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Review Essay

**Captive Minds, Imprisoned Bodies: Prisoners of War, Detention, and
“Voluntary Repatriation”**

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Monica Kim. *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. 452 pp.

David Cheng Chang. *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. 496 pp.

There is a temptation for historians to interpret events through the present, or certainly to appeal to recent incidents as a basis for understanding the past, recognizing the common elements connecting distinct intervals. If this impulse proves problematic in certain cases, it equally offers a valuable set of tools for placing the present in the context of a wider temporal frame, emphasizing the degree to which the past remains vital, whether in terms of perceived slights, the construction of historical memory, or, more importantly, deeply entrenched and starkly contrasting views about the significance of events. For Northeast Asia, this second remark remains highly relevant. It corresponds to China’s increasing economic stature along with numerous unresolved issues dating to the Japanese Empire and its legacy after 1945 for the two Koreas, Taiwan, and China. The two books under review here—Monica Kim’s *Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History* and David Cheng Chang’s *Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*—each offer an extended examination of how the breakup and reconstitution of the Japanese Empire, the Chinese civil conflict (1945–1949), and, ultimately, the Korean War (1950–1953) collectively represent a mid-twentieth-century set of ruptures involving contested conceptions of the nation, economy, and underlying foundations of personal identity. Far from a complete, legible set of events, the Korean War represents fiercely contested space and, as such, provides a powerful motivation for undertaking new methodological approaches. Moreover, it is a force that continues to drive conflicts among the various parties involved.

For both authors, the tense negotiations over prisoners of war, which prolonged the conflict for nearly two years (mid-1951 to July 1953), represent a central concern, though for somewhat different reasons. For Monica Kim, the “interrogation rooms” represent an opportunity to probe the intersecting worlds of Cold War psychology,

American Orientalism, emerging area studies/social science, and the decisions made by individual “human subjects.” The latter term refers to a developing understanding of one’s ability to make choices at the level of personal motivation while taking into account nationality, ideology, and social circumstances. In particular, the choice to go “home” via “voluntary repatriation,” itself very much a contentious issue, was offset by the option to reject this possibility and instead move to another country altogether.¹ This scheme proved enormously controversial, especially as Communist nations accused the United States and its allies of employing the strategy for propaganda purposes, seeking to embarrass the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and North Korea.

For his part, David Cheng Chang recognizes the critical role of this set of issues for a diverse collection of Chinese actors, here arrayed across a spectrum of interests with respect to Guomintang (GMD)-led Taiwan and China, and in many cases still grappling with the outcome of recent civil conflict. In contrast to Kim’s emphasis on cognitive psychology and subtle shifts in definitions of the human, Chang rests his focus on the effect these questions played in shaping popular understandings of the war’s meaning for national sovereignty and, in particular, how these debates continue to frame the vexed relations among China, Taiwan, and the United States.

“War by Other Means”: (Re-)defining the Human

In many respects, these two accounts render the Korean War almost entirely new, even as they engage with familiar questions generated by an earlier historiography, including issues drawn from diplomatic history, Cold War history, and military history (Foot 1990; Young 2014). Kim opens *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War* with the intriguing case of Oh Se-hŭi, a Korean actor wandering in a war-torn landscape and carrying concealed documents and pieces of paper, each of which attests to a distinct form of identity, whether framed in national or class terms. When South Korean soldiers capture Oh as he returns from serving in the Korean People’s Army (KPA), the determination of his identity ultimately rests not on documents but on the length of his hair, a physical criterion that convinces his captors that he could not possibly be part of the North Korean military. Therefore, he is deemed worthy of captivity and not subject to a death sentence. This highly fluid conception of identity challenges the status of new national categories—South Korea, North Korea—still in flux, with each of these provisional labels seeking legitimation through military force. Instead, the conflict becomes characterized in terms of competing ideologies that are hotly contested through new ideas, forms of psychological warfare, and ways of performing the self. As her narrative ultimately rests on captivity and the question of voluntary repatriation, Kim invokes the emerging category of the “human subject”—a topic central to an extended post-World War II

¹ Kim discusses the seventy-six prisoners who opted for “neutral country” alternatives, such as Central and South America (288–300). In his dedication, Chang acknowledges the fates available to actors—China, Taiwan, and neutral nations—along with those who died while held in United Nations (UN) camps (v).

