

GUY PODOLER. *Monuments, Memory, and Identity: Constructing the Colonial Past in South Korea*, Welten Ostasiens. Worlds of East Asia. Mondes de l'Extrême-Orient 18, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2011, 272 pp., num. ill. ISBN 978-3-0343-0660-7 (hardbound), € 52.80

The task of how to interpret the past has always been one of the most crucial issues in Korean history. Besides the modern history subsequent to the occupation by Japan, which established foundations for the contemporary Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea, how to construct the memory of ancient dynasties such as Kojosŏn (in the revised Romanisation, Gojoseon) and Unified Silla used to be continuous agony for following dynasties that cultivated history on the Korean peninsula. The discrepancy of standpoints in interpreting history has split Korea into two parts. Taking only a part, the Republic of Korea, into account, she is divided into many factions with a variety of incompatible ideologies generated from a discrepancy of standpoints about history according to region, generation, and social class, which still produces dissolution and discord in society rather than leading to coexistence in harmony. Constructing historical memories or national history is still an on-going task even in Korea of the 21st century.

Author Guy Podoler arranges and analyses the complications in the aforementioned burden on the Korean people in the viewpoint of a foreigner and provides a new perspective that local Koreans fail to perceive. The author attempts to analyse how the colonial past in the first half of the 20th century of Korea was perceived by political parties and leaders of Korea who gained legitimacy after the establishment of the Republic of Korea and how the memories of history were described and archived in order to maintain their power.

The Chosŏn (Joseon) Dynasty, which was the last monarchy of Korea and adhered to a policy of seclusion to reject Western civilisation in the second half of the 19th century, was deprived of its sovereignty by Japan. The Japanese Empire, which began undermining national authority and sovereignty gradually in the latter part of the 19th century, officially annexed Korea in 1910 and consequently Korea degenerated into a Japanese colony. Following the Korean War, which broke out 5 years after independence, Korea was divided into two parts, a situation that still exists. The author stresses that 'it was not the Korean struggle that finally brought colonial rule to an end' (p. 70). According to the author, signs of division were perceived

even during the March First Uprising in 1919, when the Korean people proclaimed independence against Japanese rule. The March First Uprising was not successful in establishing the independence of the country, but in the North it forged the way of establishing a historical narrative centred on the anticipated appearance of Kim Il-Sung, who was believed to have liberated the nation from cruel colonisation by the Japanese people and was later granted political power. In the South, even though on the surface it is also perceived to be unsuccessful as in North Korea, the uprising obtained positive results like establishing the Provincial Government in Shanghai, which was the predecessor of the future Republic of Korea and produced a large number of outstanding independence activists such as Yun Pong-gil (Yun Bonggil) and Yi Pong-ch'ang (Yi Bongchang). The government of the Republic of Korea asserts that the Provincial Government inherited valid historical authenticity from Kojosŏn (Gogoseon), the ancient dynasty of Korea, which is still maintained in the South by the government established by conducting a separate general election in the South after the Korean War. (The author tried to verify this proposition by analysing the method and design of constructing historical materials at representative memorial sites built during the regime.) Syngman Rhee, the first president of the ROK, came to power after the assassination of Kim Ku (Kim Gu), the last president of the Provisional Government, the leader of the Korean independence and reunification movement, and biggest political rival of Rhee. The assassination was probably ordered by Rhee himself, who however had to leave office as a result of the resistance of the people. Following presidents such as Park Junghee and Chun Doohwan, who both took power by way of military coup, lacked as much political authenticity as Syngman Rhee, and it was therefore necessary to employ special methods to narrate history to endow themselves with political and historical legitimacy.

The book focuses on a particular form of establishing historical memory and national identity, i.e., mnemonic sites. This historical memory is related to what he terms 'tangible history'. Tangible history is defined in the book as the construction of an intentionally designated three-dimensional memory agent that, first, occupies a specific spatial location on a permanent base and, second, conveys its messages and images through multiple means such as architectural design, artefacts, texts, statues, photographs, and videos (p. 15). For this reason, he describes the process to construct tangible history employed in a variety of representative museums and exhibition halls built to display collective memories. These structures are exemplified by Independence Hall, built during the regime of Chun Doohwan, who took power after a series of inhumane deeds such as the massacre committed in Gwangju in 1980 and a military coup followed by the assassination of Park Junghee. As revealed by the name of the book, the main focus is placed in South Korea. The author

conducted field investigations to memorial sites significant in Korean modern history (Independence Hall, the national cemeteries in Seoul and Taejŏn [Daejeon], Kim Ku [Kim Gu] Memorial Museum, etc.) to collect material, and I suppose that thanks to the good level of his Korean language (I presume from his appropriate interpretation and employment of Korean terms), he made an adequate analysis of the subject.

