

Two Perspectives on the Land, State and the Environment in Pre-Modern and Modern Korea

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Books reviewed:

- (1) Kim, Seonmin. *Ginseng and Borderland: Territorial Boundaries and Political Relations between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea 1636-1912*. University of California Press. Oakland, 2017. (Kindle Edition)
- (2) Edited by David Fedman, Eleana J. Kim and Albert L. Park. *Forces of Nature: New Perspectives on Korean Environments*, Cornell University Press. Ithaca and London, 2023.

Introduction

Research into the Korean Peninsula's environment and the natural world's effects on politics and economics has enjoyed greater examination in recent years. This trend invariably follows global interest into the effects of humans upon the climate and nature in their contemporary era – the so-called *Anthropocene*. Writings on what we term as 'nature' do not always cover the broad spectrum of the environment, but rather focus on the interactions of people and the use of particular biological (e.g., rice or cotton) or non-biological (e.g., minerals or land reclamation) resources and their potentials in the coastlines, land, rivers, and deep seas. Some recently published books illustrate this trend, such as Sven Beck-

ert's *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014) and Peter Francopan's more sweeping look at man's effect on the planet, *The Earth Transformed: An Untold History* (2023). In the realm of East Asian history, the study of the pre-modern and modern Chinese environment has skyrocketed in the last decade, ranging from Micah Musscolino's *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River and Beyond, 1938-1950* (2014) to Jonathan Schlesinger's *A World Trimmed with Fur: Wild Things, Pristine Places and the Natural Fringes of Qing Rule* (2019). The number of published articles covering Korean environmental and biological histories have increased significantly but are generally less numerous than studies on neighboring powers. The two texts chosen for this review exemplify the current state of Korean Studies that showcase the effects of the biological and non-biological ecology on politics in the pre-modern, modern, and contemporary worlds.

Ginseng and Borderland

The first text by Seonmin Kim, *Ginseng and Borderland*, surveys the history and use of wild ginseng in the politics of Chosŏn Korea and Qing China between the 16th and 18th centuries (although there are some points on the rapidly transforming 19th century). The contents of the book survey how the value of the ginseng root (K. *insam* 人參) in the mountains of northern Korean Peninsula and southern Manchu heartland (K. *tongsamsaeng* 東三省) became an increasingly contentious point of contact between the established Kingdom of Chosŏn 朝鮮 (王國), which sought to maintain its newly conquered northern border, and an increasingly powerful Jurchen confederation that became the Later Jin Khanate (K. *Hugūm* 後金 (汗國)) (1616-1636) and Imperial Qing Empire (K. *Chŏng* 清 (帝國)) (1636-1912). According to the author, the root became extremely valuable owing to its perceived medicinal properties and rarity – only growing under ideal climatic conditions and requiring years or decades to grow before harvesting. Ginseng became a political and economic point of contention as the root was presented to the Ming court (C. *mýōng* 明) for tribute, could be traded on the border and into the wealthy

markets of China for silver and other goods, and, in turn, promoted the movements of people across loosely established borders to pilfer the root. The monetary value of the ginseng was of most prevalence to the early Jurchen confederations. But the control of populations' movements and separation of peoples along the borders played a greater role after establishing the Qing, and later proved useful for Chosŏn's claims to maintaining a depopulated and obfuscated northern border for their own concerns.

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3. "Making the Borderland"
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Filling the Empty Land/ Korean Subject North of the River/
Demarcating the Border
7. "Conclusion"

The introduction covers and defines the basic concepts. Although the Qing “[...] was motivated by the goal of securing its profits”, Kim argues that “[...] Chosŏn sought to avoid conflicts over the root with its strong neighbor; but the two countries settled on the same solution of clearing the sensitive areas near the two rivers [with] Chosŏn emphasiz[ing] their asymmetrical relationship” (18-19). The relationship over the root did not develop in Hansŏng, where the Chosŏn court surrendered, or at the Qing court in Beijing, but rather at the political penumbra, the Borderland, that combined aspects of the frontier (“undefined zone between distinct political or social entities”) and border (“defined boundary between two neighboring powers”) and became “a site at which the two neighbors encountered one another and clashed but nonetheless recognized their mutual boundary” (37).

