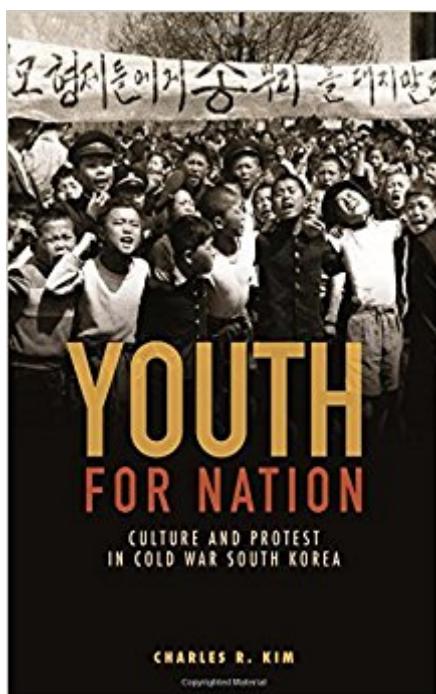


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Youth For Nation: Culture And Protest In Cold War South Korea (Studies Of The Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University)



Synopsis

This in-depth exploration of culture, media, and protest follows South Korea's transition from the Korean War to the start of the political struggles and socioeconomic transformations of the Park Chung Hee era. Although the post-Korean War years are commonly remembered as a time of crisis and disarray, Charles Kim contends that they also created a formative and productive juncture in which South Koreans reworked pre-1945 constructions of national identity to meet the political and cultural needs of postcolonial nation-building. He explores how state ideologues and mainstream intellectuals expanded their efforts by elevating the nation's youth as the core protagonist of a newly independent Korea. By designating students and young men and women as the hope and exemplars of the new nation-state, the discursive stage was set for the remarkable outburst of the April Revolution in 1960. Kim's interpretation of this seminal event underscores student participants' recasting of anticolonial resistance memories into South Korea's postcolonial politics. This pivotal innovation enabled protestors to circumvent the state's official anticommunism and, in doing so, brought about the formation of a culture of protest that lay at the heart of the country's democracy movement from the 1960s to the 1980s. The positioning of women as subordinates in the nation-building enterprise is also shown to be a direct translation of postwar and Cold War exigencies into the sphere of culture; this cultural conservatism went on to shape the terrain of gender relations in subsequent decades. A meticulously researched cultural history, *Youth for Nation* illuminates the historical significance of the postwar period through a rigorous analysis of magazines, films, textbooks, archival documents, and personal testimonies. In addition to scholars and students of twentieth-century Korea, the book will be welcomed by those interested in Cold War cultures, social movements, and democratization in East Asia.

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Customer Reviews

Youth for Nation opens up rich historical sources on mid-twentieth-century South Korean society and culture, particularly the host of journals and other publications that flourished during the period as well as films. Tackling a topic that has received little scholarly attention in English, it presents a 'bottom-up' process of Americanization and what the author calls 'de-Japanization' from the 1950s to early 1960s. It offers an intimate ethnographic portrayal of the Korean cultural scene with its pervasive anxieties about poverty, dizzying pace of modernization, and clashes between the old and the young, giving primacy to the voices of intellectuals and ordinary students. And while not focused exclusively on the April 19th Revolution of 1960, Youth for Nation fills a significant lacuna on the topic.--Namhee Lee, University of California, Los AngelesEight years before the worldwide protests of 1968, students and intellectuals overthrew the South Korean government. Positioning the event as part of Korea's transition from the colonial to the postcolonial, Charles Kim offers a wide-ranging and entertaining analysis of the unruly youth culture that drove the events of this April Revolution, the successes and failures of which presaged the tumultuous decades of democratic struggle to come. Kim's Youth for Nation is a fascinating whirlwind of a book for anyone interested in South Korean politics or protest culture in general.--Andre Schmid, University of Toronto

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