
The late Dr. James Palais once noted that those researching delicate Japan-Korea topics should not expect to make friends from either side, unless they choose one. Brandon Palmer’s *Fighting for the Enemy* skillfully straddles both sides in his examination of Korean wartime mobilization by Japanese colonial authorities. His position that “economic and social conditions accompan[ied] wartime industrialization [that] created opportunities for Koreans who cooperated with and worked within the colonial system” (11) is unlikely to win him many friends, but is an important historical contribution that challenges a strained paradigmatic history that presents all mobilized Koreans as victims of a cruel and inhumane Japanese wartime policy. He does not deny Korean victimization, but paints it as one chapter of a more complex story. Mobilized Koreans were victimized in different ways, but in certain cases they also benefited from their experiences. Many, however, remain uncompensated for the labor that they contributed to Japanese businesses and Japan’s military (193).

The book’s title is misleading; a more accurate one might have read “mobilizing for the colonizer.” First, while his primary intention is to lead readers through the process of Japan’s recruiting, training, and arming the Korean male for battle, his discussion also extends into labor mobilization. The two processes overlapped until the final stage when the Korean either was given a weapon with which to fight Japan’s enemy, or a tool with which to labor in Japanese mines, forests, and factories. Indeed, Palmer instructs, conscription occasionally permitted Koreans to choose their mode of mobilization (151, 160). Mobilization also provoked a variety of responses by Koreans. Many, after exhausting all means of dodging this responsibility, were dragged to the labor camp or military battlefield kicking and screaming. Yet, others saw positive consequences potentially emerging from the experience, such as deliverance from poverty or instruction in a marketable skill.

The title’s inclusion of the word “enemy” is also misleading in that it suggests all mobilized Koreans harbored a negative image of their colonial subjugators. Palmer’s treatment of his topic demonstrates otherwise. Kang Kong-sam, who was punched by his commanding officer when he complained of the Japanese discriminative treatment toward Koreans (129), could have adopted this image. On the other hand, Hong Sa-il, who rose to become the highest-ranking Korean in the Japanese military (130), most probably saw Japanese in a more positive light. Korean admittance into the Japanese military, first as “volunteers” in 1938 and then by conscription from 1944, gained acceptance within certain Korean circles who saw it as a weak signal that Japanese were now ready to see Koreans as their near equals. Unfortunately, the Japanese did not always treat Koreans as such on payday (163) or in their everyday affairs.
Discrimination followed Koreans into the army and labor barracks. *Fighting for the Enemy*, however, addresses this issue as it appeared in the process of developing a conscription system rather than through what individual Koreans experienced after being conscripted. Total war required the mobilization of all available resources, yet the Japanese began conscripting Koreans only after the war situation turned ugly, when they desperately needed cannon fodder to throw at the enemy. Koreans today can breathe a sigh of relief as this prejudice saved many of their ancestors from near certain death or gruesome injury. Palmer argues that the bottom line was that the Japanese believed that assimilation had not progressed far enough to allow Koreans to fight alongside Japanese, that instituting conscription might allow radical Koreans to disrupt the system, and that Japanese might have to seriously entertain Korean demands for more equal treatment in the war's aftermath (148). More progress was needed by Koreans in Japanese language proficiency, among other areas, before they could be given the “right” to serve in Japan’s military. The base of this deficiency is in the Japanese failure to institute a compulsory education system that would nurture Koreans in “becoming Japanese” prior to their requiring the colonized people to fight, and perhaps die, for imperial Japan.

Brandon Palmer joins T. Fujitani in offering an important contribution to our understanding of male Korean mobilization for military and civilian service, a topic that has received a fair amount of attention in both Japanese and Korean, but until now little consideration in English, historiography. His efforts leave several questions for future researchers. The book’s strength is in its treatment of the process that brought Koreans into the military. However, it offers limited attention to the treatment they endured once they donned the uniform. To what extent did this treatment target their Korean ethnicity, as opposed to their generally low rank? In other words was it harsher than that received by all conscripted soldiers, including Japanese? And, what factors allowed Koreans such as Hong Sa-ik the opportunity to advance in the ranks? Another interesting part of this history not discussed here are the examples of Korean deserters from Japan’s military, a sizeable number of who joined Korean units in China from which they were recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to serve under Allied command. And finally, more dedicated consideration of postwar compensation issues is required to better understand the demands of Korean (and Chinese) laborers who continue to sue for back pay and benefits that their Japanese counterparts enjoyed in the war’s aftermath. The above points are not meant as criticism, but rather as questions that future researchers of this topic might consider developing. To these ends Palmer has laid the important groundwork by completing *Fighting for the Enemy*.

