KOO’S EXPLANATION

• Concentration of workers
  • Because Korean industrialization was accomplished in large government-encouraged, urban factories organized by chaebŏl, workers were concentrated into factories and industrial neighborhoods
  • Large industrial estates: Pup’yŏng, Kuro, Taegu, P’ohang, Ulsan, Masan/Ch’angwŏn

• Working class homogeneous—often recruited through village and regional ties

• Already literate, and used to large-scale organization
WORKING CONDITIONS

• Authoritarian factory culture went beyond “patriarchy” that would have involved “family-like” concern
  • Complaints about inhumane treatment

• Long work week—especially in textiles, garments, and food processing (female work force)
  • Normal life impossible
  • High accident rate

• Labor and management did not mix (no “rising from the shop floor”)

• Categorical wage differentials
  non-manual twice wage of manual workers
  males more than twice female
ATTITUDES

• Disdain for manual workers (kongsuni/kongdori) expressed in almost total separation of manual and non-manual workers
  • However during HCI manual workers (but not non-manual) had job security (until 1997)

• High turnover—little devotion to company as “community of fate” (no Japanese ucchi no kaisha)
  • Work for the sake of the nation (“worker warriors”) had a degree of salience
  • Main motivation was “betterment of family” (not necessarily of the individual)
LABOR MOVEMENT OF THE SEVENTIES

• HCI industrialization began in 1973, but most factory workers were women until 1975
  • Conditions in female-dominated industries were worst
  • Chŏn T’ae-il’s immolation in 1970 a big inspiration:
    • Demand that South Korea enforce good labor laws that were actually on the books

• Ŭyong nojo versus minju nojo (company sweetheart unions versus democratic unions)
  • Sweetheart unions took orders from the government, not the workers
  • Democratic unions were those actually controlled by the workers
• ‘third party intervention’ against the law
  • Nobody outside the company could legally help organization

• JOC (Jeunesses Ouvrières Chretiënnes)—Catholic workers movement

• UIM (Urban Industrial Mission)—Protestant

• Turned from evangelism to helping
  • Meeting spaces, consciousness-raising (ŏullŏ manam), education on labor law, but no direct organization
Why women most active in the 1970s?

- Working conditions were the worst
- Since not life-time workers the prospect of being blacklisted was lower
- Few opportunities to improve themselves otherwise
- Koo thinks churches important because church-going is a more female activity, and also because women are more flexible and adaptable to new situations
 TRANSITION TO THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

• Park Chung Hee assassinated in 1979, and Ch’oe Kyu-ha was the constitutional successor as vice-president

• Chun Doo Hwan led a Koo on December 16th 1979

• Nation-wide student demonstrations for democracy reach climax in May 1980

• Martial Law declared May 18, 1980
  • Student demonstrations stopped everywhere except Chŏlla-do Kwangju
  • Demonstrations put down with such brutality that citizens joined the fight and threw the troops out
  • Four days later when the troops came back they retook the city killing at least 2000 people
Many people blamed the United States for not “saving democracy” in Korea

- US commander ‘allowed’ withdrawal of Korean troops from the DMZ for pacification
- Chun Doo Hwan was the first foreign leader invited to the Reagen White House

- Students felt stronger medicine than demonstrations was needed for democracy

- Workers eventually decided that they needed democracy to get economic justice
Labor movement of the 1980s

- “labor praxis” (hyŏnjangnon)
  - *Praxis* (Latin for “process”) is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, or realized

- Blacklisted workers became “chaeya sŏnjin nodongja” (progressive workers in the wilderness) who became professional organizers

- Labor-student alliance (no-hak yŏndae) organized
  - Some students took factory jobs to organize the workers (this was illegal)
  - Other students opened night schools and social service agencies in worker areas
  - Small group discussion groups
Worker identity and consciousness

From ch’ŏnhan kŭlloja to nodogja
- By the 1980s the young male workers mostly had high school education, and terms like kongsuni/kongdori had been modeled on agricultural workers
- Early workers constantly mentioned their lack of education, as if that justified poor treatment

Blatant status differences between white collar workers and blue collar ones—uniforms, eat separately, poor quality commuter buses

Did workers develop egalitarian consciousness?
- Some argue that egalitarianism has always co-existed with hierarchy in Korean society
- Others romanticize the agricultural workers of the past as having a communitarian and egalitarian ethos (seen in ture, for example)
Han & Hanp’uri

• Han (한/恨) expresses the resentment and frustration of injustice and a hard life
  • -this is not a class expression, since anyone can be oppressed
  • Koo argues, however, it is a “language of resistance” because it doesn’t accept the suffering of injustice

• The emotionality and violence of workers movements gives them a quality of an exorcism or “hanp’uri”
  • -p’uri means to “unravel” (like a knot), or “free”, and is often used in shamanism to refer to a ceremony that frees one from some affliction
Koo argues that “nodongja” (worker) eventually was rehabilitated as a word of pride.

Minjung movement
- Sees the essence of Korean culture in the minjung (or masses) rather than educated elites who were too Sinified.
- Minjungs are the subjects of history (i.e. they have agency).
- Focus on folk art—masked dance, drumming and gonging, folk art as authentic expressions of the people.
- Sinmyŏng-nada—create communal joy through performance (anthro: communitas).

Not class language per se but created an alternative framework and ideology.