

<https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2023.3.1.159>

Andrew David Jackson, Codruța Sîntionean, Remco Breuker, and CedarBough Saeji, *Invented Traditions in North and South Korea*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2021, 297 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8248-9033-9, \$28.00 (pbk)

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Invented Traditions in North and South Korea, edited by Andrew D. Jackson et al., delivers a collection of essays that reveal the elite use of invented traditions in Korea and provide case studies of both South and North Korea, which allows comparison between the two.

The basic notion this book is built upon, an “invention of tradition,” comes from the 1983 volume by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Hobsbawm noted that some traditions “that appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (Hobsbawm, 1983, as cited in this volume).

According to Andrew D. Jackson, one of the editors who opens the book with his introduction, Hobsbawm’s theory received harsh criticism in two regards: 1) his naive distinction between genuine custom and invented tradition; and 2) his claim of the universal applicability of his theory. Still, his notion can be a powerful tool to explain the ideological use of the past. With this useful tool for cultural analysis, the book joins the growing body of work investigating the invention of tradition in recent Korean history. Especially important among them are the work of Laurel Kendall and Kim Kwang-ök, from both of whose approaches to the revival of culture this book draws on notions of tradition.

This book also aims to fill the lack of comparative cultural analysis between South and North Korea. The volume aspires to demonstrate that meaningful comparison is possible and even vital, not least concerning the elite use of invented traditions.

The chapters in this volume, according to Jackson, are best understood in the context of the two Koreas’ struggle to form distinct, national cultural identities for both internal and external consumption. One aspect of invented traditions is that they are used as sources of and tools for contention. Here contention refers to “the expropriation of cultural revival by opposing groups within state and society to contend political legitimacy.” Using these ideas about culture as a site for contention, and Laurel Kendall’s ideas of the commodification, consumption, and performativity of invented traditions, the book attempts to move forward into a comparative international perspective, given that both Koreas have produced invented traditions for consumption across and beyond their national borders.

This book's comparison of the two Koreas shows that there are both significant commonalities and differences in the two Koreas' use of invented tradition. A series of case studies show that in North Korea, the active inventors of traditions often openly admit their change and re-invention of traditional forms. This stands in some contrast to the revival of heritage by the South Korean Park Chung Hee government, for whom the pretense of continuity was important for the formation of its cultural identity. The comparison reveals some underlying assumptions common to both regimes behind their respective cultural inventions: "Here, culture is not seen as a blend of indigenous and external forms that have been negotiated and reformulated over the years, but instead as something that can be cleansed of its individual or politically undesirable parts."

Another point this work highlights is that as Koreans formulated the cultural identity of modern Korea, its process was complicated by several problems, and the invention of tradition has been a way of overcoming these. First, the invention of tradition has been a way to re-establish cultural agency by political leaders in two nations that lost their historical agency due to foreign intervention and colonial rule. Second, Korean political leaders saw the re-establishment of a "lost" national cultural identity – against foreign involvement, which felt like a full-scale foreign assault upon Korean cultural identity – as a duty. The invention of tradition was a tool that could help achieve this. Finally, the re-creation of the Korean heritage was complicated by inter-Korean competition. Both Koreas attempted to establish a cultural identity superior to their competitor.

Hence invented tradition is a key to understanding "how the two Koreas remember the past, shape their divergent modernities, and present themselves to the world."

The book's first section investigates how Korea invented its cultural identity in historical and mythical terms. The second part examines invented traditions related to the history of the Korean language. The third section focuses on cultural transformation with an emphasis on the role of human agency and performativity. The final section center on space and show the political use of space the in two Koreas, North and South.

Applying Hobsbawm and Ranger's framework of invented tradition is very suitable for cultural analysis of the history of the Korean peninsula since 1945, because it was a time of immense social and demographic change and also a time of nation-building. The comparison of invented traditions between the two Koreas in their formation of identity allows much more profound study as well. An inquisitive reader might still be left with the question "aren't most if not all traditions invented at some point?" but it can also lead the reader to ask profound questions about what constitutes tradition, which a good book does. For readers who are interested in the recent Korean history, the book helps to see its identity formation process with the means of invented tradition. It also gives a good comprehensive view that includes both Koreas in their dynamic relations.