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Han Suk-jung, *Manjumodŏn: 60Nyŏndae Han'guk Kaebal Ch'ejeŭi Kiwŏn* [Manchuria-Modern: The Origin of South Korean Developmental Regime in the 1960s]. Seoul: Munhakkwajisŏngsa, 2016. 518 pages. ISBN: 9788932028521.

Jo Changho
The New School for Social Research

In this ambitious book the author explores the relationship between the development of Manchukuo and South Korea. He puts forth a very radical and perhaps controversial view of the relationship: Manchukuo being "the model of East Asian developmentalist regimes of bureaucratic authoritarianism." Han argues that the Manchuria modernization project was a complex ideological and practical formation of hard modernity, which was passed on to South Korea and whose emphasis on construction, mobilization, and competition the Korean military regime found suiting the compressed development best (pp. 68-69).

Conceding that it is almost impossible to prove the argument in a positivist sense (pp. 70-71), the author takes the strategy of inviting readers to plunge with all their imagination onto a virtual historical tour of the flow of ideas, concepts, sentiments, and people in Northeast Asia of the first half of the twentieth century. The journey starts in Busan, a focal point of the two-way flow between mainland Asia and the Japanese Archipelago, rather than in a Korean city adjacent to Manchuria, such as Uiju. The choice is to position the relationship between

Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula in the broader perspective of the colonialist activities of the Japanese Empire as well as the activities of the colonized. In this virtual tour, Han successfully dimensionalizes the colonial experience, expanding the reader's understanding of it from a fragmentary picture of Korea's exploitation by Japan and the diaspora of Koreans into the northern regions to a broader and more comprehensive perspective. The dynamic portrayal of economic and social impact pulsating through the Japanese Empire, the flow of people and ideas transforming each region, and the Korean Peninsula being closely woven in, influenced by, and influencing this imperialist yet highly cosmopolitan regional order is probably the most fascinating part of this book, especially given the fact that for decades South Koreans have thought of themselves as living in one of the most geopolitically insular places of the world.

Once the spatial dynamics in the empire has been eloquently formulated and Manchukuo presented as the crystallization of authoritarian developmentalism in which military bureaucracy enjoyed an unprecedented extent of freedom to push ahead economic plans (p. 175), the author moves on to explore the temporal dynamics. We learn a story of how the memory of Manchukuo, in both direct and indirect way, played a crucial role in the development of South Korea, as Manchukuo and the *jaegeon* (reconstruction) regime of the 1960s are juxtaposed in many ways. The regime would try to penetrate every aspect of life of the populace and transform, or "reconstruct" it in a very fascist fashion. Actually, the modernity itself could very well be the embodiment of fascism in the sense that fascism initiated the decisive break from the past by enabling a collective, social transformation through technological progress (p. 234).

Overall, this book offers valuable and enlightening observations on the relationship between the authoritarian developmentalism of Manchukuo and South Korea. The author illustrates the connection between the two states in almost every social aspect with a great amount of interesting details, and I would not dare to challenge the validity of the connection in any aspect here. Rather, I would say the book is a remarkable success if the author intended to illuminate that Korean developmentalism shared the fascist characteristics of modernity with Manchukuo, by revealing the taboo-like, direct and intimate affiliation between the two.

Probably, a bit too successful, to the extent that the reader comes to ask himself whether it is even possible to pursue modernization in any other way.

Personally, I found myself having been convinced by the author's argument even before I purchased the book, when I was reading the introductory remarks and a couple of reviews. That is how promising the project of establishing the origin of the South Korean nation building in the state-experiment of Manchukuo sounded. Both histories are embroidered with construction, roads, buildings, five-year economic plans, omnipotent military-bureaucratic apparatuses, movements for consciousness reformation, and of course with stories of a certain officer surnamed Park. When I started reading the book, I was almost certain that I would grudgingly accept as an undeniable fact that almost every aspect of the nation building of South Korea can be traced back to Manchukuo, with the problematic connection having been carefully hidden in the dark to avoid offending the nationalistic pride.

Intriguingly, as much as I enjoyed reading the book and deeply appreciated the author's adroit weaving in of extensive textual data as well as his marvelous job of integrating numerous intellectual streams into the storyline, I felt less convinced about the decisive role of Manchukuo when I finished the book than when I started.

First of all, there is an unreconciled vacillation between the theoretical universalization and the particularity or singularity of the remarkable object. On one hand, Manchukuo was an artificial state par excellence, a sui generis historical experiment, a deliberate and radical attempt to build a powerful and efficient bureaucratic state machine upholding a high-modern multiethnic culture. On the other hand, Manchukuo (and South Korean developmentalism as a successor to the Manchukuo project) is nothing but a representative, highly condensed example of the general tendency of military fascism, lurking beneath most modernizing efforts worldwide.

In other words, the reader will likely pose the question to which the book offers no clear answer: Is Manchukuo (and, by extension, South Korea) an exceptional singularity or an exemplar expression of universality? There may be no logical inconsistency in arguing both that Manchukuo was a distinctly conspicuous example serving as the basic model for the Korean developmentalism and that Korean military fascism was just another common story of building a modern

nation state—particularly prevalent among late-comers, as seen in numerous other cases, such as Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Germany, and North Korea. However, I do not think that the author exercised enough caution in treading that kind of theoretical tightrope to carefully avoid the apparent inconsistency.

