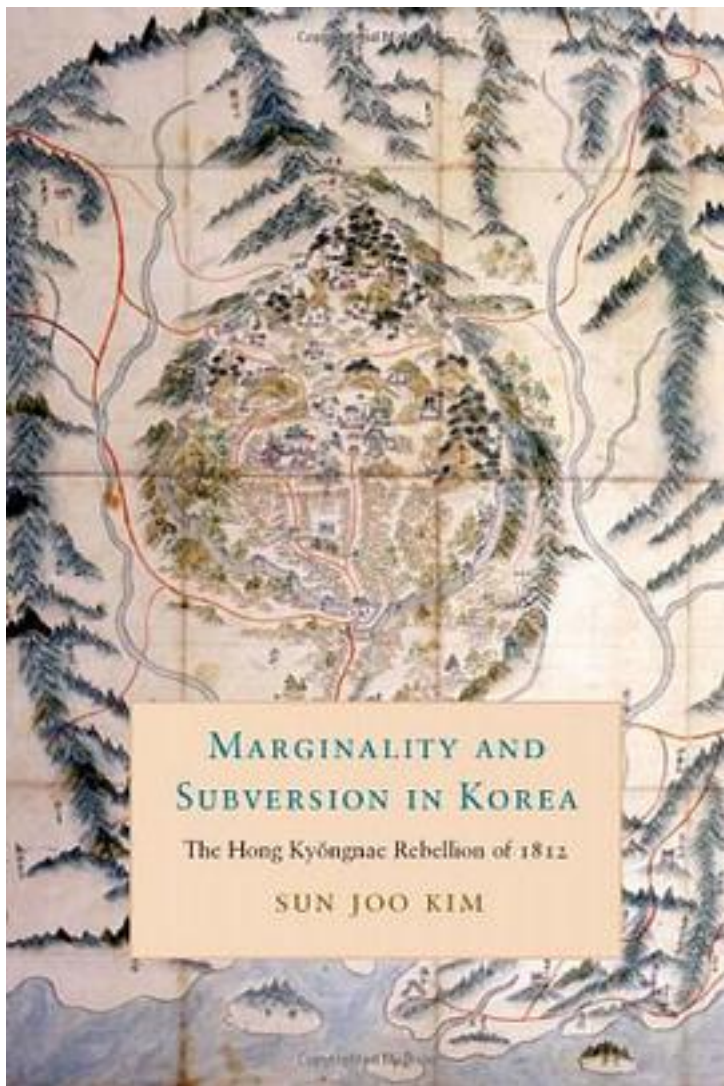


Marginality and Subversion in Korea



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In the history of Korea, the nineteenth century is often considered an age of popular rebellions. Scholarly approaches have typically pointed to these rebellions as evidence of the progressive direction of the period, often using the theory of class struggle as an analytical framework. In "Marginality and Subversion in Korea", Sun Joo Kim argues that a close reading of the actors and circumstances involved in one of the century's major rebellions, the Hong Kyongnae Rebellion of 1812, leads instead to more complex conclusions. Drawing from primary sources in Korean, Japanese, and classical Chinese, this book is the most extensive study in the English language of any of the major nineteenth-century rebellions in Korea. Whereas previous research has focused on economic and landlord-tenant tensions, suggesting that class animosity was the dominant feature in the political behavior of peasants, Sun Joo Kim explores the role of embittered local elites in providing vital support in the early stages to spur social change that would benefit these elites as much as the peasant class. Later, however, many of these same elites would rally to the side of the state, providing military and material contributions to help put down the rebellion. Kim explains why these opportunistic elites became discontented with the state in the scramble for power, prestige, and scarce resources, and why many ultimately worked to rescue and reinforce the Choson dynasty and the Confucian ideology that would prevail for another one hundred years. This sophisticated, groundbreaking study will be essential reading for historians and scholars of Korean studies, as well as those interested in early modern East Asia, social transformation, rebellions, and revolutions. Sun Joo Kim is associate professor of Korean history at Harvard University.

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