



Coal-Mining Women in Japan: Heavy Burdens (Asia's Transformations)

W. Donald Burton

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In the years between the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the beginning of the war mobilization boom in 1930, collieries in Europe and America embraced new technologies and had long since been excluded women from working underground. In Japan, however, mining women witnessed no significant changes in working practices over this period. The availability of the cheap and abundant labor of these women allowed the captains of the coal industry in Japan to avoid expensive investments in new machinery and sophisticated mining methods; instead, they continued to intensely exploit workers and markets intensively, making substantial profits without the burdens of extensive mechanization.

This unique book explores the lives of the thousands of women who labored underground in Japan's coal mines in the years 1868 to 1930. It examines their working lives, their family lives, their aspirations, achievements and disappointments. Drawing heavily on interview material with the miners themselves, W. Donald Burton combines translations of their stories with features of Japanese society at the time and coal mining technology. In doing so, he presents a complex account of the women's lives, as well as providing a keen insight into gender relations and the industrial and labor history of Japan.

Coal Mining Women in Japan will be welcomed by students and scholars of Japanese history, gender studies and industrial history.

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