

The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea

Namhee Lee

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Namhee Lee : The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Ilnyun Kim Good

In this sweeping intellectual and cultural history of the minjung ("common people's") movement in South Korea, Namhee Lee shows how the movement arose in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the repressive authoritarian regime and grew out of a widespread sense that the nation's "failed history" left Korean identity profoundly incomplete. *The Making of Minjung* captures the movement in its many dimensions, presenting its intellectual trajectory as a discourse and its impact as a political movement, as well as raising questions about how intellectuals represented the minjung. Lee's portrait is based on a wide range of sources: underground pamphlets, diaries, court documents, contemporary newspaper reports, and interviews with participants. Thousands of students and intellectuals left universities during this period and became factory workers, forging an intellectual-labor alliance perhaps unique in world history. At the same time, minjung cultural activists reinvigorated traditional folk theater, created a new "minjung literature," and influenced religious practices and academic disciplines. In its transformative scope, the minjung phenomenon is comparable to better-known contemporaneous movements in South Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Understanding the minjung movement is essential to understanding South Korea's recent resistance to U.S. influence. Along with its well-known economic transformation, South Korea has also had a profound social and political transformation. The minjung movement drove this transformation, and this book tells its story comprehensively and critically.

"Lee's book is one of few studies that attempts to analyze the Korean democratic movement from its origins in the early 1970s to its denouement in the 1990s. While most studies focus on the May 1980 Gwangju uprising or the post 1987 democratic transition and consolidation, Lee's book covers the entire period of the movement. Thus, in Lee's book we get the full story: how the movement emerged in the 1970s, the catalytic effects of the Gwangju uprising in the 1980, and how the movement became increasingly radicalized in the 1980s."—Paul Y. Chang, *Mobilization*, Fall 2007 "This book is the best, and virtually the only, political ethnography of South Korean antigovernment political activism by students and intellectuals during the 1980s' turbulent democratization periods. While a few works have been published regarding the political democratization processes in South Korea recently, they fail to achieve the accuracy and in-depth description that Namhee Lee has provided through this meticulous survey of real life experiences of South Korean activists in the 1980s."—Jungmin Seo, *Korean Studies* "A tour de force! *The Making of Minjung* puts the South Korean struggles for democracy and social justice on the world historical stage. An answer to the postcolonial predicament, a movement, and a transformative public sphere, minjung emerges as a remarkable historical constellation. Namhee Lee's is that sort of history of the present that takes us into the future."—Nancy Abelman, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign "In *The Making of Minjung*, which is notable for its evenhandedness, Namhee Lee has given us what will become the standard work on the confluence of political, economic, and social forces underlying South Korea's transition from military dictatorship to a flourishing democracy."—Donald N. Clark, Trinity University "The *Making of Minjung* is a pathbreaking book on an important movement in Korea's contemporary social and political history. It is extremely well researched, full of new insights, and true to the lived realities of student activists and their allies in Korea's democratic development."—Joseph Wong, University of Toronto "From the Back Cover" "A tour de force! *The Making of Minjung* puts the South Korean struggles for democracy and social justice on the world historical stage. An answer to the postcolonial predicament, a movement, and a transformative public sphere, minjung emerges as a remarkable historical constellation. Namhee Lee's is that sort of history of the present that takes us into the future."—Nancy Abelman, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign "In *The Making of Minjung*, which is notable for its evenhandedness, Namhee Lee has given us what will become the standard work on the confluence of political, economic, and social forces underlying South Korea's transition from military dictatorship to a flourishing democracy."—Donald N. Clark, Trinity University "The *Making of Minjung* is a pathbreaking book on an important movement in Korea's contemporary social and political history. It is extremely well researched, full of new insights, and true to the lived realities of student activists and their allies in Korea's democratic development."—Joseph Wong, University of Toronto About the Author Namhee Lee is Associate Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles.