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Culture and State in Late Choson Korea (Book Review)

Thomas D. Curran Ph.D.

Sacred Heart University, currant@sacredheart.edu

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and early Heian periods, and of our view of medieval Japanese Buddhism as a whole. He has command of an impressive range of sources, both classical and modern, and he has a sophisticated grasp of recent theoretical discussions. Especially those relating to language and the construction of the "reality." Indeed, a major argument presented in the book is that Kūkai's understanding of language, attained through his study of Sanskrit and Esoteric Buddhism, set the stage for the liberation of Japanese culture from the dominance of Chinese language and the Confucian stress on "rectification of names" as the central linguistic task of rulers. This innovative volume is sure to generate much discussion. Is Abe correct, for example, in asserting that, in contrast to Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism, the early Nara schools "lacked their own conceptual apparatus to explain what language is, how signs form relationships with objects, and how discourse constructs the order of society?" (388). Was it that these topics could not be addressed on the basis of the Prajñā and Yogācāra texts known to the Nara clergy, or was it that no one of Kūkai's abilities appeared to formulate the arguments? Also, in explaining the rise of Esoteric Buddhism in the mid- and late-Heian period, how much attention should be given to the cultural context, broadly speaking, and how much to Kūkai's genius (his talents in language, his knowledge of continental thought, his ability to relate to the Nara clergy, his skill at developing close relations with the court)? While the former is surely not ignored in this study (see Abe's discussions of the links Esoteric Buddhism forged with Shinto and the techniques it had for dealing with demonic spirits), the weight of the discussion is on the latter. That such questions can be raised, however, is in itself an indication of the seminal nature of this study. Both in the new readings of early and medieval Japanese Buddhism that it advances and in the discussions that it will stimulate, this volume stands as a major addition to the field.

DePauw University

Paul B. Watt

Habouš, JaHyun Kim and Martina Deuchler (eds.): *Culture and State in Late Choson Korea*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 182. (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999); xi + 304 pp., \$ 40.00. ISBN 0-674-17982-X.

This work is a conference volume containing six chapters on various aspects of the intellectual and cultural history of Choson Korea (1392–1910). The thread that binds them all is the notion that conventional treatments of Korean history have tended to misperceive the richness and diversity of Choson intellectual life, seeing it as a static universe dominated by a Neo-Confucian orthodoxy that suffocated competing or marginal traditions. In reality, the contributors to this volume argue, the Choson world was a vibrant and richly-textured arena within which, despite a hegemonic alliance between the state and privileged Neo-Confucian groups, different schools of ideas contended. Each chapter explores either the internal dynamics of the Confucian mainstream or the relationship between it as a whole and a particular religious or intellectual community that existed in a state of dynamic tension with it. In each case, the relationship between the parties was subject to a process of adjustment, negotiation and re-negotiation.

During the early Chosŏn dynasty Neo-Confucian ideology became entrenched as political, social, ritual and intellectual orthodoxy. Its intellectual strongholds were private academies and it found strong support within the court and bureaucracy. As Yong-ho Ch'oe demonstrates in his contribution, however, even the academies bore an ambiguous relationship to the state. Writing their own rules for admissions and curriculum, they stood apart from the apparatus of government. They typically avoided politics and even shunned preparation for the civil service examinations in order to preserve a measure of independence and academic integrity. Yet, while academic and factional differences divided the academicians, on the whole they stood as champions and self-imposed guardians of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy that the state used to legitimate its rule. They therefore stood somewhere between the state and society.

Probing the dimensions of intramural conflict within the academic community, Ch'oe also shows that many scholastic lineages became closely identified with political factions and found themselves wrangling over local influence. Their library holdings, for example, reflected factional affiliations, as scholars in one academy were prevented from reading the works of scholars in the opposition. Also, at least until the mid- 17th century, student political involvement was largely confined to sectarian matters such as promoting the enshrinement of local heroes.

On the other hand, others demonstrate that while the outward manifestations of elite conflict might appear to be shallow, pedantic, or merely factional, by the middle of the dynasty academic controversies had come to involve serious issues of textual interpretation and even matters of profound national importance. Deuchler's own contribution is to show that, while they may have been amplified by factional conflict, there were serious differences over classical scholarship. Academicians were engaged in a contest for influence that pitted those who conceived of themselves as the true guarantors of the Chu Hsi heritage against those seeking a return to old text scholarship. Given the crosscurrents within Neo-Confucian ideology within China itself, it is no surprise that the precise content of Korean orthodoxy was a contested matter.

Disagreements within the Neo-Confucian establishment were, nevertheless intensified by the crisis situation that developed following the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Manchus in 1644. From the point of view of Korean intellectuals, the Manchu conquest of China was not merely the replacement of one dynasty by another but a barbarian conquest of the civilized world, a usurpation of the center of civilization by a barbarous horde. As such, it shattered the world order of which Koreans felt they were a part and raised questions about the identity of Korea itself. No longer merely a part of a larger civilized order, Korea came to many Koreans to be what Jahyun Kim Haboush calls the "last bastion" of Confucian civilization, the sole repository of orthodox Confucian learning and the only authentic source of Confucian culture.

