Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hour:
The Socio-Political Origins of Minjung Protestant Movements

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During his tenure as South Korea’s leader (1961-1979), President Park Chung-hee exercised his authority by developing laws and various state apparatuses aimed at controlling all dissident movements. For this end, the Korean military, the national police, and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) became useful coercive structures Park employed to maintain his rule. In addition to these structures of domination, Park also attempted to legitimize and justify his seizure of power as well as his plans to modernize South Korea. These legitimizing discourses revolved around two main themes. Park initially justified his seizure of power as an issue of “national security” and continually used the sentiment of “anti-communism” as a trump card to frame and imprison dissidents. During his reign, Park subsequently added to this a justification by “economic growth” which he held to be the most significant priority of his government.

The year 1972 marked a significant shift in how Park exercised his power over South Korean society. For various reasons detailed below, Park gave up the idea of maintaining a democratic polity and enacted the Yushin Constitution, which gave Park absolute control. The Yushin Constitution transformed Park’s government into an authoritarian regime that afforded very little space for dissenting voices. Park continued to cite the threat to national security and the need for economic development as reasons why Yushin was necessary. Through these two pillars of Park’s legitimizing discourse,
authoritarian rule, economic policies detrimental to Korea’s labor class, and harsh repression of dissident movements were justified.

Korean Christians responded to this political and economic situation in different ways.¹ During this time, when the need for rapid industrialization justified labor exploitation and hysterical levels of anti-communistic McCarthyism restricted any criticism of the government, a minority of Protestant leaders became champions of democracy and human rights.² Evolving from a small but visible group of dissident ministers and churches into a thoroughly developed Christian social movement, these protesting Christians became a salient voice in the burgeoning democracy movement that eventually helped transform South Korea into a liberal democracy.

The protest of these dissident Christians constituted both the founding of social movement organizations and developing counter-hegemonic discourses. Christians formed organizations to mobilize resources that were used in their strategic challenge of the Yushin regime. Through these organizations Christians attempted to educate and organize laborers, carry out various petition drives in the hopes of changing oppressive laws, and monitor the ways in which Park Chung-hee utilized groups like the KCIA to forcefully dominate Korean society. As the movement progressed, and with experiences of repression by the government, Christian organizations more thoroughly developed their networks to consolidate resources. Thus, what began as individual organizations fighting the regime on various fronts evolved into a networked group of Christian social movement organizations working together to challenge the Yushin regime.

In direct reaction to Park’s legitimizing discourse, Christians initially began their discursive challenge by centering on political themes such as democracy. Quickly
though, the discursive challenge incorporated the notion of human rights in reaction to the government’s repressive measures. Thus “democracy” and “human rights” became the two main ideal symbols put forth by Christian protestors as a response to Park’s Yushin regime. But what started with political and humanitarian symbols evolved into questions of identity and purpose for these dissenting Christians. Specifically, the populace identity of minjung (roughly translated as the ‘masses’ or ‘base people’) came to inform the rhetoric of Christian protest. More generally, throughout the 1970s, what Nancy Abelmann has called the “minjung imaginary” became the source for a more thoroughly developed master-narrative of protesting groups. This master-narrative became manifest in the discursive contest waged by Christians as well and what began as a liberal Christian concern for the social welfare of the Korean people, evolved into a full blown systematic liberation theology. Thus Minjung Theology was born after years of protest by dissenting Christians and became a rhetorical weapon in the discursive struggle against authoritarianism.

The goals of this chapter are twofold. First, I shall attempt a descriptive task of Christian protest at both the organizational and discursive levels. Regarding the social movement organizations, the questions are:

*What were the formal social movement organizations that constituted the network of Christian groups? When and why did they appear? What were their main concerns and activities?*

Christians also waged a discursive battle that challenged Park Chung-hee’s rhetorical justification of the Yushin regime. To illustrate how a group of theologians made sense of their protest, I attempt to explicate the logic of Minjung Theology through
the theological subcategories of soteriology, Christology, and biblical hermeneutics.

Here the questions are:

*What constituted salvation for minjung theologians? How did they theologically construe Jesus? Moreover, how did the minjung imaginary influence their reading of the Bible?*

The second goal of this chapter is to analyze movement transformation and I attempt to explicate the origins of the Minjung Protestant movement by situating it in its socio-political context. To achieve this second goal I attempt to answer the following questions:

*What were the factors that galvanized the formation and networking of Christian social movement organizations? How could, and why did, the “minjung” sentiment become the master-symbol for a Korean liberation theology? Finally, how did State repression of Christian organizational and discursive protest facilitate changes in the structure of Christian organizations and Minjung Theology?*

I use archival data to answer the above questions. The main source is the *UCLA Archival Collection on Democracy and Unification in Korea*. This archive was compiled by the Korea Church Coalition for Peace, Justice, and Reunification. Included in this prodigious collection are various types of primary documents including publications by the Coalition, the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC), various Christian social movement organizations, and formal declarations of protest by individuals and groups of Christian activists. This archive also includes official statements of the Korean government including proclamations of the National Assembly. A second archival source I utilize is the *1970-nyŏndaem injuhwa undong (1970s Democracy Movement)*.
This eight-volume collection was compiled by the Human Rights Committee of the KNCC and published in 1986. This set of primary sources includes mission statements of various Christian social movement organizations, official histories of these organizations, and most of the formal protest statements declared by Christian activists during the Yushin era. Finally, I draw upon the South Korean government’s publication of Park Chung-hee’s public speeches given throughout his tenure.

**Historical Context, the Park Chung-hee era**

*From Coup d’etat to the Yushin Constitution (1960-1972)*

In April of 1960, the first Republic of South Korea under Syngman Rhee came to an end as pressure from university students, professors, and the broader urban mass became overwhelming. The subsequent government under Yun Posôn and Chang Myôn proved to be ephemeral and on May 16, 1961 General Park Chung-hee, through a military coup d’état, assumed political charge of South Korea. Immediately after the coup, Park Chung-hee temporarily dissolved the National Assembly and established the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction as the main governmental body. Martial law was enacted and Park began the campaign to consolidate his power by arresting, threatening and eliminating opposing figures. Park also strategically placed many of his military peers in positions of power. In 1961, Kim Chongp’il (Park’s military junior and nephew by marriage) created the KCIA and within three years this repressive organization developed a vast network of agents that monitored any opposition in Korean society.

