

that the state's and the union's attempts to solve labor conflicts with organizational innovation have largely failed. Bringing external economic factors in is an important contribution to the study of Chinese unions; however, other factors may be at play with regard to the development of sectoral bargaining in Zhejiang. Under similar economic conditions, why have some unions engaged in sectoral bargaining while others have not? Why do labor gains vary significantly in sectoral contracts? And why are some sectoral contracts better enforced than others? Future research needs to further explore the causes of these variations.

The last factor accountable for different union responses to worker demands is the changing political economy conditions over time. Through the comparison of the state's and the union's responses to two strikes (Ascendant in 2007 and Nanhai Honda in 2010), Friedman argues that the rising level of labor conflict and the shift of China's economic development model from emphasizing export to domestic consumption make the central and provincial authorities change their approach to labor insurgency, from merely avoiding instability to resolving labor conflicts and improving working conditions. While the changing political economy context certainly plays an important role determining the state's and the union's activities, one may question whether this argument can be well supported by merely comparing two strike cases, given that the Nanhai Honda strike is unique in many ways, that some strikes occurred before 2008 were resolved in a similar way as the Nanhai Honda strike (e.g., the Yantian International Port strike in 2007), and that many strikes after 2010 were resolved in a similar (or even worse) way as the Ascendant strike (e.g., the Nokia strike in Dongguan in 2013 and the IBM strike in Shenzhen in 2014).

Throughout the book, Friedman argues that political concerns make the state unwilling to allow independent unions. Yet, economic concerns may also contribute to the formation of the insurgency trap given their important impact on the state's and the union's responses to labor unrest. After all, the fear that organized labor may damage a developing country's labor cost advantage is common. Nevertheless, by identifying the insurgency trap and emphasizing the critical role of organizational and economic factors in shaping union activities, Friedman makes a valuable contribution to the literature. As the dynamics of worker-state interactions and the politics of labor representation are key for the future of the Chinese labor movement, Friedman's book is a must-read for anyone with interest in China's labor.

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Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India. By Rina Agarwala. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 264 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-66308-4, \$29.99 (Paperback).

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Informal workers, unprotected by official labor law, make up a majority of the labor force in most developing countries. In addition to performing agricultural labor, informal workers construct roads, clean homes, staff kitchens, and knit clothing. Notwithstanding their centrality to the economy, scholarship on the organization and politics of informal workers remains sparse. We know far too little about the work conditions they experience, how they understand their rights, and not least of all, the strategies by which they organize and engage in formal politics. As with much of the informal economy, informal workers are largely treated as a residual category, one whose import is expected to diminish with economic and political modernization. While much recent scholarship documents the resilience of the informal economy in both developing and rich countries, few studies have investigated whether and how informal workers mobilize as a class and demand their rights. If anything, informality is thought to preclude workers from engaging in collective action given the dispersed and insecure nature of informal employment.

Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India offers a fascinating account of how informal workers in India have organized themselves to make collective demands on the

state. India provides a rich and important context in which to study informal labor. More than 90% of the Indian labor force is engaged in informal work. Moreover, India's diverse federal democracy offers considerable variation for analyzing the conditions under which informal workers successfully organize themselves. Agarwala exploits this variation effectively to examine informal worker organizations across two sectors, the construction industry and the bidi (hand-rolled cigarette) industry, and analyzes how successful they are across three Indian states. The study can be divided broadly into two parts: 1) it examines the organizational demands and strategies of India's informal workers, and 2) it analyzes the political conditions that enable or constrain informal workers' organizations from achieving their objectives. The research design allows Agarwala to analyze both industry- and state-level factors that could potentially shape the organizational strategies and effectiveness of informal workers' organizations.

The first part of the book documents the rise of informal workers' organizations. Drawing on interviews with informal workers, union leaders, and public officials, Agarwala identifies three interesting trends in the construction and the bidi industries. First, in contrast to formal labor movements in India and elsewhere, informal workers' organizations target their demands to the state rather than to the employer. Second, the nature of their claims has undergone a similar shift away from traditional workers' rights, such as wages and work conditions, and toward welfare and other social policies, including health care, education, and housing subsidies. Third, in a departure from the traditional antagonism between labor and capital in India, informal workers have developed a new class identity. Rather than opposing capital outright, they embrace the idea of citizenship and basic rights. Several examples are provided as evidence for these trends. For instance, informal workers pursue membership in welfare boards and seek to obtain official identity cards, which provide them with social recognition and access to state agencies and resources.

