

do so, Forbes writes, ‘liberalism failed to supersede collective religious interests with its individual-based paradigm’ because ‘liberals had underestimated the persistence of the religiously based politics of collective identity’ (p. 19). Even the eventual embrace of the neutral liberty framework resulted not from the triumph of individualist ideology but from Liberal party leaders’ recognition that their political fortunes depended on ‘courting the Catholic vote’ (p. 157). Forbes’s book offers a cautionary reminder in the present moment – as the politics of collective identity seemingly grow stronger each year across the globe – about the limits of liberal politics and religion to challenge group identity.

One of the strengths of Forbes’s scholarship is its attentiveness to the religious ideas that underlay his subjects’ rhetoric. This is especially true in chapter i, where Forbes carefully interrogates biblical references in liberal-reform rhetoric, and in chapter ii, where he traces dissenters’ deployment of persecution narratives and millennialist themes in Canadian politics. It is the richness of these moments that makes the analysis feel uneven at other points in the book. When Forbes quotes one reformer as suggesting that state religion ‘violated “the religion of Jesus”’ the reader is left wondering what, for the book’s subjects, the ‘religion of Jesus’ was (p. 50). Was it the model of a primitive Christian community that many dissenting Evangelical groups idealised in this era? Or was it a set of ethical precepts set apart from historical Christian doctrines, as some liberal religious groups began to espouse in the mid-nineteenth century? Likewise, later chapters refer to ‘liberal Catholics’, without consistently defining whether their liberalism was political, religious or both, nor clarifying what their essential beliefs were.

Given Forbes’s persuasive claim that Canada’s Protestant liberals sought to build a society modelled on their understanding of Christianity, and that later alliances with Catholics guided the shift to neutral liberty, the meaning of terms like these matters. A deeper understanding of the underlying religious ideas guiding this book’s central figures would have made this important, compelling study all the richer.

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*Gender politics at home and abroad. Protestant modernity in colonial-era Korea.* By Hyaewol Choi. Pp. xiv + 237 incl. 22 ills. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. £24.99 (paper). 978 1 108 72028 1  
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As Hyaewol Choi notes (p. 25), this book is a sequel to her earlier book, *Gender and mission encounters in Korea: new women, old ways* (Berkeley, CA 2009). That book explored how the notion of ‘modern womanhood’ was formed in Korea. In it, Protestant women missionaries from the US loom large as role models for the first generation of Korean women exposed to Western-style education. That book also served as a stepping-stone for this book, in which centre stage is given to the Korean women. *Gender politics at home and abroad*, while blemished somewhat by its diffused focus in question-framing, holds up well and, like its predecessor,

contributes significantly to our understanding of how gender norms and relations evolved in Korea during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The book begins in the late nineteenth century, but its focus lies in the period between 1919 and 1937, the so-called Cultural Rule (Japanese: *bunka seiji*; Korean: *munhwa chŏngch'i*) Period, when Japan's rule over Korea changed from one of militaristic repression to looser and surveillance-oriented control, a shift precipitated by the 1919 March First Independence Movement, a failed attempt by Koreans to secure independence through massive, peninsula-wide protests. The Cultural Rule ended in 1937, when Japan reinstated harsher policies in Korea as it initiated an all-out war against China, turning Korea into a base for its prosecution of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Compared to its predecessor, which is mainly a historical treatment tinged with a feminist outlook, *Gender politics at home and abroad* presents a historical analysis informed not only by an explicitly feminist position but also by something new: a transnational perspective.

