

BOOK REVIEW

Robert HOPPENS. *The China Problem in Postwar Japan: Japanese National Identity and Sino-Japanese Relations*. London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015. i-xi plus 298 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4725-7546-3 (Hardback). Series: SOAS Studies in Modern and Contemporary Japan. 78.40 USD. 64.99 GB.

Robert Hoppens' book is a very well researched study of the interaction between differing concepts and perceptions of post-war "China" and Japanese discourse on national identity. It focuses on published utterances by politicians and well-known historians and intellectuals, and demonstrates the impact political and ideological convictions have on perceptions of China, how these are influenced by changes in the domestic and international situation, and the manner in which this helps shape images of the Japanese self. The approach follows in the steps of voluminous research on "identity" that stresses the role of perceptions of the "Other" in shaping the conceptualization of the "Self."

The periods covered are post-war Japan (1945-1970), the Nixon Shock and the Normalization of Relations with the PRC (1971-1972), Sino-Japanese negotiations over the Anti-hegemony Clause (1973-1976), and Peace and Cooperation (1977-1979). Within each period texts and utterances selected for analysis are mainly grouped according to categories of political persuasion, such as "conservative," "progressive," "progressive and leftist," "Marxist," or "pro-Beijing." Also treated are basic concepts common to the majority of the members of political parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party, the Japanese Socialist Party, and the Japanese Communist Party. Hoppens emphasizes political concepts related to national identity, including issues such as "war guilt" connected to Japan's pre-1945 actions on the Asian mainland.

The book under review offers an intelligent and convincing picture of events during these three-and-a-half decades that continue to shape Japanese national discourse until the present, including issues related to the cabinet under the leadership of PM Abe Shinzo and his role in the creation of a revisionist history textbook supported by numerous Japanese historians.

Research dealing with notions such as "identity," "nationalism," and "political persuasions" is prone to becoming lost in long-winded discussions, perhaps even more so when dealing with a country such as Japan. This also applies to Japanese authors who at times claim that foreign (read: "Western") notions are unsuitable for dealing with issues germane to Japanese culture and civilization. Even a scholar like Maruyama Masao, deeply steeped in Western historical and political concepts, towards the end of his career came to the conclusion that Japanese history is characterized by an "ancient undercurrent" unique to Japan.¹

¹ Maruyama Masao, *Chūsei to hangyaku* [Loyalty and rebellion]. Tokyo: Chikuma Library, 1998.

Hoppens summarizes the changes between 1945 and 1979 as follows:

While changing Chinese strategy is certainly important, if one considers the discursive context of the China problem in Japan, the history problem seems less like a radical break with, and more like a continuation of, trends observed in this study—the rise of conservative triumphalism, the alienation of leftists and progressives from the PRC, and increasing criticism of government China policy from the right. Ironically, the transformation of Sino-Japanese relations in the 1970s that helped to create compatible definitions of national interest also helped to reinforce conflicting concepts of national identity and historical narratives that erupted in the 1980s as the history problem. (231)

Hoppens stresses that “This study is more concerned with what Michael Billig called “banal nationalism,” those everyday common sense assumptions about national identity that inform conversations about the national interest...” (5). At first glance, this seems to completely justify the selection of written sources as representative of Japanese discourse on identity and nationalism. As in other civilizations, the form and content of discourse is also dependent on the medium/media in which that discourse is carried out. In Japan, perhaps more than in other cultures, written statements and utterances may differ considerably from the “true” opinions held by the writer/speaker, leading to the well-known distinctions between “opinion shown” and the inner convictions of the individual (*honno*), a phenomenon particularly observable in comments bearing on Japanese-Chinese relations. This kind of self-censorship is also observable in utterances bearing on Japan-US relations. In both Japanese and English writings, labels such as “pro-Beijing” or “pro-Taiwan” are widely used. In personal contact with a Japanese person usually referred to as “pro-Beijing,” it is not uncommon to discover that the individual may have assumed that role for rather practical, utilitarian reasons. Such behaviour is widely understood and accepted in Japanese society. This also makes for a high degree of uncertainty in communications even among Japanese themselves about the *honno* (true opinion) of one’s counterpart. Labels such as “pro-Beijing” should therefore not be interpreted as indicating support for the PRC government to the detriment of Japan without further comment.

The China Problem in Postwar Japan provides sufficient background knowledge on the general course of PRC politics to enable the reader to follow the main thread of Hoppens’ arguments. The author is to be congratulated for providing a lucid and reasoned approach to important issues that are also relevant to discourses on nationalism and identity in other countries. The book is well edited, and its language usage leaves little to be desired. It has detailed notes and a comprehensive bibliography of written sources.

