

The book is also relevant in the contemporary post-pandemic world. The individual and communal trauma wrought by Covid and the glimpse of dystopia that it provided have affected the direction of contemporary Korean art. In the epilogue, Woo argues that modernism is still a valid movement for artists in the post-1990s world, a contention that now needs to be discussed in light of recent events. The study of art history is not a static process of discovering, documenting, interpreting, evaluating, and presenting art for appreciation. Instead, it is the study of the direction of a movement, of its changing currents, and of its potential future. *Interpreting Modernism in Korean Art* poses urgent questions at a critical point in a changing world, questions that may inspire new interpretations of modern Korean art and what lies ahead.

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Eugene Y. Park. *Korea: A History*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022. xiv + 414 pp. (ISBN: 9781503629844). doi:10.18399/acta.2023.26.2.011

When I was invited to review this book, I was in the process of designing a new course on Korea's relations with empires from the thirteenth century to the present. As I had not taught a Korean history course in some time, I welcomed the opportunity to use this updated overview of Korean history in its entirety. It was also a fitting coincidence, since I first met Professor Park at the Korea with Empire Conference in 2016, hosted by the James Joo-Jin Kim Program in Korean Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. This interdisciplinary conference, meticulously organized by Sixiang Wang, opened my eyes to cutting-edge research on Korea in the world, inspiring me to engage with Korean history more broadly outside my focus on Qing-Chosŏn relations.

This interdisciplinary and global perspective is evident in the book's organization. In the introduction (pp. 1–15), Park situates Korean history within various academic fields. After a brief but insightful overview of Korean historiography (Confucian, Japanese colonial, Korean nationalist, positivist, Marxist, *minjung*, *chaeya*, and postmodern), Park is careful to note that these perspectives are “neither mutually exclusive nor unique to Korean historiography” (p. 6). This sets the stage for Park's informative summary of the archaeological, genetic, and linguistic findings that enrich our understanding of Korean history. The main part of the book consists of four parts, one each on the classical period (up to 918 CE), the post-classical period (918–1392), the early modern era (1392–1864), and the late modern era (1864–2020). As Park explains in the Preface, the book is an attempt to place Korean history in a global context and to highlight the centrality of patrilineal genealogies in the historical processes of literate, sedentary Afro-Eurasian societies. As an early modern historian of Asia, I was

immediately attracted to this periodization scheme, which most importantly allows Park to dedicate a significant number of the chapters (eight out of fourteen) to the period before 1864. A more careful perusal of the chapters further highlighted the strengths of this organization.

Part I (Chapters 1–3) narrates the formation of classical Korean civilization from the Bronze Age to 918 CE. Park’s narrative here shows a clear trajectory from the foundation of Bronze Age states to the perfection of a classical civilization whose legacy lasts to this day. Although what exactly constitutes this “classical civilization” is unclear, I was reminded of the concept of the “charter state” that Victor Lieberman has used for mainland Southeast Asia.¹ In any case, this classical period “awaited only the political unity of the Koryŏ dynasty that would herald Korea’s post-classical period” (p. 83).

Part II (Chapters 4–5) is dedicated to the Koryŏ period, divided between the early period (918–1146) and the late period (1146–1392). In making the case for Koryŏ being the first united monarchy of Korea, Park emphasizes Koryŏ’s unification of the Later Three Kingdoms, its incorporation of Parhae refugees, and Usan and Tamna’s submission to it (pp. 87–88). The early post-classical period (Chapter 4) shares much with the classical period, while the late post-classical period (Chapter 5) exhibits changes that herald future transformations. As an example of this, Park offers the custom popular among officials of having a family shrine as a sign of Neo-Confucianism’s rise as a guiding ideology, “arguably heralding the beginning of Korea’s early modern era” (p. 132).

Part III (Chapters 6–8) is the strongest section of the book, hardly a surprise given Park’s well-known expertise in Chosŏn history. Largely following the conventional periodization of Chosŏn (1392–1897), Park does an expert job of summarizing complex political, social, economic, and cultural developments over three chapters dedicated to early (1392–1567), middle (1567–1724), and late (1724–1864) Chosŏn periods. Despite periodic fluctuations and setbacks during the Chosŏn period, the overall picture highlights both its sustained growth and structural constraints, befitting its categorization as early modern. As a result, the transition to the late modern period, the topic of Part IV (Chapters 9–14), is much smoother here than in many standard accounts of Korean history. Chapter 9 clearly illustrates the political turmoil and the breakdown of the hereditary status system from 1864 to 1910, whereas Chapter 10 gives a balanced account of dramatic socioeconomic changes during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910–45). Chapters 11 to 13 do a remarkable job of synthesizing the histories of North Korea and South Korea into a single narrative from 1945 to 2000, highlighting ideological and developmental divergences as well as common political and cultural patterns. Chapter 14 ends this sweeping narrative of Korean history by discussing contemporary events all the way up to 2020.