The author focused more on the procedure of constructing tangible history in South Korea during the reign of the authoritative governments after Syngman Rhee, but it should also be stressed that the procedure itself was one of a series to protect the Korean nationality from numerous invasions since the beginning of Korean history. For instance the credibility of Tangun and methods to construct a tangible history from legends and myths have continuously been argued since the Koryŏ (Goryeo) Dynasty as the author clarified in the book. The *Samguksagi*, which depreciates myth and is given as an example of the various interpretations of Korean ancient history, also displays the multiplicity of interpretations of history in Korean tradition, which have not originated merely since the inauguration of the Korean government as asserted by the author.

The understanding and insight of the author about Korea are in general relatively precise and based on facts. He did not rely solely on the voices of Korean people or government propaganda and attempted to analyse historical characters and incidents from different angles with materials obtained from various channels. The efforts of the author to characterise from a different perspective even those 'deified' by the Korean people are very promising.

I am afraid, however, that the author's confident assumption generated some arbitrary and hasty conclusions. The attempt to exhibit the multiple past of some historical characters—for instance, Pak Yŏnghyo (Bak Yeonghyo, the initiator of the Korean national flag), An Ik-t'ae (An Iktae, the composer of the national anthem of Korea), and Ch'oe Namsŏn (Choe Namseon, the pioneer of Korean nationalism)—as patriots and pro-Japanese intelligentsias at the same time was academically tolerable, but his statements to stress the incredibility of Tangun (Dangun) and the incompetence of Koreans in gaining independence leave plenty of room for doubt, apart from the historicity of the comments.

More important is the leitmotif of the book that it was not the struggle of Koreans that brought the colonial period to an end. There would have been no way for Korea to fall into the hands of Japan if it had been strong enough to protect itself from the invasion of the intruders, but it is hazardous to state that the independence of Korea was given just out of nowhere as a gift from international circumstances in those days, because that may appear to degrade the value of mental battles and efforts exerted for independence even while Korea was faced with the possible extinction of 'Koreanness'.

The procedure to gain the independence of the Baltic States, with which I am associated, might coincide with the case of Korea. The March First Uprising could be considered a trial parallel to the proclamations of independence of the provincial governments of the Baltic States in 1990, even though the uprising in Korea was not successful in realising its ultimate purpose. Is it possible to confirm that the Baltic States were very lucky that the Soviet Union collapsed in time and that they regained independence on the wave of international circumstances that appeared due to the policies of Gorbachev but that Korea was not lucky enough to enjoy such good fortune? The battle not to forfeit nationality and cultural tradition is in many ways parallel to militarised mobilisation, and this becomes clearer when we remember the countries of the CIS that have failed in this *mental battle* and are still on the edge of cultural extinction, even though they were 'given' independence thanks to the transition of international circumstances.

Furthermore, the somewhat exaggerated and cynical styles of statements describing the method to shape a tangible history could make some readers frustrated. The author describes that in the expositions of Sōdaemun (Seodaemun) Prison the evil conduct and brutality of colonisers (namely the Japanese) are intentionally exaggerated by curators, especially in the Place of Experience, which the author states is 'representative of a tendency to market the past as an attractive commodity' (p. 98).

In Poland, which has a long history of messianism somewhat comparable to Jewish tradition to construct their past by way of literature and nowadays motion pictures dealing with tragic history, a movie released in 2011 in three-dimensional format was produced about the Battle of Warsaw, which is one of the most glorious but also saddest in the modern history of Poland. Wearing specially manufactured glasses, members of the audience can enjoy the scenes of battles as if in reality bullets are flying in front of their eyes and corpses are falling on the seats in front of them. It might be right to say that three-dimensional films can be the most effective method to amplify the attempts of artists in Poland, where a number of Polish writers and movie directors such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, Andrzej Wajda and Jerzy Hoffman have tried to construct historical memory in the form of tangible history. I believe the tendency to market the past will also happen steadily in other countries, but I am not sure whether such attempts should be criticised.