Nevertheless, there is room for suggestions for future research and publications. It is unfortunate that Hoppens decided to end his study in 1979. Developments in the seventies contributed to an important change in Japan’s definition of itself as a formal ally of the United States, first officially announced in a speech by Prime Minister Suzuki in 1981.² (On the nature of Japan’s Security Agreement with the United States and its interpretation as a full-fledged alliance,

see page 44 of Richard J. Samuel's *Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

This symbolized a significant shift in official government perception of Japan's identity in the international system.³ This shift became highly visible from 1980, but was the result of gradual changes in Japanese political discourse during the seventies, developments that add to our understanding of substantial changes in Japan's discourse on national identity. During the seventies, Japan participated in meetings discussing trilateral cooperation between Japan, the United States, and Europe in which Miyazawa Kiichi played a significant role, which contributed to preparing the ground for this development. He was at the centre of Japanese politics and relations with the West for several decades, and particularly close to Ohira.⁴ Japanese discourse on its place in the international system is also related to the introduction of a new security concept, "Comprehensive Security Guarantee" (*sōgō anzen hoshō*), the name for an overall principle covering military and non-military aspects of domestic and international security. It was formally announced in 1980 by a study group appointed by Prime Minister Ohira.⁵ *The China Problem in Postwar Japan*, would have gained much by referring to these changes in the Japanese discourse on its place in the international order.

Although I accept Hoppens' use of the term "banal nationalism," one may question whether such simple categories of political persuasion as "leftists and progressives" should not have been more clearly defined—after all, these terms are also prone to be understood differently in Western countries, meaning something rather different in the US and England, as well as continental European countries. The use of labels that are normally used to refer to convictions of principle must also be put in the context of Japanese political culture, where it has been fairly acceptable to admit to substantial and sudden changes in one's personal "principles" (political and otherwise), in contrast to other societies where such a change is likely to discredit political actors. Although best known through the massive "conversion" of "leftists" during the thirties in Japan, it is a phenomenon that persists until the present day. Speeches in Japanese characterized by strongly "nationalist" or "right-

² Even though there is some uncertainty on the exact meaning of the term in Suzuki's speech, it was a turning point in Japanese official discourse.

³ See K. W. Radtke, "Leste Asiático em busca de segurança geopolítica (East Asia in search of geopolitical security): Parte Um: Observações gerais na evolução dos conceitos de segurança no Japão, na China e nos Estados Unidos (The genesis of security concepts in China and Japan)," in *Neohegemonia americana ou multipolaridade? Polos de poder e sistema internacional* American Neohegemony or Multipolarity? Power poles and the international system), eds. P. Vizentini and M. Wiesebron (Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2006), 101-33. It lists a number of sources related to the origins of "Comprehensive Security" and the impact of new think tanks established during the seventies.

⁴ During the seventies he was minister of foreign affairs (1974-1976), and state minister and director general of the Economic Planning Agency (1977-1978), finally becoming Prime Minister (1991-1993).

⁵ The group was chaired by Inoki Masamichi. On the historical background of the term see also K. W. Radtke, and R. Feddema eds., *Comprehensive Security in Asia: Views from Asia and the West on a Changing Security Environment* (Leiden-Boston-Koeln: Brill Publishers, 2000) and M. Alagappa, "Comprehensive Security: Interpretations in ASEAN Countries," in *Asian Security Issues: Regional and Global*, eds. Robert A. Scalapino et al. (University of California, 1988).

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wing” sentiments for a domestic audience by government politicians not known for such opinions abroad have more than once led to raised eyebrows among American politicians and the media. These remarks do not diminish the merits of the book as a very welcome addition to the large literature on Japanese “identity” and Japan’s political discourse.

Kurt W. RADTKE
*Prof. of Japanese and Chinese Studies,
Waseda University (1998-2006);
Prof. Emeritus, Leiden University
kurtradtke@online.nl*

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Eugene Y. PARK. *A Family of No Prominence: The Descendants of Pak Tōkhwa and the Birth of Modern Korea*. California: Stanford University Press, 2014. 264 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8047-8876-2 (Hardcover). 60.00 USD.

