

Choi, Hyaeweol. (1995). *An International Scientific Community: Asian Scholars in the United States*. Westport CT: Praeger Publishers. (Pp. xiv; 236). Price: \$55.00

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During the 19th century, East Asian nations, one after another, woke to the painful realisation that a new world economic centre had emerged through historic capitalism in Europe and North America and was impinging upon them in ways they could not ignore. Their only recourse was to seek mastery of the modern scientific knowledge responsible for this economic might, and to create Western-style universities where their youth could be educated in wholly new ways from those promoted through Chinese-style civil service examinations, academies and other traditional institutions. Japan was probably earliest in declaring a commitment to "enlightenment" along Western lines, but China, Korea and others soon followed with much talk of renaissance and enlightenment as projects to be achieved within a brief few decades. The resulting ferment led to a rapid assimilation of Western scientific knowledge, and increasingly successful efforts at economic development. The foundation laid during this period made it possible for Japan to rise from the ashes of World War II in a brief decade or two, and for the "four Asian tigers" (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore) to follow closely in Japan's footsteps. In recent years the economic revitalization of China under the open door policies of Deng Xiaoping, has led to an increasing sense of the likelihood of the world's economic centre moving to Asia by the early 21st century.

This presents quite a challenge to the West. For more than a century Western scholars have had the luxury of studying Asian history, languages and thought as a matter of curiosity or dilettantism, with none of the urgency that inspired East Asian efforts to introduce Western scientific and social knowledge. Now, however, we face a situation in which an understanding of Asian ways of thought may become vital to our economic well-being. Seen from this perspective, Hywaweol Choi's study of Asian scholars in the United States is of particular interest, not only in terms of understanding how they adapt to the American university

context, but even more in relation to their role as potential bridge builders to an increasingly dynamic Asian university community.

The volume opens with a lengthy chapter discussing the dynamics of scientific knowledge and the structure of the international scientific community. Particular attention is paid to problems of interdependence in a situation where both economic and scientific resources are very unequally distributed. While scientific knowledge is expected to contribute to economic progress, there is an equally compelling argument for the other side of this equation - the necessity for a strong economic foundation to support advanced scientific work. Thus the recent success of East Asian economies may well herald an increasingly high profile for scientific research in the region, and possibly some basic changes in the character and definition of scientific knowledge, arising from Asian cultural and epistemological perspectives. This, in turn, would make Asian academics in North America more and more sought after as facilitators of East-West dialogue around emerging new areas of research.

For the moment, however, Choi's study shows that they remain a somewhat marginalized group, making up 4.7% of the overall American population of academics, and feeling themselves very much a minority within American society. Chapters 2 to 8, the main body of Choi's study, provide illuminating insights into their experience and perceptions, beginning with their initial motivation to do graduate study in the United States, going through career decisions to remain in the United States, the character of the scientific contacts they maintain with Asia, their experience of the academic job market, of research and teaching, of tenure and administrative leadership in the university, and finally their perceptions of their role in American higher education. The data are carefully presented, with lengthy quotations from scholars identified by their country of origin (China, India, Japan, Korea and Taiwan) and their level (from assistant to full professor). This enables the reader to feel part of the fascinating series of dialogues that constituted the main research activity. One senses that the fact that the researcher herself is an Asian scholar made for greater frankness and directness than might otherwise have been the case, given Asian traditions of courtesy.

Of greatest interest to this reviewer are the findings in chapters four and eight. Chapter four deals with the scientific networks of Asian scholars, and indicates that there is a direct relation between the economic dynamism of the home country, and the degree of scientific and scholarly contact and communication that is maintained. Indian scholars thus tended to have the least ongoing interaction with their home academic communities, while Japanese scholars had the most active networks. The lively communication resulting from China's move towards a market economy was particularly reflected in the character of interaction among Chinese scholars and their home community.

Chapter eight deals with Asian scholars' perception of their role in American higher education. To what extent does their interaction facilitate a mutual communication of ideas and scholarship, both to and from Asia? Here Choi's summary of her interview material is particularly fascinating: "As the respondents state, their different cultural and intellectual backgrounds contribute to their research and teaching in ways that can broaden their students' and colleagues' understanding of other societies. Further, their foreign-born backgrounds enable them to pose different types of questions that may be taken for granted or interpreted in a different way by domestic people. The so-called 'Eurocentric mind' or 'western ways of thinking' can be questioned and challenged by introducing Asian or Eastern value systems and ways of thinking. In this process, the West can be combined with the East in various ways, ranging from the simple juxtaposition to the creative reconstruction of each culture. Despite the small number of respondents, the interview data provide case by case situations which indicate the existing and potential roles of Asian scholars in the enhancement of cross-cultural understanding. Also, the data show that the role of Asian scholars in enhancing cross-cultural understanding is not confined to the scholarly community but extends beyond academe because of the numerous undergraduate and graduate students they educate." (p. 205)

This volume makes a valuable contribution to the field of comparative higher education and might be seen as particularly seminal to the emerging area of international academic relations, a hybrid of comparative education and international relations. The systematic use of

Wallerstein's world systems theory as a framework for the study gives it a firm basis in political economy, and some very interesting comparative perspectives on Asian and North American patterns of organization, structure and academic work arise naturally from the interviews. This approach to comparison, if further developed, would view these structures in a fluid and dynamic way, as they reflect a changing international context, rather than in the more static way often characteristic of studies that take the national context as the main focus of analysis. Choi has noted, for example, that most Asian scholars in the United States focus on research and teaching, finding it difficult to understand and use the cultural codes necessary for success in administrative leadership. There are, however, a small number of high profile Asian university presidents whose style and approach may leave a mark upon American higher education structures that reflects the changing dynamics of the global economic and political order. Given the fact that most of the scholars interviewed were highly productive and respected as researchers and teachers in nationally prominent institutions, their presence could well be the beginning of more extensive Asian influences upon the system.

At this point let me hasten to make it clear that these speculations are entirely my own. Choi is extremely circumspect in her conclusions:

The growing and far-reaching influence of scientific knowledge on a nation's economy reinforces the importance of scientific communities and their global networks. As demonstrated by my data, economic power is the major determining factor for strengthening a nation's status in global scientific networks. However, cultural and political variables also play a significant role, mainly because human agents, the producers and distributors of knowledge and technology, cannot be separated from the political and cultural context of their society. The Asian scholars in this study demonstrate the complexity of the international scientific community and show the interplay of economic factors with political and cultural factors. (p. 214)