Initially the military coup did not face the formidable challenge of those participating in the April revolution because of Park’s promise to reestablish civilian rule
as soon as some degree of stability was maintained. But the longer Park waited, the more the promise was held in question. It was this tension between promise and deed that led to the strategic decision to hold “democratic” elections in 1963. Park himself formally retired from the military in December of 1962 and announced his intent to run for the presidency in the upcoming election. Through various manipulative methods, Park succeeded in winning the election and thus became the third president of South Korea. He organized the third republic into an executive branch, a judicial branch and a two-party legislative branch.

Throughout the 1960s Park focused governmental efforts at industrializing and developing the economy of the country with a series of “five year plans.” Orchestrated by the Economic Planning Board, the first five year plan (1962-1966) began molding Korea’s burgeoning economy into one concentrated in exports (mostly in textiles). This concerted effort by the government succeeded in raising the GNP by 7.8% during those five years. The second five-year plan (1967-1971) continued the trend of the first and the GNP rose another 10.5%. Overall per capita real income rose from 87 US dollars in 1962 to 293 dollars in 1972. As the export driven economy created the demand for labor, unemployment dropped from 8.3% in 1963 to 4.5% by 1971.4

Park’s economic policies then, proved highly successful and “South Korea was unrivaled, even by Japan, in the speed with which it went from having almost no industrial technology to taking its place among the world’s industrialized nation.”5 It was this growth that Park hoped would legitimize his regime as “he needed economic progress to defend his political base against those who regarded his seizure of power as
illegitimate.” Park used economic success as his main platform to win reelection in 1967 for his second and supposedly last term as president.

Park, however, did not abdicate at the end of his second term but rather forced the National Assembly to amend the existing constitution to allow him to run for a third term. Again through coercive measures Park won the election but by the end of 1972 frustrations with the existing political system led Park to enact the Yushin Constitution. The Yushin Constitution ended Korea’s brief experiment with democracy and concentrated all political power in the executive branch. Although the National Assembly was allowed to meet again, under the Yushin constitution the president had the power to directly appoint one third of the Assembly. The Yushin Constitution also made it possible to propagate and enforce special “Emergency Decrees” that the president could utilize in an ad hoc way as situations arose. All of these political moves severed whatever democratic processes were upheld in the 1960s and in all practicality “transformed the presidency into a legal dictatorship.”

Justification by Economic Growth and National Security

Although Park did rely on coercive measures (e.g. arresting various dissenting National Assembly members) to enact and carry out the Yushin Constitution, he also tried to garner legitimacy by proffering various justifications. First, Park noted shifts in the international political sphere that compromised Korea’s security. Referring to U.S. efforts at rapprochement with communist China and progress in relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Park declared “Under these circumstances, we must guard ourselves against the possibility that the interests of the Third World or small countries might be sacrificed for the relaxation of tension between big powers.” Compounded
with the legitimizing discourse of national security was the continual salience of economic prosperity as a primary goal and the need for authoritarian policies to ensure its possibility. For this end, Park declared on November 30, 1972, “The purpose of the (political) reforms we are now undertaking is to . . . insure our national prosperity by boosting and solidifying our national strength.” For Park, this goal of economic progress surpassed other political goals including the formation of a liberal democratic polity and he always “emphasized that without ‘economic equality,’ political democracy is no more than an ‘abstract, useless concept.’” Even more poignantly put, Park declared that sometimes Asian countries, including Korea “have to resort to undemocratic and extraordinary measures in order to improve the living conditions of the masses . . . one cannot deny that people are more frightened of poverty and hunger than totalitarianism.”

**Christian Social Movement Organizations and Minjung Theology**

**Christian Social Movement Organizations**

Throughout the 1970s, Christians who found fault with Park Chung-hee’s Yushin regime organized themselves to better acquire resources. By 1979, the network of Christian social movement organizations (SMO) constituted multiple types of organizations varied along several dimensions. First, the organizations were differentiated by the characteristics of its members. Different Christian SMOs specifically mobilized students, youths, clergy, urban poor, laborers, women, and prisoners of conscience. Second, SMOs varied depending on the focus of their main activities—unionization of labor, urban poverty relief, monitoring of human rights violations, women’s rights, aiding political prisoners, and monitoring voting booths
during elections. In addition to these task oriented SMOs, there were SMOs that played the critical role of providing a centralizing structure through which many organizations were networked. These umbrella organizations provided various resources to individual groups including communication channels between SMOs and financial assistance for various organizations. The network of Christian SMOs that emerged in the 1970s was, and is still today, a highly organized community of Christian activists. Below I detail a sample of some of the more important SMOs in the struggle of Christians against the Yushin regime. All together, and with others not mentioned, this collection of SMOs constitutes a well-developed Christian social movement working toward the goal of attaining democracy and human rights in South Korea.

On November 1, 1969, various Christian student groups came together to form the Korean Student Christian Federation (KSCF). Despite the presence of such principal older individuals such as Na Sanggi and Pak Hyŏnggyu, Christian student leaders primarily conducted the decision-making process. This umbrella organization became the central bureaucratic structure mobilizing specifically Christian university students and young adults during the Yushin era. Various activities of this organization included leading Bible studies and study groups for students, monitoring voting, organizing petition drives, and participating in street demonstrations. For example, on April 19, 1970, the KSCF took the lead role in organizing the 4-19 Memorial Event to commemorate the student revolution that brought down Syngman Rhee’s first republic exactly a decade earlier. This kind of activity contributed to the overall historical memory of struggle and protest alive in the imagination of the larger democracy movement.
Another prominent youth organization was the **Ecumenical Youth Council** (EYC), created on January 29, 1976 by the **Korean National Council of Churches** (KNCC). This organization focused on facilitating solidarity work between Christian youths from different denominational backgrounds. Among its various activities were ecumenical training, Good Samaritan training, organizing the annual Christian Youth Week, human rights monitoring, and anti-draft protest. Both the ecumenical training and Good Samaritan training programs were educational programs for youths who after completion would participate in various urban poor relief efforts. The EYC’s annual Youth Week was a time for Christian youths to come together in both worship and political solidarity. Its work relating to the human rights situation focused on the release of political prisoners, on whose behalf the EYC conducted petition drives and demonstrations. The EYC also demonstrated and petitioned against the government’s illegal drafting of university students into the military.