The study of the status in the Chosŏn period of social strata other than the yangban mainly on the basis of genealogies (*chokpo*) is fraught with difficulties, as the subjects of the *chokpo* are almost all yangban. Only in the 18th and 19th centuries did substantial numbers of non-yangban construct a line of descent and entered their names in a genealogy. Yet they did not include information about the lives and occupations of their ancestors in their *chokpo* from which one might infer that they did not belong to the yangban status group. Thus studies of genealogy that use *chokpo* inevitably are studies of yangban families because the most useful sources when one wants to clarify the descent of people of earlier generations and family relations, and on the basis of such information reconstruct the history of a family over a long period of time, were the *chokpo*, which rarely contain instances of persons who were non-yangban. Herein lies the significance of Eugene Park's *A Family of No Prominence*, which focuses on the history of an average family of *chungin*, the class of technical specialists that, thus far in the study of *chokpo*, has been relatively neglected. Of course the *chungin*, who belonged to the lower strata of the ruling class, did engage in the compilation of *chokpo*, just like the yangban, and studies of their genealogies are not totally lacking. But studies like this one that tenaciously track the development of one *chungin* lineage over hundreds of years, from the 17th to the 20th century, are very rare. In spite of unpromising resources, Eugene Park has managed to show the reality of the lives of the 17th-century military official Pak Tōkhwa and his descendants as much as reliable evidence allows and make it meaningful historically. Although he has often been forced to rely on suppositions, he has been able to discuss the individual lives of the descendants of Pak Tōkhwa in relation to the customs of their social milieu and their historical context. As a lower stratum of the dominant classes, *chungin* were literate intellectuals who, as producers and subjects of records of the Chosŏn period, were almost like the yangban. From the *chungin* class emerged a great number of persons who left literary works, and there are also works about their achievements and lives, such as *Ihyang kyŏnmun nok* (Record of Observations from the Commoners' Quarters), but these were largely confined to places such as Seoul, where an urban culture flourished.

As previously stated, Park's study is significant because it illuminates the careers of the members of a *chungin* lineage, a class of people for whom biographical documents are scarce. It also deserves to be noted that it makes positive use of their *chokpo*, which have not received proper recognition as reliable historical material, and of oral sources, overcoming the limitations of documentary research. The effort to go beyond the limitations of existing studies that focus on yangban and prominent persons and to reconstruct the family history of ordinary

people is valuable as it opens up the possibility of new perspectives not only in the study of chokpo, but also in the study of persons and families. It is also interesting that in its chronological scope the book follows the trajectory of one Chosŏn-era family through the period of the opening of the ports, the colonial period, and the post-liberation period, right up to the present day.

I have a longstanding interest in the study of chungin lineages such as that attempted in this book. As mentioned earlier, it is very difficult to utilize chokpo for the study of social status, particularly that of commoners and the class of the “low-born” (*ch’ŏnmin*), because of the chokpo’s focus on the yangban. Yet, the use of chokpo is to a certain extent possible for the study of the chungin because they were a class that, although not yangban, produced chokpo showing their own status as it truly was. This contrasted with the efforts of commoners and ch’ŏnmin to hide their real status through irregular means, such as fabricating their social status or descent line. My interest lies in questions like the role the chungin played in the process of the compilation of their chokpo, their relations with the scions of yangban families, and the way in which they presented their status in the genealogies. Park’s book offers quite a few clues for answers to such questions, but I also want to raise some issues that merit further consideration.

The first problem is whether the combination of surname and place of ancestral origin, the “ancestral seat,” that is essential for distinguishing family groups consisting of the descendants of one lineage founder in the Korean family system can also be the criterion for distinguishing chungin lineages. In connection with this problem Park notes the quite remarkable phenomenon that most of the combinations of surname and ancestral seat of lineages that are known as having included many individuals belonging to the chungin class are not listed in the geographical treatise in the *Sejong sillok* (Veritable Records of the Reign of King Sejong) compiled by the state in the 15th century. If this is correct, it is evidence that the chungin lineages were not established in Koryŏ, but emerged as a new class sometime after the beginning of the 16th century. In fact, the beginning of a reliable genealogy of the family of Pak Tŏkhwa goes back to the late 16th or early 17th century. But it is a pity that Park does not discuss this in greater detail. As far as I have been able to ascertain, two lineages that are known as representative chungin lineages, the Hyŏn from Ch’ŏnnyŏng and the Pang from Onyang, are mentioned in the geographical section of the *Sejong sillok*, which may cast doubt on Park’s assertion “that *chungin* was not yet in place as an unequivocally recognized social status category.” Moreover, one has to be careful attempting to determine status on the basis of the surname-seat combination, because within the unit that shared a surname and ancestral seat there could be people of different statuses.

The second issue is the sense of identity of the chungin through marital ties. As Park too points out, the background of the class that was united by the appellation chungin was very diverse. Consisting of technical specialists, functionaries (*ajŏn*) in the capital, provincial clerks, secondary sons, and low-ranking military officials, the chungin had in common that they were halfway between ordinary commoners and yangban, but differed in respect to their social formation, the tasks they performed for the state, and the places where they

lived. There seems hardly to be any basis for a shared class consciousness. Park notes repeatedly, however, that chungin maintained close marriage networks, an important finding. Because in traditional society marriage relations implied equal status, this is an indication that an unexpectedly widespread sense of class solidarity had been created. The marriage practices of the chungin stand in marked contrast to the fact that for the yangban the choice of marriage partners was often limited by considerations of relative status within the status group, or by the factors of factional affiliation and regional origin, and thus may be considered a foundation for the budding of a positive sense of chungin identity that equaled that of the yangban. But the marriage partners of the chungin were not confined to other chungin. Park also provides examples of marriages of the lineage of Pak Tökhwa with merchants from the capital or the communities near Seoul along the Han River or with secondary sons of yangban of the Noron faction. This clearly shows what kind of relations the chungin entertained with the nobility of the capital and the merchant class. That the capital nobility had formed private patron-client relations with technical chungin and the ajön in the capital on the basis of the commercial wealth of Seoul is known through earlier studies. This study indicates that similar relations also were sustained through marriages between the secondary sons of prestigious capital yangban families and Seoul chungin.

