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Why has *Land* been so consistently popular, selling more than one million copies since the first installment appeared in 1969? The main reasons are artistic and moral. Beyond her great talent as a creative writer, Park Kyong-ni in *Land* unobtrusively espouses her own vision of natural justice and of the dignity of the humble. In a rapidly industrializing society like Korea, values are in flux. Status categories traditionally anchored in family ancestry clash with emerging indices of status based on wealth or expertise. This work provides a projection, a quite realistic expression, of the sorts of value conflicts underlying ongoing conversations about what it means to be a Korean in a rapidly internationalizing world. Thanks to her talent, Park Kyong-ni manages to address a spectrum of today's timely issues, not least that of the public status of women in a society which long limited female voices to the private sphere.

The Korean critic Zeong Hyon-Kee aptly has written that *Land* "portrays the beauty of those who never lose their dignity, who never bend in the face of punishment, and the ugliness of those who gloat at their own superiority, who make the mistake of believing in the corrupt power protecting them." The future agony of Japanese colonialism is but a dire premonition in the first part of *Land*, but at the turn of the century one of the chronic clashes of modern Korean history – patriotism versus collaboration – already had raised its head. The opening of the saga deals with the aftermath of the recently suppressed Tonghak Rebellion, an uprising intended to expel the Japanese after the Sino-Japanese War, and describes the "Righteous Armies" of Korean rebels who gave their lives to resist foreign conquest. For foreign readers, *Land* thus furnishes an illuminating glimpse of a Korea in 1897 torn between past and future, a country facing catastrophe, yet whose population possessed an inner strength and nobility.

The translation of *Land* is by and large reliable as regards literal faithfulness to the original, and some of the dialogue is skillfully rendered. A few aspects of the translation could have been better handled, though most readers unfamiliar with Korea will barely notice such shortcomings. The McCune-Reischauer system should have been used for transliteration of proper names and place names. A number of expressions were translated in disregard of established conventions, generating unnecessary confusion for readers who go on to explore Korean history. Often, idiomatic Korean forms of address that have no simple English equivalents are simply retained (in italics) with no explanation at all. A glossary or footnotes would have permitted readers to decipher these otherwise mystifying usages. Still, the translator is to be commended for much hard work invested in a worthwhile endeavor. It is to be hoped that publication of this portion of *Land* is only the beginning, and that more of Park Kyong-ni's panoramic novel will be translated in days to come.

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Getting Married in Korea: Of Gender, Morality and Modernity, by Laurel Kendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xiii, 259 pp. (ISBN 0520201981 cloth; ISBN 0520202007 paper)

Courtesy of *Korean Studies Review* 1998, no. 6
Electronic file: <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/korean-studies/files/ksr98-06.htm>

Kendall's most recent work is among her very best. In it, she interrogates the social and cultural processes attending contemporary weddings in Korea. As with her explorations of Korean shamanism, Kendall focuses primarily on the role of women in Korean society. However, the volume is anything but a rumination on the difficulties facing women in a Confucian-informed society. Rather, her work is an intriguing and nuanced exploration of the negotiation of gender politics in a rapidly changing late capitalist society. Kendall does not concentrate solely on the contemporary, however, and she is well attuned to the historical development of wedding traditions during the past several centuries. The result of her investigations into Korean weddings is nothing short of an anthropological tour-de-force. Through the examination of particular stories of specific individuals read against a backdrop of economic and political change, Kendall masterfully situates her engaging discussions of weddings and marriage in Korea at the crossroads of anthropology, sociology, history and folklore.

She begins her work with what she labels a "Confessional Introduction." Her detailed account of her personal relationship to the field situation, as well as to many of her informants, coupled to her own problematizing of the entire field of ethnographic writing serves two purposes. First, the personal descriptions bring what might seem a distant fieldwork site into clearer focus—Korea is not exoticized, and her position is not privileged. Second, Kendall's musings on the role of the ethnographer reveal her clear understanding of the problems associated with the ethnographic process—particularly when it is a Western woman writing about non-Western women. Using a Korean proverb as a guide, Kendall plunges into what is without doubt one of the most discussed topics in Korea, namely getting married.

The remainder of the work is broken into three main sections—Ceremony, Courtship, Exchange—each consisting of two chapters. The section on Ceremony focuses on both a historical overview of wedding ceremonies in Korea, as well as a detailed analysis of contemporary wedding ceremonies in Korea. Any casual visitor to Korea in the past twenty years or so has doubtlessly encountered the enormous commercial wedding halls that dot the urban landscape of any reasonably sized city. Inside the walls of these extraordinary facilities, one finds giant reception halls as well as large ceremonial halls where "Western style" weddings are carried out with extraordinary precision and efficiency so as not to result in a back-up of wedding parties. In smaller rooms tucked away on higher levels, an element of the traditional style wedding is performed, namely the *p'yebaek*, where the bride greets her new family. In these wedding halls, the present meets an imagined notion of the past. Kendall provides an amusing and detailed description of one such wedding, and it is this wedding—held in an unexceptional hall in an unexceptional suburb of Seoul—that enables the remainder of her discussion.

