

involving property, political dialogue between municipal officials and village leaders, and uncertainty at the urban-rural edge. Chapter 5 details the transformation of the village's collective landholdings into real estate, and of Hailong's villagers into shareholders. Chapter 6 examines villagers' responses to the end of that village, resulting in the displacement of both the village institutions and its inhabitants.

Through the combination of extensive literature review and analysis of rich data collected in Chongqing, this book is valuable for readers to understand the challenges facing rural China caused by the bifurcated land system, and the impact of government-led urbanization on rural transformation and the livelihoods of rural people. However, a certain caution may be needed in regard to the future of rural China. It may be too simplistic to apply the "end of the village" or "urbanization of China's countryside" (233) to all villages across China, taking into account its complexity and diversity in terms of geographic, resource, economic and social environments on the one hand, and the long history of culture tradition rooted in rural areas (Wu 2020). While the case of Hailong village could be a good example to illustrate rural transformation in suburban areas of large municipals, it may struggle to represent those villages in remote, mountainous, poor and ethnic minority communities in the marginal areas of China where rural development is often driven by a different logic and dominated the separate national programme (e.g. "Targeted Poverty Alleviation") (Wu *et al.* 2020) which is largely ignored in this book. It seems too early to predict the future of rural China because there are so many new pilots and "social experiments" that exist in different locations and carried out by different people, including grassroots innovators and urban citizen groups, who are trying to find new solutions or pathways to overcome the rural development crisis, towards a balanced and harmonic relationship between rural and urban societies in the future.

References

- NBS (National Bureau of Statistics of China) (2021). Main data of the Seventh National Population Census. Available at http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510_1817185.html.
- Wu, Bin (2020). Rural revitalization in China. Available at <https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/ingenuitylab/2020/08/21/rural-revitalisation-in-china-dr-bin-wu/>.
- Wu, Bin, Bi Wu, Xinhong Fu, Xiyao Wang, Shemei Zhang, Gubo Qi, Zhao Ding, Baojiang Geng, Yi Wang, Yun Shen and Yuying Liu (2020). *Cooperative Ecosystem to Empower Small Farmers in the Poor Areas of China: Case Studies of Sichuan*, A Report of UoN-GCRF Pilot Project, Nottingham: Nottingham University Business School. Available at https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/ingenuitylab/files/2020/12/GCRF-Project-Report_FINAL-December_2020.pdf.
- Wu, Bin and Linghui, Liu (2020). "Social Capital for Rural Revitalization in China: A Critical Evaluation on the Government's new Countryside Programme in Chengdu." *Land Use Policy* 91, p. 104268, doi:10.1016/j.landusepol.2019.104268

doi:10.1017/S1479591421000504

Soju: A Global History

By Hyunhee Park. 2021. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 300pp. Hardback, US\$99.99. ISBN: 9781108842013.

Aaron Molnar

Department of History, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Author for correspondence: Aaron Molnar, E-mail: borderbaron@gmail.com

(Received 20 August 2021; accepted 25 August 2021)

Soju is a global beverage. For those who have imbibed, *soju's* potent proof joins with distinct aromatics suggestive of high mountain pines to sweep one into a moment of tender-grilled beef ribs with good

company; or perhaps a bottle over *ttökpokki*: both distinctly Korean moments. At least this is the image Kpop celebrity ads and dramas offer for consumption, and thus an attractive way to commune with Korean culture characteristic of the global *Hallyu* movement. Yet, *soju*'s place in the modern nationalist firmament belies the other globalisms that underwrite its origins and development. Park Hyunhee in her present work seeks to clarify these turbid global waters of *soju*'s history by linking Mongol imperialism, Japanese colonialism, and Korean nationalism to the multi-vectored movement of distillation technology into Koryo, its localization and subsequent re-export as a Korean cultural object in the modern period. This allows Park to achieve the much larger goal of reframing Korean history as global history, therein providing a blueprint for understanding other premodern technologies and objects whose movement is globally embedded, but locally transformed.

The book is divided into six both thematic and chronological chapters. Chapter one is a detailed review of the archeology and historiography of distillation's global origins. It argues that distillation spread to East Asia before the Mongols with multiple origins and vectors: either medieval Central Asians or southeast Asians via the Indian Ocean littoral were responsible for its transference to China. Chapter two asserts that the Pax Mongolica and the socio-political importance of alcohol to Mongols propelled distillation more quickly and intensively throughout Eurasia, and ultimately the Koryo state (918–1392) in Korea. Chapter three builds on this latter point by looking specifically at Koryo as a satellite of the Mongol Empire (1206–1368), thus providing the Eurasian links and the intensive exchange necessary for distillation to spread to Korea. Chapter four addresses the *long-durée* process of the localization of distillates, while chapter five addresses their industrialization, homogenization, and bureaucratization under the tutelage of Japanese colonialism and subsequent South Korean regimes. The final chapter applies the blueprint of exposure, localization, and re-export from *soju* to Japanese *shochu* and Mexican tequila.