story of emerging cognitive science and Cold War psychology—to focus her discussion. No longer conceived in terms of territorial conquest, war now becomes about making personal choices, with the task of winning over minds.²

The notion of “war by other means,” or contesting one’s opponents through new forms of knowledge-making, informs a great deal of the newer literature in the Cold War social sciences, ranging from Americanist (domestic) accounts, such as Joy Rhode’s *Armed with Expertise* (2013) or Audra J. Wolfe’s *Freedom’s Laboratory* (2018), both of which link postwar institutions and practices to these emerging tensions. Not to take anything away from the history of science literature, which engages primarily with a binary, U.S.-Soviet narrative, Kim seeks to bring nuance by engaging with the question of postwar East Asia—with its complex concerns about ethnicity, race, and culture, as outlined in Christopher P. Hanscom and Dennis Washburn’s edited volume, *The Affect of Difference* (2016)—and the challenging circumstances under which prisoners were expected to make the decision about repatriation. If popular understandings of this issue continue to circulate around Richard Condon’s *Manchurian Candidate* (1959) and the notion of “brainwashing”—wonderfully captured in John Frankenheimer’s 1962 film of the same title—Kim reminds us that a limited number of American aviators and soldiers in fact selected China as their place of residence, a story chronicled in Virginia Pasley’s *22 Stayed* (1955).³

The conjoined questions of repatriation and personal choice thus become contingent upon a new understanding of the human mind, its plasticity, and the factors contributing to its psychological makeup. From an American standpoint, the best way to expose the conformity and ideological hegemony associated with Communism was to subject the prisoner to a litmus test. In theory, the “free” individual would be able to understand the risks inherent in such a choice, while still making the “correct” choice—that is, to repatriate to the “Free World” rather than its Communist counterpart.⁴ As Kim’s major concern rests on the vast apparatus necessary to execute this design—taking us inside the prison camps, with their physical risks, the sensory assault of smells and sounds, and competing groups of ideological interests—she touches on a growing literature linking the Cold War social sciences to their contexts, with the tropes of freedom and interdisciplinary approaches starting to reshape the U.S. military and the academy. Jamie Cohen-Cole’s *Open Mind* (2014) serves as a representative example here, along with the corresponding work of scholars such as Mark Solovey (2013) and David Price (2008) covering Cold War social science and anthropology, respectively.

² See Stark (2011) for the history of human subjects and institutional review boards (IRBs). Linebarger (1948) is one of the most frequently cited texts for the origins of “psywar” in the American context.

³ Alison Winter (2011) extends the notion of “brainwashing” to the domestic context in terms of legal history. See also Daniel Gordon and Nicholas Bonner’s *Crossing the Line* (2006), a documentary depicting the defection of U.S. soldiers to North Korea in the early 1960s.

⁴ Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2007) illustrates how a similar choice worked for ethnic Koreans living in postwar Japan, with many opting for North Korea in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

To be clear, though, Kim's approach remains focused primarily on the wartime Korean peninsula and its surrounding East Asian neighbors, and these social science references serve more as implicit background to the psychological drama she sets up. In seven chapters, divided into two sections—"The Elements of War" and "Humanity Interrogated"—Kim exhaustively chronicles the elements necessary to establish the credentials underlying the interrogation apparatus: prisoners of war of various nationalities, the interrogators—a highly diverse population, given the need to satisfy language and ideological criteria—and the physical sites, meaning prison camps and interrogation rooms used to stage the drama. In each of these cases, the discussion unpacks the complex negotiations taking place over what might appear to be minor points, especially the identity of the interrogators, because the various parties had to agree to both their suitability and the language they would be permitted to employ. Under the voluntary repatriation scheme, the concern was that the presence of other actors (Americans, Koreans, Chinese) might influence the choices made by prisoners for fear of reprisal against them, or perhaps their families.

As it turns out, the interrogators, many of them Japanese-American, allow Kim to not only make her points about human subjectivity but also link these ideas to a much longer history of American Empire in transition. For many historians, this period begins in the mid-nineteenth century and the conflict with Mexico. Japanese-American interrogators, particularly those deriving from Nisei (second generation) and Sansei (third generation) groups on the West Coast and in the Southwest of the United States, were well-suited to this purpose for both linguistic and cultural reasons.⁵ Fluent in English, Japanese, and sometimes Korean, these individuals could interact with prisoners of war under a variety of conditions. Moreover, they were likely to satisfy the needs of both U.S. and Chinese military, who trusted that these individuals would make good mediators, certainly to be favored over U.S. military personnel or Japanese officials from the colonial period. Finally, in keeping with Kim's themes, some of these same individuals had very recently journeyed from the detention camps of the 1940s—suspected of bearing allegiance to Japan—to being freed to serve in the U.S. military in the later years of World War II. Their personal stories therefore embodied the desired ideal: deliberately choosing to be "American" regardless of ethnicity or background.