The first chapter surveys the development of the Jurchen confederation, covering the rise of Nurhaci and Hong Taiji where Kim points out that the Ming had lost control of important markets in and around the Liaodong Peninsula “by the mid-sixteenth century” and that “[...] regulations were not respected at all” (55). The amount of silver flowing to the northeast appears to have been phenomenal with Kim citing Nicola Di Cosmo and stating that the total heading to the Jurchen amounted to “[...] a quarter of the total foreign silver imported in China in a single year” (67). Ginseng was a key ingredient in the flow of trade and much of this valuable commodity was found at the borders of the Jurchen and the Chosŏn lands. This inevitably brought each side into conflict with one another and resulted in each side blaming the other for not regulating the border properly (79).

The second chapter looks at the issues of territory and identity, when the Qing Emperor Kangxi sent a garrison to survey the region to finish *The Unified Gazetteer of the Great Qing*. The investigation into the region brought the garrison into an armed conflict with Koreans who had come over the border to look for ginseng, as the region was important for the control of the lucrative market. Boundaries were not just import as demarcations of legitimacy, but also the ethnic and mythological connections of the regions with the origins of the Manchu race. The area around

Changbaishan/Paektusan was sacred to both the Qing Jurchens and Chosŏn Koreans, but the importance placed on the mountains was largely reactionary for the Korean government that was often divided and ambivalent over the mountain. Kim writes, “It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that the assumption that all of mountains in Chosŏn territory originated from mt. Paektu was extended to the claim that the mountain itself was actually within Chosŏn territory” (105). Ginseng was again an important ecological agent, but territory, place, and state secrets come to the fore in this chapter. Chosŏn’s core goal in the Qing’s investigation of boundaries was “[...] not to leak any domestic information to its neighbor” (114) concerning the boundary and to ensure that Qing knowledge and demarcation remained unclear.

The third chapter covers the movement of people from both the perspective of Qing China and the non-Jurchen (Manchu) population into the Manchu heartland 東三省 and the Chosŏn Korean population across the border into Qing Chinese territory. Ginseng provided an impetus for people to move into the region and even cross the border to Chosŏn and was a core part of Qing Imperial revenue. In particular, the chapter focuses on the rhetoric used by the Chosŏn court to halt the construction of towers and boundary points close to the Yalu River that could infringe (threaten) Chosŏn’s nominal sovereignty. Kim writes, “By highlighting the inferior status of Chosŏn vis-à-vis the Great Qing, the Koreans succeeded in preventing the construction of a Qing military facility on the Yalu River; as the benevolent ruler of the suzerain court, the Qing emperor accepted the Chosŏn’s request to maintain a vacuum at the boundary” (134-135).

The fourth chapter delves into the asymmetrical tributary relationship between the Chosŏn and Qing courts, and the side-trade that occurred with embassies heading to the Qing capital. This allowed the Chosŏn Koreans a legal means by which to cross into and travel through Qing territory and, by means of this travel, make a profit at the same time. As Kim notes, “[the] courts had established a tributary relationship that not only defined the nature of their political ties but also shaped their economic connections” which included “the creation of a variety of trad-

ing opportunities for Qing and Chosŏn merchants”, the creation of “a space and an opportunity for Koreans to make contact with local people in Qing territory” (175-176). The embassies were not without their issues, and the economic connection was built and maintained on the premise of a firm political hierarchy (210).

The last chapter centers on the fall of Qing China’s ginseng monopoly control and the coterminous loss of control over the Manchu heartland 東三省. A largely Han population were now ‘allowed’ to move into the region near the Chosŏn’s northern border as the yield of ginseng declined and the necessity to populate the area in the face of Russian expansion led to a recalibration of the Qing-Chosŏn borders. An increasing interaction between an expanding population to the north of Chosŏn coupled with Chosŏn subjects slipping into Qing territory led to a situation in which “The two states were no longer willing to accept the existence of an unclear buffer zone; instead, they sought to claim the right to rule both the people and the territory demarcated by a clear border” (242). The strength of the boundary coincided with the loss of importance of both Manchu identity, tied to the region, and the importance of ginseng in trade. It also signaled the loss of the Qing’s power, which would eventually fall in 1912. The world was rapidly changing in the late 19th century and Kim clearly states that “The fact that the Chosŏn court demanded field investigations in order to demarcate the boundary demonstrates that the Koreans had begun to recognize the system of international relations in which a country is defined by distinct boundaries and territorial sovereignty” (239).

