

There is no doubt that Confucianism still lingers in contemporary Korean society, but its influence is rapidly diminishing amid globalization and the introduction of alternative ways of life—a fact Cawley seems to overlook in favor of asserting its steadfast relevance, particularly regarding the Sewol ferry disaster of 2014 and the subsequent impeachment of then president Park Geun-hye.

Furthermore, his focus on the philosophical dimension of Korean religion undermines his analysis of the role of Shamanism, which cannot be fully explained without a thorough consideration of its ritual and practical aspects. This is especially evident in his account of Shamanism in modern-day Korea. Tracing its history up to the modern era, Cawley presents a very optimistic diagnosis of the state of contemporary Shamanism by saying that “the *mudang*, their rituals and songs continue to be important and show no signs [of] diminishing in modern Korea” (77). However, we must approach this remark with caution, mainly because it is an inaccurate observation of the reality of modern Shamanism. While Shamanism continues to survive today against all odds, its influence is quite clearly in decline. The technological adaptations of the *mudang* and their increased presence on the Internet, which Cawley refers to as an “evolution” of sorts, are actually a response to this fact—it is a desperate attempt on the part of the *mudang* to adjust themselves to the changing times and keep their tradition alive in a secularized world that progressively finds less and less need for Shamanistic practices.

Cawley’s *Religious and Philosophical Traditions of Korea* demonstrates just how complex Korean religion is as a subject of academic research. But although there is definite room for improvement, these shortcomings do not take away from the fact that Cawley paints an impressively clear and concise picture of the intellectual history of Korea. Overall, he provides a decent introductory material for easing international readers into the relatively recent, complicated field of Korean religion. As Korean religion forms an integral part of Korean society and culture, I am certain scholars of Korean Studies worldwide will benefit from this book.

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Divorce in South Korea: Doing Gender and the Dynamics of Relationship Breakup by Yean-ju Lee. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2020. 192 pp.

In the span of just over a decade, South Korea transformed from a country

in which divorce was rare and highly stigmatized to one in which the crude divorce rate is higher than, or similar to, that of most advanced industrialized nations. The sheer scale and speed of this change begs for analysis, and yet, until now, no English language book-length study had risen to the challenge. Yean-Ju Lee's *Divorce in South Korea: Doing Gender and the Dynamics of Relationship Breakup* provides a concise and cogent sociological explanation for this dramatic shift in South Korea's marital landscape. The existing literature, which primarily examines Western countries, attributes the rise and spread of divorce to a combination of material and ideological gains for women. Lee questions the applicability of these axiomatic explanations to South Korea, arguing instead that it is rigid gender norms, not egalitarian ones, that have propelled South Korea's transition to a high divorce society.

According to the well-known "gains to marriage" thesis, more so-called bad marriages will culminate in divorce, once social and economic barriers to divorce are sufficiently lowered. In the opening chapter, Lee notes several ways in which divorce demography in South Korea runs counter to this corollary. The most obvious stumbling block is explaining why divorce is concentrated in the lowest socioeconomic and educational rungs of South Korean society. Lee also notes that South Korea's divorce rate began its meteoric rise in the mid-1990s, prior to the widespread ideological embrace of individualism or de-stigmatization of divorce. To solve the puzzle of South Korean divorce, Lee wisely chooses not to take "bad marriages" as the starting point of analysis and instead investigates precisely how it is that marriages deteriorate.

Understanding the "mechanisms of marital breakdown," as Lee calls it, requires finding a portal into the "daily behaviors, thoughts and emotions" (3) of Korean couples *prior* to divorce. Lee draws on two main sources of data: interviews (thirty primary and fifteen secondary) and court rulings drawn from the Korean Supreme Court's online library of exemplary cases nationwide. Lee found research subjects through her personal networks of friends and colleagues and conducted semi-structured interviews with them. The secondary interview material was mined from two sociological studies published in Korea. Lee excludes from her data set couples over forty years of age to limit her analysis to the earliest stages of the marital and child-rearing life cycle. The study is also bounded in time (mid-1990s to 2010) to isolate the most explosive period of rising divorce rates. After 2010 divorce rates remained high, but stopped climbing steeply.