The Protestant clergy also mobilized during the Yushin era and on March 20, 1975, formed the **National Protestant Clergy Corps for the Realization of Justice** (NPCCRJ). Principal individuals in the NPCCRJ included Kang Sinmyông, Kang Wonyong and Kim Kwansôk among the over 500 clergy membership from eight different Protestant denominations. The Corps’ activities included holding prayer meetings, petitioning for the release of political prisoners, and attempts to reinstate professors and students who were forced to leave their universities. Because members of the NPCCRJ were church leaders, this organization had the added benefit of using its existing church networks for their cause. Church services sometimes became opportunities for dissent when these ministers worked their political concerns into their Sunday sermons.
Church Women United (CWU), founded in 1967, was another Christian organization that recruited members based on specific characteristics. Led by Yi Ujong, the CWU in Korea was especially inspired by the Church Women United chapter of the United States (a mainline liberal Christian organization). The CWU worked closely with the KNCC to free political prisoners and monitor human rights violations of the Yushin regime, as well as working for women’s rights. For example, in a public declaration on December 3, 1973, CWU condemned the development of a prostitution circuit that catered mostly to Japanese foreign businessmen visiting Korea. Although prostitution was not an “official” activity of the government, CWU assumed government’s knowledge and laissez-faire attitude as complicit support of this growing industry. Throughout the Yushin period, CWU brought women together to strategize on how their particular gendered position can contribute to the larger movement for democracy and human rights.

Along with these “member specific” SMOs were organizations differentiated according to their main topic of concern. The Seoul Metropolitan Community Organization (SMCO) was founded on September 1, 1971, to specifically address the needs of the urban poor, whose numbers had grown rapidly with the industrialization and urbanization of the first two economic five-year plans (1962-1971). Several years earlier in 1968 Protestant leaders— including Pak Hyonggyu, Kwôn Hogyông, Kim Tongwôn, Yi Haehak, Yi Kyusang, Hô Pyôngsôp and Mo Kapgyông—had become concerned with the growing level of urban poverty, and developed the Institute of Urban Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul to systematically study the conditions and welfare of the urban poor. A few years later, some of the same church leaders created the SMCO to not
only research and study the conditions of the poor but also to help ameliorate these atrocious conditions. Activities of the SMCO included educational and spiritual counseling of the residents of Seoul’s slums, and organizing them to demonstrate against government plans to force evacuation from these slum areas. In May of 1976, SMCO changed its name to **Korean Metropolitan Community Organization** (KMCO) to reflect the geographical spread of urban poverty and their commitment in these other areas.

The labor movement was also another area in which Christian SMOs played a significant part. The **Urban Industrial Mission** (UIM) was a loose network of church-based labor organizers that included foreign missionary George Ogle, who worked with the unions in the City of Inchôn, and Methodist minister Cho Wha-soon, who worked with the Tongil Textile Company. Although each district UIM worked mostly with the laborers in their respective cities, all city chapters had common motives and goals. These Christians were concerned with the exploitation of laborers in Park Chung-hee’s mass-production oriented economy. Activities of the UIM consisted of educating workers about labor laws, training in the organization and administration of a labor union, providing Bible studies for laborers, and advising on strategy plans during collective bargaining with employers. It is estimated that the UIM aided in the formation of 20% of all labor unions founded in the 1970s. The feeling of solidarity that UIM members had with the laborers is manifest in their informal policy of working in the companies of the same laborers they were trying to help organize. On February 8, 1975, the loose network of city-specific UIMs became more centralized under the auspice of the **Korean Christian Action Organization** (KCAO). Renamed the **KCAO-Urban Rural**
Mission, these Christians broadened their activities to include the mobilization of farmers in the rural areas of South Korea. This new ecumenical SMO consisted of Catholics as well as Protestants.

Along with women’s rights, urban poor, and labor relations, Christians were also concerned with the social education of the general public. The Christian Academy (CA), founded in 1956, was one of the few Christian SMOs that predated the Yushin era and was part of the larger literati movement to rebuild Korea from the rubbles of war by educating the public. Much of their earlier work revolved around discussions about the church’s role in society, but by the 1970s, when it was led by Kang Wônyong, the CA held various study groups around more political issues. They formed independent-democratic groups, self-reformation groups, and minjung groups. While the first two groups brought together educated Christians to discuss and critique Park Chung-hee’s domestic policies, the minjung groups attempted to draw in the lesser educated public into informed discussions about the rapid changes then taking place in Korean society. In addition, the CA maintained a formal relationship with the Ecumenical Church of Germany, from whom they received funds and general encouragement.

The issue of human rights violations was one of the most salient topics for Christian activists. The Human Rights Committee (HRC) of the Korean National Council of Churches was formed on April 11, 1974, to specifically address and monitor the human rights situation during the Yushin period. The HRC became the cornerstone organization in the network of Christian SMOs by establishing a centralized structure for inter-organizational work. Spearheaded by Kim Kwansôk, its activities included organizing the annual Human Rights Week, the publication of a human rights newsletter,
speaking out against the brutal use of force to repress anti-government demonstrations, petitioning for the release of political prisoners, and organizing public talks by released political prisoners. Together with Kim Tôkkui, the wife of former president Yun Posôn (1960-1961), the HRC helped form the *Association of the Family of Prisoners of Conscience* (AFPC, September, 1974) and the *Association of Prisoners for the Restoration of Democracy* (APRD, March, 1975). These organizations provided opportunities for prisoners and their families to share their experiences of oppression and garner support. The activities of the AFPC included monitoring the trials of those arrested for anti-government protest, petitioning for the release of prisoners, raising funds by knitting and selling shawls, and organizing prayer meetings.

Starting from September 18, 1974, the HRC, and later the AFPC, organized the **Thursday Prayer Meeting**. Although not a formal organization, this group of concerned Christians gathered every Thursday to pray for those oppressed by the Yushin regime. The Thursday Prayer Meeting became an important opportunity for Christian activists to gather and pray, as well as to make public declarations against the Yushin government. On May 3, 1976, this group became the **Friday Prayer Meeting**, scheduled so that they could more closely monitor the trials of those arrested for the March 1st Declaration of Salvation for the Nation which was held on Saturdays (see below).

Although the network of Christian social movement organizations involved many different types of groups focusing on multiple issues, all together they constituted a cohesive Christian front against the Yushin regime. Christian protest, however, was not limited to praxis at the organizational level but also included expressive protest. Throughout the 1970s Christians waged a discursive battle using political, humanitarian,
and Christian symbols that both motivated and justified their actions. For a group of theologians, this discursive protest culminated in the formation of a Korean systematic liberation theology known as Minjung Theology.

*Minjung Theology*

Minjung Theology was developed by a group of theologians, biblical scholars, and ministers concerned with making the Christian message relevant for their particular historical and political situation. This impetus comes from the understanding that “The function and task of theology is to test, criticize and revise the language which the Church uses about God . . . (theology) must be regularly revised in order to maintain a continuity of meaning.”

This revision started taking place in Korean liberal theological circles in October, 1979, as concerned theologians began to systematize the articulation of their experience of struggle in the democracy-human rights movement. At the time of the first meeting of these “minjung theologians,” as they would later be called, most were forced out of their positions in universities, Christian seminaries, and social movement organizations. They carried into this first meeting the scars accumulated from nearly a decade of struggle and these experiences colored the formation of Minjung Theology.

