

- O'Hare, Patrick. "The Landfill Has Always Borne Fruit': Precarity, Formalisation and Dispossession among Uruguay's Waste Pickers." *Dialectical Anthropology* 43, no. 1 (2019): 31–44.
- Oh, Se-mi. "Remembrance of Nanjido: Space, Archive, and History of the World Cup Park." *Journal of Asian Studies* 82, no. 2 (2023): 163–83.
- Reno, Joshua O. "Toward a New Theory of Waste: From 'Matter out of Place' to Signs of Life." *Theory, Culture & Society* 31, no. 6 (2014): 3–27.
- . "Waste and Waste Management." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 557–72.
- Siniawer, Eiko Maruko. *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- Wöldü K'öp Kongwön Kwalli Saöpso Hwan'gyöng Pojön Kwa 월드컵공원 관리사업소 환경보전과. *Nanji-do kü hyanggi rül toe ch'atta: Hwan'gyöng saengt'ae kongwön ūro tasi t'aeönan Wöldü K'öp Kongwön* 난지도 그 향기를 되찾다: 환경생태공원으로 다시 태어난 월드컵공원 [Nanji-do regains its fragrance: World Cup Park transformed into an environmental ecological park]. Söul: Wöldü K'öp Kongwön Kwalli Saöpso Hwan'gyöng Pojön Kwa, 2006.

Hyojin PAK  
Leiden University  
h.j.pak@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Andrew David Jackson, Codruța Sîntionean, Remco Breuker, and CedarBough Saeji, eds. *Invented Traditions in North and South Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2022. 433 pp. (ISBN: 9780824890506).

*Invented Traditions in North and South Korea* is a meticulous examination of what is commonly referred to today as "Korean traditional culture."

Drawing inspiration from the theory of Hobsbawm and Ranger<sup>1</sup> concerning the construction of traditions, the primary objective of this work is to scrutinize the role of culture in shaping the Korean Peninsula following its post-war division. In addition, it aims to elucidate "the political exploitation of culture" (9) and to dissect the "commodification, consumption and performativity of invented traditions" (10). This multifaceted exploration encompasses a variety of topics, including the contrivance of tradition within historical narratives, spiritual practices, literary and textual customs, performing arts, traditional artifacts, and historical sites and spaces. The contributors undertake an extensive examination of cultural resurgence in Korea, following in the footsteps of the pioneering work of Kim Kwang-ök and Laurel Kendall.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> See Laurel Kendall, "Introduction: Material Modernity, Consumable Tradition." in *Consuming Korean Tradition*

The book consists of four distinct sections. Unifying these sections is the underlying theme of invented traditions as premeditated solutions strategically crafted to respond to rapid transformations unfolding on the Korean Peninsula.

The first section explores the portrayal of the Korean nation within the realms of history and spirituality. The chapters in this section demonstrate how, in certain instances, this results in the construction of “a suitable” religious or historical narrative, often founded on limited evidence rather than an authentic recounting of history. The authors emphasize this, as well as the fact that this type of narrative was crafted with the intention of nurturing a Korean ethos, seeking to address and artificially rectify the historical adversities of the past. In their respective studies, Remko Breuker and Andrew Logie provide a comprehensive analysis of concurrent historical narratives with the aim of elucidating the mechanisms involved and the processes at work in the formulation and authentication of a fabricated “historical” account. Similarly, Don Baker examines the construction of a fake tradition for a relatively new religious practice.

The contributions in the second section focus on the intellectual discourse on the specificity of the Korean language. Eunseon Kim examines how during the first decades of the twentieth century, the ideological endeavors of nationalist elites resulted in the appropriation of a suitable identity construct which portrayed Korea as the “Nation of propriety in the East” (*Tongbang yeui chikuk* 東方禮儀之國) in order to place the nation within the evolving global geopolitical landscape. The other chapter in this section, by Andreas Schirmer, scrutinizes the progression, or rather regression, of the official state position in both North and South Korea regarding Korean literature written in *hanmun* 漢文 (Classical Chinese). At first, Schirmer draws a distinction between the South Korean strategy, which has been to preserve original literary works and their authenticity by providing extensive translations into vernacular Korean, and the North Korean stance, marked by the radical decision to entirely abandon *hanmun*. However, he contends that both strategies yielded comparable detrimental effects. He posits that the translated text, instead of carrying forward established tradition, diverges from it, giving rise to its own *ersatz* tradition. This is because the nuances of the original text, the graphic symbolism it conveys, and the intertextual intricacies are invariably lost in the process of translation.

