The Pitfalls of Monopoly Production and the Ginseng Derivatives Market in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945*

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When the Japanese empire annexed Korea, it acquired one of the most lucrative ginseng cultivation regions in the world. However, efforts to profit from ginseng faltered as Japanese expansion into China in the 1920s and 1930s generated anti-Japanese consumer resistance. The colonial state imposed a state monopoly on its most profitable ginseng product *hongsam*, or "red ginger." However, the association of *hongsam* with Japanese imperialism hampered sales in China, which was its primary export market. The far less profitable ginseng products, on the other hand, were left largely unregulated, and this circumstance allowed private companies to expand alternative markets on their own initiative. In particular, various companies developed derivative manufactured products from ginseng such as extracts, pills, powders, and tonics. Further spurring the appetite for ginseng products during the colonial period was the science of empire that committed considerable resources to biomedical facilities that conducted ginseng research. Private producers appropriated Japan's imperial science to give legitimacy to their products. Historians who placed an emphasis on *hongsam* production have largely overlooked the complex factors behind the mass consumption of ginseng during the colonial period. Yet when assessing ginseng's colonial legacies, we must consider not just the role of the colonial state, but also the role of private producers that pioneered new consumer markets.

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