The heart of Park's work, however, is the remodeling of Korean medieval history during Koryo as global history through the lens of distillation with an intensively comparative and multi-disciplinary approach. Park's previous study, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds* (2012) used the exchange of geographic and cartographic knowledge between China and the Islamic worlds between 700 and 1500 to challenge the Eurocentric narrative of globalization in the Age of Discovery. Similarly to Eurocentric narratives, Koryo histories have often elided Eurasian connections and focused instead on intensive relationships with Song and Yuan China (Kim 2007; Yi 2013). Previous histories of distillation preserve divisions too. They are siloed into broad Western and Asian bodies, and even more parochially in the case of Korean liquor. Park dissolves these barriers, but goes further than her last monograph, adopting a fully global lens beyond China and the *Dār al-Islam*. First, she unites previously isolated Korean and Western historiographies of distillation. *Soju*'s history then flows into larger history of cultural and economic exchange between western Eurasia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. Park postulates that a Eurasian cross-fertilization of multiple distillation traditions joined by well-established routes of exchange prefigured distillation's transference to Korea (25–66). Second, she contextualizes the notably bi-directional *long-durée* exchange of alcohol knowledge and culture between Chinese and Korean states facilitated largely by diplomatic and scholarly networks (67–80). Third, she employs two *Koryosa* passages and a poetic snippet from the late Koryo official Yi Saek (1328–1396) to argue that these elite networks intensified during the Koryo-Yuan alliance (1268 CE) and were plausibly responsible for the importation and domestication of *soju* (80–84; 93–95). Subsequently, building on the work of Kim Hodong, Yi Kanghan, and Thomas Allsen, she creatively employs research on the cultural, economic, and political exchange between Koryo and the Mongol world to establish plausible military and commercial trajectories beyond elite networks (96–126). Choson excavations of stills in Cheju are corroborated with patterns of Mongol military occupation and Chinese language-learning texts like *Nogeoldae* that serve as evidence of intense commercial contact. The abundance of proximal evidence encourages the conclusion that distillates and stills entered Koryo from the mid-thirteenth century. Accordingly, tracing distillation's movement into Korea links its West Asian rise with long-standing regional patterns of East Asian exchange and the particulars of a Mongol world empire.

This multi-vectored approach to the globalization of objects here is further laudable as it moves past simple linear or unidirectional analyses that have plagued global histories of material objects. Allsen (2019), in his last book on pearls in Mongol Eurasia, suggested that pre-modern global history had to take into account multiple, simultaneous axes of movement. Park skillfully demonstrates the rich complexity of these processes and possibilities. Koryo's overland economic communion with the Yuan realm means the East to West exchange of people, foods, and textiles, while links to the Ryukus, southern China and SE Asia where dyes, fragrant woods, and other items originate are simultaneously operative. Still technology too must be moving along these trajectories. These movements are then paralleled in Choson, where distillation knowledge as well as distillates move both into Japan and even Spanish America via the Manila galleon trade, all while Chinese texts, like encyclopedias on liquor, continue to enter Choson (127–163).

A second strength is its insistence that the global exchange of objects is only rendered coherent when considered alongside processes of local transformation and consumption. In Choson, inclement summer heat, the household cottage industry, and elite consumption practices altered *soju's* form and flavor. Local ingredients in use, such as *Lithospermi radix* were used to make *hongju*, or in other recipes ginseng was added to make novel local varieties (147). Locally available wines became the raw materials. Cheju even developed a variety based on barley and millet, as rice did not grow well there (110). *Soju's* subsequent industrialization too must be understood in the local context of the Japanese colonial state that sought to rationalize the Korean economy to benefit the metropole. Introductions such as industrial column stills using sweet potatoes and tapioca increased productivity, while profits were assured by a new taxation and licensing regime. This system was inherited by the Korean post-war government. It was further bureaucratized for revenue, promoted as the national beverage, and mass-produced for the new legions of industrial laborers. As such, although now globally exported, *soju* is a direct product of local processes of colonialism and nationalism (164–199).

Although impressive in scale and mastery of the literature, the lack of direct evidence for *soju's* entry into Korea is concerning. Chapters two and three argue for the increase of particular distillation technologies and cultural transfers between the Mongol Yuan and Koryo, but this amounts to a history of probabilities loosely laced together with “circumstantial evidence” (93). There is no smoking gun, and this is a challenge for a study that touts this section as its largest contribution to *soju* and Korea's global history. The lack of any archeological evidence for Mongol stills from this period is very troubling. Yet, this shortcoming is not particular to Park's work, but rather widespread in global histories of medieval Afro-Eurasia. Allsen's (2009) work on the transference of historiographic knowledge via the Mongol statesman Chingsang Bolad is similarly rooted in reasonably convincing circumstantial evidence.

