



A Hill Center Book and Journal List for Korea

Barlow, Tani E., ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

The essays in this collection edited by *positions* founder and editor Tani Barlow, drop us squarely into complex worlds where Chinese thinkers make sense out of Western science in a context that includes intellectual exchanges with Japanese thinkers, Japanese colonialists claim Okinawans as part of Japan but not quite Japanese, South Koreans try to come to terms with a history written about them by others, and more. From what focus or perspective are these articles flowing, and what, if anything do they have in common warranting their collection in this book?

Barlow's collection of essays brings to the fore new scholarship, which is attempting to upset and unseat some of the categories that have been established in social science for the study of East Asia. There is, of course, the category of East Asia itself, also critiqued by Harootyan in the dinosaur article in *History's Disquiet*. Barlow, publishing in 1993, noted the limitations imposed on scholarly inquiry by the cold war and the development of area studies in the US. The articles themselves range from the general and theoretical to the fairly specific and theoretical, and in Barlow's Introduction she tries to present a frame that will contain them. She addresses questions of theory by first noting that the term "modernity" used to have meanings in East Asian studies that everybody accepted, and while we have all come to know that modernization theory had a special resonance in the study of Japan, such dichotomies as tradition/modernity operated in all branches of area studies. Some of the specificity of the East Asian question comes out in Chugmoo Choi's article on memory and history in postcolonial Korea. Barlow is most helpful in addressing what has become something of a knotty problem needing to be addressed in readily accessible language: the issue of traveling theory, or, as Barlow terms it, "poaching from existing lexicons." Barlow's book marks the move by East Asianists toward the body of theory that has been most influential in the development of new disciplinary approaches for the study of South Asia, and she rightly addresses the question of whether the theory is relevant for the study of East Asia. She by-passes the issue (which Robert Young does address) of whether the theoretical arguments of French philosophers have relevance for the study of India, but rather asks whether, in being

applied to the study of India, these theoretical tools drawn from Foucault and Derrida in particular, picked up any residue that would carry over into the study of East Asia. For instance, if the British Raj is the model colonial example, what has to be done to make the Chinese category of semi-colonial accessible to study?

Barlow is at her best in trying to plant us on unstable linguistic ground, where we never forget that the categories through which we think are historical constructions. This attempt to break ground for the essays serves the useful function of encouraging readers to accept the unexpected and the unfamiliar in the articles that follow.

Duus, Peter, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

This is the kind of economic and political history that rests the power of decision-making in the hands of the powerful and see the less powerful consistently through what is imagined to be the lens of the power. In other words, this book does not incorporate what we now call a subaltern perspective. Nor is the author interested in analyzing the culture of colonizer and colonized. Duus' history is full of actors and packed with information. It covers the same period as Schmid's book but from an exclusively Japanese political and economic perspective. The middle chapters, 7 ("Capturing the Market: Japanese Trade in Korea"), 8 ("Dreams of Brocade: Migration to Korea"), and 9 ("Strangers in a Strange Land: The Settler Community") give us a vivid sense of the arrogance of Japanese imperialism (pp. 245-363); and ch. 11, ("Defining the Koreans: Images of Domination"), if read contrapuntally as Edward Said and Ranajit Guha recommend, gives us a sense of the world Koreans inhabited every day, even as it tells us how the Japanese colonizers characterized Koreans (pp. 397-423).

Eckert, Carter J., *Offspring of Empire: the Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991)

One of the central questions to be asked about colonialism in Korea is whether the Korean economy suffered or prospered under Japanese rule. Did the Japanese encourage the development of Korean capitalism, or attempt to thwart it? This study, recommended to us by our Korean expert, Janet Poole, traces the economic history of the Kim family of Koch'ang County to argue that the Japanese encouraged Korean capitalist development and investment, not only in Korea but throughout the Japanese Empire.

Eckert, Carter J., Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson and Edward W. Wagner, *Korea Old and New, A History*, (Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, 1990)

This is that kind of indispensable book that one needs to feel at home while moving quickly through more than 2000 years of Korean history. It actually starts with Korea's Paleolithic period and moves forward to 1990. The focus is on politics – the attempts at centralization, the succession of dynasties, the relationships with China and Japan, and

finally the annexation by Japan in 1910 and then partition following the end of World War II. We learn about the military, the aristocracy (*yangban*) and the Confucian literati. Chs. 15 (“The First Phase of Japanese Rule, 1910-1919”), 16 (“Nationalism and Social Revolution, 1919-1931”), and 17 (“Forced Assimilation, Mobilization, and War”), pp. 254-326, are most useful for providing the authors’ political and economic views of the period of Japanese colonial rule in Korea.

Hamel, Hendrick, *Hamel’s Journal and a description of the Kingdom of Korea, 1653-1666*, (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1998)

“...suddenly the ship hit the rocks. With three shocks, the whole ship instantly broke apart in splinters. Some of those who were down in their bunks had not time to come up to save their lives, and they paid the ultimate price. Some of those who were on deck jumped overboard, others were hurled here and there by the sea.

“Fifteen of us reached land...

