

Korea in International History: An Annotated Reading List

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Introduction

This annotated reading list may be used as the basis for a syllabus on Korea in international history, focusing on the twentieth century, or as a resource for bringing Korea into more general courses. The readings on this list could be useful in a wide variety of courses, including but not limited to:

- World/International history
- East Asian history
- Modernity
- Imperialism and anti-imperialist movements
- Postcolonial history
- Immigration/diaspora
- World War II
- The Cold War
- Economic Growth in East Asia

Each section lists suggested primary and secondary reading materials, as well as visual materials, such as films and web sites, and provides brief annotations.

A few collections of Korean primary sources in translation related to various topics include:

CH'OE, Yongho, Peter H. LEE, and Wm. Theodore de BARY, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

FULTON, Bruce and Youngmin KWON, ed. *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*.

- New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- KANG, Hildi. *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001. [oral histories]
- LEE, Peter H., ed. *Flowers of Fire: Twentieth-Century Korean Stories, revised edition*, 344-72. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986.
- LEE, Peter H., ed. *Modern Korean Literature: An Anthology*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990.

Premodern Korea and Beyond: Thought, War, Trade and Diplomacy

This section stresses Korea's relationship to the world beyond the peninsula during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910). These readings demonstrate Korea's dynamic relationship with China and Japan and document early European encounters.

Primary Documents

- CH'OE, Yongho, Peter H. LEE, and Wm. Theodore de BARY, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 3-11; 12-17; 23-30; 34-52; 70-84; 88-95; 107-112; 117-142; 157-167; 173-180.

These selections, a combination of introductory text and primary source excerpts, feature a variety of perspectives on Confucian rule and society from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries offering students a glimpse of the importance of basic Confucian concepts such as virtue and benevolence and the rigidly hierarchical system that prevailed, while also allowing them to grasp that those engaged in debates over rule held a wide range of views.

- ELISON, George. "The Priest Keinen and His Account of the Campaign in Korea, 1597-1598: An Introduction." In Motoyama Yukihiro kyoju taikan kinen rombunshu henshu iinkai, ed. *Nihon kyoikushi ronso: Motoyama Yukihiro kyoju taikan kinen rombunshu*. Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 1988.

This selection provides a first-hand description of Japanese soldiers fighting Chinese and Korean troops in Korea.

- LEDYARD, Gari, tr. *The Dutch Come to Korea*. Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch: 1984.

This is the first Western description of Korea, provided by a Dutchman shipwrecked on the Korean coast and forced to live in Korea until his escape.

Secondary Readings

BAKER, Donald L. "The Martyrdom of Paul Yun: Western Religion and Eastern Ritual in Eighteenth Century Korea." *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 54 (1979): 33-58.

This article describes Korean contact with Catholicism via China and the Korean response to Catholicism.

PALAIS, James B. *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. Introduction, pp. 1-22.

This classic book introduces the world of the king and *yangban* (elite class) in nineteenth century Korea.

ROBINSON, Kenneth R. "Centering the King of Chosŏn: Aspects of Korean Maritime Diplomacy, 1392-1592." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59:1 (February 2000): 109-125.

This article provides context for Korea's involvement in East Asian maritime relations with Japan.

Film

NAKAGAWA, Kunihiro, dir. JVC World Religion Film Series: JVC Video Anthology of World Music and Dance. East Asia I (Korea 1) II (Korea 2). 1990. [videorecording] Produced by Ichikawa Katsumori.

East Asia I (Korea 1) and II (Korea 2) are available for purchase on VHS for \$60 each; or, as part of the 5-disc East Asia Regional Set (also includes China 1-3), on DVD for \$280 at: <http://worldvideoanthology.com/>. The videos are also available through many university libraries.

The film series includes selections on Korean court music as well as shaman rituals – the latter to highlight important vestiges of non-Confucian Korea.

Web Resource

The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
<http://www.asianart.org>

This museum has the largest collection of Korean art outside Korea. It is worth checking the website routinely for Korean exhibitions as well as other links.

Late Chosŏn Korea and the Outside World (1897-1910)

The materials in this section focus on the Korean reaction to the growing Japanese presence. China's defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Western presence in East Asia, and Japan's increasing involvement on the Korean peninsula spurred nascent independence and nationalist movements in Korea by 1910, when Japan officially annexed the country. These readings might be used to discuss reactions to colonialism on the part of the colonized or the rise of nationalism in East Asia.

