he notes, “Apart from the significance of its production history, however, the strongest reason for conducting a study of Takatori is the beauty and variety of the wares themselves” (p. 2).

The first chapter provides background information about politics in western Japan and about the development of the tea ceremony in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The second chapter documents the efforts of Korean potters, brought to Japan during or at the end of Japan’s invasion of the peninsula in 1592–98, to establish workshops and kilns under the protective control of the Kuroda family. The types of Takatori pottery produced in the seventeenth century, especially tea wares, are discussed and illustrated in chapters four and five. Maske provides details about recent excavations of kiln sites and the chemical analyses of archeological materials to create a chronology for technical developments and aesthetic innovations over two centuries. In chapter six, the author investigates the distribution and use of Takatori ware, with particular interest in how Kuroda daihyo strictly controlled what was commercially available for sale and what was restricted to an elite population of military-political leaders and tea masters. A price list for 1748, records of ceramics given as gifts from 1828 to 1862, and a variety of nineteenth- to twentieth-century diary entries by tea ceremony attendees give intriguing insights into how the Kuroda used ceramics to enhance their personal and han prestige. Maske also demonstrates how certain ceramic vessel shapes or painted decorations were generated, often from sketches sent to the potters, and he provides clearly labeled diagrams of vessel shapes and “string-cutting styles” evident on the bottom of a piece.

As the Japanese ceramics scholar Louise Cort, author of Shigaraki, Potter’s Valley (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1979), noted for the dust jacket to Andrew Maske’s volume, “Nothing comparable exists in English, or Japanese,” especially since most Japanese scholars have focused their research on seventeenth-century Takatori ware and Maske provides a broader perspective. Professor Morgan Pitelka’s Handmade Culture: Raku, Potters, Patrons, and Tea Practitioners in Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005) provides a similar overview to a single ceramic tradition, focused on Raku ware in the Kyoto/Kii region over 300 years, but with less technical analysis of clays and glazes and more emphasis on family histories.

Maske’s book is a valuable contribution to Japanese art history, as the field expands the familiar masterpieces to consider artistic production and patronage outside Kyoto and Edo. At $119.95, the cost of the hardbound volume is probably standard for libraries, but makes this work too expensive for undergraduate courses, and hopefully a less expensive format will be available.

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For the citizens and scholars of Japan, “3.11” evokes the same kind of reaction that “9/11” does for many Americans. We remember everything about the moment when we first heard the news of the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tohoku region and the resulting nuclear meltdowns at Fukushima Daiichi—where we were, what we were doing, and whom we were with. And we recall how in that moment we felt instinctively that the momentous events unfolding in real time on our TV screens would somehow change Japan forever. After years of grappling with sclerotic economic growth, Japan would finally be incentivized to introduce sweeping reforms. Or would it? Richard Samuels’s outstanding new book offers some answers to this question that will strike many readers as surprising.

In assessing the impact of 3.11 on Japanese politics, Samuels brings order and meaning to the cacophony of discourses that erupted in the immediate aftermath of the triple disasters. Following a succinct and informative overview of the disasters themselves, he begins by identifying the sources and significance of Japan’s particular “rhetoric of crisis.” In so doing, he strikes an admirable balance between paying homage to the poise and resilience of the stricken Tohoku residents and acknowledging that, like any other country, Japan in the midst of trauma is capable of rhetorical excess.

Samuels then offers theoretical insights into the prospects for change in the aftermath of disaster, drawing from the experiences of calamities both in Japanese history and in the United States (Hurricane Katrina) and China (the 2008 Sichuan earthquake). Here, he foreshadows one of his main findings in the 3.11 case, namely, that crises are unlikely to trigger major change unless relevant actors were already predisposed to pursue it. And yet, he shows us, it is change that has come to dominate the public and political discourse of post-3.11 Japan—a reality that in turn may have generated unrealistic expectations for its ultimate implementation.

Samuels devotes the bulk of his book to the analysis of three grand narratives of change (“put it in gear,” “stay the course,” and “back to the future”) that have played out in each of three policy areas (security, energy, and local governance). It is a highly ambitious approach that in lesser hands could easily degenerate into mere description, but Samuels executes it beautifully. In each policy-specific chapter, he draws on both his past research and a wealth of personal interviews and other primary and secondary sources to place his narratives in historical and political context. And in each case, he convinces us that change was, at best, incremental. In the security realm, the Self-Defense Forces and the American military may have enjoyed a surge in popularity following their commendable performance during the disasters, but Japan failed to produce other significant increases in defense spending or a reorientation in its military capabilities. In a similar vein, the nuclear accidents at Fukushima brought TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) to its knees, but they have yet to significantly weaken Japan’s dependence on nuclear energy. Local governance has experienced the most change since 3.11, but again, its scope has been quite limited. In each policy arena, in other words, Japan opted to “stay the course,” introducing only small, piecemeal changes to the status quo. The changes that were introduced, moreover, largely conformed to the long-standing preferences of key political actors.

In sum, Samuels tells a story of “path dependence” and of the tenacity of Japan’s political-economic institutions. But that is not all. He also provides us with a masterful example of discourse analysis that effectively illustrates how different narratives about change reflect their advocates’ preferences and prescriptions for reform. He offers sensitive insights into Japanese notions of leadership, community, and risk—tropes that, together with the change motif, have permeated Japan’s post-disaster narratives. He focuses our attention on the conspicuous gap between the dysfunctionalities of Japan’s political class and the remarkable creativity of its policy entrepreneurs. All the while, he highlights the country’s growing political diversity—a trend that may very well be at the heart of contemporary Japan’s apparent inability to rally en masse behind sweeping reform. Last but not least, Samuels offers new theoretical and empirical insights into
the nature and implications of crisis, warning us along the way about the misplaced expectations that frequently arise in its wake.