While informal workers in both sectors have organized in similar ways, their ability to secure material benefits varies across Indian states. The second part of the book analyzes the political conditions that account for the varied outcomes achieved by informal workers' organizations across the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. Agarwala draws on a combination of interviews, primary documents, and secondary sources to capture the sociopolitical context within each state. Her main finding is that competitive party systems marked by a pro-poor agenda provide the best political environment for informal workers' organizations to secure benefits such as housing subsidies and health care. Perhaps surprisingly, her secondary finding is that economic liberalization also provides informal workers some leverage with the state, as they can frame themselves as critical to the economic agenda of flexible production.

Across the three states, Tamil Nadu's competitive populism offers the best political conditions for informal workers to obtain welfare benefits. Tamil Nadu has a history of progressive social movements and has been a frontrunner in terms of social welfare provision for quite some time. The inferior outcomes experienced by informal workers in West Bengal are surprising, particularly given the state's historical legacy of class-based movements and leftist government. West Bengal has had single-party rule by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) for the better part of the last four decades, and yet informal workers' organizations there have enjoyed little material support from the state. The results in Maharashtra are mixed. In a less competitive, pro-business political landscape, informal workers have achieved moderate welfare gains. Interestingly, they have appealed to the state's liberal economic agenda, acceding to capital's demands for labor flexibility, in exchange for some material benefits.

Agarwala makes several contributions to our understanding of how informal workers assert their rights. The fact that bidi and construction workers are mobilizing collectively and obtaining tangible welfare benefits in a setting such as India, where social norms and economic disparities work against them, is rather remarkable. The capacity of these workers to engage in collective action targeting the state provokes a rethinking of how informal labor may organize itself as an economic class and political category. In addition, the findings compel one to consider further how informal workers relate to public institutions and the political system more broadly. All too often, informal labor is assumed to fall outside the formal channels of the state. While that observation may well be true in some cases, Agarwala's careful, empirically grounded study demonstrates that informal workers do seek official rights and recognition, and their associations engage directly with state agencies, albeit with varied material consequences for workers. The finding that political competition enhances the provision of state benefits suggests further that informal workers can access and benefit materially from democratic institutions and processes.

The findings raise questions as well. While a compelling case is made for treating informal workers as a distinct class that cuts across caste lines, the politics of caste nevertheless seem to influence the state's response to their class-based claims. For example, that informal workers are found to have far greater success in Tamil Nadu, where the social and political mobilization of lower castes gave rise to pro-poor policies and a relatively responsive state bureaucracy, suggests that caste politics continues to influence the material outcomes of class-based claims. In addition, although the welfare benefits for informal workers documented in the book are substantial, they must be understood against the backdrop of the Indian state's monumental failure to provide basic public services. The private costs of health care and education in India are daunting, particularly for the urban poor. The fact that informal workers are seeking these services through their welfare boards, rather than higher wages or better work conditions, may reflect a political compromise of vulnerable citizens in the face of India's ailing public health and education system. The extent to which informal labor movements can advance more comprehensive social policy reforms is worth examining further, with potential implications for the future of the welfare state in developing countries.

This illuminating book inspires several avenues for future research on the politics of informal labor. How informal labor and other subordinate actors can collectively enhance their well-being and engage in substantive forms of citizenship are pressing questions for the study of democracy and development. Informal workers are central to the process of democratic deepening, and yet scholarship has not kept pace. This study of informal workers in urban India comes at an ideal time as the country undergoes rapid economic and social change. In addition, the rich, qualitative evidence that Agarwala has carefully gleaned through semi-structured interviews and participant observation stands as a model for students of labor politics. Those interested in understanding the politics of labor, social welfare, and state-society relations in contemporary India will find this book immensely rewarding.

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