Primary Documents

CH'OE, Yongho, Peter H. LEE, and Wm. Theodore de BARY, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 207-211; 221-226; 227-230; 235-239; 245-248; 254-258; 261-267; 272-276; 277-288.

These selections, a combination of introductory texts and primary source excerpts, highlight competing interests — both domestic and foreign — at play in Korea as the country's leaders were simultaneously confronting rising nationalism and the prospect of losing national sovereignty.

Secondary Source

SCHMID, Andre. *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Chapter 2, "Decentering the Middle Kingdom and Realigning the East," pp. 55-100.

Schmid demonstrates how Korean intellectuals shaped their own ideas of the Korean nation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Colonial Korea (1910-1945)

These materials explore the Korean experience of the global phenomenon of imperialism during the period of Japanese colonization of Korea, with attention to such issues as collaboration and resistance, capitalism, and communism.

Primary Documents

CH'OE, Yongho, Peter H. LEE, and Wm. Theodore de BARY, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 315-332; 333-351; 352-366.

These selections, a combination of introductory texts and primary source excerpts, highlight different responses to Japanese rule as well as competing visions for Korea's future as an independent state.

KANG, Hildi. *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001. 166 pages.

This is a collection of oral histories about various aspects of life under Japanese rule.

Secondary Sources

DUDDEN, Alexis. *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Chapter 1, "Illegal Korea," pp. 7-26, and Chapter 5, "Mission *Législatrice*," pp. 100-129.

Dudden's book places the process of colonizing Korea in an international context.

ECKERT, Carter J. *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991. Chapter 2, "An Industrial Bourgeoisie: Transition and Emergence, 1919-45," pp. 27-63.

Eckert elaborates the history of capitalist development in the colonial context.

Literary Works

RI, Kai-sei (Yi Hoe-song). "The Woman Who Filled Clothes." Trans. Beverly Nelson. In Peter H. Lee, ed., *Flowers of Fire: Twentieth-Century Korean Stories, revised edition*, 344-72. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986.

This short story and the others in this volume allow students to grapple with issues of daily life and struggle in colonized Korea.

YI, Sang. "Wings." In:

- LEE, Peter H., ed. *Modern Korean Literature: An Anthology*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990, pp. 29-46 [abridged version].
- FULTON, Bruce and Youngmin KWON, ed. *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 65-84 [unabridged version].

Probably the best recognized work of the colonial era, "Wings" tells the story of an intellectual recluse trying to negotiate the new environment colonialism has brought to Korea, including the urban space of Seoul and power dynamics within gender relations.

Films and Audio

KIM-GIBSON, Dai Sil, dir and prod. *A Forgotten People: The Sakhalin Koreans*. 1995. 59 min.

Available through the Center for Asian American Media:

http://asianamericanmedia.org/rf/cms/index.php?cmd=showPage&page_id=1.4.1.2.71§ion=1.4 (purchase: \$265; rental: \$75).

This documentary examines a group of Koreans forced into labor in Japanese mines on Sakhalin and raises questions about the whole process of colonized labor as well as post-1945 legacies.

LEVINSON, Hugh and BBC, producers. *Tiger Tales: Korea* (radio documentary). 2003.

Available at:

http://www2.thny.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/tiger_tales/ram/tiger_tales2.ram.

This half-hour radio show depicts significant moments of Japanese rule of Korea as well as interviews with Koreans describing legacies of colonization in their contemporary lives.

YOUNG-JOO, Byun, dir. *Habitual Sadness: Korean Comfort Women Today*. 1999. 70 min.

Available through Filmmaker's Library:

<http://filmmakers.com/indivs/HabitualSadness.htm> (purchase: \$250; rental: \$75)

This film is the first segment of a trilogy entitled *The Murmuring*. Each film examines the history and legacies of Japan's notorious comfort woman system, focusing wholly on the Koreans enslaved in the process.

Post-Liberation Struggles (1945-50)

This section examines the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule through the lenses of communism and the US policy of containment.

Secondary Sources

ARMSTRONG, Charles. *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002. Chapter 4, "Coalition Politics and the United Front," pp. 107-135.

This chapter brings to light the significance of land reform programs in North Korea following Japanese defeat in 1945 as well as the importance of the pro-Japanese purges there.

CLARK, Donald. *Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience, 1900-1950*. Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2003. Chapter 14, "Liberation and Reoccupation," pp. 281-307, and Chapter 15, "Making Korea Safe for Democracy," pp. 308-322.