The emerging postwar American Empire, based on a broad consensus of liberal ideals affirming the defeat of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, also situates this narrative within the rapidly changing world order of the late 1940s, with the emergence of decolonization and the breakdown of formal empire. New definitions of human rights and trade networks appeared not only as part of the recovery from wartime but also in

⁵ The interrogator story includes Indian representatives from the UN, which makes a fascinating narrative about the afterlife of empire. In this sense, Kim engages with many of the same issues as Takashi Fujitani (2013). John Okada famously captured the dilemma faced by "No-No boys," Japanese-Americans in the camps who were asked to swear allegiance to the United States (and deny loyalty to the emperor) but also did not necessarily want to serve in the U.S. military (see Abe, Robinson, and Cheung 2018).

response to the need to deter a pair of interlinked threats: the appearance of the Communist rival and the uncertain prospect of decolonization. If the first of these two issues appeared as early as wartime, with heightened tensions among allied leaders about appropriate arrangements to be made for the postwar order, the second issue came with the breakdown of the British Empire, with many other countries watching. Colonial possessions, like individuals, now had to be recognized in terms of this newer language of human rights and, with decolonization, had to be appealed to in terms of reestablishing trade relations. Kim's work captures American Empire and its intersection with Japanese Empire for much of postwar greater East Asia, whereby the formal disruption of Japan's wartime ambitions permitted a new kind of conjoined American-Japanese order to be established throughout much of the region, at least partly in response to the radical instability created by the Korean War.⁶

The Captive Experience: Detention Practices and Ambivalent Outcomes

For all this discussion of minds, however, Kim's account remains very much centered on materiality and the body, with a great deal of attention devoted to the construction and enforcement of sites of detention. Following an elaborate setup in the first section, the crux of the book lies in the diverse collection of prisoners held at Koje-do (Koje Island), before a famous insurrection in March 1952 (chapter 4, "Koje Island: A Mutiny, or Revolution"). The capture of camp commander Brigadier General Francis Dodd adds to the stakes, underscoring the enormous violence and pressure exerted by U.S. authorities to maintain the site, as well as corresponding forms of resistance and mediated forms of public expression permitted on the part of the detained. This approach allows Kim, as noted earlier, to bring in the longer history of American Empire—including the often neglected United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) occupation of Korea (September 1945–August 1948)—and specifically in the context of the violent contestation taking place over these sites (Hwang 2016). In other words, the capture of the U.S. commander places the debate precisely in the context of a much larger set of questions about identity, choice, and sovereignty, along with the immediate issue of physical detention.

In these four critical chapters of section 2, Kim juxtaposes physical confrontation and violence with a vast web of documents and their associated questions of identity, characterizing what she calls "violence in the archive" (18). This phrase suggests the immense contrast between pieces of paper—whether in the form of safe-conduct passes, propaganda leaflets dropped by various parties, or even accounts scrawled by prisoners (sometimes in their own blood) under challenging conditions—and the

⁶ Barak Kushner edited several volumes associated with a Cambridge University project on the breakup of the Japanese Empire, including, with Sherzod Muminov, *The Dismantling of Japan's Empire in East Asia* (2017). See also Lisa Yoneyama's *Cold War Ruins* (2016).

violence contained within.⁷ In contrast to activities that previous historians have often regarded as propaganda exercises, Kim seeks to historicize these individual acts in terms of the volume's larger concerns about humanity and the emerging postwar articulation of human rights. She even points out that prisoners sometimes requested copies of the Geneva Convention to better understand their circumstances.

The capture of Dodd fascinates David Cheng Chang as well and offers an ideal transition point, as the physical sites of detention are central to both authors' stories.⁸ For Chang, however, this episode becomes much more a China-centric story, with "China" here implying a diverse range of associations as the competition for legitimacy between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was very much at its apex.