This theme of uncertainty muddies the waters about *soju's* ultimate identity too. Park's conclusion suggests that any definition should be diluted to include any and all distilled liquors descended from Choson *soju* and industrial ethanol-based replicants introduced by the Japanese with a geographic relationship to the Korean peninsula (234–236). Modern industrial *soju* is a combination of column-still mass-produced ethanol combined with flavorings and other industrial ingredients to produce consistent brand-specific flavors, while traditional *soju* either used a region-dependent grain mash, rice, or barley, or a fermented wine as a base and was distilled once before aging. This would be like saying industrially produced ethanol if cleverly combined with grape juice and buffered with chemicals is still French wine, because the column-stills are in Bordeaux. Without a firm definition of process or ingredients, by the book's end *soju* has become somewhat watered down as an analytical category.

What could have fortified the argument would have been a more intensive look at ceramic accoutrements of alcohol consumption. Mapping cultural transfers through ceramics has already been successful demonstrated by Hur (2015) in his study of Korean tea bowls' penetration into Japan. Shuo and Misun (2021) have argued in the Chinese context that mutual influences were transmitted between liquor vessels and tea vessels. Furthermore, and importantly, Han (2019) has argued that a sudden burst of creativity occurred in ceramic drinking vessels during the Mongol

period, as *kumiss*, *araq*, and grape wine were absorbed and accommodated by domestic ceramic culture. This material archive might provide a better purchase on global exchanges, and supplement what has been to date suggestive documentary evidence.

Another enduring issue for histories of globalization that manifests itself here is periodization. Recently, Valerie Hansen and others have argued for an early dating of the onset of globalization. Hansen (2020) has argued that by 1000 CE the entire globe exhibited increased commercial, social, and cultural exchange built on the back of intensified maritime and continental mobility. Other authors look even earlier to Rome, India, and China arguing for globalization's genesis in antiquity (Benjamin 2018). Park chooses not to engage with this debate, and firmly pitches her tent in the Mongol camp with Allsen (2019) and Timothy May (2012). Park admits that evidence for Korean peninsular interaction beyond China before Koryo is sparse, and that seems to lead to a Korean globalization during Koryo. However, what the instance of Koryo and *soju* masks, then, is that globalizations are not experienced evenly, geographically or temporally, as pointed out by Holmes and Standen (2018). Choson, in the book, demonstrates that the globalization of *soju* somewhat hemorrhaged in domestic veins before flowing out again.

Ultimately, *Soju: A Global History* is a study in possibilities for how to think about global history as well as how to reframe Korean and northeast Asian history therein. Foregrounding material exchange and technology as the chief lens for Korean globalisms allows not only an escape from the myopia of ethno-centric nationalism, but also a clear glimpse at the dynamic interplay of material mobilities, technological acculturation, and identity (re)formations. That dynamic at the heart of *Soju* is both proof of Korea's global entanglement and a clarion to excavate the bedrock of this cultural powerhouse's globalism.

References

- Allsen, T. (2009). *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Allsen, T. (2019). *The Steppe and the Sea*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Benjamin, Craig. (2018). *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era, 100BCE–250CE*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Han, In-Sung Kim (2019). "Look at the Alcohol If You Want to Know the Country': Drinking Vessels as a Cultural Marker of Medieval Korea." *Act Via Serica* 4:2, pp. 49–59.
- Hansen, Valerie. (2020). *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World – and Globalization Began*. New York: Scribner.
- Holmes, Caroline and Naomi Standen (2018). "Introduction: Towards a Medieval Global Ages." *Past and Present* 238, pp. 1–44.
- Hur, Nam-lin. (2015). "Korean Tea Bowls (Kōrai Chawan) and Japanese *Wabicha*: A Story of Acculturation in Premodern Northeast Asia." *Korean Studies* 39, pp. 1–22.
- Kim, Hodong. (2007). *The Mongol Empire and Koryo*. Seoul: Seoul National University Press.
- May, Timothy. (2012). *The Mongol Conquests in World History*. London: Reaktion.
- Park, Hyunhee. (2012). *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shuo, Tong and Chung Misun (2021). "Comparative Fusion Study on the Modeling Characteristics of Drinking Vessels and Tea Vessels in Different Chinese Dynasties." *The Korean Society of Art* 31:1, pp. 89–101.
- Yi, Kanghan. (2013). *The History of Exchange between the Yuan Empire and Koryo*. Seoul: Changbi.

doi:10.1017/S1479591421000498