The various meetings of these theologians over the next few years came to be known as the Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia. Although the theme of their first meeting was “The People of God and the Mission of the Church,” their main concern was to struggle with, and incorporate, the concept of *minjung* into their theologies. It was the aim of this conference to create a “living theology”— one that “must speak to the actual questions men in Asia are asking in the
midst of their dilemmas: their hopes, aspirations and achievements; their doubts, despair and suffering.”

Derived from two Chinese characters, *min* (people) and *chung* (masses), the notion of *minjung* identified all those in Korean society that were suffering oppression at the hands of Park’s dictatorial regime. *Minjung* began as a *populace* term but was transformed into a *populist* theology as theologians started to use it as the master symbol in the construction of their version of liberation theology. Through this theological reformulation, the collective identified as the *minjung* gained a kind of ontological status pointing to their preferred status in the eyes of God. Like all systematic theologies, Minjung Theology manifests itself in various subcategories. Below I provide brief descriptions for only the three theological subcategories of soteriology, Christology, and biblical hermeneutics.

**soteriology and the notion of ‘han’**

In systematic theology, soteriology has to do with doctrines that comprise notions of salvation. According to the traditional view of more orthodox theological circles, salvation consists of individuals repenting of their sins, accepting the resurrection of Jesus, and acknowledging Jesus as the only begotten son of God. For the *minjung* theologians on the other hand, salvation was not an individual process but rather a social one. This stems from the notion of “social sin” that blamed the suffering of the *minjung* on social structures rather than on personal sin. The condition of the *minjung*, one from which they have to be saved, has to do with the suffering stemming from these social structures. This condition of suffering is what *minjung* theologians called *han*. According to *minjung* theologians, *han* is very unique to the experience of the Korean
minjung: “It is a repressed murmur, unexpressed in words or actions. It does not change anything. It might arouse a sense of revenge at most. But usually it would be limited to submission or resignation to fate.” Suh Nam-dong, one of the important founders of Minjung Theology, notes the “helplessly defeated” theme in defining han but adds to it the possibility of salvation from suffering: “Han is an underlying feeling of Korean people. On the one hand, it is a dominant feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness. On the other, it is a feeling with a tenacity of will for life which comes to weaker beings.”

The minjung of Korea need a way to release their han, which is accomplished through a process of “cutting out” or tan. Literally it denotes “cutting away,” but theologically, minjung theologians understood tan as a process of transcendence and transformation. Transcendence from the condition of han can only come about as the minjung actively struggle for their own liberation. Through this process, the minjung are able to exorcise their han as the systems that generate societal injustices are transformed. Regarding this point, the Catholic minjung poet Kim Chiha reinterprets the resurrection of Christ as a symbol of how han can be ameliorated and salvation brought about:

This is the mystery of resurrection – this is revolution. That resurrection fashions people in God’s image, opens their eyes to their own dignity and turns their frustration and self-hatred into eschatological hope. This kind of resurrection changes a selfish, individualistic, escapist anomic into a communal, united realistic commitment to the common good . . . This is a revolutionary religion. One important point regarding the salvation theme in Minjung Theology has to do with the conscious absence of “sin” as a defining characteristic of Christian soteriology.
From the beginning, minjung theologians have focused on han rather than sin as the core issue for salvation. Minjung theologians advocate the position that it is not only personal sin from which one must be saved but also from the collective han stemming from societal injustices. Therefore, the salvation of the minjung is not tied to the acceptance of grace which reconciles God and man in more orthodox theological views, but rather emphasizes a group-achieved process as the minjung struggle for their own social liberation.

**Christology**

Christology in systematic theology has to do with beliefs about Jesus Christ. Broadly speaking, notions of Christ are categorized as either “high Christology” or “low Christology.” While high Christology focuses attention on Jesus as the divine son of God and equal to God, low Christology highlights his humanness and life on Earth. Understandings of Jesus by Minjung Theology go beyond the low Christology emphasized by liberal theologians. Minjung theologians constructed a radical new Christology, one that apotheosized the minjung.

In articulating their own Christology, minjung theologians have focused not on the “personal savior” motif found in more conservative theologies, but rather on the “Jesus-event” itself. Biblical scholar Ahn Byung-mu interprets Jesus’ ministry in the gospels as the first minjung movement and Jesus’ crucifixion as the symbolic sacrifice of the minjung. This interpretation argues that the story of Jesus in the gospels is not a time bound unique story but rather a common story that is enacted through the lives of all suffering people. One example of minjung Christology manifesting itself in readings of the Bible has to do with the interpretation of the good Samaritan parable (Luke 10: 25-
37). While traditional interpretations identify the good Samaritan as the Christian “neighbor” and the robbed man as the individual representative of humanity’s suffering, minjung theologians identify Jesus as the suffering man. In this way, Jesus becomes one with the minjung.

This understanding of Christ emphasizes the historical person of Jesus and the suffering that Jesus had to go through as the suffering of all minjung. As Ahn notes, “this Jesus is not the Christ who is facing man from God’s side, but the Christ who is facing God from man’s side.”23 For Ahn, and other minjung theologians, Jesus becomes the Messiah not because he is in fact God, but because as a fellow minjung, he carries on his shoulders the social sins of an unjust world. Thus the purpose of the parable of the good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke is not to reveal the generosity and compassion of a Christian neighbor, but rather to invite the Christian to identify with Jesus and the suffering minjung robbed and beaten on the road to Jericho.

minjung biblical hermeneutics

Since the post-Enlightenment emphasis on higher criticism of sacred texts (including the Bible), liberal biblical scholars have questioned the assertion that the Bible is the revealed word of God leading to automatically given interpretations. On the contrary, biblical scholars working out of the liberal tradition have tried to situate the Bible in its various historical contexts in attempt to make obvious the connections between text and the ‘life-world’ of the author. Drawing upon developments in hermeneutical theory and textual analysis,24 these biblical scholars argue that readings of texts are always influenced by pre-existing interpretative frameworks (conscious or unconscious). In this vein, minjung theologians purposefully and consciously developed
their own biblical hermeneutic (a *minjung* biblical hermeneutic so to speak) that colored their reading of the Bible.

In his paper “An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung,” Cyris Moon argues that the essence of the Old Testament is “the history of belief about the minjung’s liberation movement (the Exodus event) and creation of humanity.” This creative connection between humans as God’s most important creation and the Exodus story highlights a key aspect in Minjung Theology: the suffering of the *minjung* is not the original condition meant for God’s people but rather a consequence of the Fall (here interpreted as not from Adam and Eve’s sin but from social injustices). The Exodus story is an archetypical story for Moon and shows how God restores Israel’s enslaved *minjung* to their original purpose.