In contrast to the uneasy capture in October 1950 opening Kim's account, Chang offers a triumphant march in early 1954, with the return of Chinese prisoners to Taipei and the security concerns surrounding the travel of these individuals. Although he focuses on events similar to those in Kim's book, Chang opts to pay greater attention to the political struggle between the two Chinas, a conflict that reached down to small groups of prisoners fighting fiercely within the camps and led to the subsequent choice for many of them to "return" to Taiwan, a place that was not their geographical origin. The narrative drive then centers on two related questions: why did so many prisoners opt for Taipei over Beijing, and why is there relatively little historical memory of these events? This second question is critical for Chang, as he emphasizes the degree to which the rancor stemming from the period 1952–1954 continues to inform China's policy regarding Taiwan, as well as the larger world. His book's title reflects the extent to which the Korean War, whether treated as a civil war or an international conflict, was effectively "hijacked" by the interjection of this dense nexus of politics. This version of events has the conflict on the mainland over legitimacy and sovereignty dating to the transition to the republic in 1911, and armed competition between Nationalists and the CCP dating to the early 1920s. In this context, the act of "forgetting" has been highly deliberate, very much orchestrated.

To underscore the theme's significance, Chang recounts several of its recurrences, such as Zhou Enlai bringing up the POW issue to Richard Nixon in 1972, carefully pointing out that China could have made a bigger fuss but elected to defer. Other participants held a range of views on the matter. The North Koreans dropped it from public pronouncements shortly after the war's close. For the GMD, the moment was foundational, marking the return of "anti-Communist heroes" and providing a substantial claim to Republic of China (ROC) legitimation, at least certainly in 1954. The

⁷ The use of archival materials from Stanford University's Hoover Institution, the International Red Cross, and the UN Archives proves highly illuminating. There is much more to be said about the physical form and materiality of these diverse propaganda materials and personal accounts in terms of media and genre.

⁸ Kim cites Chang as "Chang (2019)" (413), and Chang devotes chapter 11 of his book to Dodd. These mutual acknowledgments suggest that these two works are very much in conversation with each other.

American view proves perhaps the most curious, as the POW issue stands in contrast to the increasing number of casualties incurred over the last two years of the war, as well as numerous public remarks made by Presidents Truman and Eisenhower. Despite this extensive documentary record, there has never been an official claim to a war fought “against China,” nor a direct affirmation of the “success” of the returnees, which would result in conflict with the American narrative. This conspicuous discrepancy from a heated and very public moment, which disappeared by the late 1950s, motivates Chang’s inquiry into the issue.

“Democracy” with a Difference: Re-education and Interrogation

In keeping with Chang’s line of inquiry, the 1954 return of prisoners marks the opening frame of *The Hijacked War*, with the first three chapters returning to the 1940s to offer a detailed account of the civil conflict and the potential appeal of the CCP to a diverse range of actors. This perspective spans the rural poor with relatively few opportunities as well as idealistic students, several from elite backgrounds, including those with Nationalist ties. Chang emphasizes the diversity of this population specifically to account for the complexity of the PRC’s composition—especially its nascent military prior to the Korean War—as well as the ongoing forms of contestation carrying into the war and beyond. First, he takes care to outline the CCP’s practice of “democracy,” a term not carrying the same meaning as its American analogue but certainly proposing a contrast to the hierarchical governmental structure previously offered by the Nationalists.⁹ Numerous interviews recall the degree to which captured soldiers were given rations and better treatment upon being captured by the Communists, with this behavior extending to the treatment of surrounding civilian populations. Moreover, in CCP meetings, soldiers were permitted to speak and express their views. Granted, this form of practice took place within implicit boundaries, carefully shaped by the presence of superiors, but many young Chinese found the forum comfortable.

This form of expression then takes the institutional role of reshaping or adapting Nationalist minds and loyalty ties in chapter 2, “Reforming Former Nationalists.” Here, Kim’s psychology and Chang’s pragmatic focus share a great deal of common ground, even though they provide somewhat different outcomes. As far back as the 1920s, the CCP put its soldiers through extended sessions of group critique, with these sessions running for hours incorporated within a daily schedule filled with ideology and numerous tasks. In the aftermath of the civil conflict, Nationalist soldiers underwent a comparable experience in concentrated form, when the PRC required highly trained soldiers and, especially, a reform of existing facilities, such as the Whampoa Military Academy. In other words, the new state apparatus had to determine, quickly and efficiently, which individuals might be reformed and put to good use and which would never be able (or willing) to adapt to this new context. Rather than the language of the

⁹ Chapter 2 documents the process of “thought reform,” whereby incoming recruits were permitted almost no personal time and had their deeds and thoughts compiled in dossiers.

new psychology permeating American journals at the time, this kind of focused training emerged from more than two decades of brutal military conflict and the corresponding need to inculcate a core set of ideals on behalf of a group with state-making ambitions.

