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## Development and Defense in the Cold War New Village

*Naengjeon-gwa saemaeul: Dongasia naengjeon-ui yeonswae-wa bundan gukga cheje* (The Cold War and the New Village: The Cold War Chain and the Divided National System in East Asia). By Eun Heo. Paju: Changbi, 2022. 569 pages. ISBN: 9788936482978.

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The Saemaul (New Village) Movement for rural revitalization looms large in both scholarly appraisals and popular remembrance of the era of authoritarian economic development in South Korea, and yet, as historian Heo Eun points out in his reevaluation, it remains curiously detached from its historical context. Heo's ambitious study sets out to challenge this by reframing the "Saemaul of the Cold War" as the South Korean articulation of a broader strategy of developmental governance stretching back to colonial antecedents and across global experiments in community mobilization far beyond the Korean Peninsula. Expanding the temporal and spatial scope of analysis, *Naengjeon-gwa saemaeul* (The Cold War and the New Village) sets out to "historicize Saemaul" (p. 17) by tracing how the movement launched by the Park Chung-hee administration was shaped by enduring trajectories of militarized governance and enmeshed in a culture of politicized development that bound (post)colonial development under Cold War conditions. In doing so, Heo constructs a genealogy of rural governance committed to integrating defense and development imperatives that spans "from the rural areas of Manchuria in the 1930s to the rural areas of Korea in the 1970s, from the New Hamlets in Malaysia to the New Life Villages of

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South Vietnam and the Saemaul in Korea” (p. 8). It is only by considering Saemaul alongside its diverse historical counterparts and contemporaries, Heo asserts, that we can arrive at a full historical awareness of the deeply entangled relationship between economic development and military defense and rule “in the so-called ‘underdeveloped countries’ of the Cold War bloc in East Asia” (p. 18).

In contrast to scholarly treatments of Saemaul that have largely addressed the movement in economic terms divorced from “macro-historical” contexts, Heo asserts that the reorganization of Korean communities must be understood in connection with the development of the Cold War in East Asia. His intervention here is temporal and geographic, endeavoring to draw throughlines between the colonial and Cold War eras, on the one hand, and to tie together both Northeast and Southeast Asian regional development and communist and capitalist bloc governance strategies, on the other. At the same time, this interest in a broad “macro” approach is balanced by a commitment to excavating granular *micro* historical drivers for grand events, described by Heo as the “Cold War from below” (p. 23). Cast in this light, the Park administration’s program emerges not as a benevolent effort to improve rural living standards but rather as an integral component of a comprehensive agenda to ensure the regime’s survival by asserting political control, promoting economic development, engineering social compliance, and expanding military security. This characterization implicitly rebukes the recent rise of nostalgia for the years of rapid development under authoritarian rule, within which “Korean society in the 1970s, especially rural areas, are remembered only as a place where the Park Chung-hee government expressed its desire for modernization to escape hunger and poverty” (p. 19). Given that Heo frames his study not only as a scholarly intervention but also as his contribution to the ongoing effort to achieve more “humane” community compacts in the post-Cold War but still-divided Korea of today, an explicit statement of this critique would have been a powerful step towards his mission to “help to overcome the division system...and create a new community where everyone on the Korean Peninsula can lead a better human life” (p. 11).

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Tracing the origins, global influences, and local drivers of Saemaul from the 1930s through the 1980s, Heo's study unfurls in a sprawling but densely packed historical journey across ten chapters organized into four parts. In Part 1, Heo explores the roots of security-driven Cold War development in pre-modern and colonial governance models, focusing particularly on resettlement practices in wartime Manchuria as a crucial proving site and training ground for East Asian iterations of colonial practices for population concentration and surveillance. His exploration of the coalescence of Western concentration camp models with a revived version of the pre-modern Chinese *baojia* system in Japan's administration of Manchukuo is particularly fascinating. Here, he asserts, the basic characteristics of the modern "New Village" were set along three interlocking axes: (1) Villages were to be reorganized as the fundamental units of the (anti-communist) nation; (2) village surveillance was primarily trained on the specter of internal enemies; and (3) the village community, as the base unit of the nation, was conceived of as an infinitely mutable entity that could and should be continually transformed to meet the changing demands of "modernity." The dynamic and transferable potential of a system of governance based on village-level control was crucial to its persistence into the post-colonial era, when it was reintroduced by Korean agents trained under Japanese auspices and "reborn," according to Heo, as "Cold War warriors during the process of division and the Korean War" (p. 39).