Except for Chapter 1, which has three sections on the political history of early Korea and a section on social and cultural developments, every chapter follows the same format: a

¹ Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

section on politics, a section on economy, a section on society, and a section on culture. My rough calculation of the page numbers of these sections shows the following distribution of emphasis: politics (36%), economy (15%), society (20%), and culture (29%). These sections form their own narrative arcs, which is very useful for readers who might be interested in focusing on one of these themes. I found the sections on economy and society to be particularly helpful. With their focus on demographic changes and agrarian economic growth, the economy sections in Parts 1 to 3 do a stellar job of situating Korean economic history within global economic history. Park portrays agrarian economic growth as the primary engine behind commercialization and urbanization as well as the sustained growth of population throughout the Chosŏn period (from 5.5–7.5 million in 1392 to 10–12 million in 1678). This analysis is very much in line with the agricultural revolution thesis regarding the origins of the global industrial revolution.² The social history sections, in turn, focus on status groups and genealogies. For instance, Park shows how the Kaegyŏng aristocrats traced their “ancestral seats” (*pon’gwan*) back to the late Silla/early Koryŏ period (Chapter 4) and how the capital *chungin* were able to form a closed status group by the seventeenth century (Chapter 7). In doing so, Park traces the spread of continuous, reliable patrilineal genealogies from the aristocracy to the rest of the population in the post-classical, early modern, and late modern periods.

It should be clear by now that Park has succeeded in writing an innovative and informative overview of Korean history. He has done so by drawing from “original-language sources and the up-to-date synthesis of East Asian and Western-language scholarship.” While the content of the book appears to support this claim, the lack of references presents a challenge to the reader. While I have full confidence in Professor Park’s scholarship, I was continuously frustrated by my inability to check his sources. In the Introduction alone, I kept wondering what “the more traditional view” (p. 7), “a working hypothesis” (p. 12), and “some linguists” (p. 14) referred to. More importantly, without even a select bibliography, the readers will have difficulty further exploring topics of their interest. While the book does have “Further Readings” at the end, this is a limited list of primary and secondary sources that is categorized by neither period nor topic.

On the whole, however, Park’s book remains a resounding success. It will serve as an excellent textbook for survey courses on Korean history. In fact, this single book could be used both for courses on premodern Korea (Parts I and II) and modern Korea (Parts III and IV). I would also highly recommend this book for those who wish to incorporate Korea into their courses on East Asian or global history.

References

Allen, Robert C. *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge

² Although he is critical of the thesis, Robert C. Allen provides a good summary in Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 57–79.

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Lieberman, Victor. *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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Wayne Patterson. *William Franklin Sands in Late Chosŏn Korea: At the Deathbed of Empire, 1896–1904*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. ix, 161 pp. (ISBN: 9781793649270). doi:10.18399/acta.2023.26.2.012

Building on the critiques on the “impact-response” model and modernization theories, historians of premodern East Asia have increasingly observed that Chosŏn 朝鮮 and the Qing 清, as well as Meiji Japan, exercised considerable agency in their relations with other states during the late nineteenth century. For one, the inner workings of the Chosŏn court as it tried to sustain its precarious autonomy in dealing with the great powers at the turn of the twentieth century, amid unadulterated imperialist maneuvers and “diplomacy without gloves, perfume, or phrases,” are a theme that still needs to be further explored in East Asian historiography. Likewise are the microscopic analyses through the lens of significant contemporary individuals, be they of the Chosŏn state or others, looking into their activities and influences on the fluid power dynamics in and surrounding the dynastic court “at the deathbed of empire.” Wayne Patterson’s book *William Franklin Sands in Late Chosŏn Korea: At the Deathbed of Empire, 1896–1904* is a superb work in this regard. Within each chapter and largely as a whole, it records the words and experiences of William Franklin Sands 山島 (1874–1946), nominally the highest-ranking foreigner in the Chosŏn government during the years 1900–1902, along with those of others closely involved in Sands’ life and career trajectory mostly during the Taehan Empire 大韓帝國 period, in a sleek way and with an effective approach of narrative analysis.

In his preface Patterson informs us that he has *not* relied on the material in Sands’ autobiographic memoir *Undiplomatic Memories: The Far East, 1896–1904*. He gives the reason why the memoir, standing alone, is a conveniently ‘diplomatic’ – not ‘undiplomatic’ – account of Sands’ time and events during the final years of an ‘autonomous’ Chosŏn: written almost three decades later, it naturally reflects Sands’ own retroactive perspectives and biases, with many of the events having been either omitted or glossed over such that there are noticeable discrepancies between it and the primary documentary evidence. By competently utilizing *William Franklin Sands Papers* at the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center and supplementary papers deposited at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, the author provides detailed accounts of what Sands did and went through in Japan (briefly before