The author might have tried to deal with too much in his book, and sometimes I could spot a series of impetuous conclusions and hazardous attempts to generalise the entity, but his efforts to comprehend the country and interpret in his own original way are worthy of compliment. As a conclusion however, I believe that the book could have been more perfect if the country had been approached with more affection.

PAULINE C. LEE. *Li Zhi* 李贽, *Confucianism and the Virtue of Desire*, SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture, Albany: SUNY Press, 2012, pp. 202. ISBN 978-1-4384-3927-3 (hardcover), \$75.00

Reading the refreshing and insightful book by Pauline C. Lee, I could not stop wondering how it could be that this first full-length study of such an original philosopher as Li Zhi has appeared in English only now, that is, nearly forty years after he was discovered by Western sinologists. How could it be that he, whom the author of this book introduces as ‘one of the best-selling and most widely read authors of his own time, late-Ming China’ (p. 9) and as ‘a key intellectual figure in late 16th century China’ (p. 8), did not receive enough attention in studies about the Ming, especially late-Ming culture, which have boomed in recent years in Western sinology?

Part of the answer can be found in the introduction of the book, where the general overview of Li Zhi’s studies and their limitations, the arguments for a new look at his philosophy, and the description of investigative methods are presented in a very detailed and concrete way. As Pauline C. Lee admits, previous scholarship on Li Zhi have viewed him either from a ‘broadening’ evolutionary perspective of intellectual and literary ideas, such as individualism, capitalism or even Marxism, or from a ‘reducing’ historical perspective of his time and place, such as the cult of feeling or emotion (*qing*), a flourish of the Taizhou school of Wang Yangming’s Confucianism. The privileging of those two approaches gave impact for the stereotypical calling him a ‘nihilist’, ‘individualist’, ‘iconoclast’, ‘proto-capitalist’ or even ‘proto-Marxist’, as well as for treating him as a follower of one or another philosophic school—most often as a Confucian philosopher, an ‘eccentric’ representative of the Taizhou school. Such labelling, it seems to me, could also be one of the reasons of ignoring his ideas as not worthy enough for understanding the ‘main’ or ‘official’ Confucian (Neo-Confucian) tradition of thought.

I would summarise the novelty of this ground-breaking study of Li Zhi in the following few points: first, by the readiness to approach his ideas ‘in their own right’ (p. 10) and to read him ‘on his own terms’, that is, focusing on the content of his works, his own words rather than their historical or ideological context as emphasised in previous interpretations; second, by viewing Li Zhi first and foremost as a writer (poet, short essayist) rather than moral philosopher, a literary theorist, or a social critic, although Pauline C. Lee chooses his striking and robust ‘ethics of genuine feelings’ as the central subject of her study in this book; third, by examining ‘how Li Zhi both newly imagines and reinvigorates a “repertoire” of virtues having to do with desire, expression of feeling, spontaneity, and genuineness’ (p. 12) rather than approaching him as a member of a particular philosophical tradition or ‘synthesiser’

of several such traditions; fourth, by acknowledging that the originality and the finest nuances of his ethical ideas could be discerned from discrete and hidden details, especially his language ‘strategies’, such as ‘almost imperceptible manipulation of words, phrases, and literary references’ (p. 24). For the same reason, Pauline C. Lee is also ready to pay considerable attention to some missing points or words in his ethical discourse, since ‘attending to and examining what is prominently absent in Li’s writings is at many points no less critical to understanding Li’s argument and his philosophical vision than attention to and analysis of what he explicitly writes, cites, and claims’ (p. 46). This fourth point could be related to the fifth one, namely, the readiness to recognise Li Zhi’s ethical views and ideas as resisting any systematic and rigid theory of life, since ‘Li never offers a specific, narrow prescription for living life well but rather uses character sketches, metaphors, wit, irony, and humor to draw us into looking at the world from new perspectives’ (p. 3).