Mark CAPRIO
Rikkyo University
caprio@rikkyo.ac.jp

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This is a book that delivers more than it promises. The author is well read in comparative book history and appreciates that there is more to books than their printing history. As he notes on the final page of the book: “Printing, especially with blocks, fixed the malleable texts and housed them intact, as an immovable whole, through the process of engraving. Yet behind the materiality and design of the book were the conceptions of the people who produced it.” Those people, those conceptions and their roots in the intellectual and cultural history of the Chosŏn period are central to this book: the title, *Engraving Virtue*, alludes to the ethical concerns of the Chosŏn court, which are very much to the foreground.

The moral primer referred to in the subtitle, *Samgang haengsil-to* (Illustrated examples of the three bonds in action), is well known as a work that was intended to inculcate a sound understanding of basic Confucian behavioral norms in the population at large, but it raises many questions. What prompted the production of the primer in the first place, why at that particular juncture, and why seek to ensure that it was distributed widely? And what is the significance of the substantial differences between the various editions? The first part of this book seeks to unravel the background to the preparation of the text in its earlier incarnations and it does so with a masterly assessment of the imperatives of Zhu Xi’s reformulation of Confucianism and of the Chosŏn state’s take on those imperatives, while the second part unravels the changes in the text over two centuries and anchors them in shifting ethical considerations at the Chosŏn court.

The production of the various editions of *Samgang haengsil-to*, it seems, had concrete proximate causes in addition to the more remote causes that are to be found in the ethical imperative to inculcate moral virtues. Thus the second chapter begins with an account of a patricide that occurred in 1428, of the moral problems this posed, of the background to patricide in the Ming legal codes, and finally of the range of punishments available, from “death by slow slicing” down to more comfortable forms of execution such as strangulation and decapitation. The reader is left in no doubt of the profound shock this incident gave the Chosŏn court. The patricide happened in the tenth year of Sejong’s reign and Oh gives us a perceptive account of the reaction to this incident and of Sejong’s subsequent decision to compile a book of stories focused on exemplary behavior. The patricide laid bare ethical shortcomings in the populace and so the object of the book was not just to inculcate ideas of good behavior, but also to persuade people to act in accordance with moral norms, rather than killing their fathers.

The first edition of *Samgang haengsil-to* was printed in 1434, and was of course in Chinese, for ônmun (*han’gul*) had yet to be invented. The first new edition with added vernacular elements seems to have been published in 1481, though the
only copies that survive come from later reprints. In one of the most perceptive parts of the book, Oh demonstrates that the vernacular texts, which are squeezed into the upper margins of the page, are not so much translations for the benefit of readers as vernacular cues for those who were to provide oral explanations to the illiterate. The point was to spread the moral lessons as far and wide as possible, and in the case of the illiterate that meant oral instruction based on the Chinese text. Equally instructive is Oh’s discussion of the reduced edition of 1490, which cuts out the stories containing conflicting moral messages, the stories giving extreme and violent examples of filial piety, and most of the stories in which ministers reproach a monarch. In a careful analysis of the political and ideological context he argues that there were very good reasons at the end of the fifteenth century for these deliberate omissions to be made. Thus, for example, he relates the omission of reproachment stories to the changing conceptions of the relationship between ruler and subjects.

In the case of the sequels that were published in 1514 and 1617, Oh highlights what he calls the “Chosŏnization” of the text. More and more Korean stories replaced those from China, and in the 1617 edition the vernacular version was placed alongside the Chinese text rather than in the upper margin. Thus the vernacular finally achieved parity with the Chinese, and in both textual accuracy and in intent it can be called a translation. Ironically and interestingly, that 1617 edition was printed in a very limited number of copies, so it cannot be said that the vernacular translation was provided in order to make the text accessible to an extensive vernacular readership. Here and in other places Oh’s handling of the vernacular versions in post-1444 editions is a valuable lesson in the limits of vernacularization and the unwarranted assumptions involved in calling them “translations.”

Even Homer nods, and there appears to be one slip in this book. The detailed and rewarding discussion of the New Sequel to Samgang haengsil-to, published in 1617, demonstrates that in this version at last the reader finds “[f]aithfully parallel and matching Chinese and vernacular texts” but the author then adds: “the vernacular text of the story does not invest much in the details but merely sketches the skeleton of the story” (252). This is surely incorrect: the author has just shown convincingly, by translating both the Chinese and the vernacular versions of one of the stories, that they are very close; what he meant to say, surely, is that both the Chinese and the vernacular versions give merely the “skeleton of the story” by comparison with earlier editions, which give much fuller versions of the stories they contain.

This slip apart (and which of us has not nodded in our published work?), this book is an authoritative, subtle, and wholly satisfying exploration of an emblematic moral primer and Oh contextualises it superbly. It is book history at its best, and that means in the Korean context that it also tells us much about the social history of the Chosŏn dynasty.

