Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910–1945. Hong Yung Lee, Yong-Chool Ha, and Clark W. Sorensen, eds. Seattle: University of Washington, 2013.
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If Japan's imperial domination of Korea lasted less than four decades, *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910–1945* demonstrates that the debate over the legacy of that era will last far longer. This thought-provoking collection of essays analyzes the blurred boundaries between colonization, modernization, nationalism, and native agency that emerged during Korea's time under Japanese rule. At its core, this work is a response to a long-running historiographical debate about the legacy of Japanese imperialism in Korea. On one side of the debate is a nationalist approach, emphasizing that Japanese rule stymied the development of modern economic and political structures on the peninsula, and on the other, a "colonial modernity" school of thought, which argues that colonial rule laid the foundation for South Korea's massive economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s. These two historiographical trends—the book argues—err in their teleological assumption that modernization in Korea was somehow preordained by the 20th century. The authors note that the "colonial modernity" approach in particular relies too narrowly on economic data and ignores unquantifiable political categories that shaped life in Korea from 1910–1945 and thereafter.

Thus, this collection offers a more comprehensive view of Korea under Japanese rule by analyzing how its citizenry responded to Tokyo's social and political policies during the colonial era. In doing so, the authors do not seek to answer the reductive question of whether Japanese colonialism was a net positive or net negative for the peninsula; instead, their essays assess how Japanese policies gave rise to conflicting identities in Korea based on evolving circumstances with class, gender, culture, and

nationalism. The result is a much-needed contribution to the historiography that complicates our understanding of colonial rule in Korea by demonstrating that Japan's modernization policies often had unintended effects that defy tidy summation. At the center of that analysis is the humanity of the Korean people themselves.

In that regard, this work is most effective in offering a clear, reoccurring theme: Japan never succeeded in forcing the Korean populace to embrace Japanese social, cultural, and political customs as part of a unique modernization strategy. If the era of colonial rule—as Hong Yung Lee admits in the introduction—precipitated "profound transformation" on the peninsula, Tokyo's assimilation efforts led many Koreans to acquiesce to colonial policies when necessary but also to defy them whenever possible (14). While the nine chapters in this volume focus on an array of subjects—ranging, for instance, from Japanese educational policies (Chapter 3) to colonial efforts at "thought conversion" (Chapter 6) to the evolving status of the Korean family under Japanese rule (Chapter 9)—these essays emphasize that the Korean people maintained their own socio-cultural identity amid Japanese efforts to implant their own traditions. Indeed, after the liberation of Korea in 1945, as Keong-il Kim notes in Chapter 6, the "seemingly well-established Japanese 'identity' of the Korean people was totally negated at once" (227). While acknowledging that Koreans often found themselves forced to cooperate with their colonizers, this text contends that they never surrendered their own initiative and agency within a transformative colonial space.

The two articles that best demonstrate this reality are Yong-Jick Kim's "Politics of Communication and the Colonial Public Sphere in 1920s Korea" (Chapter 2) and Kwang-Ok Kim's "Colonial Body and Indigenous Soul: Religion as a Contested Terrain

of Culture" (Chapter 8). In the former, Yong-Jick Kim analyzes how the more open "cultural rule" of Japanese governor-general Saito Makoto led to the emergence of a Habermasian "public sphere" in the Korean press in the 1920s. Korean language newspapers, like *Tonga ilbo*, used new freedoms to question Japanese educational and legal policies and draw attention to instances of Japanese abuse against civilians (often prompting authorities to confiscate editions of the paper). At the same time, however, moderate "cultural nationalists" behind *Tonga ilbo* were unable to confront the tyranny of Japanese imperialism directly and often had no choice but to maintain close contacts with colonial authorities. Radical socialists decried their "collaborationist tendencies" as a result, and—as Yong-Jick Kim concludes—a "fine line [emerged] between moderate nationalists and collaborators" (103). In a similar vein, Kwang-Ok Kim's "Colonial Body and Indigenous Soul: Religion as a Contested Terrain of Culture" explains how Koreans accepted and "counter-manipulated" Japanese efforts to integrate Korean folk religions into the Japanese practice of Shinto. When colonial authorities adapted native Shamanistic practices for Shinto worship, many Koreans embraced those native traditions at Shinto shrines to mock and defy colonial authorities. Ordinary Koreans, the author writes, began "to re-evaluate shamanism as a cultural instrument for their political resistance against the secular power of colonialism" (307). These two essays demonstrate that even as Japanese authorities sought to coopt native customs to their own ends, diverse groups of Koreans used creative tactics to challenge their colonizers in the process.

The chapters in the rest of this volume reiterate this point and do well at offering a focused argument that Koreans continuously negotiated the restrictive confines of

colonial rule to the best of their ability. However, Dong-No Kim's "National Identity and Class Interest in the Peasant Movements of the Colonial Period" (Chapter 4) stands apart in this collection by describing how Japanese agricultural policies wrought long-lasting divisions among the Korean populace—an unprecedented "distortion of the national spirit" that remained after liberation in 1945. Colonial land and taxation policies in the Korean agrarian economy, the author explains, produced intense class antagonisms between landless peasants and wealthy landlords that had not existed prior to Japanese rule. In the decades before 1910, going back to the mid-19th century, Kim explains, peasant protests—including most notably the 1894 Tonghak peasant movement—focused their rebellions against the taxation policies of the central government as part of a nationalist consciousness. However, in the 1910s the Japanese carried out cadastral surveys that encouraged a "modern property" system, protecting landowners and ignoring the rights of tenants, and created an individual taxation system that greatly increased tax burdens on peasants. Amid worsening harvests and declining incomes, the result was that the landless began to focus their fury on landlords rather than a central state. "International struggles between the colonizer and the colonized," the author notes, "were transformed into intranational class struggles between landlords and peasants" (166). This article thus reveals an extremely important instance in which Japanese efforts towards creating modern capitalist structures in Korea had widespread ramifications for the social dynamics of the peninsula that dramatically affected post-liberation Korea.

If there is one fault that stands out in this impressive book, it is its lack of any concluding chapter. A closing summation reiterating how these essays transcend the restrictive dichotomy of a "nationalist" vs. "colonial modernity" discourse would have

strengthened the volume in terms of contextualizing its place in the historiography. In that regard, the editors need to remind readers of the cohesive strength of these essays as a broader statement about the legacy of Japanese rule in Korea. Such a conclusion could have also offered a discussion of the research that remains undone in probing the unresolved history of that controversial period.

Regardless, this work succeeds in offering a series of focused essays that reflect critically on the complexities and unintended consequences of Japan's efforts to modernize the Korean peninsula in its own national image. Historians, educators, and students alike will find its individual chapters valuable as case studies in which Japanese aims intersected with the nationalist agency of the Korean people. In any colonial space, this text reminds us, the quiet initiative of the colonized remains a potent force.

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