In respect to New Testament accounts of the *minjung*, Ahn Byung-mu focuses his philological lens on the Greek word *ochlos*. Found 36 times in the Gospel of Mark to connote the crowds surrounding Jesus, Ahn argues that the word *ochlos* is intentionally used by the author of Mark as a referent to a social historical class. Working through a *minjung* hermeneutical lens, Ahn argues that the masses of people surrounding Jesus’ ministry are a witness to his faithfulness to them. For Ahn, then, the *ochlos* “were the minjung of Galilee.” This interpretation of Jesus’ ministry leads Ahn to affirm a fundamental axiom in liberation theology, namely that God prefers and stands alongside of marginalized oppressed groups.
Origins of Christian Social Movement Organizations and Minjung Theology

From Individual Groups to a Network of Social Movement Organizations

The Christian organizational network was indeed thoroughly developed by the end of the Yushin era, incorporating a variety of activities by many types of formal social movement organizations. However, the founding dates of the Christian SMOs indicate that most did not exist in the 1960s, but came into existence and became part of the network only in the 1970s. To understand this evolution of a few individual SMOs into multiple networked organizations, we need a detailed knowledge of the historical condition and experiences that facilitated this change. Only through understanding the Christian SMOs in relation to the oppressive state apparatuses of the Yushin regime can we gain insight into the factors that gave rise to these organizations. While some arose as a reaction to the injustices originating in Park’s economic policies, and others arose as a reaction to the repressive measures of the regime, all the SMOs in the network were in some way related to the Yushin government.

As mentioned above, the Economic Planning Board set Korea on an economic path which required large numbers of unskilled manual workers. Urbanization accompanied the rapid industrialization of the 1960s as people in the rural areas flocked to the cities in hopes for a modern and more lucrative life. The first two five-year economic plans generated and fostered textile companies while at the same time encouraging the migration of as many potential laborers from farming dominated communities. As in other industrializing nations, including the United States, the early years of industrialization were a witness to atrocious working situations, poor wages, and the general exploitation of laborers. The self-immolation protest of garment worker
Chŏn T’aeil, on November 13, 1970, “became part of South Korea’s labor history and 
signified the beginning of a new working class activism.”28 As public knowledge about 
these working conditions spread, Protestant Christian leaders resolved to work in the 
labor movement. Contact between Christians and the laborers was inevitable as the rapid 
growth of the Korean churches during this time was symbiotically tied to the 
industrialization-urbanization process.29

Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) ministers and church leaders first indirectly 
learned of the situation from the laborers themselves who attended their churches. They 
then obtained manual labor jobs in order to work alongside laborers and help them 
organize. Their direct experience with the working conditions solidified their conviction 
that something had to be done for the rights of workers. UIM continued its educational, 
organizational, and strategizing work with laborers throughout the 1970s. Through these 
programs, the UIM contributed to not only the formation of unions in various companies 
but also galvanized “worker’s consciousness” amongst laborers.30 In particular their 
work with two labor unions catapulted the UIM into the forefront of the labor movement. 
The Reverend Cho Wha-soon of the UIM involved herself in the aforementioned Tongil 
Textile Company union. On February 21, 1978, when women workers (who constituted 
the majority of workers) were about to win the election for union leadership for the 
second consecutive time, Tongil management hired street thugs to disrupt the union 
election. The hired strongmen beat up the women, as well as throwing human excrement 
on them.

After this incident, Tongil management fired 124 union members for “causing 
damage to company property” and dismissed the union completely.31 Various Christian
organizations protested what happened to the women workers of the Tongil Textile Company. On March 12, at Tapdong Cathedral, UIM ministers joined fired workers, Human Rights Committee members, Ecumenical Youth Council members, various Catholic SMOs, and journalists from the daily newspaper Tonga Ilbo, in a fast to protest the harsh repression of the Tongil company union. In this way, the Tongil Textile Company labor struggle, led by the UIM, became a rallying point for diverse elements in the democracy-human rights movement.32

A second union dispute led by the UIM also facilitated solidarity work between Christian SMOs. On August 11, 1979, one thousand riot policemen gathered at the YH Company to suppress a sit-in strike by 250 women workers.33 During the violent exchange, one woman was killed and many more seriously injured. Three days later on August 14, the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches held a press conference in front of both Korean and international reporters decrying the police brutality against the YH Company workers. The next day, the Association of Families of Prisoners of Conscience held a sit in demonstration at Hanbit Church and demanded the freedom of those arrested. Both the Tongil Textile Company and YH Company incidents came about as UIM ministers helped organize workers against their employers who, with state backing, severely repressed these efforts at unionizing. The repression, in turn, strengthened the role of the UIM in the labor movement as well as solidifying the connections between various organizations.

The Ecumenical Youth Council is another SMO whose origin is intricately tied to state repression. After Pastor Pak Hyŏnggyu’s protest on Easter Sunday at Namsan Mountain in 1973, the Yushin regime began a pattern of arresting Christian protestors
under the National Security Law. This pattern became even more accentuated with Presidential Emergency Decree nos. 1 and 2 (January 8, 1974), Emergency Decree no. 4 (April 3, 1974) and Emergency Decree no. 9 (May 13, 1975). These Emergency Decrees (ED) restricted the already limited freedoms accorded by law by disallowing the collection of signatures for anti-government petitions (ED nos. 1 and 2), subduing protest activities in the university campuses (ED no.4) and proclaiming illegal any criticism of the Yushin regime or the decrees themselves (ED no. 9). ED nos. 4 and 9 especially became useful tools for the government who used them as justifications for the harsh repression of student protestors.

Following the promulgation of ED number 4, the state began a campaign to arrest and incarcerate student protestors. This period of mass student arrests has come to be known as the “minch’ông incident” after the name of the most salient leftist student organization, the National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students (minch’ông haknyun). However, Christian students, especially those affiliated with the Korea Student Christian Federation, were also arrested and student activism was for the most part silenced. The Korean National Council of Churches, realizing that the university campus could no longer serve as a space for anti-government protest, began to make efforts to fill the void left by arrested students. To this end, the Human Rights Committee formed the Ecumenical Youth Council to mobilize students and youths outside of their university settings. The purpose of forming the EYC was to draw upon the potential power of students and youths while moving their activities away from the campuses to avoid restrictions set by ED number 4. Thus, the addition of the EYC to the larger network of Christian SMOs is best understood in light of the activities of the KSCF,
the repression of the KSCF by the Yushin regime, and finally, the Christian movement’s reaction to state repression.