The essays in the third section center on the development of tradition and the establishment of cultural symbols within the realm of Korean heritage, particularly in music, traditional artifacts, and culinary practices. In the introduction to this section, CedarBough Saeji underscores the distinction between the underlying purposes of invented traditions in North and South Korea. In the South, these creations are largely motivated by financial imperatives or the demands of consumers seeking symbolic “cultural” elements, whether authentic or not. By contrast, in the North, the impetus for these forged traditions is rooted in a political agenda, dictated by the imperative of reinforcing the national ethos and promoting

---

*in Early and Late Modernity: Com modification, Tourism, and Performance*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); Kim Kwang-ök, “Socio-Cultural Implications of the Recent Invention of Tradition in Korea: An Overview.” BAKS (British Association of Korean Studies/ Papers 1:7–28, 1991).

the cult of personality surrounding the ruling family. In the following chapter, Laurel Kendall conducts an in-depth exploration into the institutionalization of symbols from Korean folk tradition. It places particular emphasis on the remarkable transformation of an everyday item, namely, the split-bamboo comb, into a revered emblem of Korean culture. Kendall adopts an anthropological perspective, underscoring the pivotal role of human agency in this evolution. She attributes this transformation to the romanticized depiction of the bamboo comb by Ye Yonghae 芮庸海 during the 1960s, as well as contemporary initiatives in cultural management. She emphasizes the strategic function of individuals as essential agents in the process of elevating an ordinary artifact to the status of a symbol of cultural heritage. The next two chapters focus on theories about traditional Korean music, with a focus on the genres of *p'ansori* 판소리 and *sanjo* 散調. Keith Howard uses an ethnomusicological approach to outline the developmental trajectory through which *p'ansori* and *sanjo* evolved into not only integral components of Korean traditional music (*kyugak* 國樂) but also emblematic musical genres. He demonstrates how these genres, characterized by the absence of the prestigious veneer associated with elite culture and limited references in historical records to bestow legitimacy, have gained the status of quintessential parts of Korean culture. According to Howard, this is due to their distinctiveness as uniquely Korean sounds, not subject to the influence of other regional musical traditions. In the next chapter, Jan Creutzenberg reinforces this hypothesis. His study focuses on full-length *p'ansori* (*wanch'ang p'ansori* 完唱 판소리) and underscores that this form represents “a relatively recent innovation” (279). His primary focus lies in elucidating its role in the process of commemorating a culturally significant historical past, achieved through components such as language, musical elements, stage design, and costumes and possible only through human agency. The concluding chapter in this section is a departure from the other three contributions. Notably, it deals with North Korea, and its temporal scope is precisely delineated, spanning the period from the latter half of the twentieth century to the present. The author, Maria Osetrova, investigates recently contrived culinary traditions emerging in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). She elaborates on the dual purposes underpinning these fabricated traditions: firstly, safeguarding a revered historical heritage, and secondly, the deliberate crafting of a historical narrative, particularly in instances where reality does not conform to the prevailing political narrative. Osetrova underlines how these crafted culinary creations are intricately intertwined with a distinctive northern historical context, commemorating the revolutionary underpinnings of present-day North Korea. This association has allowed the DPRK to establish a culinary tradition quite distinct from its southern counterpart.

The fourth and final section, aptly titled “Embodying Tradition,” offers a balanced account of the different narratives of invented space in South Korea and North Korea. It delves into the strategies employed by both Korean states to (re)construct and legitimize spaces to represent a particular ideological stance. Codruța Sîntionean investigates the negotiation of space and the intricate orchestration of special control achieved through the meticulous planning and systematic design and arrangement of heritage sites in South Korea during the 1960s and 1970s under the umbrella of the “purification projects” (*chōnghwa saōp* 淨化事

業) of the Park Chung Hee regime. In the concluding chapter, Robert Winstanley-Chesters examines the interplay between an event that takes place in contemporary North Korea, the annual schoolchildren's march, and the symbolic geographical allusions it invokes. This chapter also offers a critical inquiry into the priorities of the North Korean leadership, which has been confronted with a considerable erosion of its legitimacy in the twenty-first century. Winstanley-Chesters argues that the leadership of North Korea has sought to strengthen its political hegemony through novel institutional traditions. One such example is the study visits of North Korean bureaucrats and civil servants to Paektusan, a place of profound symbolic significance to the ruling dynasty of North Korea.