This was in 1653 and the author, Hendrick Hamel, spent the next 13 years in that place that turned out to be Korea. Though not the first European to arrive in Korea, Hamel stayed the longest of the early Europeans, and produced this account, recently revised and reissued, complete with a picture of what might have been Hamel’s ship and his own map of Korea. There are descriptions of 17th century Korea that include climate, the military, the monarchy, the tax system, the legal system, religion, education, and more. This is a good primary source to include with readings from the De Bary, et al., volume.

Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton, *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998)

This book has a translators’ preface in which the authors note that the Korean literary community calls 20th century literature up to 1945 “modern” (*kundae*) and literature after 1945 “contemporary.” (*hyondae*)

At the end of the 19th century many Korean writers were still writing in Chinese. In the 1920s many began writing in *hangul* and in the 1930s many were masters of the short story.

In discussing the role of Japanese colonialism in Korean literary production, editors note that many Koreans went to Japan for education and that they there encountered European works in Japanese translation – O’Henry, Maupassant, Turgenev, Balzac, Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Hemingway. They also become familiar with writers like Soseki, who consider themselves professionals. They return home and found journals, and write for newspapers.

The first phase of Japanese colonial rule (1910-1919) was brutally repressive and led to the March 1, 1919 Independence Movement. Japanese then instituted the cultural policy and Korean literature flourished. The outbreak of the Pacific War brought renewed repression. Japanese banned writing in Korean, and many Korean writers then wrote in Japanese.

In the 1920s fiction was realist. In 1925 KAPF (Korean Artist Proletariat Federation) was founded. It was disbanded in 1935. After 1945 “*wolbuk*” writers moved to the north and their work was banned in the south until the 1980s. Yi T’aejun was one of these writers.

Some of the best known of Korean writers today: Hwang Sun-won (greatest short story writer); Kim Tong-ni (uniquely Korean), Ch’ae Man-shik (explores the effects of colonialism on writers). The introductions to the separate stories give biographical info on the writer: education, subject matter (problems faced by intellectuals, etc.)

Schmid, Andre, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

The title for Schmid's book comes from his physical and temporal spacing of Korea. "...as the power of the Qing Empire in China ebbed and the reach of Japanese imperialism extended to the peninsula...", Schmid says, the nation became "the premier subject of intellectual exchange for the first time in the peninsula's history." The intellectuals involved in the exchanges were associated with the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement which aimed at Korean assimilation of western knowledge in order to fend off foreign incursions. Thus, argues Schmid, they developed a Korean brand of nationalism. In making this argument Schmid places himself within the frame of colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies. The production of knowledge about Korea, he says, "was a process deeply entwined with the international environment of that particular historical moment..." Korea was being pushed and pulled into the global economy and that movement, says Schmid, "has informed and structured the ways in which culture has been used, promoted, and forged in the name of the nation." There are no essentialisms here, no embryonic nation, no cultural practice dating back to time immemorial. Claims to particularity, adds Schmid, are universalized since "every nation is to have a unique character as part of its claim to nationhood." It is well worth paying attention to Schmid's footnotes to see the theoretically sophisticated company he keeps.

Having laid out his theoretical apparatus, Schmid then tells us that his subject of study is Korean newspaper and journal writing in this period from 1895 to 1910 when it seemed, at least to Korean intellectuals, that sovereign nationhood could be achieved. The book, recommended to us by Janet Poole, opens up for us the vast geographical and intellectual range of Korean thinking during this important period, forcing readers to abandon any notions about the "Hermit Kingdom" that might have included assumptions about intellectual isolation. The Korean writers whose works are analyzed are contemporaries of those Chinese intellectuals analyzed by Rebecca Karl in her book, *Staging the World*. Reading the two books together can make for intriguing discussions about how the "world" of the "great powers" looked from China and Korea. Add Thongchai Winichakul's study of the nation in Thailand, and you get an invigorating sense of intellectual openness a hundred years ago.

This book is difficult to put down or select from, since Schmid moves so convincingly from one angle in his analysis to another, as chapter follows chapter. The whole of it is helpful for our understanding of the culture of colonialism in Korea after 1910, but the middle chapters 2 ("Decentering the Middle Kingdom and Realigning the East"), 3 ("Engaging a Civilizing Japan"), 4 ("Spirit, History, and Legitimacy"), and 5 ("Narrating the Nation"), pp. 55-198, set the stage for the complexity that is to follow.

Shin, Gi-Wook, and Michael Robinson, eds., *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999)

The contributors to this collection of essays draw upon post-structuralist theory to study the various forms of colonial modernity in Korea under Japanese rule. Articles deal with issues of legality, rural organization, industrialization, the arts, communication, and a

variety of social movements. Of special interest for the study of the production of popular culture in colonial Korea are the articles by Michael Robinson on radio (“Broadcasting, Cultural Hegemony, and Colonial Modernity in Korea, 1924-45”, pp. 52-69), Daqing Yang (“Colonial Korea in Japan’s Imperial Telecommunications Network,” pp. 161-189) and Henry H. Em (“*Minjok* as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch’asho’s Historiography,” pp. 336-362). Robinson analyzes the struggles over what constituted Korean music, old and new, when the Japanese introduced radio broadcasting. Daqing Yang looks at the long history of the Japanese attempt to control telecommunications in Korea (going back to the 1870s), the role of Japanese control after annexation (1910) in fostering economic integration of the empire, and the use that Koreans made of the communications network built by the Japanese. Henry Em studies the development of a nationalist history in Korea in the early 20th century, particularly in the work of historian Sin Ch’aeho.

