

South Korean Social Movements

From democracy to civil society

Edited by
Gi-Wook Shin and
Paul Y. Chang

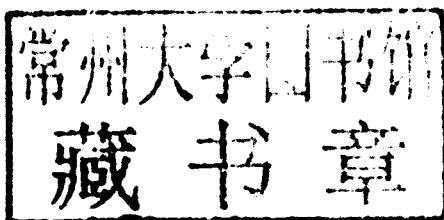


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and Paul Y. Chang**



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South Korean Social Movements

This book explores the evolution of civil society in South Korea by focusing on the institutionalization and diffusion of social movements after democratic transition in 1987. The contributors examine the transformation of Korean social movements from the democracy campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s to the rise of civil society in the democratic period. The book contends that the transition to a democratic government was motivated, in part, by pressure from social movement groups that fought the state to bring about democracy. After the transition, however, activists found themselves in a qualitatively different political context which in turn galvanized the evolution of the social movement sector.

Including an impressive array of case studies ranging from the women's movement to environmental NGOs, and from cultural production to law, the contributors to this book enrich our understanding of the democratization process in Korea and show that the social movement sector remains an important player in Korean politics today.

This book will appeal to students and scholars of Korean studies, Asian politics, political history and social movements.

Gi-Wook Shin is Professor of Sociology at Stanford University.

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From democracy to civil society
Edited by Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Y. Chang

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Gi-Wook Shin, Stanford University
Paul Y. Chang, Yonsei University

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Introduction

1 Democratization and the evolution of social movements in Korea

Institutionalization and diffusion

Paul Y. Chang and Gi-Wook Shin

If South Korea was one of several nation states to ride the “third wave of democracy,” it is arguably one of the most successful cases of democratic transition. Beginning in the 1970s, democracy spread through Southern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia and roughly 50 percent of all democratic nations today made their transition to democracy between the early 1970s and the late 1990s (Haynes 2001). Democratic transition in 1987 marked the end of successive authoritarian regimes that ruled South Korea since 1948 and the nation began the process of democratization in earnest. Direct presidential elections in 1987, the establishment of a civilian government in 1993, and the first peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party in 1998, were the main milestones on Korea’s road to democracy. Various institutional reforms in governance followed to further facilitate democratization and it is fair to say that South Korea has established a viable democracy.

In South Korea democratic consolidation is motivated by different sectors in political society: while institutional reforms have taken place within the central government (Diamond and Kim 2000), social movements continue to play an important role in Korea’s democratization (Armstrong 2002; Huntington 1991; Koo 1993a; Shin 1999; S.H. Kim 2000a; S.S. Kim 2003). Despite autocratic rule, the movement for democracy developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s and culminated in the mobilization of millions for political liberalization in the summer of 1987. Following democratic transition, the social movement sector has remained active and this volume explores how social movements have evolved from the authoritarian to the democratic period. After democratic reforms, social movement activists found themselves in a qualitatively different political environment which, in turn, shaped the contours of their activism. In this chapter we take a “life cycle” approach to social movements and draw upon the social movement literature to develop a framework for understanding the evolution of Korean social movements after democratic transition (Giugni 1998a; Giugni and Passy 1998; Hiller 1975).

Greater attention to movement evolution is needed to enrich our understanding of the democratization process in Korea as the social movement sector remains an important player in Korean politics today. The chapters collected in this volume show that there are at least two important processes to consider when