Peter KORNICKI
University of Cambridge
pk104@cam.ac.uk
Reviewing an edited volume is always a challenge because the different perspectives of the individual authors often make collective assessments nearly impossible to render. There may be temptations to group the authors into specific categories and make generalizations about various academic trends. Yet such broad pronouncements would inevitably encounter the problem that the individual authors in an edited volume have their own research agendas and theoretical perspectives that distinguish them from the others.

The inherent problems of classification need to be kept in mind when reading the recent publication of Hong Yung Lee, Yong-chool Ha, and Clark Sorensen, *Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea, 1910-1945*. The volume itself is a welcome addition to the growing number of studies on colonial Korea. The individual authors represent some of the foremost experts on colonial Korea and the breadth and quality of the questions that they raise are truly outstanding. Overall, the articles provide multivalent explanations of the complex phenomenon known as Japanese colonialism, and the richness of the empirical findings will greatly contribute to the English-language discussions about Korean history. Several of the Korean scholars in this collection have not been published in English before, and the translation of their highly valuable research is certainly welcome.

The collection begins with Hong Yung Lee introduction that resurrects the ghosts of debates long gone by. Fourteen years after the publication of Gi-wook Shin and Michael Robinson's *Colonial Modernity in Korea* and twenty-three years after the publication of Carter Eckert's *Offspring of Empire*, it would seem that little new can be said about these time-tested works. The conflation of these seminal studies with that of the entirely different New Right historiography of An Byŏngjik and a disparate group of scholars mostly active in Korea into one collective “Colonial Modernity” school may tempt one to conclude that a troubling trend has been spotted. Yet a closer look at the assertions of Hong Yung Lee reveals that the purported coherency of the “Colonial Modernity” school fails to materialize on the whole.

The individual studies that Hong Yung Lee critiques all have different goals and intentions which are difficult to group into a single category. While he makes some necessary interventions into the various historical debates over the colonial past, some of his problematic claims will need some correctives to balance out the generally comprehensive literature review that he provides. The argument that no other country had colonized its neighbor like Japan seems to ignore the work of one of the contributors within the collection, Mark Caprio, who discusses
the highly interesting comparison between France and Algeria in his book, *Assimilation and Colonial Korean Policy*. The point that Koreans and Japanese are more culturally similar than the French and Algerians might be plausible, but the proximity argument is perplexing given such existing examples that can be found of neighborly colonialism.

Space limitations will preclude a point by point analysis of the introductory chapter, but suffice to say that how one interprets the findings will depend on whether or not one agrees with Lee’s assertion that modernization is the end point of all history. Such Fukuyama-like narratives seem to be at odds with current trends in the study of colonial studies where the concept of globalization and modernization has been ably deconstructed by eminent colonial scholars like Fredric Cooper.

Moving on to the individual chapters, the first by Yong-chool Ha, “Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea: The Paradox of Colonial Control,” provides an interesting theoretical framework for understanding the colonial situation through his elaboration of the concept of “colonial space.” Ha’s argument seems reminiscent of Hae-dong Yun’s work on the colonial grey zone, although he elaborates it in much more detail through his delineation of Colonial Superstructural Space, Colonial Functional Space, and Colonial Social Space. His discussions on colonial education would have benefited from the inclusion of more recent studies, like Jun Uchida’s work, to provide more complexity in the Korean responses. His section on the Korean family encounters the problem that a group of gender and legal scholars in Korea have long pointed out: that the claims to preserve the Korean family through the recognition of Korea’s special characteristics, *Chōsen no tokusei*, led in fact to the invention of completely new family traditions and practices that never existed in premodern Korea. Overall, Yong-chool Ha’s call to theorize the colonial relationship suggests the need to provide more ways of categorizing and understanding the complexities of colonial rule and that more work in this direction may help to clarify the overall framework of Japanese colonialism.

Yong-jick Kim’s chapter, “Politics of Communication and the Colonial Public Sphere in 1920s Korea” presents a somewhat problematic argument that the public sphere of 1920s Cultural Rule should be seen as a brief emergence of a Habermasian public sphere. While his call for a closer evaluation of the public discourse of the period and the many examples that he provides are a welcome introduction to the complex debates of the period, he does not reference a rather long standing

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discussion among Korean and Japanese scholars on the nature of “colonial publicness” or *singminji konggongsŏng*. The applicability of the Habermasian model to colonial Korea has been the focus of a fierce debate and an engagement with the existing literature would provide a more nuanced view. In my own recent work on the colonial public sphere, I suggest the need to consider the importance of a “colonial rationality” that greatly hampers the application of any Habermasian notion of the public sphere to colonial Korea. At the same time, his call to mark 1926 as an important break in the communications history of colonial Korea may require further consideration to see if the differences before and after this year do in fact reflect a major shift in colonial policy.