A third issue is the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children in chungin households and the consequent difference in status. Park does not fully deal with this discrimination in his book, but several times effectively uses it as evidence as the basis for distinctions in status. However, the book also offers space for further reflection on this issue. For example, Park surmises, according to the general principles of the compilation of chokpo at the time, that in the genealogies a person whose descent line is discontinued is a secondary (“illegitimate”) son. But it is difficult to judge uniformly whether someone was a secondary son on this basis alone. The earlier the genealogies, the fewer the records of secondary sons, but as the consciousness of patrilinearity was reinforced there was a tendency to be more liberal and even omit entirely indications that particular individuals were secondary sons. It is also not entirely justified to consider marriage of a person from a yangban household with a chungin unconditionally as evidence that the former was descended from a secondary son, as, in the process of the division of the yangban into powerful and declining lineages during the late Chosön period, there might be other factors that motivated such unions.

Then there is the issue of the position and role of the chungin in the chokpo culture of the Chosön period. The members of the chungin class in this book, although they were not yangban, were holders of office and official rank, sometimes even quite high rank. We should consider the question why such chungin, in spite of the fact that they possessed two basic requisites of the yangban, holding office and having a genealogy, still were not recognized as yangban. In my opinion, the status of yangban became largely subjective and relative, and rather than the objective fact of office holding, social reputation or recognition became the more important qualifier. In the chokpo someone may have been an office holder, but that did not mean he was accepted as a member of “yangban society.” It is necessary

to think more deeply about how the particular character of the chungin was evaluated against the background of a chokpo culture in which a person's life was primarily judged through his official career.

The question of how chungin were evaluated in their chokpo is closely linked to the attitude of chungin towards the genealogies. If the evaluation had not been positive, the chungin would have shunned the chokpo. In fact, it is well known that the secondary sons of yangban were discriminated against even in chungin chokpo, which avoided including them. In this respect Park's book mentions an important fact. Showing a positive attitude toward the reception of western culture from the end of the 19th century, the chungin became less attached to their genealogies. Generally, even when, as late as the colonial period, the enthusiasm for the publication of chokpo generally grew only stronger, the chungin were not much interested in genealogies, in contrast with the rest of Korean society. It seems Park regards this as a chungin status characteristic due to their progressive social consciousness. This makes one wonder if one should conclude that the descendants of commoners and the lowborn who tried hard to attach themselves to existing chokpo, not only in the colonial period but also after 1945, were lagging in the acceptance of modern values.

Park states (4, 108-09) that after the middle of the 19th century the inclusion in chokpo of chungin who had been registered earlier sharply declined by more than 75%. This strongly supports his thesis, but only if this decline is compared with changes that might have appeared in yangban chokpo can one confidently judge whether the decline in inclusiveness of chungin chokpo is the result of a dampening of interest in society as a whole, or whether this reflects a change that varied with social class, as even among the scions of the yangban there likely was a breakdown of traditional values, even if it was relatively late. Perhaps those who had earlier been included in the chokpo gradually started to develop a cooler attitude to chokpo culture, while because of the desire of those who did not possess a chokpo to be included, the colonial period appeared from the outside like an age of a new flourishing of genealogies. There is no clear evidence, but it is also possible that the chungin who were no longer included had changed their affiliation to another branch in another chokpo, and presented themselves as yangban descendants.

The question is whether chungin were proud of their forefathers or wanted to obscure who they were. In the 18th and 19th centuries records such as *P'alsebo* (Record of Eight Generations) were spontaneously produced that registered the names of prominent technical chungin and their ancestors, at the same time in certain chungin lineages that had produced office holders the phenomenon of "heirlooms" handed down throughout the generations became more prominent. Thus chungin, too, in their own way, had the desire to show off their pride that they were the descendants of illustrious forebears. Actually, Eugene Park provides an example of this in the form of the Ch'önnyōng Hyōn chokpo of 2001 presented in the Epilogue, in which he looks for the motives for the compilation of such a document against the background of their modern-era achievements, noting that this continues the tradition of commemorating chungin ancestors and is useful for

understanding the social meaning of the drawing up of chungin chokpo.