Though Lee acknowledges that idiosyncrasies of temperament, personality, and situation make every individual case of divorce unique, the book is concerned with systemic patterns and social structures. If there is a single analytical thread tying all examined cases together, it is this observation: "marital rela-

tionships break down while married persons are doing gender in their everyday lives" (116). Chapter 2 catalogs an assortment of social trends to underscore and explain the salience of gender for marital breakdown in South Korea. Recent changes in the realm of divorce law, education, and the labor market, as well as changing ideas and practices surrounding marriage, divorce, remarriage, and cohabitation point to a complicated and disjointed picture. Lee notes that gender relations have been swift to change in some ways and spheres, while seemingly traditional gender norms have been reinvented and reinvigorated in others. These broader asymmetries of gender create the conditions in which gender role prescriptions, perceptions, and expectations within the family are prone to conflict and collision. Specifically, the rigidities of the family breadwinner role for husbands and the ambiguities surrounding rapidly changing roles for wives produce a minefield of potential marital trouble.

Lee invokes the sociological theory of identity control (or identity verification) to make sense of what happens as couples navigate traps of unmet expectations in their family and work lives. According to identity control theory, individuals experience an "identity threat" whenever a gap exists between prescribed social roles and perceived ability to fulfill them. The theory further postulates that people will engage in "compensatory acts" to try to "restore" their damaged identities. When applied to South Korea, marital breakdown is shown to be the by-product of husbands and wives striving and failing (by their own and other family members' measures) to fulfill gender roles at home or work. The ensuing compensatory acts constitute the opening salvos in a vicious cycle of reciprocal retaliation and set couples on the road to divorce. Because the compensatory act is considered the initial "breach of the marital contract," the compensatory act is taken by Lee to be the primary cause of divorce.

Chapters 3 through 6 chronicle the various kinds of marital dynamics arising from gender role performance-related anxiety or frustration. The broadest categories include cases of marital breakdown initiated by husbands with "provider anxiety" (Chapter 3), marital breakdown initiated by wives with "contradictory role perceptions" (Chapter 4), cases complicated by in-law conflict (Chapter 5), and cases involving conduct the legal code defines as sufficiently severe to cross the threshold for divorce in South Korea's fault-based system, including infidelity and domestic violence (Chapter 6). Each large category is further broken down into typologies, the names of which often reflect how gender role anxiety is intertwined with economic resources and aspirations. For men who perceive themselves to fall short of provider aspirations, for example, there are six types: underemployed young husbands, burnt-out husbands with working class backgrounds, husbands struggling with small

businesses, husbands reacting to economic shocks, husbands who take financial risks, and husbands who display defensive masculinity. Wives with “contradictory role perceptions” fall into four types: wives with unmet expectations of hypergamy, self-serving wives who are financially independent, depressed housewives, and wives insisting on their own terms.

There are some noteworthy, and perhaps unexpected, findings. Husband-initiated marital breakdown turns out not to be triggered by dominating husbands, but by husbands who lack the ability to assert such power. Patriarchal authority is no longer intrinsic to the role of household head. According to Lee, masculinity must now be demonstrated, and marital worth continually proven, through the singular and excessively narrow channel of family breadwinning. This is the case despite the ubiquity of dual income families. Regarding wife-initiated marital breakdown, Lee argues it would be a mistake to view women’s empowerment as the driving force behind South Korea’s rise in divorce. Educational and financial wherewithal in and of itself does not make women divorce-minded. A wife’s increased access to resources, whether by dint of her own employment or her parents’ involvement, is shown to influence marital dynamics in significant ways. Lee’s careful analysis reveals, however, that what upends marriages is the discordances of gender role perception, and the anxieties accompanying them.

The final chapter concludes that more flexible attitudes toward gender roles (in particular, more relaxed expectations around male breadwinning) will help South Korean families stay together. How to achieve this remains uncertain, but Lee’s last word on the subject is: “the question of how to change gender norms is not psychological but sociological” (124). This final statement is a curious one. Even though the patterns Lee describes are fundamentally social (that is, learned from others and changed through interactions that take place within larger social structures), the edifice of her argument depends on accepting certain psychosocial assumptions about the nature of (gender) identity and its relationship to psychologically defensive behaviors. Nonetheless, Lee’s study will be of great interest to sociologists and demographers who study marriage and family in comparative perspective. Researchers of contemporary South Korean society who want a quick grasp of the pivotal legal changes that have moved the country in the direction of greater gender and generational equality will find Appendix A useful. Overall, the book is a bold sociological foray into under-explored territory, and it will help pave the way for more explorers to follow.

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