The formation of the Human Rights Committee of the Korean National Council of Churches was itself a manifestation of the shift in protest rhetoric due to the repression of the Yushin regime. Initially, the discursive challenge of Christian activists began with political ideals such as the recovery of democracy. The aforementioned Easter Sunday in 1973 marked the beginning of direct Christian protest against the government, as opposed to such activism as the UIM’s work with laborers or the CA’s work in educating the public. The arrest of Reverend Pak Hyônggyu under the National Security Law, and mass arrests of students under the Emergency Decrees, facilitated the change in Christian protest rhetoric from political ideals (democracy) to humanitarian concerns (human rights).

As stories of the appalling treatment of political prisoners leaked out to the public, Christians became concerned with not only changing the policies of the government but also the harsh treatment of dissidents. The arrests of Pak Hyônggyu and junior pastors prompted the KNCC to sponsor a week long “Church and Human Rights Week,” during which leaders in the Christian dissident movement came together to strategize about how to work more efficiently toward the amelioration of the government’s human rights violations. This desire for a strategic front grew with the promulgation of Emergency Decree no. 4 and the arrests that followed it. It was with these motives that the KNCC officially formed the Human Rights Committee on April 11, 1974. This organization quickly became the central SMO by linking together a variety of organizations, and by forming various new ad hoc organizations, thereby furthering the growth of the network.
The Association of the Families of Prisoners of Conscience was one of the ad hoc organizations that the HRC helped form (September, 1974). Headed by Kim Tôkkui, the AFPC specifically concentrated its efforts on monitoring the arrest and incarceration tactics of the Yushin regime under ED nos. 1, 2, 4, and 9. The government used ED no. 9 as the legal justification for conducting mass arrests following the March 1st Declaration of Salvation for the Nation. As more and more Christian dissidents were incarcerated, greater numbers of family members of political prisoners found themselves in need of a community that could sympathize and support them in their distress. As the AFPC made concerted efforts to mobilize these people, its membership grew accordingly. Similarly, the Association of Prisoners for the Restoration of Democracy grew in proportion to the numbers of Christian dissidents arrested. While unable to act freely, political prisoners at the very least were able to come together to share their experiences of arrest, torture, trial, and incarceration. APRD members continued their work by publicly sharing experiences of prison after some were released.

The Yushin regime issued Emergency Decree no. 9 on May 13, 1975 and used it to legally constrain any open criticism of the government, or of the decree itself. It was during this critical time in the movement, when the KCIA effectively monitored and suppressed activities of most Christian SMOs, that the Friday Prayer Meeting (formerly Thursday Prayer Meeting) became an important part of the Christian organizational network. Although these gatherings were not technically formal SMOs, they nevertheless provided a consistent space for Christian dissidents to gather and further their cause. Indeed, the Friday Prayer Meetings provided just about the only opportunity left for indirect criticism of the government following ED no. 9.36
As the name implies, the main activity of the Friday Prayer Meeting was group prayer. Dissident Christians would gather for a short liturgy and spend the rest of the time praying for the general state of the nation, as well as for specific arrests and court cases. It was because of this overtly spiritual agenda that the KCIA hesitated to infiltrate and repress the FPMs. 37 We would, however, miss the subtleties of the FPM if we ignore its subversive activities. After ED no. 9 suppressed most of their other activities, the Human Rights Committee continued to distribute their Human Rights Newsletter through the networks at the FPMs. Political prisoners also gave their testimonies regarding the prison experience at these prayer meetings. Overall, the FPMs were able to sustain Christian dissident praxis when the Yushin regime made great efforts to repress Christian protest.

From Political and Humanitarian Ideals to a Systematic Liberation Theology

Understanding the rise and networking of Christian organizations during the Yushin era is critical to the overall comprehension of Minjung Protestantism at the organizational level. Along with this development of an organizational network, a handful of Christian theologians developed Minjung Theology. Like the network however, Minjung Theology did not approach its full form until the end of the Yushin era. It is also crucial to understand the formation of Minjung Theology in relation to the rhetorical aspects of the Yushin regime.

Christian discursive protest of the Yushin regime began in 1973 on various fronts. In a pivotal event, Reverend Pak Hyônggyu and two younger ministers of his church gathered their congregation at Seoul’s Namsan on April 22 for Easter Sunday and, in response to the “passing” of the Yushin Constitution, disseminated leaflets that read “Politicians Repent,” “The Resurrection of Democracy is the Liberation of the People,”
and “Lord, show thy mercy to the ignorant King.”

The government accused Reverend Pak and his supporters of trying to “overthrow the government” and promptly arrested them under the National Security Law.

In this seminal conflicting moment between Christian protestors and the Yushin regime, a pattern emerged that was to become characteristic of the discursive battle for the remainder of the 1970s. For Pak Hyŏnggyu, protest was a direct expression of the Christian faith and it was the duty of all Christians to help alleviate the suffering caused by the Yushin regime’s political and economic policies. The government, on the other hand, refused to acknowledge these religious motives and identified these ministers as a threat to national security. By arresting them under the National Security Law (NSL), Park Chung-hee insinuated that the protest at Namsan was pro-Communist, thereby framing it as a political and not religious act. It is significant that Park Chung-hee could not simply repress their protest without having some kind of justification. Since the Korean War, the label of communism constituted a serious charge and Park Chung-hee’s reliance on the NSL was an attempt to strike a common chord within the larger Korean society whose memory of the war was still vivid.

Pak Hyŏnggyu attempted to challenge the rhetorical justification put forth by the Yushin regime which argued for the necessity of an authoritarian political system to ensure national security and economic prosperity for the sake of the nation (minjok). In his legitimizing discourse, Park Chung-hee claimed to speak for, and protect the, will of the Korean people. Pak Hyŏnggyu, on the other hand, was proffering a new signifier—democracy—to refer to the will of the people. In this event of protest, symbols came into a binary relationship with each other as Pak Hyŏnggyu defined democracy to be the true
referent to the will of the Korean people as opposed to Park Chung-hee’s symbolic gesture of national security and economic prosperity. Not surprisingly this contest between opposing binary symbols did have an evaluative component as both Pak Hyônggyu and Park Chung-hee assumed to know what was truly best for the Korean masses.