The introduction by Shin and Robinson starts with a now familiar evocation of the Cold War and its effects on historiography, followed by an explication of their own newer approach. Replacing those nationalist histories in which all Koreans were resisters and all Japanese were exploiters, Shin and Robinson’s historical method is conceptually bounded by attention to three terms: colonialism, modernity, and nationalism. “Each carries its own unique cluster of concepts while holding within its individual frame important constituents of the other two”, they say: “By seeing them as mutually reinforcing frames, we can deepen our current understanding of colonial history....”(5) If we think of these variables as intellectual constructs, or categories, the usefulness of which is to help us think, we can then recognize that Shin and Robinson want us to treat them as variables interacting with each other during the colonial period.. A main goal of working within this frame is to recognize that Koreans were not passive recipients of initiatives from Japan, but active participants in the production of colonial culture.

Tanaka, Stefan, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

This book ranks as something of a classic, in that Tanaka’s analysis of how Japanese intellectuals, viewed by Europeans under the rubric of orientalism as analyzed by Edward Said, imbibed European orientalism and then turned it to their own account and themselves became orientalists in relation to the rest of East Asia. That is, Japanese accepted the West’s view of them as “Oriental” and then distinguished themselves from Koreans and Chinese by asserting that the Japanese were modern and Koreans and Chinese were not.

Tanaka looks at the problematic of epistemological adaptation from the Japanese perspective. Given the dislocations accompanying industrial change, the European claim to be the most civilized place in the world, issues of self-representation around religion, and the discrepancies between how one is seen by others and seen by oneself, Tanaka says, “...Japanese faced the dilemma that is a main focus of this book; how to become modern while simultaneously shedding the objectivist category of Oriental and yet not

lose an identity.” (3) The particular Japanese that Tanaka studies are the historians. A principal figure in the study is Shiratori Kurakichi, who taught history at Tokyo Imperial University from 1904 to 1925. He played the major role in establishing Oriental history (*toyoshi*) as a subject of study. He studied with one of the foreign experts hired by the Meiji government to modernize Japan: Ludwig Riess, a student of Leopold von Ranke, master of the objective method in the study of history. Riess and Shiratori were instrumental in establishing postivist history as the mode of historical research and history in Japan.

Tanaka pays attention to the history of words, *toyo* (Orient), *shina* (China), *toyoshi* (Oriental history) and others. Historians used these terms to establish Japan’s identity vis-avis the West and China. Japanese historians, says Tanaka, understood that knowledge was constructed, as they labored to extricate themselves from the unacceptable position they were placed in, as “Orientals”, by Europeans and Americans. Tanaka has a fine section on the theory and methodology that has influenced his own analysis. He is indebted, for instance, to Bakhtin for his understanding of the malleability of language, and to Said for the conception of the Orient as Europe’s other. What Tanaka has done, in brief, is to show how, being Europe’s other, the Japanese created a history in which China was their own Oriental “other.”

The greater part of Tanaka’s study concerns how Japanese historians dealt with the relationship between Japan and China. For the general sense of how Tanaka proceeds to explain Japan’s intellectual dilemma, read the “Introduction: The Discovery of History”, pp. 1-28, and for the discussion of the East-West dyad, which includes the placing of Korea in Japan’s oriental imaginary, read Ch Two, “*Toyoshi*: The Convergence of East and West,” pp. 68-114.

Yongho Ch’oe, Peter H. Lee, and Wm. Theodore De Bary, eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition*, vol Two: “From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

This book, like others in the series in which Theodore De Bary has taken part, are collections of primary sources with introductions that do the job of contextualizing the documents for us. While the early sections are wonderfully rich fare for reading about Korean high culture from the 16th to the 18th centuries, the chapters of special interest for the study of Korean colonialism are chs. 27 (“Domestic Disquiet and Foreign Threats”), 28 (“Negative Responses to Western Civilization,”) 29 (“Development of Enlightenment Thought”), 30 (“The Tonghak Uprisings and the Kabo Reforms”), 31 (“The Independence Club and the People’s Assembly”), 32 (“Patriotic Movements”), and 33 (“National Culture during the Colonial Period”), pp. 212-332. We learn about European incursions into Korea beginning in the late 16th century, culminating in the international rivalries of the mid 19th century that were eventually resolved in favor of Japanese dominance. Korea’s domestic troubles are talked about and there are several sources documenting the intellectual debate among those in favor of Western learning, or Enlightenment, and those advocating a return to the Confucian classics. The selections

are short and amply introduced, especially if the material is supplemented by material from Eckert, et. al. These readings serve as a fine introduction to recent scholarly interest in studying colonial cultural production.