



## Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910–1945

By Hildi Kang

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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.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"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

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Hildi Kang is an educator and writer living in Livermore, California. She is the author of several books.

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