

Park Yun-jae 박윤재, *Han'guk Hyeondae Uiryosa 한국현대의료사* (The History of Modern Medicine in Korea). Paju: Dulnyouk, 2021. 344 pp.

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In the times of COVID-19 pandemic, rapid mobilization of the health system in Korea for testing, tracing, and treatment caught international attention. Although early response to pandemic was widely praised as success of “K-quarantine,” there were deep rooted inequalities and dimensions surfaced. Decades of conflict between doctors and government arose over expansion of medical student quota, which led to doctors’ strike in the midst of a pandemic. Also the lack of public medical institutes was overburdened, leaving the questions over how the next pandemic should be prepared. As the author puts it, Korea has “best medical care,” yet with “poorest public health” (21). National health insurance system covers the entire population, public medical institutes provide only 10 percent of beds. Such promises and perils of the health system in recent pandemic responses need careful examination, and historical research can add valuable insight to where it came from and where it is headed.

This book is a timely addition to historiography of medical history, especially the modern healthcare system of Korea, in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. The book covers the development of the health system and medicine in Korea from 1945 to present. It is notable that the author defines medicine in a broader sense, choosing the word *uiryo* (healthcare) rather than *uihak* (medicine). This was deliberately chosen to include all aspects of health, from public health, health system and therapeutics. Rather than focusing on a few doctors and policy makers in internal development of academic medicine, this book takes a social history approach to show the role of public and private. The author argues that although the government as public played a crucial role in the formation of the modern health system, historically a large amount of role—specifically treatment—was outsourced to the private sector. Thus, interactions, cooperation, and conflict between public and private would be a key to understanding the current state of healthcare in Korea.

To effectively show this analytical framework, the author takes both thematic approach rather than chronological. Chronologically, the book divides three periods; development of modern healthcare system after liberation (1945-1960), Park Chung-

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hee and Chun Doo-hwan period with mass mobilization for public health and expansion of accessibility (1961-1988), and the rise of contemporary system with deployment of National Health Insurance Service (1989-present). Each period was thematically covered with topics on major government policy on health system and public health measures, diseases, and private response to such measures and threats. It is a particularly welcoming addition to current historiography, as the period of 1990s to present are less explored areas in history of medicine.

The major contribution of this book is to bring out the analytical framework of public and private in the development of Korea's health system, providing consistent historical narrative. This is particularly valuable in addressing the challenges the Korean health system is facing at the moment, where weakening of public health infrastructure and marketization of medicine is evident. Rather than restricting to historical analysis, the author boldly addresses the root of current problems in history. For example, During the early period after liberation, the distinction between public and private was rather ambiguous. With limited supply of medical professions, many of them revolved as private practice and public servants. Although the number of doctors grew and private practices expanded in the 1960s to 1970s, public and private had mutually beneficial relationships. However, as shown in Chapter 3 of "Rise of Private Medical Institutions and Conflicts," increased competition in the medical service market and private economic interests dismantled previous mutual relationships and gave rise to conflict between public and private. Sociological analysis on professionalism of doctors in Korea, such as *The State and Physicians in South Korea, 1910-1985: An Analysis of Professionalization* by Cho Byong-Hee showed that entrepreneurism in the medical profession founded marketization and privatization of medicine in Korea. Such keen perception over public and private relationships in healthcare in Korea draws our attention to what the future relationship with medicine should be. Since this is the time to "call the new actor" to make "sustainable, long-term changes" in healthcare system (280).

Overall, this book well embraces the recent advances in the history of medicine, where scholars overcome traditional nationalistic view to more social and anthropological approach to shed light on bottom-up historical narrative. However, certain limitations remain in the book. The author draws evidence from a wide range and length of primary and secondary sources, yet a large amount of primary sources rely on government documents. The government document is a sound starting place for health system analysis, however this strongly reflects the perception of the policy makers and influenced by power dynamics which itself needs critical analysis. Also important actors in the private sector, namely the patients and consumers are less visible in the book.

Limitations of this book in turn reflect the gaps in research of the history of medicine. Although scholars in the history of modern medicine in Korea made significant progress in social history, oral history and transnational history during the last decade, there are still significant gaps. Public institutions such as university hospitals

are still a dominant starting point of research in the history of medicine, yet as effectively shown in the book, private practice was the dominant medical service provider in later periods. Traditionally, history of medicine looked into prominent figures of doctors and policy makers, leaving aside patients and healthcare workers on the ground level. Thus, questions arise whether “lack of resistance or rejection” of the private sphere in response to public policies was actual representation of reality (179).

Yet, the book opens more avenues of research by broadly defining medicine as health and healthcare. Development of drug companies by the support of U.S. International Cooperation Administration (65), and technical support from the foreign donors in mass mobilization public health programs, such as family planning and parasite control, shows possible connections with science and technology studies. In particular, the drugs and medical devices, which make material basis for implementation of public health policy, were manufactured by private companies nurtured in borders of science and technology policies. By expanding the purview of medicine from narrowly defined prevention and treatment of the diseased state, history of medicine bears much more fruits from cross disciplinary studies.

With the author's previous book, *Hanguk Geundae Uihag-ui Giwon* 한국 근대의학의 기원 (The Origin of Modern Medicine in Korea), this book will provide a valuable entry point to any readers and highly recommended for those who wish for a complete overview of modern medicine in Korea. Succinctly laid out topics and chronology will not only value those who are new to the field, but also provides new avenues of research for existing scholars. More broadly, the authors attempt to examine the root of current challenges through the lens of interaction between public and private, and provide good examples of what historical analysis can offer to present.