Yet another issue concerns the activities of chungin lineages. Historically the chokpo have not been made simply with the intention of recalling family history, but were a kind of membership list meant to provide proof to society of who belonged to a patrilineal descent group. In Korean history the patrilineal descent group is mainly manifested as the group of relatives (*munjung*) who together worshipped ancestors up to their shared great-great-grandfather and who tended to pursue mutual ties and support. According to Park's book, in the case of Pak Tökhwa's lineage, apart from the compilation of a genealogy, there existed hardly any of the *munjung* activities that are often seen in yangban lineages, such as collective sacrifices, the establishment of private academies and shrines, and the publication of the collected works of illustrious ancestors, all intended to reinforce an identity as "Confucian savants." If one regards this as characteristic of a chungin family that was less inclined to Confucianism, it may seem little surprising. Yet the question remains why there was a lack of even practical *munjung* activities, such as the formation of communal property around the gravesites or mutual material support among relatives.

There also are questions regarding the use of genealogical materials such as chokpo and family registers. While making a positive use of the chokpo, Park sufficiently takes into account the possibility of their fabrication or distortion, but in some instances there is room for debate. As a means to trace people the chokpo are not perfect. In the process of compiling a chokpo it is difficult to faithfully register all members of a family and it is always possible that some persons are inadvertently left out. But in this book whether or not a person is registered in a chokpo is sometimes used as a criterion to understand his status. Here caution is required. For example, because the father of Pak Tökhwa's wife, who was of the Sunhüng An lineage, was not included in the Sunhüng An chokpo, Park surmises (23) that he was not "a bona fide aristocrat." Indeed, the fact that Pak Tökhwa's father-in-law is not mentioned in the examination rosters, although in the Pak chokpo he is said to have been a literary licentiate, is grounds for suspicion. But it is difficult to draw a conclusion about his status only because he does not appear in the Sunhüng An chokpo. While Park notes this non-appearance, in the notes it can be seen that he is referring to the Sunhüng An chokpo of 1783. It is true that around that time a large number of comprehensive chokpo were compiled, but they did not include all yangban. Pak Tökhwa's father-in-law lived at the end of the 16th century, a time when only a few pionerring families had compiled chokpo. If in later generations there was no descendant who would remember him and add him to the genealogy it is quite possible that he would be left out forever. In fact, there are many examples of powerful figures from the late Koryö and early Chosön periods who are recognized as historically important, but whose descendants with the same name and ancestral seat did not manage to establish a link with in their genealogy.

The fact that the genealogy of this Pak family for the early period was a single-line genealogy, in which daughters are absent, also deserves further consideration; it is remarkable that for four generations it recorded only single sons

and no daughters or sons-in-law. This is characteristic of genealogies that were made, retrospectively, at a later date. In fact, as in the case of early yangban chokpo of the 15th and 16th centuries, genealogies until the end of Koryŏ are generally recorded as a single line. Park, however, surmises that the absence of daughters signifies an absence of noteworthy sons-in-law (32), a fact he uses to argue the modest, nonelite origins of the Pak descent group.

The reconstruction of the history of an average chungin family, something that has not received much attention from Korean academia, which has focused on yangban chokpo, should be positively evaluated as a fresh approach to the study of genealogy. But there are not a few factual barriers in developing such an approach further. Korean genealogies have been “re-arranged” with yangban ancestors at the centre. Simultaneously one has to cope with the circumstance that material that shows status inferiority has deliberately been erased or tampered with. This means that the value of the chokpo that until now have been amassed is limited, and to overcome such limitations it is necessary to change the perspective with which we look at genealogies. If the compilation of chokpo and the work on lineage records so far has had as its purpose determining who belongs to the family group, from now on one has to aim for a factual reconstruction of family history. A true family history will be needed that is not tied to the wish to become a member of a family group and share in its glory, but devotes attention to the the unadorned origin of the family and the historical continuity manifested in the change of the generations through which the ancestors are linked to their descendants. It will be a difficult undertaking but it is necessary to review the records of the past and distinguish the parts that can be trusted from those that cannot. There are also external factors that impede such efforts. Even today, to clarify who were commoners or lowborn, and particularly who has ancestors descended from secondary sons, is a highly sensitive issue and occasionally may stir up the opposition of the persons concerned. Eugene Park’s attempt to look for historical meaning in the history of a “family of no prominence” in the long term will be helpful in changing the mental attitudes of present-day Koreans toward their ancestors.

Kiseok KWON
Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies,
Seoul National University
kwonks93@snu.ac.kr

BOOK REVIEW

YANG Huilin. *China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture*. Edited by Zhang Jing. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2014. 272 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4813-0017-9 (Hardcover). 59.95 USD.

China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture is a collection of essays written by Professor Yang Huilin, a leading scholar in religious studies and comparative literature in China. Originally written in Chinese between 2004 and 2012, these essays are collected and translated into English for the first time. Thanks to the publisher, Baylor University Press, English-speaking audiences now have access to his latest studies on philosophy, theology, intellectual history, and other fields in the humanities.

