

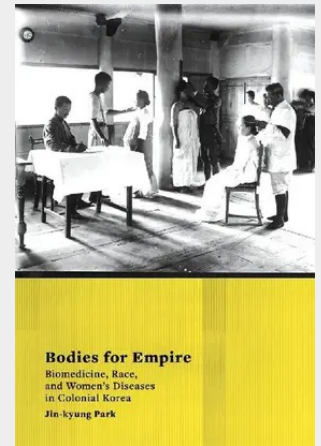
Park

Bodies for Empire

Biomedicine, Race, and Women's Diseases in Colonial Korea

During Imperial Japan's rule over Korea (1910–1945), modern biomedicine and its interpretations of women's illnesses began to define a vision of womanhood that differed significantly from anything imagined in the Chosŏn era (1392–1910). In the context of Korea's colonization by Japan—where, in contrast to Western colonies, ruler and ruled were not separated by perceived racial difference—the diagnosis of illnesses served to distinguish Korean from Japanese bodies and was used as proof of Korean racial inferiority. Physicians initiated invasive examinations of women's bodies under the guise of civilizing and modernizing the race, and of promoting the health and well-being of a primitive, subject population. Centering the female body within the context of colonialism and nationalism, Jin-kyung Park investigates what she calls "corporeal colonialism," or the relationship between colonial power and women's bodies. This relationship was chiefly characterized by the shifting meanings given to women's maladies, arbitrarily categorized by the colonial biomedical establishment as *puiabyong* (women's diseases), a constellation of conditions that ranged from irregular menstruation, frigidity, and infertility to syphilis, hysteria, and homicide. Park argues that the aim was to cultivate a new "biological womanhood" for Koreans, grounded in Western medical science, that would bring Korean women into modernity. *Bodies for Empire* also reveals how this effort was undertaken, not only by Japanese physicians but by native Korean physicians as well, with surprisingly varied motives for participation.

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56,00 €

56,00 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

vorbestellbar, Erscheinungstermin ca.
Dezember 2026

Artikelnummer: 9780674307476

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-674-30747-6

Verlag: Harvard University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 15.12.2026

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2026

Serie: Harvard East Asian Monographs

Produktform: Gebunden

Seiten: 310

Format (B x H): 152 x 229 mm