These ambitions encountered a complicated reality with the decision to intervene on the Korean peninsula in the fall of 1950. American policymakers were uncertain how the PRC would respond to the conflict and, in turn, failed to understand signals from Beijing prior to October 1950. The Koreanist literature includes recognition of the significant role of North Korean combatants during the Chinese civil conflict, thereby creating an obligation that Mao was more than willing to meet by sending his troops in the fall of 1950. At the same time, intervention represented a calculated nexus of risk and opportunity, a chance to consolidate the gains of the revolution, mobilize enthusiasm for change, promote anti-Americanism, and target domestic enemies. To carry out a military venture, the PRC possessed not only troops with extensive combat experience but also a significant core of new Nationalist members who had just recently chosen to join, largely through the force of re-education programs. The legacy of these recruiting efforts would be put to the test, because how these individuals would behave during combat was far from certain. For their part, these troops carried a mix of hope, ambivalence, and confused motivations. As Chang points out, violence directed at such individuals in mainland China was rampant, meaning that war represented a chance to escape from danger and certainly to avoid uncomfortable questions about one's previous family history.

This collective tale, narrated through a series of individual case histories, builds Chang's group portrait leading into the early stages of the Korean War. The China transition story was very much in process, and in turn, the mission to Korea consisted of large numbers of soldiers who were uncertain of their status, having joined the army out of a range of motivations—from coercion to the desire to flee and reinvent themselves. Once in Korea, these troops were among the first to be taken as prisoners of war. At this point, the confused mix of violence, ideology, and struggle began to affect and ultimately "hijack" the war, in Chang's terms. Again, he carefully and painstakingly reconstructs the timeline, so that it becomes clear that the first captures reflect a large portion of these recent Nationalist converts, especially during late fall 1950 and early spring 1951. In turn, many of the same individuals became leading figures within the prison camp struggles at Busan and Koje, urging on their fellow captives through persuasion and, frequently, through acts of violence.

"Voluntary Repatriation": The Interview as Compressed Violence

If Kim's focus rests primarily on 1953 and its aftermath, and refers specially to Korean prisoners of varying affiliations, Chang's lengthy process begins much earlier, with the basis for the repatriation system essentially taking shape by early to mid-1951. This description should not imply a teleology, by any means, but it points to Chang's tight focus on how the Chinese civil conflict continued by moving to another venue, with the

United States adding to the problem in two major ways. First, the logic of National Security Council (NSC) Report 81-1 (September 1950, chapter 4) called for the re-indoctrination of prisoners, presumably on the understanding that the war was nearing completion; this process would play a large part in reintegrating Communist prisoners within a united Korea. Next, the reliance on GMD/Nationalist translators to interview prisoners introduced this ideology into the system with a significant role, a gesture that held implications for Chinese prisoners in particular. Instead of crediting the United States with consciously designing the re-indoctrination system, Chang characterizes its actions as deriving from a combination of ignorance and arrogance, and an inability to recognize the effects these twin moves held for Chinese prisoners. If Nationalist prisoners made up a large portion of the target population, then the psywar programs subsequently lent further legitimation to their cause.

In terms of its narrative structure then, *The Hijacked War* gives less attention than Kim's account to explaining events taking place at Kojé and far more to establishing the background stories of the individual soldiers and units placed in combat through May 1951 (chapters 1–7). With this composition and chronology carefully erected, Chang brings us to the stalemate portion of the war, from which point negotiations started in earnest and began to prolong the conflict. Here, he does not differ radically from existing accounts for the following period but brings to bear his extensive collection of Chinese sources and interviews—gathered from archives in Taiwan, the PRC, and the United States—to illustrate that the outcome should not have surprised the United States had it paid attention to any number of cues coming from Nationalists and the PRC. In effect, the United States legitimized the former group through the re-indoctrination program, and the ensuing interviews and repatriation program were heavily shaped by soldiers who reached out to their fellow captives through their words, deeds, and, frequently, creative forms of violence, enforcing their views within Kojé.

