

## KOREA

*Paekche of Korea and the Origin of Yamato Japan.* By WONTAEK HONG. Seoul: Kudara International, 1994.

This volume is a reworking of *Relationship Between Korea and Japan in Early Period: Paekche and Yamato Wa*, which I reviewed in this journal in 1989. The new book is improved in several ways. The material used in the previous book has been rearranged and new sentences inserted, creating a context of "model building." Although Hong's model is not clearly articulated until chapter 6, the theme emerges early. In the preface Hong states that Japanese scholars "enthusiastically distorted their history, especially the history of the relationship between Korea and Japan before the eighth century" (p. 1). Hong argues specifically that the source of the new ruling population of Kofun Japan is the Paekche kingdom on the Korean peninsula. His hypothesis of a close connection between the rulers of Paekche and those of Yamato is chiefly supported with reference to passages from the *Nihon shoki*, but he uses additional selections from other texts and alludes to similarities of artifacts from archaeological contexts.

The model is a refinement of the "horserider" theory. Hong reviews the literature on the horseriders (which derives Yamato culture from "the continent" by means of mounted horsemen), and concludes that the horseriders were nobles from Paekche, not mysterious newcomers from an unknown place. The whole enterprise is explicitly motivated by an understanding of the political uses of the past, and a belief that setting the record straight on this score will be a major step in improving Korean-Japanese relationships. Hong notes that his intent is to open "a way to study Japanese history in a more objective and balanced manner" (p. 12).

The organization of this book includes an introductory chapter in which other scholarship on this topic is reviewed, followed by a chapter devoted to various theories about the early peninsular/island relationships. Chapter 3 is called "Checking the Consistency of the Model," and chapter 4 "Interpreting Facts within the Model." Chapters 5 and 6 are entitled "Background Materials" and "Summary and Conclusions," respectively.

This new organization is not entirely successful. It is repetitious in some sections, in which previous arguments are restated rather than simply referred back to. For this reason, the book reads more like a collection of separate articles than a book-length argument, lacking the flow and development that would provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the events of this time period.

Hong uses a variety of data, but focuses on the Japanese writings, especially the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, to demonstrate a close relationship between Yamato and Paekche. The texts form the crux of his argument; other material is added like flying buttresses. Chapter 3 covers this material, divided into sections on mythologies about the origin of the Yamato imperial clan, the "emotive records" which reveal the kinship between the royalty of Paekche and Yamato, the transfer of technology and culture from Paekche, governmental systems derived from Paekche, and other similarities between Paekche and Yamato.

In this newer version Hong reuses the same data and arguments as the previous book, rearranged and in some cases more extensively argued. The argument would

have been strengthened with reference to recent excavations in both Japan and Korea. However, for the most part Hong fails to use archaeological material directly, but instead quotes the opinions of archaeologists, with little attention to new discoveries. For example, in discussing the Yayoi period, he never mentions the well-known Yoshinogari site in which characteristics described in Chinese records were found, nor does he note the vast array of new excavations of Kaya materials in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, with their important similarities to sites in Japan. The section on the early history of Korea using archaeological data (pp. 169–81) relies almost exclusively on Kim Won-yong's 1986 compilation of his earlier papers in English, many of them already period pieces in 1986. More distressingly, citing the Dong-hu people from eastern Liaoning as "pure-blooded Dong-hus called Yemaek" (p. 170) is precisely the type of political use of archaeology which Hong is arguing against as it appears in Japan. His use of archaeology is thus thoroughly out of date, mistaken in temporal attributions, and missing relevant excavations. Illustrations of similar artifacts found on both sides of the Tsushima strait, which are interspersed throughout the book, are given no verbal treatment, leaving the artifacts to "speak for themselves," which they fail to do. In short, the author fails to use archaeological data to achieve the impact they could have had.