The main question that drives this book is this: 'How did the transnational circulation of knowledge and the mobility of people, fostered by the global Christian [Protestant] network, affect gender norms, domestic material culture, and women's engagement in the public sphere within the specific historical context of colonial Korea?' (p. 4) Along with this, Choi puts forward two other questions as pertinent to her discussion: 'What insights can we gain from the gendered experiences of transnational encounters in the making of modern Korea? And what new light does Korea's experience shed on wider historical transformations of gender relations under colonialism?' These, however, lack clarity and are inorganically incorporated into the book, unnecessarily complicating the overall argument. What is overarching, saliently and consistently throughout the book, is the first question. And in response to it, Choi offers the following argument: in the historical context of colonial Korea, Protestantism, through its global network, fostered transnational circulation of knowledge and the mobility of people that had conflicting effects on women of Korea, both furthering and limiting their agency with respect to gender norms, domestic material culture and engagement in the public sphere.

Choi develops her argument in the book's four substantive chapters. In chapter i, 'Ideology: wise mother, good wife', she explores the genealogy and consequence of *hyŏnmo yangch'ŏ* ('wise mother, good wife'), the dominant ideology of womanhood in Korea in the twentieth century. In it, she persuasively argues that while this ideology bears some semblance to *pudŏk*, the traditionally touted womanly virtue, it is in truth a modern construct, born at the turn of the twentieth century, owing to a confluence of nationalist, colonial and Protestant desires: the nationalists' desire that women's roles be modernised just enough so that they could more effectively aid their menfolk's efforts to regain Korea's sovereignty; the desire of the colonisers that women become more useful subjects of the Japanese emperor; and the desire of the missionaries that the women be modernised along the lines of Victorian womanhood, to facilitate the task of evangelising the world.

The spread of this ideology, Choi argues, extracted women from being mere cogs in the machinery of the extended family-oriented patriarchy of the pre-modern period, but it also reinserted them as subordinates to men in the

nuclear-family-oriented patriarchy of the ‘modern’ era. This ambiguity is emphasised in chapter ii, ‘Materiality: the experience of modern house and home’, which focuses on well-off Koreans’ infatuation with modern/Western domesticity, indicated by their hankering for Western-style residences and esteeming women who had mastered the science of home economics as it was being espoused in the West. Importantly, Choi argues, the inspiration and driving force behind this publicly prized domesticity was not the supposedly modernised Japan but the West as it was being exemplified by Protestant missionaries, by their lifestyle, their everyday accoutrements and their transnational access to Western ideas and resources.

In chapter iii, ‘Crossing: selfhood, nation, and the world’, Choi focuses on transnational experiences of several well-known ‘New Women’ (*sin’yōsōng*) of colonial-era Korea, for example, Pak Indōk, who travelled the globe on behalf of various Protestant causes, and Kim Hwallan, who, in 1939, became the first Korean president of what is now Ewha Womans University. This chapter underscores women’s initiative and independence of spirit, defying the ‘wise mother, good wife’ ideology and challenging men in the public sphere. At the same time, it leans into Protestantism’s empowering side, as it shows that most of these women could not have acted as they did if they had not been supported by transnational resources of Protestantism, such as mentorship, scholarships and higher education. In the final chapter, ‘Labor: search for rural modernity’, Choi discusses efforts of some of these new women, including Pak and Kim, to revitalise Korea’s decrepit countryside, reform of which was thought to be crucial for the renewal of the entire country. They brought to bear the knowledge they had gained from their transnational experiences, such as the Danish model for rural reform, supported by funds and expertise from the global Protestant network, putting their distinctive stamp on the public sphere in the process.

It is well known that Protestantism contributed crucially to modernising women’s lives in Korea in the first half of the twentieth century, and the achievements of Korean Protestant women during that period are increasingly being brought to light by researchers, especially in Korean-language publications. An important example of this is Yun Chōngnan’s *han’guk kidokkyo yōsōng undong ūi yōksa, 1910–1945* [A history of Korean Protestant women’s movement, 1910–1945], Seoul 2003. This is not referenced by Choi. Even so, there is no doubt that *Gender politics at home and abroad*, as a companion to *Gender and mission encounters in Korea*, makes a unique and valuable contribution to the field, not least by its ability to interweave the topic with discourses of transnationalism and feminism, as well as nationalism and colonialism, and its tempered hermeneutics of suspicion.

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