It seems to me almost undebatable that the Manchukuo experience exerted a significant amount of influence on South Korea. It is also probable that Manchukuo was a hidden, unmentionable role model for the Third and Fourth Republics. Yet it would be not only too overreaching to suggest that the legacy of Manchukuo was a critically important intellectual and institutional asset in other East Asian cases of authoritarian developmentalism such as Taiwan, Singapore, and North Korea, but also nearly impossible to prove the connection using concrete historical evidence, since proving the much more apparent and direct connection between Manchukuo and South Korea necessitates historical imagination of the historian compensating for the loss of positive data (pp. 70-71).

Certainly, the author did not intend to demonstrate that Manchukuo served as a kind of ur-model for the other cases of authoritarian developmentalism in Asia. To the contrary, Han points out that South Korea is one of the multitude of cases observed worldwide, where a patriarchal authoritarian regime mobilized the whole country in a fascist way, combining the bureaucratic top-down efficiency with the impelling force of military aggressiveness, and not allowing any freedom of opinion. Thus arises the question: is there a reason to believe that South Korea would not have followed the authoritarian developmentalism model, had it not been for the influence of Manchukuo? Would it have taken a different path from its fellows in the East Asian cultural sphere, namely Taiwan, Singapore, North Korea, China, and (prewar) Japan? (One thing to note: "authoritarian" and "fascist" are different things, and scholars have different opinions on which of the aforementioned cases falls into which category. I am not going to deal with the exact definition, differences, and the historic genealogy of the two concepts here.)

The author himself emphasized the universality of fascism, saying "the fascism is the modern itself, in that it pursues the break from the past" (p. 234). He also argues that "the authoritarianism and the modern shared the same body. The authoritarianism is the driving force behind the modern," and observes a useful

guidance to the relationship between modernization and fascism in Wallerstein's argument which, Han says, is that the only choice left for late-developing countries to climb the ladder is either protectionism based on nationalism or the fascist and authoritarian development (p. 234). This seems to be a slight overemphasis on Wallerstein's "technique of mercantilist semi-withdrawal" (Wallerstein 1974, 411-13) and a generalization, given that Wallerstein recognized the importance of "a certain minimum strength in terms of skilled personnel, some manufacturing, and other factors" (p. 413) that could determine the country's position as a challenger to the established hierarchy of the international division of labor. More importantly, however, this line of logic can be used to support a certain kind of conservative or, rather, reactionary argument. In other words, it can be employed to posit that the means of authoritarian developmentalism, even fascism to some extent, is not only justifiable for the purpose of modernization; without it, modernization would have been impossible.

Of course, no argument should be dismissed simply because of its potential of being politically damaging. Some arguments should be accepted because they are true, regardless of whether they play into the hands of liberals or conservatives. Neither does being necessary for modernization automatically signify its worthiness, especially given that there is no consensus on such questions as whether the modernization was inevitable and desirable or whether the Western-style modernization is the only viable path.

However, even if we accept the seemingly overreaching and problematic generalization that modernization necessitated fascism, the fundamental question regarding the main theme of the book rebounds. If the solution for modernization of the late-comers is so obvious as well as widely shared, what is the significance of Manchukuo, other than that of a close historical link by virtue of the same colonizer, geographical proximity, and personal background of several leading figures? I do not argue this is the case; rather, I am expressing my confusion.

The affinity between authoritarian militarism and economic planning has been observed ever since the German case of government-driven late development on. For instance, I do not think the Manchukuo experience directly informed Walt Rostow's thesis on the mobilization of educated military officers to plan and carry

out economic and social reforms, on the account that they are the most valuable organized human resource available in modernizing countries. Likewise, it is improbable that the Manchukuo legacy played a critical role, if any, in all other East Asian cases of authoritarian developmentalism, even though Han points to parallels in three fascist youth organizations, namely the Hitler Youth, Chiang Kai-shek's Blue Shirts Society, and the Korean National Youth Association (pp. 236-238).

Perhaps it is my sociological background that prevents me from fully appreciating the book; yet, I am genuinely curious what the results would be if the author embraced a comparative sociology approach more eagerly. Han criticizes Theda Skocpol's structural realist approach (p. 161), saying that the boundary between the state and society is not as distinct as she implied. However, I believe Han could deepen the argument of his rich and scrupulously researched book by utilizing the Skocpolian comparative structural analysis to elaborate the theoretical implications regarding the relationship between modernization and fascism in East Asian countries. This is perhaps a far-fetched request, since the main purpose of the book is to examine the relationship between Manchukuo and the South Korean developmentalism of the 1960s.

To conclude, Han's book is a must-read for anyone interested in such subjects as colonial modernity, authoritarian developmentalism, and the relationship between modernity and fascism. Not only does it contain many stimulating ideas, but it also gives one the pleasure of learning while travelling vast areas of strange yet familiar connections of the empire and modernity. After reading this book, however, I am not convinced that efforts to position Korean developmentalist authoritarianism in broader historical contexts—such as the fascist nature of modernity and the critique of the Western civilization conquering the East, the women, the body, the Nature, and so forth—as well as efforts to outthrust Manchukuo as a kind of unique "origin" of Korean developmentalist authoritarianism can be integrated smoothly without more explicit theoretical rearrangement. Or, so to say, is it really necessary or plausible to determine the origin of a certain postcolonial hybridity, particularly when the "origin" itself is another uncanny Frankensteinian contraption?

References

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