The arrest of Pak Hyônggyu under the NSL led a group of concerned Christian leaders to propagate the “1973 Theological Declaration of Korean Christians.” This declaration was a forerunner to Minjung Theology in that it was the first attempt to publicize Christian protest theologically or specifically as a Christian duty. In reaction to the state’s framing of Pak Hyônggyu as a threat to national security, the declaration first established theological motives for protest: “We are under God’s command that we should be faithful to his Word in concrete historical situations…” The declaration then applied these concerns to the specific context of Park Chung-hee’s Yushin system:

The present dictatorship in Korea is destroying rule by Law and persuasion . . . Our position is that no one is above the law except God . . . If anyone poses himself above the law and betrays the divine mandate for justice, he is in rebellion against God. The present regime is destroying freedom of religion . . .”

As can be seen from this theological declaration, Christians were contesting Park Chung-hee’s rhetoric of maintaining national security via authoritarianism with the argument that it impinged on their religious rights. The declaration also challenged the second pillar in Park’s legitimizing discourse, economic policy:

The present dictatorship is responsible for the economic system in Korea,
in which the powerful dominate the poor. The people, poor urban workers and rural peasants, are victims of severe exploitation and social and economic injustice. So-called ‘economic development’ in Korea turned out to be the conspiracy of a few rulers against the poor people, and a curse to our environment.\textsuperscript{41}

Overall, this declaration had the effect of challenging both of Park’s justifications for the Yushin constitution. For both Park Chung-hee and these Christians, the ultimate referent was the will and benefit of the Korean masses. While Park insisted that the Yushin system protects the Korean nation, Christians argued that only the restoration of democracy and a change in economic policy would ensure the rights of the people. The cultural contest between Christians and the Yushin regime, then, revolved around the antithetical symbols of democracy and workers’ rights versus national security and economic prosperity.

The contest for the sole right to speak for the Korean masses continued between Christians and Park Chung-hee throughout the 1970s. The Christians presented their alternative interpretation of the state in sermons and public declarations. In particular, the “Declaration of Conscience” by Bishop Chi Haksôn (July 16, 1974), and the “Declaration for the Salvation of the Nation” by Catholic, Protestant and oppositional political leaders (March 1, 1976) were important for their highly publicized nature. These predominantly discursive protests gave Christians the opportunity to challenge Park’s justification of Yushin while upholding the ideals of democracy and human rights. The state’s repression of the dissenting voices was quick and harsh. Both Bishop Chi and the group of eleven signers of the March 1\textsuperscript{st} Declaration received long prison sentences
(ranging from three to eight years). The National Security Law (with the implied association with communism) provided the warrant for arrest and conviction in each case. Along with this material/instrumental repression, the state’s discursive responses to this counter-hegemonic challenge were threefold. In various speeches, Park Chung-hee continued to propagate the rhetoric of prosperity for the minjok. In court cases, the government’s prosecutors used the “threat to national security” discourse to identify and frame Christian protestors as pro-communists. Finally, in a few rare occasions, the state directly responded to Christians’ continual use of the term “democracy” by offering their own definition.

Two aspects of Park Chung-hee’s rhetorical battle were important in the shaping of Minjung Theology. The first has to do with the collective term used to identify the true will of the Korean masses. Christians criticized Park’s assumption that he had the will of the Korean people in mind. The symbolic aspect of this contentious point became manifest in the Christians’ use of the term minjung in opposition to Park’s favored term minjok (translated as ‘the nation’). Park, through various speeches, constantly referred to the minjok, to convince larger society that his policies were for the betterment of the Korean nation. For Christians however, the true voice of the Korean people was the “groaning of the minjung” and not the gratitude of the minjok implied in the state’s public interpretation of Korea’s economic growth. For some Christians, such as Ahn Byung-mu, relying on minjung rather than minjok was a conscious effort to raise an alternative rallying symbol for the Korean collective over and opposed to the state’s use of minjok. Thus, the collective identity of minjung became a sacred symbol in a binary relationship with Park Chung-hee’s vision of the minjok. While not necessarily profaning
the nation, Christians understood *minjung* as a ‘sacred-ontological category’ of the Korean people, while the advocate of *minjok*—Park Chung-hee—was literally framed as demonic. In this way, as other scholars have noted, *minjung* versus *minjok* became “antonymic partners” in the symbolic contest over who represented the true voice of the Korean masses.\(^{46}\)

The second aspect of Park’s discursive critique of protesting Christians has to do with the identity of the latter. By arresting Christian activists under the NSL, Park was framing Christian praxis as (1) political, and therefore not religious in nature, and (2) as pro-communist. This accusation vexed Christians who not only saw themselves and their protest as fundamentally different from the atheistic political ideology of Marxist informed communism, but also had historical reason to detest this association.\(^{47}\)

Two events in the discursive struggle of the 1970s gave the state the opportunity to make pro-communist accusations and the Christians a chance to rebut. The activities of the Urban Industrial Mission, while part of the instrumental challenge that Christians waged against Park Chung-hee, led to developments in the symbolic contest as well. On November 30, 1977, the government sponsored the publication of Hong Chiyŏng’s pamphlet, *What is the UIM Aiming At?*, in which the state framed the UIM as a communist organization that “shakes the base of society . . . because they imply companies belong to workers not to employers.”\(^{48}\) The state then passed out these pamphlets to workers and used this identification with communism as a justification for the violent repression of UIM sponsored labor strikes.\(^{49}\) In response to the pamphlet, Christians made various public declarations refuting this framing of the UIM. On March 20, 1978, the Catholic Justice and Peace Committee issued a public statement decrying
the association of the UIM with communists. Two days later the Human Rights Committee followed in suit. More importantly, the HRC directly and more thoroughly addressed this issue during a conference they held on October 19, 1978, entitled “Consultation on Ideology.” During the two-day conference Christian activist leaders studied the ways in which the government historically used anti-communist ideology to frame political dissidents. Again, on August 29, 1979, three denominations affiliated with the Korean National Council of Churches held a press conference to denounce the government’s framing of the UIM as communists. In all public declarations and the HRC conference, Christians first rejected the identification of their praxis with communism and then proceeded to argue that their activities stemmed from their religious faiths.

