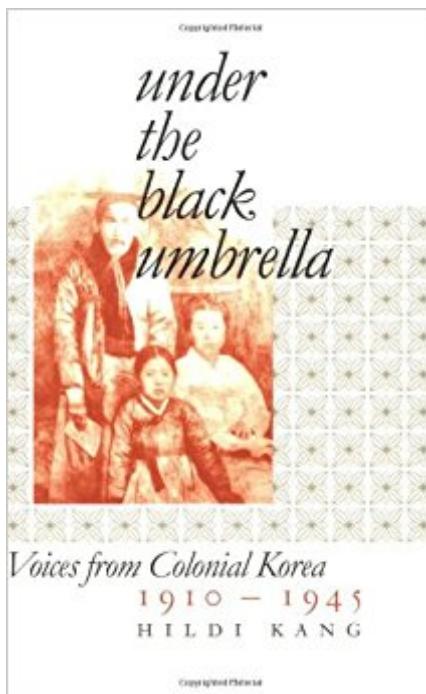


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# Under The Black Umbrella: Voices From Colonial Korea, 1910-1945



## Synopsis

In the rich and varied life stories in *Under the Black Umbrella*, elderly Koreans recall incidents that illustrate the complexities of Korea during the colonial period. Hildi Kang here reinvigorates a period of Korean history long shrouded in the silence of those who endured under the "black umbrella" of Japanese colonial rule. Existing descriptions of the colonial period tend to focus on extremes: imperial repression and national resistance, Japanese subjugation and Korean suffering, Korean backwardness and Japanese progress. "Most people," Kang says, "have read or heard only the horror stories which, although true, tell only a small segment of colonial life." The varied accounts in *Under the Black Umbrella* reveal a truth that is both more ambiguous and more human—the small-scale, mundane realities of life in colonial Korea. Accessible and attractive narratives, linked by brief historical overviews, provide a large and fully textured view of Korea under Japanese rule. Looking past racial hatred and repression, Kang reveals small acts of resistance carried out by Koreans, as well as gestures of fairness by Japanese colonizers. Impressive for the history it recovers and preserves, *Under the Black Umbrella* is a candid, human account of a complicated time in a contested place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this riveting and highly informative collection of oral histories, Kang has intricately woven together these voices into an impressive history of the Japanese colonial period that tells the story of people who lived their lives under the duress of the Japanese. . . . This is an important book and sheds light on areas not often covered in other works. Most assuredly, Kang's book is a valuable

addition to the growing body of works on the Japanese colonial period. The 'voices' that Kang has collected for her book present a fresh view, not to mention a clearer picture of this period of Korean history."Jeffrey Miller, *Korea Times* (3 August 2001) "It is often said that Japan's colonial ventures produced two contrasting legacies: bitterness in Korea and positive memories in Taiwan. This book argues that Koreans had in fact more mixed experiences."Foreign Affairs (January/February 2002) "The recollections that Kang collected contribute an essential (but to date neglected) ingredient to our understanding of Korea's colonial history. Their contents disturb the neat package that pits the colonizing (Japanese) aggressor against the colonized (Korean) victim."Mark Caprio, *Korean Studies Review* (2002) "Whereas history is usually a story of 'great men' told by its 'winners,' Hildi Kang's *Under the Black Umbrella* offers new insights into Korean history as it was lived every day by ordinary people. The diversity and heterogeneity of human experiences in this book challenge the oversimplified story of the Japanese colonial period in Korea that has held sway in Korean history until now."Elaine M. Kim, University of California, Berkeley "For its many voices and for the candor that comes from those voices, *Under the Black Umbrella* is a book of exceptional merit. Through the observations and reminiscences of Koreans who lived under Japanese rule, Hildi Kang shows us an interesting and mostly unknown picture of daily life in a neglected colony."Bruce Cumings, University of Chicago "Under the Black Umbrella is a pioneering collection of oral histories of Koreans who lived through the turbulent years of Japanese rule. It has many rich, vivid, and moving stories that reveal diversity and complexity of colonial life. No doubt this book will be a valuable addition to the growing body of works on colonial Korea in the West."Gi-Wook Shin, University of California, Los Angeles

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valuable addition to the growing body of works on colonial Korea in the West."--Gi-Wook Shin, University of California, Los Angeles

I actually had to purchase this book for class, but I enjoyed it so much I would buy it without the requirement. Before reading this book I knew the bare minimum about Japan colonizing Korea. I knew dates and major events, but this book humanized the history. I felt like I could relate to many of the stories and since I visited Korea before I took the class I gained a lot of retrospect of the culture. Hindi Kang has even added disclaimers to the types of stories that are collected, allowing the reader to understand that many of the stories are from people who could afford to go to America. I highly recommend this book.

The first-hand accounts provided in this book are indispensable to garnering a better understanding of Koreans' lives under Japanese occupation. While the occupation itself was odious, the stories and experiences of individual Koreans and their interactions with Japanese citizens, as is often the case with many things, were as varied as their number--something which, I admit, I found rather surprising. A must-read for an objective treatment of a still-volatile topic. The book is well organized, balanced, quite readable, and informative in its refreshing simplicity.

This is exactly what you want this type of book to be. Surprising, eye-opening, reliable, well-edited and jaw-dropping. If you are the least bit curious as to why your Korean grandmother hates all things Japanese, pick this book up. If you are in the pursuit of scholarly research and you need some oral history recollections, these are gold. The author has done extremely well in translating, arranging, presenting and setting historical context for each chapter. Some stories are just a paragraph long while others go one for pages. Despite the sample being taken from elderly Koreans living in the American west coast, the people interviewed are amazingly diverse and well-represented. The stories are captivating, earnest and beautifully told. I can't imagine how the stories must have sounded in the original language because the English translation is simply breathtaking. The reader may find it unusual to hear that many Koreans became civilized or even friends with Japanese living in their towns during this period. The honesty of the interviewees runs counter to the widespread belief that all Japanese were zealous conquerors bent on world domination. Don't misunderstand, some of the stories indeed paint a terrible picture in terms of cultural repression, but as mentioned before, the book is well-balanced. My only disappointment was the short length of the book. That's it. It's readable by anyone with a passing interest in Japanese colonial history. It's what you want - a

collection of stories that completes any academic background you might have read. Simply a gem.

Personally informative.

Thank you. It arrived in a timely manner and was in excellent condition. I am very much enjoying reading this book.

This book gave me a good sense of what the Koreans were feeling during the time they were under Japanese rule. But it is very short and I wish there was more.

Informative and chock full of primary sources.

These choice interviews truly reveal how Koreans survived, thrived, adapted, and were oppressed in different families in many different ways during the Japanese occupation. Excellently written and strung together. Great reading and fantastic primary source.

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