The book is an excellent introduction to the nature of asymmetrical international relations in Northeast Asia before the advent of more modern political systems. It is highly readable and compact enough to complete in an undergraduate course (especially on Pre-modern Korean International Relations). Its focus on the importance of political, philosophical, and ethnic boundaries allows the reader to understand how the interaction at the borderlands became a moving pendulum that affected and forced the mental and physical boundaries of a people, their origins, histories, and economies. There were two theoretical ‘glues’ that were uti-

lized to keep the cohesive historical narrative – *Ginseng and Borderland*. I would argue that the latter was the stronger concept throughout the book and was better defined from the introduction to the conclusion. This was in part due to the fact that the borderland's exactness became a more important feature of tribute relations until the end of the 19th century. Ginseng, although connected in each chapter, fell away from the center of discussion as the root itself became scarcer. An expanded discussion of the ginseng trade would have made for a more complete understanding of the root and its impact on the economy and society in Northeast Asia. In particular, the importance of ginseng trade for silver and other goods during the early and late Qing needed to have been clarified. Was ginseng a conduit for cash to fuel the early expanding empire (i.e. weapons) and later to generate silver cash for the empire? Would then a discussion of the world-wide flow of silver also have helped understand ginseng's global implications and connections? In addition, the market and reasons for the ginseng demand did not seem as well developed as the discussion of borderlands and troubles surrounding trade. Is there any information on the destination of the ginseng once it left the Manchu heartland 東三省 and Chosŏn borders? Its inclusion in the book would have recentered ginseng to the heart of the argument. In addition, an additional discussion on the *hyanghwain* 向化人 would have offered an opposite look into the nature of boundaries when Chosŏn attempted to control its northern borders prior to the Later Jin's ascent.

Forces of Nature: New Perspectives on Korean Environments

The second text edited by David Fedman, Eleana J. Kim, and Albert L. Park is a collaborative work that combines a wide spectrum of disciplines and eras issued after a conference at the University of California, Irvine in 2018. Unlike a single-author monograph, the collection of works is centered around understanding man's impact on the Korean Peninsula's ecology and its effects in a range of societies over time. This leads to a freer range of exploration but limits any in-depth analysis.

There are ten core articles, each with an accompanying introduction (panel chair), and additional writing that act as individual “chapters,” such as David Fedman’s “General Introduction”, Marc Los Huertos and Albert L. Park’s “Geographical Introduction” and Albert L. Park and Eleana J. Kim’s “Epilogue”. Although not part of the main articles, the “General Introduction” and “Geographical Introduction” spell out the purpose and objectives of the edited volume. Fedman clearly and succinctly introduces how and why we interact with the natural world in the Koreas today. According to Fedman, the natural world has been intensely politicized leading, often times, to the erroneous transformation of nature. Although it can act as a ‘passive backdrop’ for the Koreas and the peoples within the states, nature has been swept aside for various projects and has been debated over times owing to internal (e.g., cancer from chemical leaks) and external factors (e.g., world environmental movement) which has given way to increasing numbers of NGOs throughout the country. Be that as it may, there is a great contention between the stability of the ecosystem, the demands and burdens placed upon it, human’s evolving relations with the environment, and, finally, how our imagination can represent a past that never existed (or was unnatural itself). These phenomena are not entirely confined to the contemporary world either. Fedman spells out *three basic facts* essential to understanding the Korean Peninsula’s environment. These are:

1. “Korea’s location at the crossroads of Asia”;
2. “its mountainous topography”;
3. “its regional variation” (13).

The following “Geographical Introduction” gives an excellent overview of the theories of geography, followed by the various rock formations and geological history of the peninsula. Huertos and Park also introduce the climatic variations, bodies of water, and aspects of the soil that could impact life and agriculture on the peninsula. The maps are also very useful and can be referred when reading the main chapters. Both of these ‘introduction’ chapters preceding the main articles are good reads

on their own and offer succinct information on the peninsular biosphere that is not readily available in most history books. Indeed, it feels a shame that these ‘introduction’ chapter were not longer as the information can be used in each subsequent chapters for the book. Namely, maps and graphical information that showcased corresponding information for the subsequent chapters would have better illustrated the contents and placed the core information in an easily shared space. Be that as it may, the first two chapters are a good resource on their own for any introduction of Korea’s biospheres and ecological history.

The contents of the edited volume, including these aforementioned chapters, are as follows:

1. Ann Sherif, “Foreword”
2. David Fedman, “General Introduction: Whose Nature? Centering the Environment in Korean Studies”
3. Marc Los Huertos and Albert L. Park, “Geographical Introduction: A Biography of the Korean Peninsula in Maps”
4. “Part 1: Imperial Interventions”
David Fedman, section introduction with articles by:
John S Lee, “A State of Ranches and Forests: The Environmental Legacy of the Mongol Empire in Korea”,
Joseph Seeley, “Dammed Fish: Piscatorial Developmentalism and the Remaking of the Yalu River”,
5. “Part 2: Crisis and Response”
Eleana J. Kim, section introduction with articles by:
Sooa Im McCormick, “The Politics of Frugality: Environmental Crisis and Artistic Production in Eighteenth-Century Korea”
Hyojin Park, “Between Memory and Amnesia: Seoul’s Nanjido Landfill, 1978-1993”
Ewa Eriksson Fortier and Suzy Kim, “North Korea Caught between Developmentalism and Humanitarianism”
6. “Part 3: Processes of Dispossession”
Albert L. Park, section introduction with articles by:
Anders Riel Muller (Yeonjun Song), “Rice Fields, Mountains and the

Invisible Meatification of Korean Agriculture”

Lindsay S.R. Jolivette, “The Eco-zombies of South Korean Cinema: Consumerism, Carnivores and Eco-criticism”

7. “Part 4: Reclaiming Life”

Eleana J. Kim, section introduction with articles by:

Yonjae Paik, “Communal Environmentalism in the History of the Organic Farming Movement in South Korea”

Jeongsu Shin, “Gotjawal: The Promise of Becoming Wild”

Nan Kim, “South Korea’s Nuclear Energy Entanglements and the Timelessness of Ecological Democracy”

8. Albert L. Park and Eleana J. Kim, “Epilogue: On Everyday Ecologies and Systems of Mediation”

John S. Lee’s chapter, “A State of Ranches and Forests: The Environmental Legacy of the Mongol Empire in Korea,” plots the environmental impact of the Mongol Invasions of Koryŏ through equine and sylvan cultures. This left, according to Lee, a ‘significant institutional and environmental legacy’ (37) that can still be seen somewhat today with Jeju’s association with horses and the southern isles with pines. First, Lee documents how the Mongols created ranch systems to supply their large numbers of horses – not only transforming the land but also introducing the bureaucratic offices charged with their maintenance. Second, the genetic lineage of the animals, namely Mongolian horses, interbred with Korean and created new breeds. Third, the pines sourced by the Mongols to build their fleets to invade Japan were later protected to service future fleets even after the Mongol Empire had vanished. Last, these pine lands and pastures were related to one another in area and defense, with pines increasing in quality as horse quality fell after the 17th century. These changes were not only Mongolian-driven, but the animals and areas were inherited and changed in Chosŏn to supply their own military needs and even the tribute to the Ming. Thus, the impact was not only foreign driven but became a *palimpsest* with each group contributing to the continued development over the *long durée*. The impact of the invasion is, quoting Lee, “[...] best understood through a centurieslong perspective” that af-

affected the use of land that could be used for horses, government services and the sylvian ecology.

Joseph Seeley's chapter, "Dammed Fish: Piscatorial Developmentalism and the Remaking of the Yalu River," covers the building of Sup'ung Dam, its subsequent filling, and the 'piscatorial developmentalism' of the Yalu River. The dam's primary purpose was to create hydroelectric power for developing industrial centers supporting Japan in occupied Korea and the puppet state of Manchukuo. The area for the reservoir impacted both human and animal life. Cleared of its human and animal population before being used, fish not native to the region were transplanted to the reservoir (55). The dam's construction also had an unexpected effect on the fisheries downstream by polluting the waters and killing native fish population. Thus, the effects went well beyond arresting the flow of water. Under the subsequent communist government, the dam became a site of various competing ideologies that either downplayed its past uses or exalted the "brilliantly" implemented plans (57). Overall, the dam affected both human and aquatic populations in equal measure and each subsequent generation used its existence and memory of the dam to promote output and the idea of state-led development.

In Sooa Im McCormick's "The Politics of Frugality: Environmental Crisis and Artistic Production in Eighteenth-Century Korea," we are introduced to effects of the environment on government planning, its measures of frugality and the display of culture between the late 17th and 18th centuries when famines killed up to 33% of the Chosŏn population (1670-1671 and 1695-1696). The "Modest," "Austere," and "Restrained" descriptions of this period are, according to the author, less to do with following Neo-Confucian philosophy, but were rather in "response to climatic oddities, ecological change and the economic crises they precipitated" (65). The mass death and lack of foodstuffs led to horrific scenes, and the *sumptuary* laws were implemented by King Yŏngjo 'in response to the deteriorating ecological conditions' (71). Her arguments contradict popular presentations of the austere works from the period. The dramatic climatic change led to the protection of local woodlands due to "scarcity and rising costs of wood" (72). In addition, the decline of the sylvian

ecology happened alongside the decline of silk, perhaps from temperature fluctuations that harmed both the silk-worm larva and the mulberry leaf which led Yōngjo to limit the importation of Chinese-produced silk to protect the Chosŏn market (74).

Hyojin Park's "Between Memory and Amnesia: Seoul's Nanjido Landfill, 1978-1993" covers the use and memory of Seoul's (then) largest landfill site that was later converted to the World Cup Stadium. Instead of looking at people's interaction with pristine ecology and the natural environment, Park elegantly portrays this terrible landscape, where groups of workers and waste pickers competed and fought with government entities and gangs. The structure and competition of power with 'no overall control' reflected many of the divisions elsewhere in Korea society during the 1980s and 1990s. The waste site became a center for social change and power when Korea was becoming a democratic state. It was later transformed into an ecological park that has discarded the landfill's memory, by simply covering it up and forgetting the past as it was the anthesis of Seoul's developing image (84-86).

Ewa Eriksson Fortier and Suzy Kim's "North Korea Caught between Developmentalism and Humanitarianism" looks at the terrific crisis in North Korea where short-term paradigms between development and humanitarian aid could not overcome the long-term environmental crises plaguing the North. Following an excellent overview of North Korea's ecology, the authors mention that not only is the land not suited for self-sufficiency, but unexploded munitions litter the fields, and the government sought to rely on its own products in the face of lower yield resulting from climate change that helped lead to the famine of the early 1990s. Be that as it may, the North Korean government has taken a key interest in climate issues and has supported numerous resolutions and the people have contributed to various projects supported by international organizations. Mismanagement has caused many issues, but the problems in North Korea are, according to the authors, a reflection of issues seen around the world including depleted soils and emphasis on monocultures. However, industrial development continues to shape the environment in the north and international organizations are unable to make any of the

necessary long-term projects owing to the Northern government's defense criteria and politics.

Anders Riel Muller (Yeonjun Song)'s article, "Rice Fields, Mountains and the Invisible Meatification of Korean Agriculture," analyzes the massive and largely invisible transformation of Korea's countryside where Korea can produce almost as much meat as Denmark – but on only a quarter of the land (110) with imported feed lessening the transformation of land use in South Korea (111). According to Muller, 'the bifurcation strategy allowed the livestock sector to expand without converting vast tracts of South Korea's agricultural land to pasture and feed production' (112). The strange, and ominous, bifurcation of large swathes of rice fields and relatively few feed lands comes from protection for rice farmers and meat producers, but places South Korea's environmental footprint on a global scale and increases the instability of the protein market if those monocultures are disrupted (121). This liberalization of 'feed' enabled rice to remain protected, the landscape remains seemingly unchanged, and it became a patriotic duty to eat meat. However, this 'biggest agricultural transformation' now connects Korea's protein markets well beyond its own borders and now is dependent on global prices and stability.

Lindsay S.R. Jolivet's "The Eco-zombies of South Korean Cinema: Consumerism, Carnivores, and Eco-criticism" takes a very interesting approach by looking at the relation of eating meat and taking care of the environment through the vehicle of zombie films (133). The author surveys three films in which health and safety of meat intermingle with the zombie genre and "are the manifestations of the anxiety caused by detrimental ecological effects of the booming commercial meat industry and increased meat consumption" (123). The zombies are the embodiment of people's fears and often reflect contemporary concerns (such as the mad-cow crisis). The films' core message is, however, a criticism of the contamination found in foods (largely meats) and the polluting of the environment. These zombies are a reflection of the 'eco-punishment' found in the world wither in the BSE crisis or the recycling of waste back into food until the two are inseparable.

Yonjae Paik's article, "Communal Environmentalism in the History of the Organic Farming Movement in South Korea," covers the history of environmental farming from Park Chung-hee's 'Green Revolution' where fertilizers and monocrops helped create pests and diseases thus necessitating pesticides (140). This issue created a slew of environmental problems and the use of artificial components led to environmental and human health issues that "were a symptom of the exploitative relationships of mainstream agriculture" (141). The two main groups covered in the 1970s include the Chongnonhie and the P'ulmu School, which were later followed by the creation of the Hansalim Cooperative which sought to teach farmers about organic farming and offer a place to sell their goods (144). The government was not supportive of these groups, as the organic farms contradicted the state's intensive developmental model and did not always turn a profit. But each group, most founded in a religious philosophy, Christian or Donghak, created a new ideal of the organic community within South Korea and Paik demonstrates how an indigenous grassroots movement started to question the 'poisoned' capitalism of the 1970s and 80s agriculture.

