at Tokyo Imperial University. Catching wind of these plans, Hu clamored to have Dewey lecture in China. Convinced that "one could begin to learn something of the East" in a year's time, Dewey sought and received permission from Columbia to spend a year in China—an allowance that would be renewed for a second year. While Hu was indispensable with respect to arrangements for Dewey's visit, and was perhaps the scholar most responsible for the dissemination of Dewey's thought in China, Wang's careful study shows that Hu's purportedly Deweyan brand of cultural reformism was not always consistent with Dewey's philosophy. At the same time, with respect and deference as a foreign guest, Dewey thought it inappropriate to intervene with Hu's New Culture Movement. More significantly, thinking that the key to Chinese prosperity lie in tapping into their own distinct history, culture, and values, Dewey saw it unfit to forcefully impose Western ideals upon the Chinese.

It is this eye for nuance that makes Wang's study an intriguing and important contribution to intellectual history. Drawing heavily on primary historical materials from China, as well as Dewey's published correspondence; Wang fills out a picture left somewhat sketchy by previous scholars and presents new interpretations of material already available. The important question of what Dewey was experiencing, thinking, and learning in China receives much more concentrated attention from Wang than it has from anyone before her. We learn of Dewey's reception in China as a veritable celebrity, the vaunted "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy"—whose lectures, attended by thousands, were perceived as holding the secrets to modern progress in China. We find that contrary to what some scholars have previously suggested, Dewey stayed closely attuned to the events transpiring around him. His habit was to want to know what China needed and what he could offer, tailoring his lectures to the interests of his audiences. At the same time that he was accommodating, we learn that he was not afraid to express a critical attitude toward what he perceived as weaknesses of the Chinese—passivity and overreliance on authority. Dewey urged the Chinese to cultivate their skills and talents, to be proactive in creating the way of life that they hoped for.

Dewey's name became associated with the single-sentence slogan, "School is society and society is life" (43). While this message was inspirational to many, it provoked the dissatisfaction of some, such as social reformist Fei Juetian, who held that only a social revolution or class war could cure China's social ills. At the same time that Dewey did not advocate a position such as Fei's, on occasion he encountered antagonism from government and school authorities concerned that his lectures might stir reactionary sentiment. Wang recalls an incident during Dewey's visit that brings this tension in Dewey's reception in China into vivid focus. Claiming inspiration from Dewey's repudiation of rote learning, a student at Beijing University announced a "manifesto against examinations," calling fellow students to "throw away the pen of examination" (43). Upon learning of this uprising, a vexed Dewey altered his travel itinerary to return to Beijing to clear up the misunderstanding and dissuade the students from rebellion. In turn, many people in Guangdong who were expecting to hear Dewey talk were left disappointed, with one hundred people reportedly waiting for Dewey at the train station in the hopes of preventing him from leaving. As told by Wang, episodes such as these convey the sometimes polarizing effect of Dewey's presence in China, while revealing the difficult balance that Dewey had to tread as he taught in China.

As a learner in China, Dewey underwent similar ambivalence, as he "oscillated between hope and frustration" (79). With careful attention to Dewey's writings and correspondence throughout his stay, Wang reveals the vicissitudes of Dewey's outlook on China in light of the fluctuations of his experience there. Although the exception rather than the rule, Dewey is at times decidedly critical of China and pessimistic concerning its prospects for progress. This attitude serves as a stark contrast of the typical portrait of Dewey as seeing the world always through rose-colored lenses. At the same time, Wang shows that Dewey's experience in China made him all the more convinced of the interconnectedness among nations of the world and the importance of cross-cultural understanding and dialogue.

Dewey's subsequent "educational missions"—Turkey in 1924, Mexico in 1926, Russia in 1928, and South Africa in 1934—would likely not have come about if not for the fruits of Dewey's journey to China. Wang is to be credited, then, not just for adding to our picture of Dewey's visit to China by discussing Dewey as a learner, but for adding to our picture of Dewey the person and transnational scholar.

