



Reconstructing Ancient Korean History: The Formation of Korean-ness in the Shadow of History

Stella Xu

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This book examines the contested re-readings of “Korea” in early Chinese historical records and their influence on the formation of Korean-ness in later periods. The earliest written records on “Koreans” are found in Chinese documents produced during the Han dynasty, from the third century BCE to the third century CE. Since then, these early Chinese records have been used as primary sources for writing early Korean history in Korea, China, and Japan. This study analyzes the various reinterpretations and utilizations of these early records that became more diverse by the late nineteenth century, when the reconstruction of ancient history became a crucial part of the formation of Korean national consciousness. Korea’s modern historiography was complicated by a thirty-five year colonial experience (1910–1945) under Japan. During this period, Japanese colonial scholars attempted to depict Korean history as stagnant, heteronymous, and replete with factional strife, while Korean nationalist historians strove to construct an indigenous Korean nation in order to mobilize Koreans’ national consciousness and recover political sovereignty. While focused on Korea and Northeast Asia, the links between historiography and political ideology investigated in this study are pertinent to historians in general.

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