This book offers some powerful vignettes of American missionary life in colonized Korea, but these latter chapters are particularly interesting in demonstrating how the missionary kids—as they were called—came to play a critical role in the American strategies for bolstering the newly created South Korea.

CUMINGS, Bruce. "The Course of Korean-American Relations, 1943-1953." In Bruce Cumings, ed. *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983, pp. 3-55.

Cumings offers a rigorous assessment of the US-led division of Korea in 1945 and how that policy shaped the course of war on the peninsula.

Civil War/Cold War (1950-1953)

The recommended literature and films provide a variety of viewpoints of the Korean War, including North Korean, South Korean, British, and American.

Primary Source

RILEY, John, Jr. and Wilbur SCHRAMM. *The Reds Take a City: The Communist Occupation of Seoul, with Eyewitness Accounts*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1951. Chapter 1, "The Reds Move into South Korea," pp. 3-30, Chapter 2, "The Blueprint of Occupation," pp. 31-64, and Chapter 3, "Official Conduct and Personnel Policy," pp. 65-102.

First-hand accounts of the Communist North Korean forces' capture of Seoul and how South Koreans responded.

Secondary Source

CUMINGS, Bruce. *North Korea: Another Country*. New Press, 2003. Chapter 1, "War Is A Stern Teacher," pp. 1-42.

Cumings provides a good background to the Korean War, with an emphasis on the international perspective.

Literary Works

CHO, Chang-Rae. *Playing With Fire*. Trans. Chun Kyung-Ja. Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1997. 188 pages.

Playing With Fire is a riveting novel of post-1945 Korea that draws readers' attention to the important legacies of the history of aristocratic and colonial rule in the South Korean countryside before and during the Korean War, focusing awareness on the occurrence of communism in the South.

HAN, Sorya. "Jackals." In Myers, Brian. *Han Sorya and North Korean Literature: The Failure of Socialist Realism in the DPRK*. Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell, 1994, pp. 157-188.

This 1951 short story is one of the best-known pieces of North Korean social realist fiction available in English and is fascinating for students when examining the wartime era from the North's perspective. The action is set during the preceding colonial era, and, unlike colonial era literature when the Japanese embody evil most commonly, HAN Sorya's American villains make the Japanese pale by comparison.

Films

CUMINGS, Bruce and Jon HALLIDAY, dir. *Korea: The Unknown War* (Thames Television/PBS Series).

This television documentary is easily the best representation of the Korean War available in English. The British copy is worth attaining because PBS censored the American version, cutting out the footage of US attacks on Pyongyang. Cumings has written a book about the making of this video, *War and Television* (New York: Verso, 1993.) The book is currently out of print but available from used booksellers such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

LEE, Kwangmo, dir. *Spring in My Hometown*. 1998. 120 min.

This film is not widely distributed in the United States, but it is available through many university libraries. It is also available for rent on Regionless DVD format to members of cinflix.com. www.hanbooks.com offers Region 3 DVD versions for sale (\$14.95)

Lee's film looks at the Korean War from the viewpoint of a little boy and subtly and powerfully brings a big historical event — the war — into typical small town life in rural South Korea. It is a perfect accompaniment to the novel *Playing With Fire*.

North and South Korea (1953 – present)

With an emphasis on authoritarian rule, the materials in this section examine the pros and cons of the rapid growth of the South Korean economy after the civil war and the very different experience of the North

Primary Documents

A Hard Journey to Justice: First Term Report by the Presidential Truth Commission on Suspicious Deaths of the Republic of Korea. Seoul, South Korea: Samin Books, 2004.

From October 2000 to October 2002, the truth commission investigated the deaths, primarily of individuals working towards the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea, that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s under the leadership of PARK Chung-hee. The commission's report makes very clear the costs to South Korean society of its "Race to the Swift" — Korea's explosive economic growth — while also revealing South Korea's newly attained level of social and political freedom. Teachers can pick selections of individual cases and testimony from this invaluable resource recently produced in English.

KIM, Il Sung. *Juche! The speeches and writings of Kim Il Sung.* Ed. LI Yuk-Sa. New York: Grossman, 1972. 271 pages.

Most of KIM Il Sung's writings on the North Korean political doctrine of *juche* (self-reliance) are widely believed to be authored by others. Selections of these essays allow students to get a better grasp of the ideology underpinning the North Korean state. Teachers can encourage students to understand what becomes known as "Kim Il Sungism" as distinct from Stalinism and notice the imprint of classical Confucian thought in the writings.

