

Brothers at War

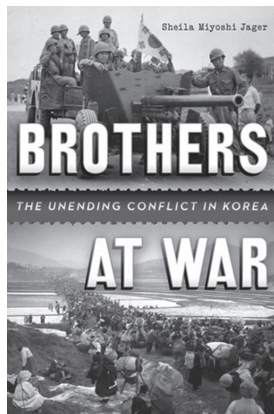
The Unending Conflict in Korea

BY SHEILA MIYOSHI JAGER.

NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 2013

608 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0393068498, HARDBACK

Reviewed by Michael J. Seth



Almost every author writing on the Korean War states that it is often, and aptly for Americans, called the “forgotten war.” Sheila Miyoshi Jager in her book *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea* provides one of the most persuasive cases for its importance, not only because it had a large impact on shaping the geopolitics of Asia and the Pacific but also because it is a conflict that has never ended. She does this in a long but engaging book that is accessible to undergraduate students or to anyone with a limited

background on the topic. The author does not provide much in the way of new information or interpretations, but unlike other accounts of the Korean War, she includes developments up to the present.

The book is divided into four sections. The largest covers the Korean War as it is conventionally presented: the division of the peninsula, the creating of two rival regimes both claiming to be the legitimate representative of the entire nation, the events leading up to the conflict, and the war itself. There is probably no more readable account of the

Korean War available. Where Jager departs from other histories of the Korean War are the next three shorter sections that bring the postarmistice conflict up to the present. Together, they account for two-fifths of the main text. The first of these post-1953 sections covers what she considers to be the “Cold War era” in which rivalry and tensions between the two Koreas took place within the larger context of the Cold War, a period that ended in the late 1960s. With US-Soviet *détente*, the improvements in US-PRC relations, and the American withdrawal from Việt Nam, Washington’s focus on Korea shifted to stability rather than containment. At this point, the conflict became more of what the author calls a “local war,” a period of intense competition between Seoul and P’yŏngyang marked by violent incidents that had relatively little global impact. A final part of the book deals with the period since the early 1990s, when South Korea became a democratic society and North Korea had lost the contest for legitimacy. The conflict then entered a phase in which the main concerns of Seoul, Washington, and the international community were over P’yŏngyang’s nuclear weapons and the repercussions of what was assumed to be the inevitable collapse of the North Korean regime. Jager has made good use of the information available from the North Korean International Documentation Project at the Wilson Center in Washington and from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Korea to incorporate the most recent insights into the Korean War, as well as to provide numerous anecdotes. Drawing upon these sources and the secondary literature, she provides clear and balanced explanations for the causes of the Korean War and the complex relations between the powers involved. She also, in an evenhanded way, discusses the brutality shown by all participants in the war. Throughout the book, Jager weaves into her narrative the experiences of participants in the conflict, making the Korean War real and understandable. Even those familiar with the topic will find these many personal accounts fascinating and informative.

Jager provides a clearly presented analysis of why P’yŏngyang lost what she calls the “legitimacy wars.” North Korea’s economy began

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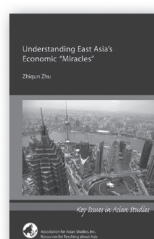
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slowing down as early as the 1960s, just as the South's began its remarkable takeoff. Already in deep trouble, the loss of its chief economic patron, the Soviet Union, after 1990 plunged North Korea into sharp decline. She also credits Seoul's democratization as important, in part because it occurred as South Koreans became fully aware of the prison camps, the political repression, and the grim material conditions in the North. But democracy also brought another change, a growing indifference among younger Koreans to their Northern compatriots and opposition to reunification, at least in the near future. Many Southerners no longer viewed the regime of Kim Il Sung as an alternative Korea, but rather as a strange and troubled backwater whose collapse could bring a flood of refugees that would be ill-equipped to live in a modern democratic society and who would endanger their newly won prosperity.

There are, of course, limits to a book that tries to do so much, and the last section of the book is perhaps too condensed. Anyone trying to understand North Korea today and the current relations between the two Koreas would be advised to also look at another new book, Andrei Lankov's *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Nonetheless, Jager has provided one of the best studies of the Korean War available. ■

MICHAEL J. SETH is a Professor of History at James Madison University. He received his PhD from the University of Hawai'i. He is the author of four books on Korea, including *Education Fever: Society, Politics, and the Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea* (2002) and *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (2010).