Kendall notes that, despite a will to fixity, Korean wedding practices do not conform to a general notion of wedding ritual derived from written texts and learned tradition. Rather, weddings are dynamic cultural expressions that are constantly changing based on the participants' own negotiation of cultural processes and their position within that unsteady terrain. In her third chapter, Kendall focuses on contemporary weddings in the context of modernization, exploring both the historical dimensions of weddings (and the broader concept of marriage) as well as their contemporaneous expression in the rapidly modernizing Korea of the 1970s and 1980s. Setting up the opposition of the "modern

wedding" and the "traditional wedding," and the various concessions made to each type of wedding during the past thirty years, Kendall reveals how the wedding ceremony itself is one subjected to debate, negotiation and frequent reinterpretation. In an interesting discussion of the relationship between politics and ritual, she expertly shows the effect of national policy, such as the 1969 Family Ritual Code (*Kajông ūrye chunch'ik*), on ritual form, and explores how wedding ceremonies ultimately became incorporated into the national identity rhetoric of the late 1980s.

In the second section of the work, *Courtship*, Kendall steps back from the actual wedding ceremony and traces the path that eventually brings a couple to the altar. A great deal of anthropological ink has been spilled concerning the economic and political implications of marriage, yet Kendall manages to add an important contemporary example to this otherwise well-described field. With wonderful ethnographic acumen, she details the concept of both arranged marriages (*chungmae kyôrhon*), love marriages (*yônae kyôrhon*) as well as the half-and-half marriages. She also details some of the attendant practices, such as the arranged meeting (*massôn*), and reveals some of the tensions and difficulties that women experience as they go through this difficult process. It is in this chapter that a glance toward the male side of the process would have greatly helped round out this study, since it seems likely that equally interesting considerations, concerns, fears and anxieties are expressed on the male side of the ethnographic equation.

Kendall's fifth chapter is among her strongest, and her frequent appeal to personal experience narratives makes for an engaging consideration of aspects of arranged marriages. Among the most intriguing figures Kendall discussed here is that of the professional, yet unlicensed, matchmaker—the *Madame Tu*. Stories of good and bad matchmakers are an integral part of contemporary Korean folklore and clearly illuminate many of the concerns that mothers and their marriage-age daughters have concerning the process of finding suitable groom. Kendall properly suggests that these stories "reveal women as enmeshed in the pragmatics of making marriages, not only as skillful matchmakers, but as mothers who set the process in motion and who effect the complex exchanges of proper weddings" (150). It would, of course, have been interesting to collect similar stories about matchmaking from men.

The final section of the work focuses on the various exchanges that are so crucial to the Korean wedding. Kendall focuses primarily on the economic burden many of these exchanges pose for both lower and middle class families (and even upper class families, given the rumored excesses of some of these exchanges). Kendall details these various exchanges: those of household goods (*honsu*); gifts of clothing and jewelry between the bride and groom (*yedan*, *ch'edan* and *p'aemul*); gifts given to the significant kin of the groom (*yedan*); gifts of cash from the groom's kin to the bride (*chôlgap'*), and from the bride's family to the groom's friends (*hamgap'*); and exchanges of food and wine between the two families (*sangsu*) (166). Among the exchanges that Kendall explores in greatest detail are those of ritual silk, given by the bride to the groom's significant kin, and the negotiation of the purchase price of the gift box (*hamgap'*) delivered on the night before the wedding to the bride's house by friends of the groom. Indeed, her final chapter is dedicated to a wonderful economic anthropological consideration of the obligations and expectations of the various parties to the transaction of the gift box price. It is also in

this chapter that consideration of the groom and his friends—the male side of getting married in Korea—receive attention.

Kendall's work provides an exceptionally detailed analysis of women's concerns surrounding the ever-change in cultural complex of wedding in Korea. Her work will clearly appeal to those interested in Korean studies, as she expertly incorporates considerations of politics, sociology, anthropology, folklore and literature on women's issues in Korea (as well as East Asia and the world, for that matter). Kendall's work will likely have general appeal to anthropologists and folklorists who work in other geographic regions, although folklorists will doubtlessly cringe at her rather conservative use of the term "folklore" in short, Kendall's book is an ethnographic masterpiece that is destined to become a classic in the field of Korean studies.

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Echoes of the Past, Epics of Dissent: A South Korean Social Movement, by
Nancy Abelmann. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 306 pp. (ISBN
0-520-08590-6 cloth; ISBN 0-520-20418-2 paper)

Courtesy of *Korean Studies Review* 1998, no. 7

Electronic file: <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/korean-studies/files/ksr98-07.htm>

This book is about the discursive politics of the minjung (the non-elite mass as subject of history) as practiced by the farmers of Koch'ang and their supporters, including students and organizers. Koch'ang is a remote rural county in North Ch'olla Province, but Carter Eckert's eloquent book, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origin of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (University of Washington Press, 1991) has made it known to many Koreanists as the hometown of early capitalists Kim Yôn-su and Kim Sông-su, the founders of the Kyôngbang and Samyang companies. Though Abelmann and Eckert deal with very different issues in their books, Eckert's accounts of the Koch'ang Kim family and their entrepreneurial activities during the colonial period help us to understand the movement of the Koch'ang tenant farmers that Abelmann investigates.

The Samyang group reclaimed land in Koch'ang in the late 1930s, and many villagers of the region worked on the newly created rice fields as tenant farmers. While these fields could later have been allocated to the tenant farmers as a result of the Land Reform Act of 1949, they remained exempt from distribution because of the company's claim that the land was not ready for rice cultivation at that time.

The farmers, nevertheless, believe that it was not distributed because of the political influence of Kim Sông-su, the brother of Samyang's chairman Kim Yôn-su. Motivated by the minjung spirit and the highly politicized atmosphere of 1987, the tenant farmers occupied the headquarters of Samyang in Seoul and demanded the company cede the land to them. Abelmann, who stayed several months in villages with the farmers and participated in their protest in Seoul, writes about their lives, their labor, protests, and discourses of resistance.