Described as "the focal point of the book" (102), Wang devotes a substantial discussion to the influence of China on Dewey's social and political philosophy. Her primary focus is on the transition in Dewey's thought from a conception of democracy as government to a conception of democracy as culture, or a way of communal life. Wang is again fastidious in scholarship, recognizing that the trajectory of this development in Dewey's thought might be traced back to passages in works of Dewey's that were published several years before his visit to China. Still, Wang persuasively demonstrates that Dewey's discourse concerning democracy makes a pronounced shift in emphasis on the heels of his visit to China, particularly in *The Public and its Problems* (1927). In light of his experience in China, Dewey saw more clearly than ever before that a democratic culture is not derivative of a democratic government, but that a democratic culture leads to sound decisions concerning governance of communities.

John Dewey in China is a valuable contribution to scholarship in Asian studies, American studies, comparative philosophy, and intellectual history. It should be given especial consideration by those interested in intersections between Chinese and American thought and values. In the present age of globalization, Dewey's philosophy continues to have much to teach us. As individuals and communities interested in mutual understanding among Eastern and Western cultures, we continue to have much to learn.

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BOOK REVIEW

Tae-Ung BAIK. *Emerging Regional Human Rights Systems in Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 352 pages. ISBN-10: 1107015340 (Hardcover). 99.00 USD.

Asia has often been portrayed as something of a dead zone for regional approaches to human rights. Region-wide initiatives are usually seen as weak, with several countries being partial or reluctant participants in the international human rights regime. As Dinah Shelton concisely wrote in 2007, “Neither Asia nor the Middle East has any regional [human rights] system in place. These regions remain dependent on the work of the U.N. to promote and protect human rights” (Shelton 2007, 471-72). This situation is usually portrayed in stark contrast to Europe, the Americas and Africa, where long-established (if not always effective) regional human rights mechanisms exist, as integral parts of the Council of Europe, Organization of American States, and Organization of African Unity, respectively. With *Emerging Regional Human Rights Systems in Asia*, Tae-Ung Baik strongly challenges this conventional wisdom. Baik argues that there in fact is an emerging regional human rights system in East Asia, with strong momentum toward a regional human rights commission or charter (153).

Before exploring Baik’s claims further, it is worth noting the geographical scope of his argument. While Baik admits the possibility of a broader institution eventually encompassing the Pacific Islands or Middle East, his core claim is that a regional system is emerging that covers East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. His analysis thus concentrates on twenty-three states in these regions, namely the ten ASEAN member states and East Timor in Southeast Asia; seven out of the eight SAARC states in South Asia (Afghanistan being omitted); and China, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan in East Asia (26). Although many observers, including myself (Wolman 2010), have noted the recent emergence of sub-regional human rights systems in Asia, Baik explicitly focuses his attention on this broader regional group as the locus for future action. While acknowledging that sub-regional groups are in many ways on the leading edge of Asian human rights cooperation, he feels that “each sub-region is not sufficiently independent and sustainable” (231) and that “sub-regional approaches cannot be a substitute for pan-regional cooperation” (23).

It is also worth exploring further Baik’s usage of the ‘systems’ approach, which he characterizes as “a methodology for analyzing an object, with the emphasis on the constituent elements of a system” (37). Although more commonly used in other fields, the systems approach has been introduced into legal analysis by Lynn LoPucki and applied to human rights by Dinah Shelton (37-38). It is a methodology which Baik feels is appropriate for a specific time-frame in the development of the human rights movement in Asia, even if a full-blown regime has yet to emerge (39). According to Baik, the three essential elements of a human

rights system are norms, institutions, and implementation, each of which are examined in greater detail in the three chapters that contain the substantive core of his text.

