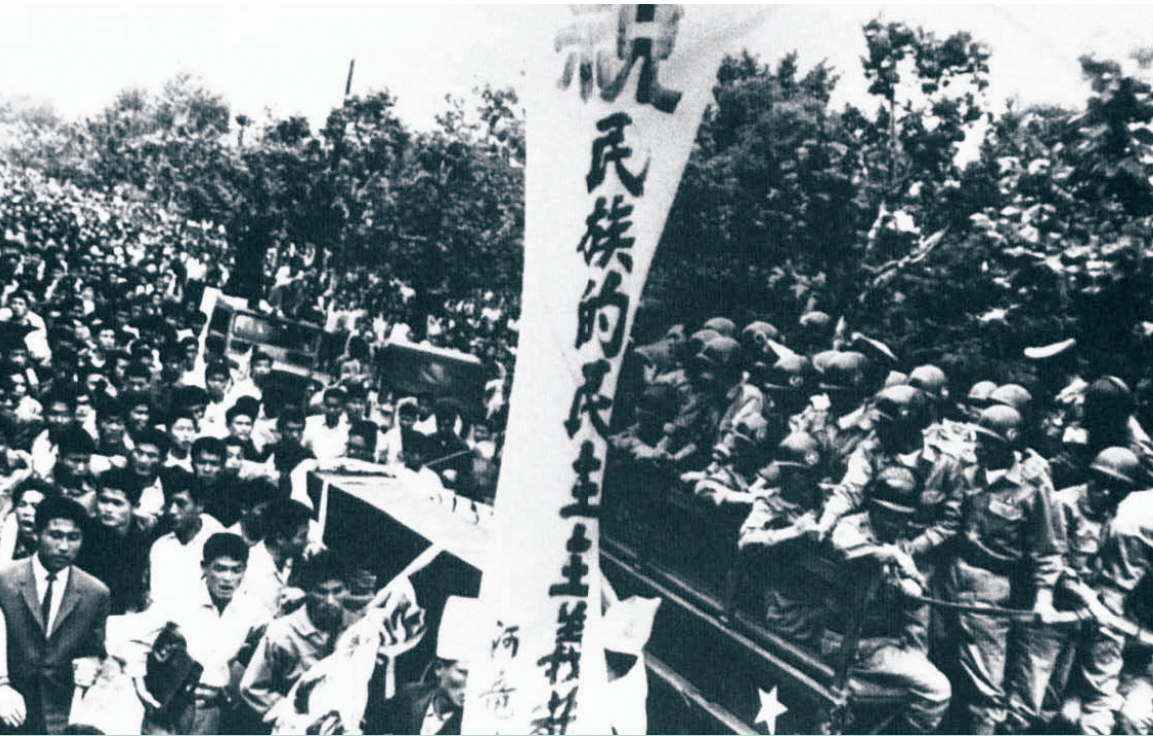


Toward Democracy

South Korean Culture and Society, 1945–1980



Edited by Hyunjoo Kim,
Yerim Kim, Boduerae Kwon,
Hyeryoung Lee, Theodore Jun Yoo

KOREA RESEARCH MONOGRAPH 38

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Hyunjoo Kim, Yerim Kim, Boduerae Kwon, Hyeryoung Lee,
and Theodore Jun Yoo

Preface

THEODORE JUN YOO

Toward Democracy: South Korean Culture and Society, 1945–1980 brings together essays by fourteen established and emerging South Korean scholars in the humanities and social sciences who work across methodologies, specializations, and disciplines. Using approaches from sociology, political science, history, and literary and cultural studies, the authors offer innovative and nuanced analyses of a wide range of topics—from refugee displacement to street politics, from anti-communism and democracy to militarization—and discuss the links between cultural productions and their sociohistorical contexts. *Toward Democracy* builds on broad changes over the past two decades in the arts and humanities in South Korea, where scholars have been challenging traditional approaches and producing cutting-edge scholarship. The translated essays in this volume will enable wider distribution of such highly teachable works, written from multiple perspectives, that address the most provocative questions and issues animating Korean society today. Taken as a whole, the volume allows scholars, students, and general readers to grapple with key historical periods and movements as well as gain new perspectives and positions thanks to approaches developed by leading local scholars.

