



Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea (Politics, History, and Culture)

Seungsook Moon

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This pathbreaking study presents a feminist analysis of the politics of membership in the South Korean nation over the past four decades. Seungsook Moon examines the ambitious effort by which South Korea transformed itself into a modern industrial and militarized nation. She demonstrates that the pursuit of modernity in South Korea involved the construction of the anticommunist national identity and a massive effort to mold the populace into useful, docile members of the state. This process, which she terms “militarized modernity,” treated men and women differently. Men were mobilized for mandatory military service and then, as conscripts, utilized as workers and researchers in the industrializing economy. Women were consigned to lesser factory jobs, and their roles as members of the modern nation were defined largely in terms of biological reproduction and household management.

Moon situates militarized modernity in the historical context of colonialism and nationalism in the twentieth century. She follows the course of militarized modernity in South Korea from its development in the early 1960s through its peak in the 1970s and its decline after rule by military dictatorship ceased in 1987. She highlights the crucial role of the Cold War in South Korea’s militarization and the continuities in the disciplinary tactics used by the Japanese colonial rulers and the postcolonial military regimes. Moon reveals how, in the years since 1987, various social movements—particularly the women’s and labor movements—began the still-ongoing process of revitalizing South Korean civil society and forging citizenship as a new form of membership in the democratizing nation.

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