*Invented Traditions in North and South Korea* provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of the field of Korean studies. It not only introduces fresh analyses that build on previous research, such as the Tangun myth and its historical narratives, but also delves into research topics that remain relatively uncharted among Korean studies specialists. An example of this is the examination of the invention of nationalist culinary dishes and their accompanying narratives in North Korea.

Most of the chapters present a specific instance of the creation of a fake tradition. However, not every chapter views the expansion of tradition through new constructions as the manifestation of a fake tradition. In his exploration of the dynamic nature and the fluidity of tradition within the performing arts, Keith Howards highlights the often unacknowledged role of adaptability within cultural production, an essential component of the creative process. He posits that Hobsbawm and Ranger,<sup>3</sup> in their demarcation between authentic and fabricated traditions, inadvertently neglected this. Howards thus characterizes neo-traditional artistic expressions such as *sanjo* and *p'ansori* as natural artistic constructs rather than deliberate inventions. In contrast, Jan Creutzenberg, categorizes *p'ansori* as an invented tradition in line with Hobsbawm.<sup>4</sup> However, he also acknowledges its organic, innate, and inexorable evolution within the framework of Korean traditional music. On the other hand, Maria Osetrova's chapter on North Korean food emphasizes an additional use of the term "invented," its literal application in the context of introducing a novel culinary custom and imbuing it with a narrative that integrates it into the fabric of cultural tradition.

The distinguishing feature of this book is its coverage of both North and South Korea. All the studies point out that the transformation of traditional practices or changes in the perception of traditional practices share the common goal of maintaining a façade of continuity while forging a fresh cultural identity. One question raised by this book is the use of the words "tradition" and "culture." As Andrew Jackson observes in the introduction to the book, the different uses of culture in North and South Korea mask certain shared underlying assumptions that have exerted an influence on the formation of traditions in both regimes. In this context, culture is not an amalgamation of indigenous and external elements that have undergone a process of negotiation and reconfiguration over time. Instead, it is something

---

<sup>3</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," 1-14.

amenable to recreation, with the aim of removing “individualistic or politically undesirable components.” Jackson also argues that this perspective is essential for the selective adoption of a singular representation of a shared Korean historical legacy, such as resistance to foreign political domination (15). Hobsbawm’s theory of the invention of traditions<sup>5</sup> is advantageous in this context as it provides a comprehensive synthesis of the manner in which political elites, in the 1960s and 1970s in South Korea and in North Korea since the 1950s, have employed the construction of tradition to establish the legitimacy of their governance over their respective national constituents.

Without claiming to be all-encompassing, *Invented Traditions in North and South Korea* presents a judicious evaluation and an in-depth exploration of the manifest challenges associated with invented traditions across a variety of academic domains, including history, religious studies, anthropology, musicology, landscape studies, and cultural heritage. It is worth noting, however, that it omitted two important areas where the presence of invented traditions is particularly pronounced, literature and philosophy. Including these fields would have given an even greater synthetic force to the work. Nevertheless, its engaging studies and compelling examinations of invented traditions on the Korean Peninsula provide thought-provoking interpretations of the broader dynamics and patterns of social, political, and cultural transformations on both sides of the Korean border. These studies are an invaluable contribution to the understanding of Korean culture. They stand as a significant point of reference within the field of Korean studies and serve as a crucial tool for teaching Korean history, culture, and society in universities globally. Additionally, by offering a novel perspective on the ideological mechanisms underlying the evolution of culture and society, the studies in this volume constitute an essential resource for scholars and students investigating cultural practices, whether Korean or from other cultures.

### References

- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kendall, Laurel, ed. 2011. *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity: Com modification, Tourism, and Performance*, edited by Laurel Kendall, 1–17. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.
- Kim, Kwang-ök. 1991. “Socio-Cultural Implications of the Recent Invention of Tradition in Korea: An Overview.” BAKS (British Association of Korean Studies) Papers 1:7–28.

Diana Yüksel  
University of Bucharest  
diana.yuksel@g.unibuc.ro

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, “Introduction: Inventing Tradition,” 1-14.