

Collaborative Publications and Early Swiss Receptions of Korean Culture

Rosa Jiyun Kim M.A.

University of Zürich

Korea, a book held in the Swiss Military Library in Bern, was published in 1955 by Paul Eynard (1913-1986), a Swiss soldier and editor in commemoration of the second anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The book was published in Lausanne, Switzerland and contains ten woodblock prints, on which are nine seals of Kawase Hasui (1883-1957), seven seals of the Swiss painter Fred Bieri (1889-1971), one seal of Natori Shunsen (1886-1960), and three seals of Sesson Ōta (김설촌, 1922-2014). In the book's colophon, the author wrote that the woodblock prints were created in the Tokyo workshop of the woodblock print publisher Watanabe Shōzaburō (1885-1962). I would like to introduce this book, describe a group of previously unknown woodblock prints by Hasui, and illuminate the collaborative process between three cultures that led to the publication of this book.

In 1953, immediately after the cessation of the Korean War, Switzerland dispatched 96 soldiers as members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission to Panmunjom. From then and until today, the Swiss Neutral National Supervisory Commission has been stationed at the Panmunjom, even with a reduction of the personnel number. Paul Eynard and Fred Bieri who were involved in the creation of this book, first met at Panmunjom in 1954. Since Bieri writes in his diary that he did the first sketches for Eynard's book on 14 February 1954, it seems likely that there was already a plan between them at that time to publish a book.

Since Swiss soldiers stationed in South Korea had their Base Camp in Tokyo, vacations and contact with their home countries were conducted mainly in Japan. We know from the diaries that Fred Bieri had lunch with Paul Eynard in Tokyo on March 16, 1954. We also know that Bieri met with Watanabe Shōzaburō afterwards in order to talk about the production of the woodblock prints, and that he met the famous woodblock print artist Hasui and the Korean artist Sesson Ōta at this occasion. The book *Korea* was published in Switzerland on July 27, 1955 after an intensive year-long process.

In the introduction to his book, Eynard mentions that they used the finest washi paper, picked the most beautiful photos, had the woodblock prints hand-made at a traditional woodcut studio, and selected the finest Shanghai silk for the book's cover.

Hasui died two years after the book's publication, and the woodblock prints that he made for the book may well be some of his last works. Another interesting aspect of the book can be found in the colophon, where Eynard lists the names of all the artists who took part in the work. According to this record, there were no direct meetings with Shunsen, rather, Bieri copied aspects of Shunsen's design from his prints.

During this time, Swiss soldiers formed various networks in Tokyo, including the Red Cross Club, the military clubs for the other Western soldiers stationed in Japan, Japanese cultural figures, and various politicians. At that time, although Japanese woodblock prints were not as popular as they once used to be, they still appeared to Westerners, such as the Swiss, as a beautiful East Asian art form. Therefore, it became possible to publish this book in Switzerland through a close collaboration with a Japanese woodblock print publisher and artists from Switzerland, Japan, and Korea. At that time, due to the destruction of the war, it was not possible to publish Eynard's book in Korea.