This book contains three parts. Part One, titled “Christianity and Chinese Culture,” discusses different issues that since the nineteenth century have contributed to clashes, confrontations, and dialogues between Chinese culture and Christianity. Yang starts his discussion with two case studies of missionary universities in late nineteenth-century China (Chapter 1). Choosing Chinese as the language of instruction, Cheeloo University hoped to advance the dual goal of assimilation of Christianity into Chinese culture and resistance to secularization from the English-speaking academia. On the other hand, St. John’s University saw English as a better instrument in conveying Western ideas including religious messages, while considering Chinese “outmoded and ineffective for the expression of abstract ideas” (6). Yang contends that behind the different choices of language of instruction adopted by these two institutions were different understandings of the relationship between language as a medium and the purpose of education, which also changed overtime as a result of interaction and even confrontation between instructors and students. In Chapter 2, Yang reads contemporary interreligious dialogues between Christian theologians and Buddhist masters in the light of Raimon Panikkar’s discussion of “me-consciousness.” Yang agrees with Panikkar that a genuine interreligious dialogue is ultimately intra-religious, and proposes a vision of the future that is based on the willingness of both parties in cultural or religious conflicts to seek something that is external to and higher than their own beliefs (23). The central chapter of Part One is the third, “Inculturation or Contextualization: Interpretation of Christianity in the Context of Chinese Culture.” After reviewing different attempts at adaptation, accommodation, and inculturation that took place in the course of Christianity’s development in China, Yang points out that before the 1980s inculturation, “constituted as a sort of defensive reaction,” was unable to connect to the theological basis (29). In Yang’s opinion, the 1980s witnessed, for the first time, the contextualization of Christianity in the living human experience of the Chinese people, rather than the simple equation of religious symbols with indigenous cultural practices. If, Yang argues, the transmission of the Christian faith is “a sort of universal activity of

comprehension and not merely a cultural grafting from West to East,” perhaps “the essential point of inculturation rests first in the interconnection between faith and the value of existence” rather than “between faith and the cultural carrier” (36). The remaining two essays (Chapters 4 and 5) of this section can be seen as further discussions of the subject of Chapter 3 from two different angles. One investigates “ethicized” Christianity in the Chinese language and its implications for a contextualized interpretation of the Christian faith. The other is Yang’s comparison of the Holocaust and the Cultural Revolution through the lens of theological ethics.

Part Two of the book, “Theology and Humanities,” further investigates the generation and identification of meaning in contemporary theology, which Yang described in Part One as serving as the basis for the inculturation of Christianity in China. Yang traces the development of theological hermeneutics since Friedrich Schleiermacher, with a focus on theology’s response to the linguistic turn of modern philosophy (Chapter 6). According to Yang, hermeneutics in theology differs from its literary and historical counterparts in its emphasis on the divine word. One model of theological hermeneutics advocates a “universal religious experience” as the foundation for the certainty of meaning. Another model sees “belief” as a precursor to “interpretation,” and theological hermeneutics as “a hermeneutics of revelation.” Chapter 7 is a further explication of theology as a different approach to hermeneutics through Gerhard Ebeling’s discussion of the certainty of the Christian faith through “Word-Became-Flesh,” and Thomas Torrance’s pursuit of “objectivity” by differentiating Truth, which is ultimate and final, from “truth statements,” which are “relativized in themselves” by “being related to the ultimate Truth.” Both chapters praise theology’s pursuit of ultimate meaning and certainty, which the author thinks is lacking in today’s study of the humanities. Part Two also includes Yang’s essay on Marxism and Christianity (Chapter 8), his response to Slavoj Žižek’s reverse thinking on theology (Chapter 9), and his theological reading of Heidegger and Derrida, with comparisons with David Tracy and Karl Barth (Chapter 10).

Part Three of the book returns to the Chinese context and focuses on “scriptural reasoning” as a form of dialogical relationship between Chinese and Western cultures. Chapters 11, 12, and 13 examine the translation of ancient Chinese classics into English by the famous missionary and sinologist James Legge. Through a comparative study of Legge’s translations with both Zhu Xi’s annotations and other more recent English translations, Yang argues for the value of Legge’s work as an example of “scriptural reasoning” between the Chinese classics and the Christian Bible (159). The last chapter (Chapter 14) focuses on another example of “scriptural reasoning,” the Chinese Union Version of the Bible. Yang concludes that a Bible translated into everyday language “was intended to penetrate more directly into people’s specific existential experience” (210). Yang also analyzes in detail Legge’s ingenious translation of Logos/Word into *Tao*, which has become the standard translation today. This section further contextualizes what Zhang Longxi has studied in his *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*, and demonstrates that our understanding of the concept *Tao* as used in Western writings is always already a product of scriptural reasoning or theological

hermeneutics.

