



# Making Capitalism: The Social and Cultural Construction of a South Korean Conglomerate

*Roger Janelli, Dawnhee Yim*

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This pathbreaking work extends the boundaries of contemporary anthropological research by presenting in one cohesive, meticulously researched work: an original theoretical perspective on the relationships between the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of a large modern business organization; the first anthropological work on South Korean management and its white-collar workers, in a case study of one of South Korea's "big four" conglomerates; and an innovative delineation of how modern business practices are enmeshed in past and present, structure and agency, and local and international systems." "Based largely on the author's nine months of participant-observation in the offices of one of South Korea's largest conglomerates (with annual sales of about \$15 billion and approximately 80,000 employees), the book is also enriched by the author's previous fieldwork in rural Korea, where many of the conglomerate's white-collar personnel spent their formative years. These vantage points are used to explore constructions of "traditional" Korean culture and transformations of cultural knowledge prompted by new political-economic conditions, and how both inform practices prevailing in the large conglomerates - and ultimately shape South Korea's capitalism." "The work focuses on South Korea's new middle class. It explains how office workers' identities and often contradictory interests present them with choices between alternative interpretations and actions affecting both themselves and their conglomerates. Much attention is paid to ideological and more coercive means of controlling white-collar employees, to subordinates' strategies of resistance, and to ways in which cultural understandings and moral claims inform the assessment and pursuit of material advantage.

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