Jeongsu Shin introduces a new vocabulary to our environment in "Gotjawal: The Promise of Becoming Wild," wherein we find a local village group combating environmental activists over the construction of a safari theme park. The activists argue that the land has become a *Gotjawal* - a naturally reclaimed area "rich in biodiversity" (150). However, the term *Gotjawal* is a relatively new term for the environment which is unique to Jeju on the peninsula. Shin explains that the concept of *Gotjawal* may have come from a variety of earlier Jeju vocabularies and developed conterminously with "[...] native Jeju islanders [not necessarily reading] these patches of land as one total special concept of *Gotjawal*" (157). Yet, the interest in protecting Jeju's natural environment from overexploitation encapsulates the idea of an area of nature rejuvenated specific to Jeju. *Gotjawal* may have existed in the past but its sylvan existence is given new prominence through scientific investigation that first labelled the land *Gotjawal* (159) and the continued use by environmental activists that have cemented its vocabularic reality in the syl-

vian world.

In the last chapter, Nan Kim covers the most powerful manmade force at work in the world today in “South Korea’s Nuclear Energy Entanglements and the Timelessness of Ecological Democracy.” The paper covers nuclear power facilities in Korea and the local movements that hinder or support facilities connected to the nuclear industry. Nan Kim does an excellent job of covering the development and reasons for nuclear power in Korea. However, the government often must lobby different locations close to established nuclear power stations to create additional capacity which have met both success and stiff resistance. The nuclear crises in Fukushima and corruption in Korea have tainted the industry, but the promise of jobs and investment into neglected areas are used to support the projects’ democratic mandate. The city of Kyōngju has constructed a waste storage facility for a mixture of these reasons, but also as a way to ensure that the area does not have to be forced to house more radioactive materials. Rather Kim focuses on the fact that an idea of ‘Long-Term Stewardship’ remains absent in Korea and that “in their relative haste and expedience can hardly answer for the duration of their impact...” (177).

Overall, the compilation is an excellent addition and the first complete look at Korean ecology in the English language. Each chapter ranges from the 13th century to the present day, but there is a large emphasis on the last 50 years. The addition of works that balanced surveys of both North and South Korea gave a complete picture of the environment from a variety of angles. Although the articles work well individually, I felt that there was room where the chapters in their sections could have overlapped. For example, the nuclear issue and zombie films left open a section for a debate on and reference to the nuclear disaster film *Pandora* (2016) where each side could have spoken on a mutual topic. In addition, Muller’s article might have made mention of the rising levels of unused milk in Korea – a byproduct of the *bifurcation*. But these are minor details and are sure to be covered by the authors in the future.

However, many chapters and the epilogue do show a common theme. “The Epilogue” by Albert L. Park and Eleana J. Kim not only ar-

gues how the environment could be approached (181) but also outlines three areas for future studies: critical cultural ecologies, landscapes of militarized modernity, and vernacular climate changes. However, it is argued that Capitalism, as well as Religion and Science, are the main modes of mediation through which people interact with, protect and, more often, exploit nature. In fact, it has been the idea of capitalism and liberalization that has come under criticism throughout the papers in the collection. For many authors, and also in the epilogue, industrial capitalism is argued to be unable to solve long-term environmental issues. The concept of capitalism, however, is unclear in the last chapter as it is often placed alongside and seemingly equated with (military) industrialization. There are of course non-capitalist societies (North Korea) that have equally or more severely abused their environments, but the main differences between the Communist industrialized ideal and Capitalist industrialized ideal, and their subsequent effects on ecology, are not explained in enough detail. Capitalism and industrialism are not the same, but the conclusion seems to treat them as such. The subsequent discussion on religion and its role in environmentalism is also interesting, especially in their capacity to organize people and set out human-nature interactions. But again, there is not enough room to discuss atheistic approaches or non-religious philosophical notions of nature. For example, the epilogue seems to have left out a proper discussion of the global environmental movements such as 'Just Stop Oil.' Lastly, the role of technology is introduced, but the great eco-economic changes, such as electrification of transportation is also strangely absent. This above all indicates how Eco-capitalism can influence world markets and politics and is a combination of the three mediations. Be that as it may, the volume offers the most complete and diverse picture of the Korean environment published so far and should be a basic reading in all courses on Korea.