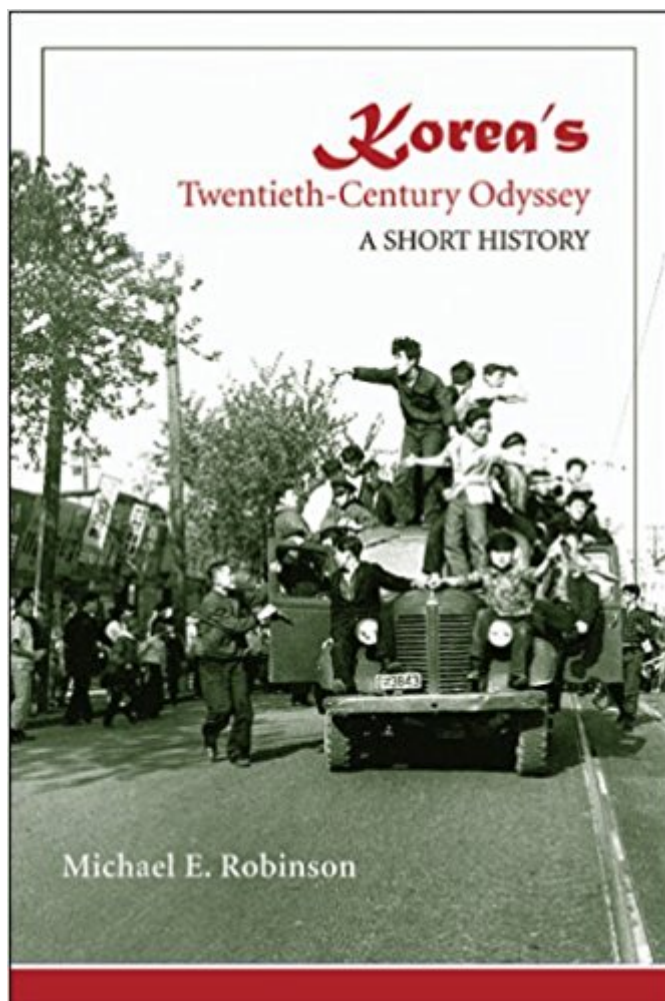


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Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A Short History



Synopsis

Michael E. Robinson provides readers with the historical essentials upon which to unravel the complex politics and contemporary crises that exist in the East Asian region.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Ironically, what was the Hermit Kingdom in the late 19th century is now where the major powers of the world are congregated, tied in a knot by their inability to find a new paradigm for stability in Northeast Asia." This brilliant sentence sums up the transformation and tragic history Korea went through in the 20th century. Michael Robinson does a very good job in reconstructing this transformation on less than 200 pages. The book is written in a very concise way, while covering many important issues related to politics, economics, geopolitics, international relations, social issues and culture. Given this wide range of issues, of course you can't expect much detail, but you'll still get a pretty good idea of most of the topics important in modern Korean history. In the last few chapters, there is a strong focus on politics and geopolitics. Elections are described in some detail and nuclear crises are analyzed several times. The author also describes the Asian financial crisis and social issues, but neglects South Korea's recent economic transformation. While doing a pretty good job in explaining the developmental state under Park Chung-hee, Robinson almost completely misses the transformation of the developmental state in late 1980s and 1990s: The role of the state underwent a major transformation, responding to increasing domestic pressure from labor movements and students as well external pressure peaking during the Reagan administration and later democratization. Interventions in the economy became less strategic and more reactive,

mitigating adverse effects of the market economy (as opposed to development planning).

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