SUNG, Suh. *Unbroken Spirits: Nineteen Years in South Korea's Gulag.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001. 197 pages.

This unique source is the memoir of a Japanese-Korean man imprisoned while studying at Seoul National University in the early 1970s on charges of spying for North Korea. Suh SUNG describes not only his own story but that of his fellow inmates during the dark era of South Korea's rise to global prominence.

Secondary Source

WOO, Jung-en. *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in Korean Industrialization.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. 280 pages.

Woo elaborates on the South's political-economic transformation into an industrial-capitalist state and in so doing offers an incisive critique of the dictatorship era.

Film

YI, Sun-Kyung, dir. *Inside the Hermit Kingdom: North Korea*. 2004. 52 min.

Available through Filmmaker's Library:

<http://filmmakers.com/indivs/InsideHermitKingdom.htm> (purchase: \$350. Rental: \$75)

In 1994 a young Canadian-Korean journalist gained permission to travel through North Korea at the time of KIM Il Sung's death. The trip turned into a quest to examine her own identity and led to a decade-long project culminating in a thoughtful mediation of the current problems facing North Korea, including the famine and the nuclear standoff.

Overcoming the Cold War Legacy

These materials examine Cold War legacies such as the division of the country and American bases from a South Korean perspective.

Secondary Sources

GRINKER, Roy Richard. *Korea and its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Chapter 1, "Introduction: Unification and the Disruption of Identity in South Korea," pp. 1-17, and Chapter 2, "Nation, State, and the Idea of Unification: Speaking of the Unspeakable," pp. 19-48.

This unusual book takes an anthropological look at the challenges of unifying a country in which generations have now been taught to demonize the other side. Almost exclusively focusing on conditions in South Korea in the early/mid-1990s, it richly examines social and cultural obstacles towards recreating "Korea."

MOON, Katharine H.S. *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 240 pages.

This monograph brings to light the official use of South Korean "camptown" women to service US military personnel stationed on the peninsula, focusing on the stories of these women and the way they view their roles in the international relations of Korea and the US.

Film

PARK, Chan-wook, dir. *JSA (Joint Security Area)*. 110 min. 2000.

Available through select retail venues. Available for rental and purchase through many retail video/DVD outlets (including Amazon and Netflix.)

Park's feature film is a blockbuster approach towards the politics of unification, and is significant as a historical document as testament to the popular cultural impact of Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy. The film was a number one hit in Korea and throughout Asia when it was released in 2000.

Web Resources

Race Ethnicity, and National Identity: America, Korea, and Biracial Koreans, Grace Mitchell (College of Staten Island, CUNY)

<http://www.exeas.org/resources/korean-race-ethnicity.html>

This teaching unit features discussion questions and suggestions for using Katharine Moon's *Sex Among Allies* in the classroom, as well as additional suggested student readings.

South Korea's Ministry of Unification Website

<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/>

By clicking on the English section of this website, students can read through South Korea's current official statements on unification.

Koreans beyond Korea

A great number of Koreans live beyond the borders of North and South Korea. What does it mean to be "Korean"? What is the link between ethnicity, language, citizenship and "belonging to a Korean community"? This section examines ethnic Koreanness beyond the Korean peninsula, specifically in Japan and the US.

Secondary Sources

ABELMANN, Nancy and John LIE. *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. 272 pages.

Abelmann examines issues of race and power in contemporary US society through the problem of Korean-American involvement in the 1992 riots.

WENDER, Melissa. "Mothers Write Ikaino." In RYANG, Sonia, ed. *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*. New York: Routledge, 1999. pp. 74-102.

Wender's article focuses on the lives of second-generation Japanese-Korean women writing themselves into Japanese literature. Students can examine the problems of Korean attempts to gain citizenship in Japan

Literary Work

FENKL, Heinz Insu. *Memories of My Ghost Brother*. New York: Dutton, 1996. 271 pages.

This is the mesmerizing story of a young boy, the son of a Korean woman and an American serviceman, growing up amidst the ghosts of modern Korean history as well as among the lived surroundings of US military presence in South Korea.

Web Resource

Still Present Pasts: Korean Americans and the "Forgotten War"
<http://www.stillpresentpasts.org/spp/exhibit/exhibit.html>

This website presents a multi-faceted art exhibit that explores the legacies of the Korean War.