

Jonathan Lipman, Barbara Molony, Michael Robinson, *Modern East Asia: An Integrated History*, Pearson, 2012, 480 pp.

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To write and publish a book covering such a geographical space (China, Japan and Korea) with such a long historical span (from the 17th century to today), cannot but have been prompted by some audacious purpose. Which one? Or the question, put differently, could be: Who are the readers addressed by the authors? Not a wide and average public, for the book is too voluminous for easy reading. Nor the specialists, who probably have already some knowledge of what is narrated, or would prefer to read more academic studies. Students? Yes. In fact, the authors, professional historians with rich teaching experiences, have written a text-book for students. They offer the student an encompassing, well documented historical introduction to the three countries of East Asia, showing their evolution along centuries under many angles, culture, politics, economy, social structures and international connections.

This book is therefore a text book, but with the ambition, clearly explained in the preface, to present the three East Asian countries in an "integrated" view. Indeed, it is a very laudable ambition since, as the authors say, countries are connected and should not be considered as separate histories. It is also obvious that in the ancient and recent past, the three countries were linked by many interchanges, peaceful or violent. One could object that the so-called integration results more from the fact that the histories are assembled in one single volume, with division into periods and subdivision by countries. This would already be an interesting initiative on its own right, but there is more to be discovered, although not always clearly expresses in this book.

A look at the table of Contents helps to see the overall structure of the book. After a chapter on general topics (lands and languages), the following chapters divide the historical time into 12 periods, from the 17th century up to 2010. Each begins with a short description of world context and then narrates what happened in China, Korea, and Japan, ending with two short summaries, one on the diasporas related to the countries, and the second on what is titled connections, which mentions relations of every kind between the three countries and with the world at large.

We have mentioned the sequence China-Korea-Japan. But this is true only for chapters 2 to 5, i.e. from the late Ming to the 1860s. In Chapter 6, "Traditionalist Reforms and Origins of Modernity", Japan comes first, followed by China, then Korea. This remains the sequence until Chapter 9. For Chapter 10, "Occupations, settlements, and divisions (1945-1953)", Korea leads, before China and Japan. Chapter 11 (1963-late 1970s) returns to the first sequence: China-Japan-Korea, but then the Koreas, in the plural. Chapter 12 (mid-1970s-early 1980) begins with China and Taiwan, the Koreas come in second place, Japan in third. The last chapter (13) speaks first of Japan, then of Korea (again in singular, but with narratives on both Koreas), and China and Taiwan.

The changes in sequences have surely meanings that the title of the chapters cannot completely reveal, but which are insinuated, more than clearly explained, in the text itself. For example, the lead of Korea in Chapter 10 indicated the importance of what happened in this country, not only for the country itself, but also for Japan, China, and many other actors on the international scene, among whom the USA are so influential. The Korean War was indeed a turning point toward the Cold War. So a reader could investigate in the pages of each chapter justifications for the order of presentation.

The index is, of course, an essential part of such a book. It is good enough and with the detailed table of Contents one can easily use the book as a tool for many purposes. To a student who wishes to read about gender issues or feminism in the three countries, the entry "women" in the index will give many pages to go back to: a section "Women's life" in the chapter on late Ming, another one on the evolution of the status of women during the Qing, etc. For Japan, pages and boxes introduce the artists Ema Saiko (1787-1861), Ichikawa Fusae (1893-1981) and many others; the first "feminist" of Korea, Na Yesok (1896-1948) is there too...It could be said that the book insists on the role of women in the life of their country under different aspects. Perhaps this is special to the book, if so, it is a good one for which the authors should be credited.

The authors offer a bibliography for each chapter, which denotes their professionalism and erudition; students can rely on what they write, even if others would have written it differently, especially concerning the role of the USA, and other Western countries, in the affairs of East Asia. The authors seem to be rather critical of Western attitudes. On the other hand, terrible events in China or North-Korea, although described with their negative consequences, are sometimes explained in such a way that they may appear to be excused or reduced in importance. Perhaps the authors want to offer arguments for more balanced judgments among some members of the public. It is true that many in the West should know much more about the three East Asian countries; for this the book can be often consulted with great profit.