The chapter on norm development commences with a brief examination of the Asian Values debate. Baik dismisses the political debate as unedifying, and instead embraces more recent research into the domestication of international norms as providing greater insight into the filtering process by which indigenous norms “evolve under the influence of foreign norms” (59). Baik then proceeds to show that the human rights movement has in fact been embraced—to at least some extent—within Asia. All Asian states have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (87). Most have also ratified several other core human rights treaties, albeit sometimes with significant reservations. Baik shows how these treaties become effective in domestic legal systems, either directly, as in several ‘monist’ states, or through incorporation or transformation, as in so-called ‘dualist’ states. He also details the varying places that international law possesses in the domestic law hierarchy of Asian nations. Baik then reviews domestic rights norms in Asia, especially as contained in written constitutions, which all twenty-three nations now possess. Baik sees these domestic-level norms as a positive sign for regional cooperation. Baik finally reviews human rights-related norms that he sees developing at the regional and especially sub-regional levels. These include the 2004 SAARC Social Charter, the 2007 ASEAN Charter, the 1993 Bangkok Declaration, and NGO-initiated documents such as the Asian Human Rights Charter of 1998.

The next chapter reviews institutions of two types: those addressing human rights in Asia and those that promote regional integration. First, Baik describes those governmental and inter-governmental institutions involved with Asian human rights at the global, sub-regional, and domestic levels. This includes the UN Human Rights Council, various sub-regional bodies such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and domestic institutions such as constitutional courts and national human rights commissions. Second, he details the numerous non-human rights focused regional institutions, such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the East Asia Summits.

Baik then turns to those institutions that combine both a regional scope and a focus on human rights. Many of these are non-governmental movements that address human rights across Asia rather than being confined to a single country. At the governmental level, Baik highlights the Asia Pacific Forum for National Human Rights Institutions and the series of U.N. semi-annual workshops on building an Asian regional human rights system. While the now-defunct series of U.N. workshops may equally well be seen as a failed attempt to foster regionalism, the prominence given to the Asia Pacific Forum is warranted, as it has been called the “closest that the Asia-Pacific region has come to a regional arrangement or machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights” (Muntarbhorn 2005). However, the Asia Pacific Forum is not an international organization, but

rather a transgovernmental network linking governmental sub-units not controlled by the executive.

Baik sees three potential scenarios in which this potpourri of institutions can coalesce into an operational regional human rights mechanism (231-32). First, continued developments at the sub-regional level could eventually lead to the sub-regions cooperating at the regional level. Second, ASEAN-affiliated groupings that are currently active at the regional level such as ASEAN Plus Three or the East Asian Summits could develop a human rights competency. And third, the Six Party Talks could evolve into a regional cooperation mechanism that addresses rights issues, which could potentially expand to include ASEAN and other states as well. While any of these changes may someday occur, there is no evidence of them happening at the moment, and the speculative nature of these proposed scenarios is therefore one of the weak points in Baik's argument.

The final section discusses the different mechanisms for human rights implementation in Asia. While implementation at the domestic level is briefly discussed, the focus here is on international implementation, and primarily on the United Nations arrangements such as the Special Procedures, pledges in Human Rights Council elections, and reports to treaty bodies. Baik also reviews the major challenges to human rights implementation in Asia, such as poverty, the presence of authoritarian regimes, and still-unresolved colonial legacies. He emphasizes the benefits to cooperative models of implementation (while admitting that coercion can sometimes play a valuable role).

Baik concludes his book by noting that "Asia is rapidly moving toward comprehensive regional integration" (297) and will "eventually join the world with fully functioning regional human rights norms, institutions, and enforcement mechanisms" (298). While he may be proven correct, not all readers will be convinced that the available evidence necessarily leads to such a conclusion. Although human rights norms, institutions, and implementation mechanisms are certainly influential in Asia, meaningful human rights mechanisms at the regional level seem very slow to develop. China remains an elephant in the room, impossible to ignore but unlikely to accept a regional human rights institution with any real powers. In addition, political tensions—many of which have worsened since Baik's book was written—make it difficult to imagine significant integration or human rights cooperation in Northeast Asia in the foreseeable future. In particular, the Japan-China relationship, Japan-South Korea relationship, and South Korea-North Korea relationship are now characterized by competition and conflict rather than integration or cooperation.

Even for those who are not convinced by Baik's argument, however, there is no disputing the value of the book's rich descriptive details on Asian human rights norms, institutions, and implementation. The book is thus important not only for its coherent claims that a regional human rights system is emerging in Asia, but also as a guide to the current state of human rights in this important part of the world, and could easily be used as a textbook in courses on human rights in Asia or related subjects.

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