Those refreshing approaches to Li Zhi and his style of writing in particular validate the main methods of investigation—the close textual study and discursive analysis of his language and its strategies, that is, the use of genres, metaphors, particular terms, references, and allusions to earlier literary sources, envisioning and transforming particular conceptions and terms. Pauline C. Lee starts this (in Chapter Two, called ‘Life stories’ 傳) from the close reading of Li Zhi’s famous autobiographical essay ‘A Sketch of Zhouwu: Written in Yunnan’ (*Zhuowu lunlue: Dian zhong zuo* 卓吾論略滇中作). Pauline C. Lee analyses his manipulation of this genre of literature, reasons for choosing or not choosing particular words, and use of quotations from classical texts. She first discusses his skilful adoption and adaptation of the traditional form of commentary (*lun* 論), his favourite genre, as very suitable for the expression of the inner world (feelings, thoughts) of each individual. Then, she analyses the introductory paragraph to this autobiographical text, drawing attention to the introduction of Li Zhi’s personality by only two of his ‘style’ names (*hao*): Zhuowu 卓吾 (‘Genuine self’) and Duwu 篤吾 (‘Deeply Sick Self’). Those are names by which Li Zhi referred to himself or was referred to by officials in the registers accordingly as a result of pronouncing the character *zhuo* 卓 according to the standard pronunciation of *du* 篤 (p. 23). Pauline C. Lee is trying here to trace the reason why the narrator of Li Zhi’s biography pays attention to subtle details such as the difference between the standard pronunciation of the character *du* as *genuineness* and as *seriously ill*, which, as he writes, was used interchangeably in bureaucratic texts but not in the local speech of the rural people. She comes to the conclusion that already with those first lines Li ‘spoofs the hypocritical and unimaginative scholar-bureaucrat and privileges the values and life of people in the countryside’, thus claiming ground for his ethics of the virtues of ‘genuineness’ (*zhen* 真) and ‘the spontaneous expression of true “feeling” (*qing* 情)’ (p. 24).

In this chapter, Pauline C. Lee also focuses her attention on subtle details such as the relative silence in Li Zhi's autobiography about his professional achievements, official life, and titles, but the extended discussion about the adoption of his 'non-official' names in regards to his spiritual aspirations and emotional life. To understand the basis of Li Zhi's ethics of genuineness, she finds no less important the sympathetic description of his wife as the embodiment of its ideal, that is, 'as genuine in her feelings and thoughts and spontaneous in her expression' (p. 36), as well as his views on death and dying, even visions of his own death, which are expressed here by his selective quotation of Kongzi's words on the topic. All those details of the story of Li Zhi's life and especially the subtle ways they were presented in 'A Sketch to Zhuowu' Pauline C. Lee takes as demonstrating his resistance to living a conventional life of 'reverent formality' and the preference for fulfilling one's genuine desires, or living according to the sincere intentions of one's original (childlike) heart.

This particular and Li Zhi's central concept or metaphor of childlike heart-mind (*tong xin* 童心) in his philosophy is analysed in Chapter Three ('The Heart-Mind'), by close reading of his famous essay 'On the Child-like Heart-Mind'. Again, Pauline C. Lee starts her discussion by pointing out two details in Li Zhi's introduction to this essay. The first is his indication of the literary source for this term, namely, his choice to refer to the anonymous commentary on the *Western Chamber* (*Xixiang ji*), which celebrates passion, spontaneity and love, instead of the earliest *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuo zhuan*), in which the term *tong xin* has a rather derogatory meaning. The second is his reformulation or allusion to the famous question from *Zhuangzi* in the final lines of his essay: 'Oh! Where can I find a genuine great sage who has not lost his child-like heart-mind and have a word with him about culture?' (p. 47). What for her seems critical in understanding his views is exactly his attention to terms of art, allusions to those particular texts, and his reference or non-use of terms such as 'the original heart-mind' (*ben xin* 本心), the 'genuine heart-mind' (*zhen xin* 真心), 'pure-knowing' (*liang zhi* 良知), and 'the infant heart-mind' (*chizi zhi xin* 赤子之心).