Part two explores the role of these Korean Cold warriors in the continued exploration of Manchurian governance strategies on alternative proving grounds in the decades after WWII. This section plays a crucial role in Heo's argument by bridging a chronological gap between the training of Korean agents in colonial community governance methods in 1930s Manchuria and their reintroduction to Korean society with the inauguration of the Saemaul movement in the 1970s. Far from disappearing, he maintains that the commitment to a conjoined program of community development and defense remained at the forefront of Korean military planning throughout the intervening decades, transposed to the battlefields of Southeast Asia. Over three chapters, Heo reviews debates within the South

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Korean military over the need for political intervention by the military, addresses how the shift in US Cold War policy towards a development orientation encouraged the Park Chung-hee military government to integrate its economic and security policies, and explores the South Korean military's participation in New Village projects in the Vietnam War. The final chapter's reassessment of the Korean military's provision of aid and execution of massacres in Vietnam not as separate undertakings, but rather as bound to one another through the overarching mission of rural pacification, is particularly cogent to ongoing academic and public debate about Korean remembrance, culpability, and responsibility in Vietnam. I would have liked to see Heo engage directly with these debates, particularly with analyses of the dynamics of sub-imperialism that drive much of Cold War Transpacific studies.

In the third part of his study, Heo charts the emergence of cracks in the bipolar Cold War system that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and examines how these shifts in Cold War geopolitics informed the enforcement of securitized development initiatives in Korean communities. Returning his gaze to the peninsula, Heo details the growing disjunction between the late-1960s turn towards multipolarity in the global Cold War, on the one hand, and the continued bipolar division of the Korean Peninsula, on the other. In response to these shifts, military officials doubled-down on the need for autonomous, sovereign national defense against both external and internal enemies, working through the inauguration of the Saemaul movement to establish a garrison state that extended from an expanded formal military down to setting the foundations for local police surveillance and paramilitary organization. In Heo's narrative, the conflict between a changing geopolitical landscape on a global scale and continued division and conflict on the Korean Peninsula was directly responsible for the transfer of attention from external enemies to internal subversives. Meanwhile, part four addresses how the securitized community development model conceived in colonial Manchukuo and reiterated in wartime Vietnam finally returned to Korea's doorstep in the Saemaul movement. Here, Heo draws on his many years of original oral history collection and onsite

research to produce thorough and invaluable case studies of the operation of Saemaul development and defense campaigns in two towns, Goesan-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do and Guseong-myeon, Yongin-gun, Gyeonggi-do. The final chapter and conclusion, devoted to examining how Saemaul “cracked and disintegrated from the bottom up” (p. 40), end abruptly in liberation from village-level surveillance achieved through a grassroots movement of rural activists casting off the restrictive shackles of authoritarian governance in concert with the nationwide democratization movement.

Throughout his study, Heo provides an incredibly detailed historical narrative enriched by original archival research and peopled by a vivid set of historical actors ranging from military officials to farmers. His rigorous attention to encyclopedic detail is particularly commendable given the book’s ambitious temporal and geographic scope. Heo seems equally at ease with the minutiae of 1930s efforts to reconceive the “feudal” *baojia* system in Manchuria as he is detailing the Ngô Đình Diệm administration’s strategic village plans in 1960s South Vietnam or religious resistance to oppressive Saemaul surveillance regimes in 1980s South Korea. The sheer volume of detail sometimes threatens to overwhelm Heo’s central and supporting arguments, as for example in the disconnect between his characterization of a tenacious system of village-level governance that persisted across different times and regions only to suddenly disintegrate in the face of the South Korean democratization movement. Nonetheless, *Naengjeon-gwa saemaeul* provides a meticulously catalogued account of the origins and evolution of the Saemaul movement that is invaluable to ongoing research. The original and thought-provoking connections Heo draws between diverse regimes and eras of rural governance, security, and development invite further investigation into how we understand attendant issues such as the inherent contradiction in top-down directives for local autonomy or transformations in the dynamic of governance when a ruling strategy is transposed from a colonizer-colonized to state-citizen context.