Haboush examines the famous controversy over the mourning rituals for King Hyojong (r. 1649–1659), an episode that appears to have been a turning point marking the emergence of private academies into the realm of national political discourse. The rituals controversy began when upon the death of King Hyojong in 1659 the Ministry of Rites sought the opinions of the senior ministers of the State Council on the matter of what kind of mourning the deceased king's step-

mother should wear. The advice they received in response was split. Members of one faction, the *Soin*, argued that the stepmother's filial status dictate that her mourning be limited to the one-year period normal for the mother of all the primary sons of her husband. Scholars of the opposing faction, the *Namin*, argued that the lady should observe the three-year period that was considered appropriate to a subject's mourning for the ruler. The court's decision to follow the recommendation of the *Soin* sparked a heated debate which, since ultimately it involved questions concerning the legitimacy of the king's successor, bore with it serious political overtones.

Historians of the 1950s and 1960s considered the rituals controversy to be little more than an example of Confucian pedantry and factional strife. Scholars of recent decades, however, have seen it either as a battle in the struggle for power between the throne and the bureaucracy or a principled debate that pitted conservative scholars committed to ancient texts against followers of Chu Hsi. Haboush prefers to view the episode as neither just a power conflict nor a contest between two competing versions of Neo-Confucian ritualism. It was, rather, an arena within which a serious discourse took place concerning the nature of Korean identity. It dealt with such questions as the character of the Korean monarchy and state, their relationship to civilization, especially Chinese civilization, and their places in a world that was changing. It was a response to the identity crisis that was engendered in part by the Manchu conquest of China. The "conscious sense of identity" that emerged in the context of the rituals controversy approaches what some scholars might consider to be an ingredient of national identity. That leads directly to the question that Haboush raises but does not fully answer: as Korean intellectuals struggled to locate Korea's place in the emerging East Asian order, did they develop a concept akin to modern nationalism? On that important score, Haboush seems conflicted.

State-sponsored Neo-Confucians considered their stake in maintaining their hegemony to be so important that they sought to use the state to protect it by punishing severely those who deviated from rigid adherence to Confucian principles. Nevertheless, some aspects of competing traditions remained vibrant. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. shows that the pressures and tensions between the Buddhist community and the Neo-Confucian establishment led both to a Buddhist accommodation with Confucianism and to a "rejuvenated synthesis" of Buddhist thought and practice itself. Early in the dynasty, Confucian criticism of Buddhism followed the pattern established during the Koryo period (918–1392) focusing on corruption among clerics and the financial burden of state support. Eventually, however, such utilitarian concerns yielded to an attack on Buddhist ritual and religious life, leading to wholesale suppression. As suppression intensified, Buddhist intellectuals sought accommodation with Neo-Confucian ideologues by trying to demonstrate the fundamental harmony between Confucianism and Buddhism, especially in the realms of ethics and morality. Meanwhile two contending streams of Buddhist thought, the meditation (*Son*) and doctrine or learning (*Kyo*) schools, were synthesized into a uniquely Korean brand of Buddhism.

Just as in the case of Buddhism, the Confucianization of elite culture affected, but did not extinguish, elements of the popular religious tradition. Boudewijn Walraven's study of shamanistic practices indicates that while Confucianization

promoted the suppression of popular religious expression, ultimately such popular practices as shamanistic rituals filled spiritual and social gaps left unfilled by Confucianism and, as a consequence, continued to coexist as a complement to the elite tradition. On the other hand, elite values penetrated the popular tradition; shaman songs, for example, reveal at least a superficial acceptance of Confucian values, indicating that popular religious practices adapted themselves to Confucian hegemony. After Confucianization had transformed the institutions of the elite, Confucian values filtered to other layers of society.

Catholicism, it seems, proved more resistant to the penetration of Confucian values and it suffered as a consequence. Its challenges to orthodox rituals and social morality were considered a serious threat to state Confucianism and its suppression was quite vigorously pursued. Ironically, however, Don Baker points out, it was not its challenge to orthodoxy so much as to orthopraxy, behavior, that attracted the most serious concern.

As the above summary may suggest, taken as a whole this book is a wonderfully thoughtful collection. Each chapter reveals something important about the interactions between competing ideas, contending elites, or elite and popular culture in Choson Korea. Together they suggest that there was a level of complexity and dynamism in the intellectual and cultural life of the period that conventional scholarship, in a field that is after all still quite young, apparently has not thoroughly explored.

Sacred Heart University

Thomas D. Curran

Shin, Gi-Wook and Michael Robinson (eds.): *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 184. (Cambridge: Harvard University Area Center, 1999), xv + 466 pp., \$ 49.50. ISBN 0-674-14255-1.

This book is a conference volume containing twelve chapters by an international body of scholars who have focused on the reconstruction of modern Korean history following the end of the Cold War. The historiography of modern Korea has been greatly complicated by the post-World War II partition of Korea and the subsequent competition between the two Korean states for control of the historical record. With history being employed to legitimate the nationalist credentials of each of the contending powers, the record was severely distorted, colored to suit the political purposes of the contenders. The end of the Cold War, however, has offered many new opportunities for scholars to reevaluate Korea's modern history, and there has been what Shin and Robinson call a "renaissance" in research on the colonial period in particular. Meanwhile, recent developments in postcolonial/postmodern studies have much to offer by way of a deeper theoretical understanding of the complex origins of modern national identities. The contributors to this volume have capitalized on both developments by launching some initial probes into the mechanisms by which Korean national identity emerged during Korea's time under Japanese rule. If this book is to be followed by similar work, as it surely must, the results are likely to be rewarding indeed.

Of several themes that emerge here two are especially pronounced. The first is that the evolution of Korea's national identity under Japanese occupation was a product not just of resistance or reaction on the part of Koreans to heavy-