The conclusion of this final chapter also applies to the main theme of the whole collection and is thus worth quoting here:

The unique logic of theological hermeneutics is not meant to eliminate the heterogeneity between “divine Word” and “human words” or to bridge the gap between “meaning” and “understanding.” It is meant to establish a significant relationship between the “self” and the “other” through the medium of such absolute heterogeneity and in the process of absolute *différance*, to use Derrida’s term.... (211)

As a leading scholar in philosophy and advocate for the value of theology in the study of the humanities, Yang Huilin is a unique voice in Chinese academia. While his colleagues are enthusiastically talking about the adaptation and inculturation of Christianity into Chinese culture, Yang questions the premises behind such juxtaposition of a particular religion and a particular culture. Through the collected essays in this volume, he synthesizes modern theologians’ responses to the challenges from hermeneutics and postmodernism, and discusses possibilities for a relationship between Christianity and China to go beyond “ethicization” and enter into discussions of the generation of meaning and interpretation. To some degree, he lines up with Chinese church leaders in advocating for a systematic “Chinese theology,” which in Yang’s opinion should include theological hermeneutics, theological ethics, and theological aesthetics. Only then, Yang maintains, can Christianity be established in the Chinese-language context.

Meanwhile, Yang also clearly holds on to his position as a “non-believer” who replaces “God” with “meaning” when discussing the contribution of theological hermeneutics to the humanities. My question while reading this collection has always been this: Is there a truly “nonreligious interpretation of Christianity” if eventually “faith,” “revelation,” or some kind of universal religious experience is to serve as the foundation of hermeneutics? Can we say that the study of the humanities can benefit from theological hermeneutics because it also reveals the human pursuit of transcendence across cultures? On the other hand, should we exclude “the popular” and “ethicization” while talking about “lived human experience” and its significance in the construction of a systematic theology?

Yang’s anxiety concerning the dissolution of meaning caused by the “extreme application of reception theory and reader-response criticism” may remind readers of Umberto Eco and others in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. Eventually what differentiates Yang from Eco lies in his view of what constitutes overinterpretation. While Eco explores the issue of boundaries in the interpretation of literary texts, Yang is trying to go beyond “interpreted meaning” and reach “meaning itself.”

Finally, Yang’s personal experience in the Cultural Revolution permeates the pages of this work, especially when he laments that “any community of people is capable of producing entirely new interpretations of good and evil, and that such interpretations are sufficient to induce the whole group of people to plunge into the evil [sic] with equanimity” (66). Having lived through one of the most horrible atrocities of the twentieth century, Yang not only presents his discussion

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of hermeneutics within the context of modern China, but also questions values and ethics in the wake of the Cultural Revolution as a self-reflective human being with personal limitations. Perhaps this is what he means by “lived human experience,” and what we can take away from this volume in addition to his insights on individual topics.

Yunjing XU
Hamilton College
yxu@hamilton.edu

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Robert WINSTANLEY-CHESTERS. *Environment, Politics, and Ideology in North Korea: Landscape as Political Project*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, Lexington Books, 2014. 102 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7391-8777-7 (Hardcover). 75 USD.

While recent academic scholarship on North Korea has tended to focus on the country's political system and foreign relations, far less attention has been devoted to its environmental policies. Yet as a nation that has touted itself as a socialist paradise on earth, the issues of nature, the land, and how they are used are integral to the understanding of how the country conducts itself in political and economic matters. In *Environment, Politics, and Ideology in North Korea: Landscape as Political Project*, Robert Winstanley-Chesters begins an important conversation as he uncovers how the North Korean regime has established legitimacy through environmental development projects throughout its history.

Linking the North Korean Juche ideology of self-reliance and national sovereignty to what he terms "Utopian Politics," Winstanley-Chesters reimagines North Korea as having a radically collectivist orientation, in which nature is not merely something to be conquered but a heroic participant in the utopian narrative. The backdrop of landscape development provides a medium for him to track how this ideology plays out in practice. The areas of environmental development that Winstanley-Chesters tracks are deforestation, afforestation, and tideline reclamation. These developmental fields, as well as the physical areas in which they take place, are considered by the author to be "revolutionary spaces" because of their potential to dramatically alter the capacity of the population to achieve self-sufficiency and happiness.

The major contribution of this work is its documentation of tactical shifts in North Korean landscape developmental policy. Since the rugged terrain and natural disaster-prone environment of the northern half of the Korean peninsula has made sustainable agricultural production extremely difficult, it is interesting to get a glimpse of how the regime has struggled to maximize the productivity of the land. At times, this has resembled exploitation, such as the deforestation that occurred during the famine period of the 1990s, but at other times the state took corrective action in a way that was perfectly consistent with its political vow to improve the utopian potential of the landscape for the short-term and long-term alike. In contrast to the bombastic and pompous side of North Korea that we often see in the international media, here we have a self-reflexive entity, very aware of its limitations, and even of its missteps.

