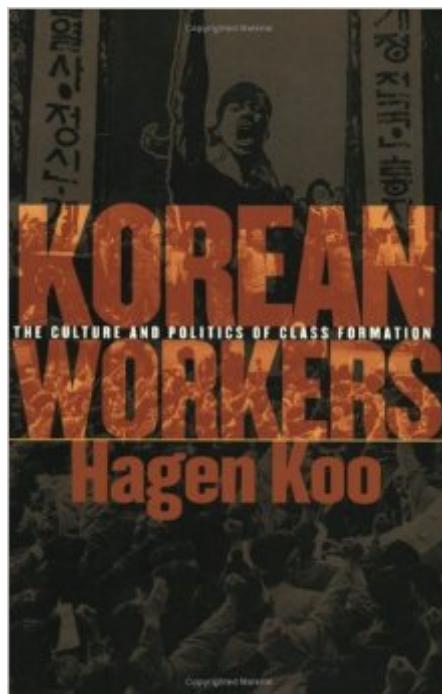


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Korean Workers: The Culture And Politics Of Class Formation



Synopsis

Forty years of rapid industrialization have transformed millions of South Korean peasants and their sons and daughters into urban factory workers. Hagen Koo explores the experiences of this first generation of industrial workers and describes its struggles to improve working conditions in the factory and to search for justice in society. The working class in South Korea was born in a cultural and political environment extremely hostile to its development, Koo says. Korean workers forged their collective identity much more rapidly, however, than did their counterparts in other newly industrialized countries in East Asia. This book investigates how South Korea's once-docile and submissive workers reinvented themselves so quickly into a class with a distinct identity and consciousness. Based on sources ranging from workers' personal writings to union reports to in-depth interviews, this book is a penetrating analysis of the South Korean working-class experience. Koo reveals how culture and politics simultaneously suppressed and facilitated class formation in South Korea. With chapters exploring the roles of women, students, and church organizations in the struggle, the book reflects Koo's broader interest in the social and cultural dimensions of industrial transformation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In their book 'Empire', Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri talked about the 1996-7 workers' general strike in Seoul, South Korea as one of the historical events against Empire. Koo's book about working-class formation in Korea shows and analyzes how progressive and sometimes militant

working-class movement of a large scale has been possible and grown up as a major political force in one of the East Asian countries which often have been well known for their docility of labor forces under conservative political rule. This book has several merits: 1) it shows the process of working-class formation in the context of contemporary Korean development. Many books about Korean development have been written mainly in an economic way. This book reveals people's lives and voices more realistically in the historical process. 2) while describing the historical process, Koo also tries to put his arguments on the theoretical base of working-class formation, especially E. P. Thompson. I think his way of doing this is very successful in this book. 3) Many books about working-class formation are mainly about the histories in the European context or Latin America. This book shows uniquely how the process has happened in the context of East Asian development. His book is not only describing but also theoretical and analytical. And his book does not lose both academic rigidity as well as sympathy for workers' movement for social progress. With in-depth interviews of labor movement activists and the use of many domestic materials, Koo also could escape superficial observations and dry abstraction. I find that this is one of the great books not only about contemporary Korean society but also about global working-class history. Additionally, regarding informative social (movement) history of Korea of the same period, I strongly recommend Nancy Abelmann's book about farmers' movement and Sunhyunk Kim's book about civil movements.

It was in good condition. I liked the fact that the price was cheap, and the condition was good as advertised.

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