A similar incident was the case of the Christian Academy in 1979. On May 28 of that year Professor Chông Changyŏl and six staff members of the Christian Academy were arrested by the government under the Anti-Communist Law for their work in educating farmers and workers. Definitional elements crucial to the discursive struggle for both the state and Christians arose during the trial. On August 6, the presiding judge asked defendant Yi Ujae to define “socialism” since this was the formal accusation by the prosecutors. In his response, Yi and all of the other defendants insisted that their work with the farmers was a manifestation of their belief system, claiming that this was what their faith called them to do. Thus, Park Chung-hee’s efforts at labeling Christian protestors as communists not only gave Christians opportunities to reflect on their motives, but also helped facilitate and solidify their sense of self and praxis as religious in nature.
Conclusion

In his prison notebooks, the neo-Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci made a keen observation regarding the powers that dominate societies. He noted that the ruling classes hold power over subordinate groups in at least two distinct ways. This “dual perspective” of power bifurcates hierarchical relations as a function of either “domination” or “hegemony.” Gramsci articulated the notion of domination to describe the relationship between ruler and ruled in which the latter enters the unequal relationship without consent. The forced relationship is held together as long as the ruler retains enough power to coerce the ruled. The other side to this dual perspective is what he called hegemony; the maintaining of an unequal relationship partly depends on rulers’ ability to persuade, lead, and draw consent from those they attempt to control. Gramsci speculated that the most thorough and efficient form of exercising power is to combine both of these strategies so that both the body and mind of subordinate groups are convinced and accepting of the existing relationship. For aspiring rulers, to have material power without hegemony is to rely strictly on the employment of brute force to maintain control. Likewise, to have consent without material power is to be at the whims of subordinate groups’ shifting loyalties.

Park Chung-hee instinctively understood Gramsci’s dual perspective of power and acted accordingly. Throughout his tenure, Park formed and utilized coercive state apparatuses to maintain control of South Korean society. In particular the Korean Central Intelligence Agency represented the “sophisticated and systematic repression” of any element within South Korea’s society that challenged his political power. Along side this material repression of dissident groups, Park also developed legitimizing discourses
in hopes that this would justify his position as South Korea’s undisputed leader. For this end, Park constantly referred to an impending threat to the nation’s security as well as the need to industrialize the country as reasons why the authoritarian policies of the Yushin system were necessary. Thus from 1961 to 1979, Park Chung-hee consolidated his power over South Korean society through both the iron hand of material might as well as the softer voice of a father figure who knows best.

As a direct complement to Gramsci’s dual perspective of power, the protest of dissident Christians constituted both strategic-material protest and expressive-discursive protest. Social movement organizations such as the Korean Student Christian Federation and Urban Industrial Mission were founded to consolidate resources in an effort to strategically challenge the political and economic policies of the Yushin regime. In fact, increasing levels of repression of Christian dissidents gave rise to certain types of organizations as Christians responded to Park Chung-hee’s Emergency Decrees. That is to say, the origins of organizations such as the Human Rights Committee, Association of the Family of Prisoners of Conscience, and the Association of Prisoners for the Restoration of Democracy are to be found in the repressive measures of the Yushin regime itself. All of these SMOs exist even today, in some form, contributing to the present strength of the community of Christian activists.

In addition to these forms of strategic protest, Korean theologians also waged a discursive battle that challenged the justifying rhetoric of the Yushin regime. The Christian democracy movement established at the beginning of the Yushin era soon became a “human rights” movement following the repression of Christian political demonstrations. The continuing protest of Christians for democracy and human rights led
to the arrests of many Christians under the National Security Law and the Anti-
Communist Law, which in turn facilitated the motivational reappraisal of protest for these
Christians. This re-articulation of motive for protest consciously utilized symbols that
were the binary antithesis to Park Chung-hee’s own legitimizing rhetoric. This process
eventually culminated, for a group of theologians, in the formation of Minjung Theology.

Despite their efforts, Christians were not in the end the direct agents responsible
for the fall of Park’s regime. Ironically, the catalyst came from within his own
government. On October 26, 1979, Kim Chaegyu (director of the KCIA) shot and killed
Park Chung-hee, ending his eighteen-year reign. Following the assassination, hopes for a
true democratic polity were once again shattered as General Chun Doo-hwan forcibly
assumed control of the government. In the political period under Chun, Christians
maintained their active role as the voice for the minjung and continued to suffer
persecution for their praxis.
Notes

1. In the most general sense, we can roughly define two main positions amongst the Korean Christian leadership. A majority of the Christian leadership seems to have accepted, and even supported, the political status quo while a minority became a conspicuous force in opposing Park’s Yushin regime.

2. Although not discussed in this chapter, the contribution by the Korean Catholic clergy cannot be overstated. For an in depth study of the Catholic church during this time, see Nyong Kim, “Politics of Religion in South Korea 1974-89: Catholic Church’s Opposition to Authoritarian State.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1993. Also, while the heart of the Christian Minjung movement is the countless number of marginalized people living and struggling in the Yushin era, this chapter focuses attention on the organizational and discursive manifestation of the movement.


6. Ibid., 51.


11. Quoted in Ibid., 53.

12. The SMOs in this sample were the most prevalent in the archival sources.

13. These included Korean Student Christian Movement, Korean Student Christian Council, and the youth group of the Korean YMCA.


15. Ibid., 132-140.


17. Ibid., 170.


20. Ibid., 25.


24. Hermeneutical theory has been an important field of study for biblical scholars since the former’s inception. See for example, Gayle L.Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).


27. It is true that sweeping generalizations of this sort will necessarily overlook the positive experiences of some segments of the Korean economy. But still, what is maybe more important than the “objective truth” of the labor conditions, is the fact that UIM members understood their own experiences in Park Chung-hee’s economic program as fundamentally exploitive in nature.


32. UCLA Archival Collection on Democracy and Unification in Korea, Box 09-1, folder 09-1-05.

33. Ibid., folder 09-1-06.


35. Ibid., Volume 1, 295.

36. Ibid., Volume 3, 1039.

37. Ibid.


40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., Box 09-1, folder 09-1-03.

43. The government at this time started to put forth the notion of a “Korean-style democracy”. For example in a press conference (July 19, 79), assembly man T’ae Wansôn said that the threat to collective existence of Korea “makes the meaning of freedom here different from that existing in the Western Democracies . . .” Quoted in UCLA Archive, Box 09-1, folder 09-1-06.

44. In the mission statement of the Korean Christian Action Organization, a Christian based social movement organization.


47. Although outside the scope of this chapter, I briefly mention here the fact that during pre-war Korea, many Christians in the northern regions were heavily persecuted by Korean communist groups. See for example, Charles Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004.

48. UCLA Archive, Box 09-1, folders 09-1-04, 09-1-06.

49. Koo, Ibid., 83.

50. UCLA Archive, Box 09-1, folder 09-1-05.

51. Ibid., Box 09-1, folder 09-1-06.

52. Ibid.


54. It is helpful to note the ambiguous nature of this term in Gramsci’s writings. As the editors note (Ibid., xiv), “hegemony” has two usages and while it is defined in opposition to “domination,” highlighting the subjective or interpretative qualities to power relations, it is also used to denote relationships where groups have been dominated in both the material and cultural spheres leading to the total Hegemonic control over a society.

55. Eckert et al. Ibid., 341.