

Buchbesprechungen

Shannon McCUNE: *Korea's Heritage: A Regional and Social Geography*. For an uncritical review of the same book by G. Henderson see JAS, XX/3–4 (1957), 744–748. Rutland/Vermont and Tokyo, 1960. Pp. XIII, DM 25,—.

In this book, Shannon McCune surveys, in eleven chapters, „Korea's geographical position, character, and diversity“ (VII), especially „the differences and similarities from place to place“ (p. 10). In the first chapter dealing with the peninsula's location and diversity, the author rightly observes that „it (the peninsula) has served as a bridge between powers on the continent of Asia and powers in the Pacific“ (p. 3). Indeed, this aspect of Korea, her central position in the Far East, has been repeated throughout the book. Korea, including its adjacent islands, comprises 85,285 square miles but, because of its latitudinal spread (latitude 43° N to latitude 33°06'), demonstrates marked differences. This geographic diversity is, according to McCune, owing to the contrast within the peninsula of plains and mountain lands (p. 7). Only one-fifth of the country can be cultivated, chiefly in river valleys and coastal plains. The remaining four-fifths of the peninsula are, on the other hand, mountainous and sparsely populated. Terrain and climatic differences between the mountainous north and fertile south affect not only production but population densities as well. But to describe these divisions as „the Agricultural South and the Industrial North“ is, warns the author, an oversimplification (p. 9). Indeed, the book is written to defeat such over-simplification. The imposition of the 38th parallel as a barrier between North and South accentuated such geographic diversities. Mr McCune is a fierce critic of the division of Korea:

Actually, in no place in the world was a line more sharply drawn between these powers than along the thirty-eighth parallel in Korea (p. 39).

He sees everywhere the disasters and miseries brought about by the Korean War, the outcome of such division.

The second chapter, „The Land of Korea“ (pp. 11–24), is a more detailed analysis of the geographic diversity outlined in the preceding chapter. The third chapter dealing with the history of Korea (pp. 25–40) is perhaps the weakest portion of the book. Although it does not claim to be more than a popular outline, a number of factual errors disturb the reader. Koguryō adopted Buddhism not in 371, but 372; Paekche did so twelve years later (384). Koguryō was defeated by the allied army of Silla and T'ang in 668, but Paekche was crushed by the same force in 660. That „Koguryō had fought a successful war against the T'ang invaders in 613 A.D., ...“ is impossible (p. 27), because T'ang did not come into being until 618. Wang Kōn^[1] is misspelt as „Wang Gun“ (p. 28), and labelled „a rebel from the north“. The second Khitan invasion of 1010–1 is dated 1011 (p. 30), and the Liao dynasty whose date is 907–1125 is again wrongly dated as 907–1119 (p. 30). Kubilai's second invasion of Japan occurred not in 1279 (p. 30), but 1281. The most famous admiral in Korean history, Yi Sun-sin^[2], is misspelt as „Yi Su m sin“ (p. 33).

A discussion of the political pattern, ancient and modern, in Korea forms the fourth chapter (pp. 41–55). Here again the importance of Korea as a strategic area of contact in Far Eastern history is emphasized. Because of its central geographical position, Korea not only served as the bridge over which higher civilizations passed from China to Japan and

Melanesia but has been a testing ground for different Asian peoples. Caught in the mesh of international politics, Korea has always been affected by political changes in the Far East. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the discussion of Korea's relationship with China in the past, the nature of the Korean government in the past – which is described as „autocratic“ –, the influence of Confucianism in Korean politics, the structure of the Japanese government in Korea, and the postwar occupation of the peninsula by the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. forces. According to McCune, the three fundamental factors in the history of postwar Korea are: (1) the division of the nation by the 38th parallel into zones occupied by fundamentally opposed forces (p.46); (2) Korea becoming one of the friction spots between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union (p. 48); (3) the rise of Korean nationalism (pp.49ff.). With the Korean War, the author laments,

Korea once again became the devastated theatre of a struggle between great powers, its strategic geographic position a severe handicap to peace and progress (p.55).

The fifth chapter (pp.56–66) studies the Korean population patterns. The author traces the growth of population historically, and observes that the noteworthy point is the movement of people to the pioneer land of the north, i.e., the northeastern interior of Korea and southern Manchuria. The major movement remained, however, within Korea itself. What is lacking here is the analysis of the social structure of the population, past and present, and the relation of its economic development. For the sixth chapter which discusses the manners and customs of the Korean people (pp.67–81), the reader is advised to consult similar accounts in *Korea, Its Land, People, and Culture of All Ages*, published by Hagwon sa (Seoul, 1960). The seventh and eighth chapters have as their themes agriculture, fishery, forestry, mining, energy, and transportation in Korea. The author emphasizes the cruelty of the Japanese colonial policy and Japanese exploitation of the Korean soil and economy to meet their imperialistic needs.

By far the most important section of the book is Chapters 9 and 10 which discuss the regions of north and south Korea. The author establishes three distinct categories of land area and stresses the details that make for geographic diversity (p.117). He divides the peninsula into the North and the South, the North consisting of three geographic regions and the South of seven. These regions are further subdivided into sections or land areas, the determining factors being the boundaries drawn along traditional county lines, physical geography, economic activity, and large cities within their environs. The following is a summary of these categories.

North	I. Northern interior ¹	A) The drainage area of the Tuman River B) The slopes of Mt. Paektu with their lava flows and other volcanic land forms C) The western boundary between China and Korea marked by the Yalu River
	II. Northeastern coast	A) The northern section B) The southern section ² B 1) Section around Songjin and Hamhung B 2) Section around Wonsan
	III. Northwestern coast	A) The interior section of mountains and isolated valleys B) The coastal section along the Yellow Sea
South	IV. East central coast	
	V. Central & southern mountains	A) The Diamond Mountains B) The corridor ³ running from south-western to northeastern Korea C) The southeastern area of the central mountains around Mt. T'aebaek D) Mt. Chiri massif
	VI. West central coast	
	VII. Southwestern coast	A) The northern plains B) The extreme southern coast
	VIII. Southeastern coast ⁴	A) The northeastern mountain section B) The coastal fringe
	IX. Cheju Island ⁵	
X. Ullung Island ⁶		

The book ends with nine appendices, including a useful bibliography on the subject. There are also a number of excellent maps and a good miscellaneous collection of photographs (from which, however, the picture of devastations of the Korean War might have been spared).

1 Served as an open frontier or pioneer land for the people; characterized by itinerant fire-field folk (Hwajönmin) 1221. There are also lumbering, fishing, mining (gold, copper, ferro-alloy metal), and hydro-electric power.

2 Consists of „a horst, or upthrown block of the earth's crust, along the coast, and a graben, or down-thrown block, inland“. See page 138.

3 A stream-eroded valley covered by outpouring of lava.

4 Defined as „a basin of hills and valleys drained by the Naktong River and bordered on the west and north, by the Central and Southern mountains“. See page 176.

5 Also called Quelpart Island; some 60 miles off the southwestern coast.

6 Also called Dagelet Island; some 80 miles off the east central coast.