Needless to say, 3.11 is not the first major academic treatment of the triple disasters and their aftermath; to the contrary, much ink had already been spilled on the subject before this volume was published. Nor, for that matter, will it be the last word on the subject, as Samuels himself recognizes. 3.11 will, however, make its mark as the most comprehensive, contextualized, and insightful snapshot of the first few months of a critical juncture in Japanese history—a juncture that may not be so “critical” after all. I enthusiastically recommend this study to Japan scholars of all disciplinary persuasions, as well as to social scientists interested in the processes of change.

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In concluding this riveting study, Theodore Hughes describes his book as a cultural history of South Korea (p. 205). That is an understatement, as much as the book’s title is an understatement. Rather than a classical cultural history, this book is a study of the formation and development of the South Korean cultural field as meant by Pierre Bourdieu (p. 11, n. 17). As a study of the formation of South Korea’s cultural field, the book deals with far more than literature and film. Also, period-wise, the book is not limited to the Cold War era (to be understood here as the first three decades of the Republic of Korea, or ROK), but also offers fascinating chapters on both the colonial and the liberation (1945–48) periods. The scholarly modesty that becomes Hughes shines through in the depth and breadth of his research, but has unfortunately stood in the way of a more audacious and deserving title. His is a sophisticated, rich, and tantalizing study that should appeal not only to literature and film scholars, but to historians in general. Too dense for undergraduate students, this is the kind of scholarship that a graduate seminar can feast on: empirically grounded, theoretically sound, analytically daring, and above all succinct and compact.

The roots of this project are to be found in the 1988 lifting in South Korea of a ban on numerous writers (and their works) who had gone north in the postliberation period, and the effect this has had on the development of literature studies in the course of South Korean democratization. Conversant with contemporary South Korean scholarship, Hughes integrates this rediscovery into a reflection on what the exodus of these authors and their oeuvre from the South Korean canon has meant for the ways in which South Korea’s past and futures could be imagined. By returning to the culture debates of the colonial period and subsequently tracing the development of these debates into the politically confined space of postliberation South Korea and the global Cold War order, Hughes is particularly sensitive to the shifting positions of the different actors in the cultural field over the course of the colonial period, during the U.S. occupation period (1945–48), and following the establishment of the ROK (1948). From the perspective of loss and yearning in reaction to the excision of the from the ideological and national landscape of Korea.

The body of the book consists of five chronologically sequential but otherwise contained chapters that can easily be read separately thanks to the ample cross-reference and mutual overlap between the chapters. The vantage point is South Korea as Fire Frontier, a Cold War monastery that highlights South Korea’s peripheral status in the S.-Dominated postcolonial regional framework. What this book clearly shows is the successive chapters is how Korean cultural actors (and society at large) — with this geopolitical realignment that was as abrupt as it was imposed, first under occupation and then under a growingly authoritarian state in South Korea.

Hughes returns to the colonial period in order to restate that past and map the liberation construction of colonial memory and amnesia. He revisits the formation of a cultural and literary movements—proletarian cultural movement (KAPM), modernism, artistic nativism (yanggo), and wartime mass mobilization—and the different subject positions—enlightenment, proletarian, modernist, and marginalized—that subsequently informed the formation of post-1945 cultural proverbs through a process of selective forgetting and allusion to and appropriation of movements and subject positions. Already during the American occupation period alignment of the cultural field was taking place as the territorial and political divisiones. Not only was proletarian culture excised from what became Han’guk (South Korean literature), so too was the north rendered invisible and alien (a fact that was equally visible north of the 38th parallel).

Visuality is a constant concern and a lens through which Hughes analyzes the formation of a Cold War South Korean cultural field, from visuality as a formative aspect of modern subjectivity, over the visual/verbal relation that defined modern literature, to the visual politics of developmentalism statism and how this was co-opted and subverted by the likes of Ch’oe In-hun. Ch’oe In-hun’s A Day in the Life of the Novelist (1970–78), for example, borrowed its title from Pak Tae-won’s 1934 novel excised from the South Korean literary canon because Pak was an “unholy man” (woolbuk ch’akka). Pak’s Joycean novel relates Kubo’s musings wanders through Seoul’s modern cityscape, “bringing together modernist fragments and yanggo imaginings” (p. 44). Choe’s “Kubo” points to the trauma that structuration, the production of the North not only as past but as loss, withdrawn from temporal and linguistic register (neither seen nor heard). . . . Through verbal repetition, Kubo places this history of excision on display” (p. 185).

Hughes has done us a great service by reminding us that beyond South Korea’s developmentalist discourse, a resilient and diverse cultural field did not entirely succumb to the state’s hegemonic anti-communist ideology. This book should be compulsory reading for those with an interest in Korean culture studies, but also for Korean majors. If there is one regret, it would be that the epilogue does not hint at the possible future Tibetan Cold War democratization. Then again, the polarization of the culture in the post-Cold War era could be the material for a sequel to this volume. Another thrilling project would be an identical approach to map the formation of the North cultural field. Hughes has set an example for others to follow.

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