A Reader's Companion to the Confucian Analects

BY HENRY ROSEMONT JR.

BASINGTOKE: PALGRAVE PIVOT, 2012

88 PAGES, ISBN: 978-1137303387, HARDBACK

Reviewed by Charles B. Jones

This brief book is part of the Palgrave Pivot imprint, whose purpose is to provide a venue for scholars to print works of a length between the article and the monograph. Accordingly, this work is very concise at eighty-eight pages, and it is clear the author intended it to be something that one keeps by one's side while reading the *Analects* of Confucius. The idea of a reader's companion is a good one; the *Analects* can be very confusing for the student or novice. Containing a miscellany of sayings by the master and his students as well as other interpolated material with only a minimal imposition of topical order, this classic text does not move in a linear manner or give its themes a systematic treatment. The focus of Rosemont's book is, accordingly, on those issues that make the book thorny: the unfamiliar world of thought out of which it came, its social setting, its cast of characters, its sometimes-contradictory judgments, the semantic range of its recurring terms, and even the structure of archaic Chinese itself.

The brevity of the work is inviting; a student assigned this to read in conjunction with the *Analects* in translation will not feel overburdened, and many of the suggestions for reading and digesting the text are very

apt. This reviewer found only two real impediments to adopting it as a course text. First, the style alternates between the very colloquial and the very scholarly, and the teacher might have to spend some time explaining to students what some of the author's ideas mean, in essence necessitating a reader's companion to the reader's companion. Second, the price of the hardcover book seems out of proportion to its size (the list price is, US \$45, though the Kindle edition can be had for only US \$16).

Those quibbles aside, upper-level college students could certainly benefit from consulting this guide while reading the *Analects*, and teachers of broad survey courses (e.g., world religions) who must find ways to make the text accessible, even though it is not in their own area of expertise, will find good ideas and approaches to inform their own presentation of the work. The thirteen short chapters (most between two and four pages in length) begin with the concrete and move toward the abstract. After asking what it means to be a Confucian (which is to say, what it means to be part of the community for whom this text is a classic), Rosemont moves on to consider in what manner the *Analects* is a "book," how the structure of Chinese writing and grammar affect its ideas, and how the use of concepts and "concept-clusters" might help the reader deal with its sometimes unsystematic structure and frequent aphorisms.

In the latter chapters, Rosemont proceeds thematically, using one chapter to introduce the students, another to limn the master's life and milieu, and then some time to discuss ancient Chinese devotees' modes of knowing and the question of the "truth" of the text. The last few chapters take on particularly salient themes: social roles; family and society; ancestors; the whole range of rituals that appear in ancient China, as well as the relative semantic breadth of the term *li*, (ritual propriety), when compared to Western ideas of rituals and rites. A concluding chapter of summation and suggestions wraps up the book.

At the end, there are some good resources that even a seasoned scholar will find useful: a concordance of key terms, a list of the students who appear by name, and an annotated bibliography for further reading.

As stated above, this is a useful book for novices, students, and teachers who feel out of their element in ancient Chinese thought. The professor whose own specialty is Chinese religions will note that Rosemont has his own perspective within the Sinological community; in fact, he comes clean about his own alignment with the Hall and Ames approach (to which he has been an active contributor) upfront. One will also see traces of Fingarette herein (the example of the handshake as an instance of a "little ritual" appears in chapter twelve). Assuming this approach presents no significant conflict with the professor's own, pointing out these things to a class may have the effect of evoking a discussion on Western (and even later Chinese) approaches to the classics.

In sum, I find this book a positive contribution to the pedagogy of ancient Chinese religion. I would recommend that teachers peruse a copy first in order to judge whether the academic tone and the price of the book are suitable for a particular class, but at the very least I think those that teach the *Analects* should own a copy and draw inspiration from it for their own teaching. ■

CHARLES B. JONES earned a Bachelor's degree in Music from Morehead State University in 1980, a Master of Theological Studies from the Divinity School at Duke University in 1988, and a PhD in History of Religions with an emphasis on East Asian Buddhism from the University of Virginia in 1996. He is currently an Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.