



Reconstructing Bodies: Biomedicine, Health, and Nation-Building in South Korea Since 1945 (Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute)

By John DiMoia

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South Korea represents one of the world's most enthusiastic markets for plastic surgery. The growth of this market is particularly fascinating as access to medical care and surgery arose only recently with economic growth since the 1980s. *Reconstructing Bodies* traces the development of a medical infrastructure in the Republic of Korea (ROK) from 1945 to the present, arguing that the plastic surgery craze and the related development of biotech ambitions is deeply rooted in historical experience. Tracking the ROK's transition and independence from Japan, John P. DiMoia explains how the South Korean government mobilized biomedical resources and technologies to consolidate its desired image of a modern and progressive nation. Offering in-depth accounts of illustrative transformations, DiMoia narrates South Korean biomedical practice, including Seoul National University Hospital's emergence as an international biomedical site, state-directed family planning and anti-parasite campaigns, and the emerging market for aesthetic and plastic surgery, reflecting how South Koreans have appropriated medicine and surgery for themselves as individuals, increasingly prioritizing private forms of health care.

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- Sales Rank: #1922533 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Stanford University Press
- Published on: 2013-05-01
- Released on: 2013-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .80" w x 6.00" l, 1.15 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Reconstructing Bodies* is a welcome addition to the growing scholarship on medicine and the body in East Asia. It is the first full-length monograph of Korea's post-1945 medical history in the English language and would appeal to readers with interests in Korea's political or medical history as well as interests in American medicine, reproductive politics, and the plastic surgery specialization. DiMoia draws from a rich variety of previously untapped sources, including oral histories, private papers, and archives from the U.S. military occupation and international aid organizations." (Sonja M. Kim *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*)

"*Reconstructing Bodies* is a pioneering work of scholarship at the intersection of East Asian history and the history of science and medicine. DiMoia negotiates both fields with great skill and acute insight, revealing that South Korea's 'economic miracle' was also a history of changing attitudes toward, and interventions on, the health and bodies of Koreans." (Charles K. Armstrong)

"*Reconstructing Bodies* offers the best view to date of the intersection between South Korea's twentieth-century development and its medical transformation. Its far-ranging case studies of individual topics are important genealogical resources for those interested in contemporary South Korean (and indeed transnational) medicine and biopolitics." (Robert Oppenheim, Associate Professor of Asian Studies and Anthropology)

"*Reconstructing Bodies* breaks new ground in the history of public health, biomedicine, and surgery in modern South Korea. Illuminating case studies guide readers through major transformations in twentieth-century Korean history, including advancements in cardiac surgery, Asian Blepharoplasty, the shift from controlling epidemics to family planning, and biological sampling resistance during anti-parasitic campaigns." (Marta Hanson *Johns Hopkins University*)

About the Author

John P. DiMoia is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore.

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