Seong-cheol Oh and Ki-seok Kim’s piece, “Expansion of Elementary Schooling under Colonialism: Top Down or Bottom up?” provides much of the empirical foundations for the work of several authors in the collection. Detailed colonial statistics on the education system have been widely cited in both the Korean and Japanese language scholarship, but they are introduced in some of their most complete form in this chapter. Scholars who do not have access to these Korean- and Japanese-language sources will find the data to be well organized into clear tables and useful visualizations. The authors interpret the reduction in the number of private schools in Korea to be a significant indicator of changes within the colonial order. However, the private education system in Korea was tied closely with the Japanese system, since Koreans who could pay for an education would often choose Japanese language education. Therefore, we need to proceed with caution when drawing conclusions about the education system based on data from the private sector.

Dong-no Kim’s chapter, “National Identity and Class Interest in the Peasant Movement of the Colonial Period,” provides a balanced critique of the colonial modernity debate and calls for a perspective on colonial history that avoids an overly positivist perspective on modernity. His discussion on the tenant disputes shows how the advent of many modern institutions that impacted the agricultural economy of Korea had fundamentally transformed the social structure of the colony. He provides both a wealth of empirical information and a well-informed conceptual framework for understanding the social dynamics that may have led to the emergence of a class-based identity within the peasant movements.

Mark Caprio’s “The 1920 Colonial Reforms and the June 10 (1926) Movement: A Korean Search for Ethnic Space” provides a detailed account of a historical event that is rarely discussed outside the Korean language scholarship. The failure of the June 10 Movement to incite a major nationalist protest on the scale of the March First Movement provide an interesting window for understanding how nationalist aspirations and Japanese colonial policy can intersect. By bringing a wealth of Japanese language sources to the question, Mark Caprio provides a more

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7 Michael Kim, “The Colonial Public Sphere and the Discursive Mechanism of Mindo,” in ibid.
comprehensive perspective than previous scholarship and raises important issues about the meaning of ethnic space in colonial Korea.

Keon-gil Kim's contribution, "Japanese Assimilation Policy and Thought Conversion in Colonial Korea," offers a fascinating glimpse at the extensive thought conversion program that operated within the colonial prison system. The reeducation of recalcitrant colonial subjects became a high priority for the colonial state in the late 1930s. The comparative study of the thought conversion process in Japan and Korea shows interesting similarities and differences which may require further inquiry to delineate fully.

Keun-sik Jung's chapter, "Colonial Modernity and the Hegemony of the Body Political in Leprosy Relief Work," adds to our knowledge of the complexity of the modern institutions that emerged in colonial Korea through an investigation of leprosy asylums. Jung provides an important intervention into the debates that surround colonial Korean history by explaining how Western missionaries had introduced certain key modern institutions which the Japanese later adapted. His careful empirical research sheds considerable light on the rationale behind colonial health policies and reveals the considerable violence that was deployed to operate a system that was emblematic of the modernity that the Japanese brought to Korea.

Kwang-ok Kim's piece, "Colonial Body and Indigenous Soul: Religion as a Contested Terrain of Culture," addresses the spiritual life of Koreans under colonial rule. The colonial authorities suppressed certain folk and shamanistic beliefs, but the collective memory of this process lived on in various local recollections in the area of Andong where this study was conducted. While the Japanese certainly did try to eliminate some of the Korean belief systems that Kwang-ok Kim highlights, we must also keep in mind that in certain cases, such as Buddhism, religious practices were not necessarily deemed to be incompatible with the goals of colonial rule. The concerns about balance in the presentation notwithstanding, the focus on how contemporary Koreans understood their colonial past within the regional cultures of Korea and the discussion of Japanese religious policies are welcome additions to the English language studies on colonial Korea.

Finally, Clark Sorenson ends the volume with his chapter, "The Korean Family in Colonial Space—Caught between Modernization and Assimilation," and provides a glimpse of the changing family structure through a careful examination of the Japanese Civil Code. The impact of family laws and the name change policies of the colonial government during the late colonial period all receive careful consideration in Sorenson's study. Like many aspects of colonial Korea, the Korean family underwent an ambiguous transformation that was an amalgam of old and new forces that left a complex legacy for postliberation Korea.

Overall, the authors in the collection represent disparate perspectives on colonial Korea that do not necessarily fall diametrically opposite to the positions critiqued in Hong Yung Lee's introduction. Colonial Rule and Social Change in Korea adds welcome complexity and nuances to the English-language scholarship on colonial Korea. The empirical data behind the contributions open up new points of comparison with other examples of colonialism from around the world and further
dialogue with colonial specialists from different regions of the globe will inevitably contribute to the continued development of Korean studies on the whole.

Michael KIM
Yonsei University
mkim@yonsei.ac.kr