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## SOURCES OF EAST ASIAN TRADITION, VOLUME 1 *Premodern Asia*

## SOURCES OF EAST ASIAN TRADITION, VOLUME 2 *The Modern Period*

EDITED BY WILLIAM THEODORE DE BARY

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Reviewed by Ronnie Littlejohn

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Professors, high school teachers, and students who study East Asian history, philosophy, politics, education, and religion will welcome this new two volume collection representing one more stage in Ted de Bary's project, begun in 1958, to make primary materials on East Asia available in English. In *Sources of East Asian Tradition*, de Bary offers two volumes of primary material representing selections of readings culled from earlier published volumes, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, *Sources of Korean Tradition*, and *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. Volume One samples writings from earliest times to 1600, illuminating life in early China and the first imperial age, the profound impact of Daoism, Buddhism, the Confucian revival and Neo-Confucianism, the origins of Korean culture and political structures through the Chosŏn dynasty, and major developments in early and medieval Japan.

Volume Two includes primary sources concerned with major events in the stories of East Asia from 1600 to the end of the twentieth century. This includes the Qing dynasty and various reform movements and disruptions in nineteenth century China, the anti-Japanese war and the civil war leading to the rise of the new China that culminates in the democracy movement of the late 1980s, and the new Confucian contemporary thinkers. Materials on Korea begin with the middle Chosŏn period and include the turbulent encounters with imperial Japan, as well as relations between North and South Korea until 1998. The Japan sections include materials beginning with the Tokugawa Period and include selections from subsequent historical periods, as well as contemporary readings.

Several issues are important when considering these combined volumes. The most obvious of these—are the materials well chosen, translated, and introduced? Since the materials in the new two-volume set are drawn from the earlier *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, *Sources of Korean Tradition*, and *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, the answer is most probably “yes.”

The first edition of *Sources of Japanese Tradition* was published in 1958. Since then, a second edition has been published, and in 2006, an

abridged and revised edition appeared. Both volumes of *Sources of Chinese Tradition* were first published in 1960, and have also been issued as second editions. *Sources of Korean Tradition, Volume I* was issued in 1997 and *Volume II* appeared in 2001. The portions of these works that appear in the new two-volume set were originally chosen by a distinguished set of de Bary's collaborators, but have been used by professors, teachers, and students in the US, Canada, and the UK for years. Although those who have utilized the earlier volumes might quibble about what readings should or should not have been published in the new general volumes, what appears are reliable sources for a study of the three great traditional cultures of China, Korea, and Japan.

Are the translations and the organization of key seminal texts defensible? To answer this question, consider the section, the “Classical Sources of Chinese Tradition” in *Sources of East Asian Tradition: Volume I—Pre-Modern Asia*. The translations of excerpts from such classical Chinese texts as the *Analects*, *Daodejing*, and *Zhuangzi* are included. For the *Zhuangzi*, de Bary uses translations by Burton Watson and A. C. Graham, as well as his own in one selection. While new translations of *Zhuangzi* by Victor Mair and Yang Guorong (et. al), and the *Daodejing* by P. J. Ivanhoe and Edward Slingerland are commendable, the versions in de Bary suffice for most survey-level instructors.

For such seminal texts, perhaps the structure is somewhat more problematic. This may not be a problem for the majority of historical, political, and biographical documents included in these volumes. But should “Selections from the *Analects*” include sayings from Books One through Twenty with no effort to thoroughly discuss the layers of the work? Should the *Zhuangzi* selection be accepted without criticism since it promotes the idea that the Inner Chapters (1–7) are most associated with Zhuang Zhou and the only ones worth including? (Chapter 33 is included as an example of Han syncretism.) Such an approach may perpetuate a view of the *Zhuangzi* that has been losing ground since Watson and Graham first set out their versions of the textual structure of the work in the 1960s. Perhaps there could be a different approach to the *Analects* and *Zhuangzi*—one that takes more notice of

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*These two volumes offer a wealth of primary materials that are quite accessible for professors, teachers, students, historians, philosophers, social scientists, scholars, and all those interested in East Asian traditions.*

the textual complexity and the connection of various passages that develop Chinese philosophical thought.

Although a collection of this magnitude cannot reflect every nuance of these important composite texts, no work offering this variety of materials, however useful, will ever substitute for instructor guidance. These two volumes provide helpful introductory remarks and small essays to text groupings within each tradition, but the chief virtue of the anthologies lie in the primary materials collected within them. Professors and teachers who have particular expertise in specific topics can use the volumes' selections as a jumping-off point.

In *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Martha Nussbaum writes, correctly, in my opinion, that the study of other humanistic cultures is extremely challenging because cultures are not monolithic or static. They contain many strands; they evolve over time and incorporate new ideas, sometimes from other cultures. A not-so-obvious virtue of these two volumes is the way in which educators can use them to take note of the internal conflicts and tensions to which Nussbaum points. An anthology of this sort helps both instructor and student see connections and permutations across traditions, fostering comparative projects between the traditions in a more accessible and provocative way than would be possible using only representative seminal texts from one of the three traditions. These texts offer users many options; probably no two professors or teachers will see the same things or use them in exactly the same way.

All in all, the magnitude and immense range of materials gathered here easily outweighs any reservations concerning these volumes. For instance, an instructor who studies China may ask, "Where can I find primary readings on the codification of the Confucian Canon? Where can I find samples of the writers of the principal schools of Chinese Buddhist practice? Where can I find examples of Zhu Xi's writings and Prefaces to the Four Books? Where can I find Ban Zhao's "Admonitions for Women" and Song Ruoshao's "Analects for Women,?" Where can I find Yangming's "Unity of Knowing and Acting?" or, Where can I find the "Treatise of the Most Exalted One on Moral Retribution?" These are just a few of the materials found in Volume One. This thoroughness extends throughout the remainder of the Chinese tradition, and is true of the Korean and Japanese traditions, as well. These two volumes offer a wealth of primary materials that are quite accessible for professors, teachers, students, historians, philosophers, social scientists, scholars, and all those interested in East Asian traditions. ■

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