If Kim's account delves deeper into the Cold War "hall of mirrors" underlying the formative social sciences and the lengthy process of conducting exit interviews—a take shaped in part by Marilyn Young's (1991) work on Vietnam—Chang's proves no less painstaking, offering specific accounts of which prisoners led the Nationalist cause within the camps, and to what end. Indeed, his later chapters contain numerous references to earlier chapters, a device particularly useful in tracking the key individuals and themes that enforced this style of discipline. If this is not a work of Taiwan studies per se—indeed, it will be interesting to see how Taiwan scholars respond—it nonetheless covers a great deal of new ground in documenting the near disappearance of the Nationalist cause following the civil conflict, only to witness its revival through the Korean War. An ambitious China-centric work that nonetheless wonderfully captures the ambiguity and confusion associated with the breakup of the Japanese Empire and the related uncertainty of the two Koreas, *The Hijacked War* holds interest for a range of fields, reaching out to scholars of Northeast Asia, along with more nation-oriented subdisciplines of East Asian studies.

Intimations of Empire: Postwar Fragments and Reformulations

As Chang closes by returning to the present, stressing his theme of the ongoing U.S. failure to understand China, *The Hijacked War* leaves us with more questions than it can possibly address. This is a sign of deep engagement. The two works together suggest that many of today's headlines—North Korea, the U.S.-China trade war, conflicts between Abe's Japan and Moon's South Korea—owe a good deal to these books' subject matter, especially the events of the late 1930s and early 1940s. This remark should not be taken as a problem, but rather a challenge to bring new approaches to this rich vein of material. For example, a series of recent works has begun to approach the interlinked questions of China, sovereignty, and health through the history of medicine: a short list might include Nicole Barnes's *Intimate Communities* (2018), Mary Brazelton's *Mass Vaccination* (2019), and Wayne Soon's *Global Medicine in China* (forthcoming). In distinctive ways, each of these works considers the role of medical institutions, whether domestic or international, in building and legitimating a vision of China, thereby linking the body and the nation through biopolitics. Certainly, running through both books is the body thematic, not just the body captured within a wartime prison system but also in terms of its role within new visions of peacetime society.¹⁰

Similarly, for China, and much of East and Southeast Asia more broadly, there is a growing interest in the history of the human/mind sciences, with Emily Baum's *Invention of Madness* (2018), Theodore Jun Yoo's *It's Madness* (2016), and Claire Edington's *Beyond the Asylum* (2019) spanning the colonial and postcolonial legacies for China, Korea, and Vietnam, respectively. Again, this body of work does not necessarily tie directly to the sets of questions raised by Kim and Chang, but the two books do raise issues about policing, detention, and psywar, with Kim's early chapters, in particular, informed by documents drawn from Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) records. Seeking to understand the process of interrogation from standpoints other than the assumed "norm" of Western psychology may prove useful in understanding that the reformulation of the humanist project through the Geneva Convention in the postwar period held severe structural limitations. Certainly, many within as well as outside the "Free World" questioned it then, and those questions remain valid today.

Indeed, the human legacy of this vast process of interrogation and migration remains, extending well beyond the war years to include a much longer periodization for the region. Here, the work of scholars such as Deokhyo Choi (2013), Sayaka Chatani (2018), and many others working on the Japanese Empire, Korean migration throughout the region, and Northeast Asia diasporic populations complicates the legacy of the "miracle" postwar societies that sought to employ 1945 (or 1949, or 1953, alternatively) as a firm sign of closure. These newer studies react to an older literature claiming that the "nation"—whatever this term was used to signify—was now moving in a different

¹⁰ Gross (2016) documents the Mao-era public health efforts to mobilize the population, and Fang (2012) portrays the work of barefoot doctors, when China had to maximize its existing medical resources in rural areas.

direction with a clearly defined set of actors. In fact, minority populations within powerful East Asian nations remain a fascinating subject of study, with the blurring of borders, agendas, and policies creating issues into the present. Much of this scholarship tends to be pursued within national categories for East Asian studies, perhaps granting it less visibility. If Kim and Chang have chosen to define their projects as “Korean War”-centered, and understandably so, they nonetheless hint at a legacy dating to at least the 1920s whose resolution remains elusive.¹¹

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¹¹ Masuda (2015) undercuts much of the basis for Cold War historiography by using the Korean War as a narrative means of emphasizing ground-level experience, rather than a top-down Cold War with coherence.

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