One interesting detail is that in analyzing the Register of Families (of the upper class) including imperial clans, deity clans, and foreign clans, Hong is able to conclude that "out of the 1,182 ruling clans, the Register has only 222 clans not directly related to Koreans" (p. 74). In this regard, it would have been appropriate for Hong to emphasize that neither "Japan" nor "Korea" existed at this formative stage. Relations were between smaller polities, whose competition for territory and shifting alliances may have sometimes recognized kinship and common language and sometimes not.

However, Hong does make explicit the political ramifications of the present interpretation of Japanese and Korean ancient history, which is an important contribution in itself. This book should be taken seriously by western scholars.

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Enclosed are two copies of the review of your publication(s) that appeared in the August 1995 *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 54:3.

Sincerely,



Ann W. Beard  
Publications Manager



*Relationship Between Korea and Japan in Early Period: Paekche and Yamato Wa.*  
By WONTACK HONG. Seoul: Pan Korea Book Corporation, 1988. 279  
pp.

Wontack Hong goes a step beyond the horse-rider theory in this scholarly and provocative work, which sheds new light on early Korea and Japan through careful reading of ancient documents. This book, a view from the Korean side of the Tsūshima strait, tries to redress what the author perceives as a wrong perpetrated on Korea in the traditional reconstruction of Japanese protohistory during the first six centuries A.D. Literal acceptance of the self-serving protohistorical accounts written for the Yamato court, *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon shoki* (720), has led to distortions and omissions, Hong believes, not only by Japanese historians but also by Westerners.

After explaining his objections to the standard interpretation of ancient Japanese-Korean relations, the author highlights evidence—more from documents than archaeology—of Korean contributions to early Japanese civilization. Hong devotes a chapter to the possible derivation of the Yamato clan from Paekche and another to the movement of culture and technology to Yamato from Paekche, including inscriptions, tomb paintings, and a few classes of artifacts as data. Unusually noteworthy are appendixes on the inscribed Seven-Branched Sword, the controversy over the reading of the Kwanggaet'o stele and its importance, and the *Sung-shu* records on the fifth-century "kings of Wa." Another appendix treats Imna/Mimana. Also helpful are a list of early Chinese chronicles and a table comparing events in China, Korea, and Japan from 300 B.C. to A.D. 826, although no sources are given for particular dates in the table.

Readers interested in the horse riders, Kaya/Mimana, or other facets of this turbulent era should consult Hong's book and judge for themselves. From the perspective of Korean archaeology the arguments ring true. I hope Japan specialists will not dismiss the book as a mere polemic. There are a few lapses—perhaps forgivable given the previous political uses of protohistory.

This book cogently illustrates the power of the cultural context in which prehistory and protohistory are written. Although the two polities were neither "Japan" nor "Korea" at the time, modern territorial limits have been read back into the past by many twentieth-century writers as equivalent to ethnic boundaries and then used to justify ethnic discrimination. Although this has always been clear to Koreans, several factors have led Western scholars to accept Japanese historiography (notable exceptions are James K. Ash, Gina Lee Barnes, James H. Grayson, and Gari K. Ledyard).

Language learning and the subsequent use of one country's historical writings tend to influence the acceptance of attitudes expressed or implied in that scholarship. Far more Westerners have studied ancient Japan than ancient Korea; few have defended Kaya from the historical tyranny of Mimana. It is not evident that Western specialists on early Japan have appreciated the political intent of Japanese protohistoriography, either as originally written or as it was elaborated earlier in this century, to the extent that this is assumed in Korea.

Second, the evolutionary and ecological orientation of Western archaeologists in the last two decades has frequently removed archaeological evidence from the discussion.

No longer interested in migration and diffusion as elements of cultural change, archaeologists have reformulated their research agendas to consider only in situ development. Korean claims to have influenced the development of early Japanese culture are seen as simply irrelevant. In spite of this stance, Hong's well-chosen quotations demonstrate that some archaeologists who follow the same school of thought have repeated as gospel the supposed influence of (or even conquest by) Yamato over parts of southern Korea.

There will be disagreements with specific interpretations of the texts, but on the whole Wontack Hong shows that the development of the Yamato state owed more than simple trait borrowing to the kingdoms in the south of the Korean peninsula, especially Paekche.

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