If this work had simply traced the unfolding of various land developmental strategies and their environmental impact, it would be an accomplishment in itself, yet Winstanley-Chesters has a larger purpose in mind: to synthesize the various attempts of approaching North Korean ideology, thus rectifying a field of study that in his abstract he calls "confused, opaque and corrupted." At one side of the

spectrum is Han S. Park, who generalizes the Juche ideology of North Korea as a polity-dependent humanism in which man is capable of achieving anything with the condition that he remains an inseparable part of the collective (in this case, the nation). On the other side is B.R. Myers who argues against the existence of Juche as a cohesive philosophy and instead declares it to be a distraction to the real North Korean ideology, which he conceptualizes as race-based and fascist in worldview. Instead of fixating on Juche ideology or rejecting it outright, Winstanley-Chester's approach is to view it as a "set of aspirational statements ... through which practical policies can be both developed and justified."

The approach the author uses of tracking ideological developments and land use developments as they occur allows him to examine the aspirational efficacy of North Korean ideology without having to get bogged down in deciphering and evaluating its internal logic. It also leads the author to the unconventional conclusion that ideology has played a functional role in the achievement of policy objectives. Even if one does not subscribe to this point of view, it is hard to not see the role of utopian ideology in landscape policy, from the post-Korean war years, when the cultivation of new areas for rice production was declared to be "immediate socialism," to the late-1990s Songun (Sŏn'gun) or Military First Policy, when the battle to complete tideline reclamation projects in the midst of disastrous storms was likened to resistance against hostile forces from the outside world. Because the Military First Policy involved a shift of management responsibilities for developmental projects from local organizations to the centralized body of the military, the author interprets it as having a practical dimension (namely: to prevent something like the food crisis of the 1990s from occurring again) rather than simply viewing it as a matter of geopolitical defiance.

An additional contribution of this work is its ideological description of the Chollima (Ch'öllima) mass mobilization campaign of the late 1950s, named after a horse that could travel 1000 *li* (roughly equivalent to 400 kilometers) in a single day. Instead of uncritically accepting Chollima as a transplant of China's Great Leap Forward in North Korea, he delineates it as a "theoretical movement" that merely applied the concept of revolutionary urgency from China to smaller scale projects that were not as transformational as the Chinese model. This is a critical distinction because it explains why North Korea did not suffer as much devastation as China during this time. At the same time, because of the lack of devastation, North Korea has sustained this concept of revolutionary urgency, inspired by the experience of the Chollima campaign, in its ideology and politics up to the present-day.

While the ideological analysis of *Environment, Politics, and Ideology in North Korea* is the most critical and engaging aspect of Winstanley-Chester's work, it is also the area where he comes up short. This limitation is evident in the fact that while making his case for the ideological significance of Utopian Politics, the North Korean sources he relies on are almost entirely limited to official speeches from North Korean leaders and the KCNA (Korean Central News Agency) which largely targets an international audience. If Winstanley-Chester had expanded his source base to include works of North Korean literature or even the North Korean

media that targets a domestic audience, he would have been able to provide more cogent examples of Utopian Politics in action and thus been able to make a more convincing case for how ideology captured the imaginations of North Korean citizens to carry out the regime's landscape objectives.

Moreover, while the lens of Utopian Politics is a helpful way to look at the process by which North Korea pursued environmental projects at particular times, it is also limiting in that it misses the domestic political developments taking place behind the scenes. A worthy addition to this work would have been a look at the timing and circumstances of the purging and marginalizing of political officials involved in planning and executing environmental policy. While it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable sources that would provide critical information surrounding these developments, this work would have benefitted from at least attempting to discuss whether particular contentious policies correlated with the reshuffling of key officials and why. That might help us to understand whether the corrective actions involved in landscape development were truly as corrective as they could have been, or whether failures of execution and mismanagement were embedded within the constraints of a neotraditional authority structure.

Perhaps the best way to look at these underdeveloped components is to see them as doors for future researchers to open and explore. In order to truly discover where North Korean leaders went wrong in pursuing diplomatic and economic objectives, it is important to look at where they believe they went right in order to get a grasp on why they might be reluctant to make dramatic alterations to the political and economic system. As Winstanley-Chesters' work and the works of others demonstrate, a reliance on ideology when other things were scarce, at certain periods in North Korean history at least, produced results. Therefore, any policy that has the potential to take that ideological source of legitimacy away is likely to face strong resistance from North Korean leaders.

Even if Winstanley-Chesters' work is too specialized to fully vindicate his call for a more measured treatment of North Korean ideology in general, *Environment, Politics, and Ideology in North Korea: Landscape as Political Project* is a useful and captivating read for academic researchers and casual observers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea alike. By challenging conventional narratives that portray the DPRK as consistently stagnant, it will appeal especially to those who are seeking a more nuanced portrayal of the country. It will also appeal to a wider group of readers who have an interest in looking at the impact centralized planning and utopian aspirations have on environmental exploitation and/or preservation. As the case of North Korea suggests, it is not always a simple story.

Peter G. MOODY
Columbia University
pgm2116@columbia.edu