Although Pauline C. Lee was trying to loosen Li Zhi's ties with any particular philosophical school such as Buddhism or Confucianism, her analysis of the use of term 'the original heart-mind' (*ben xin*) in Mengzi and term 'pure knowing' (*liang zhi*) in Wang Yangming's writings raises the inevitable question of his connection with Confucian thought. By this insightful analysis, revealing the differences between Li Zhi's and Mengzi's understanding of *xin* in terms of its cultivation and content, the author shows how Li Zhi 'transforms but not departs from the Ru tradition' (p. 86) simply by concentrating on the initial step of cultivating the self in the whole hierarchical way of self-cultivation as presented in *Great Learning*, but resisting the formulation of any further strict guidelines for moral life. As she points out, 'Li is

one of the most distinctive among Confucian thinkers in his passionate appreciation of the grand variation of good lives' (p. 65), since their goodness depends on the particular person, places and circumstances. At the same time, she tries to show that his ethics cannot be treated as relativistic (claiming that anything goes) or hedonistic (equating good life with pleasure). On the other hand, Pauline C. Lee shows the point at which he breaks from Neo-Confucians, especially Wang Yangming, by grounding his ethics 'most directly in human nature and the human inclination to satisfy our individual desires' rather than metaphysical schemes (p. 65).

What seems to me of particular interest in this study is the emphasis on the concept of genuineness (*zhen* 真), which is inseparable from the understanding of heart-mind and desires in Li Zhi's ethics, thus coming at the centre of discussion in the last two chapters (Chapter Four on 'Virtue 德', providing a reading of 'Miscellaneous Matters' (*Za shuo* 雜說) and Chapter Five 'Genuineness 真'). By examining pairs of contrasting terms such as *women* and *men* and *culture* and *nature* and characters such as wife and husband (as presented by Li Zhi himself) or metaphors such as 'the skills of an artisan' and 'the skills of Nature', the author aims to show the central place of the expression of genuine feeling in Li Zhi's understanding of good life. For this, she discerns from his texts the main features of genuine feelings: effortless involvement, the direction and motivation of life from within, and the feeling of life as springing from a source of abundance, as one of movement and diversity, intensity and power, and simplicity and ease. In sum, 'Li sees the life well lived as necessarily tailored to the concrete particulars of one's social and natural world and one's distinctive character, as lived improvisatorially in parts and pieces beginning from within one's own heart' (p. 79). No less important in Li Zhi's understanding of genuine feeling is the sense of self-satisfaction, which certainly once more relates him to the text of *Great Learning*. However, Pauline C. Lee points out here that Li Zhi does not limit self-satisfaction only to the fulfilment of the basic instincts and physical needs, but includes in it the satisfaction of aesthetic and emotional desires. This insight seems very important for understand the broader meaning of Li Zhi's ethics of desires, more so than revealed by earlier scholars.

Pauline C. Lee also draws attention to the relation of Li Zhi's ideas to Zhuangzi, since his writings have influenced Li Zhi's ideas—which could be seen from her investigation throughout this book as well. At this point I did expect more extensive discussion about some differences or similarities between Zhuangzi's and Li Zhi's understanding of genuine (*zhen*). Also, it was not clear to me how (or whether) the author of this book sees any connection between the concept of genuine (*zhen*) and sincerity (*cheng*), since the latter was an important concept in *Daxue*, *Zhong Yong*, and Neo-Confucianism. If Li Zhi did not mention it, then maybe there were some serious

reasons that could be helpful in understanding the original ethics of genuine feelings of this writer, whom Pauline C. Lee presents as a broadminded unconventional thinker and challenger of Confucian tradition or even an ‘iconoclast’, ‘individualist’, and radical thinker.

This book is beyond a doubt a very important contribution to the studies of the history of Chinese philosophy and intellectual culture, especially for its invitation to avoid stereotypes in its understanding. Pauline C. Lee reveals not only his originality and genius in reforming and reshaping ‘the world of writing, through writing’, but also the worthiness and strength of his thought, as stemming from his subtle articulation of the subject of genuineness as well as a insightful appreciation of those pure and untainted elements of our human nature that are mainly formed ‘prior to our mastery of language’ (p. 102). By this, she opens possible ways for including Li Zhi’s ideas into contemporary moral debates, especially comparative discourse on the importance of desires and feelings, as well as the ethical idea of authenticity or genuineness. This discourse is started by the author herself at the end of the book but certainly needs to be continued and broadened in future studies. And the last but not the least contribution of this book to the studies of Chinese philosophy lies in its three appendixes, in which the English translations of three of Li Zhi’s texts are presented (‘A Sketch of Zhuowu’, ‘On the Child-like Heart-Mind’ and ‘Miscellaneous Matters’), on which the author based her deep and subtle investigation.

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