Producing a collection of translated works of this caliber required a number of well-balanced editorial decisions. Because the volume was compiled with English-speaking audiences in mind, language and cultural barriers needed to be addressed to make it possible for readers who are not familiar with academic writing in Korean to comprehend and appreciate each work. In preparing this volume, distinguished editorial board members from South Korea and North America were actively involved in a series of workshops with the authors, identifying skilled translators for the essays based on their expertise, engaging a professional copyeditor, and securing permission to publish the works in English. To help readers associate the texts with historical, political, technological, and cultural developments, a detailed chronological chart is included.

INTRODUCTION

What Is South Korea?

JOHN LIE

The semantic resonance of “South Korea”—“Republic of Korea,” to use its official English-language name—in Korean diverges from that in English. In English, “South Korea” implies the existence of another Korea: North Korea, or the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In Korean, South Korea is “Han’guk”: the literal translation of which is “Country of Han.”¹ For South Koreans to speak of “Han’guk” often means that they are speaking of Korea in toto, eliding North Korea altogether. Symptomatically, North Korea was commonly referred to in the South in the post-Korean War period as “Baegoe,” or “Northern Block”: something of a no-man’s land.

In contrast, North Koreans usually refer to South Korea as Nam Chosŏn, or Southern Chosŏn, and in so doing acknowledge the existence of the South, however reviled. The official name of North Korea is “Chosŏn minju konghwaguk” (literally, Korea People Republic). Chosŏn is the name of the dynasty that ruled the Korean peninsula from the late fourteenth century to the late nineteenth century. In its Japanese pronunciation, Chōsen referred to the Japanese colony of the Korean peninsula. Chosŏn has a venerable provenance. The first appearance of Korea as Chaoxian (the same Chinese characters as Chosŏn and Chōsen) is in the first “history” in Chinese, Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (ca. 94 BCE). That is, Chosŏn would have been the obvious choice of national nomenclature for South Korea. Indeed, Yu Chin-o’s early draft of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea employed “Chosŏn.”² Why eschew it and other plausible names, such as Koryŏ, the name of the dynasty before that of Chosŏn, and the source of the English name “Korea”?

¹ The official nomenclature in Korean is “Taehan min’guk,” and the closest English words for the Chinese characters are “Great Han People Country.”

² Taehan min’guk yŏksa pangmulgwan, ed., *Kŭnhyŏndaesa chuyo yongŏ Yŏngmun p’yogi p’yŏjunhwa yŏn’gu* (Seoul: Saenggak shwimp’yo, 2015).

ONE

The State as Betrayal and People as Refugees

The Politics of Return

YERIM KIM

The State, People, and Refugees

Liberation in August 1945 saw a mass of overseas Koreans, once forcibly uprooted and displaced, eagerly returning to their native homeland. Over the next three years, more than 1,543,633 returnees and 622,044 North Korean defectors flooded into South Korea. This paper focuses on these returnees—their act of return, their identities upon return, and their “right to belong”—to investigate the often fraught and contentious relations between the state (*kukka*) and the people (*inmin*). Examining how these two agents contended and collided with each other not only allows us to see the fissures in the workings of the state but also avails a more diachronic and extensive problematization of the violence in modern Korea’s state-building process and the political subjectification of its members. The post-Liberation period was rife with tension as the so-called highest ideal—conceptualized in the nation-state (*minjok kukka*), ethnic-nation (*minjok*), and national citizens (*kungmin*)—and the “lowest reality”—exemplified by the military-governed state (*kunjöng kukka*), divided nation (*pundan minjok*), and refugee (*nanmin*)—commingled, collided, and fractured one another. I contend that the returnees embodied the fall from the former to the latter, and, through the act of return, revealed all that lay between these two poles.

The examination of the concrete features and political meaning of the repatriation is intended more to investigate the real consciousness and deeper desires of the “people on the move” at the time than to positively

TWO

Street Politics and the Production of Representations

CHEON JUNGHWAN

I. Introduction

1. *The Subject and Period of Discussion*

Sing, the breathing streets, shining with joy.
The gentle breeze whispers, with eyes aflame.
Sing sing sing sing, love of the streets.
Let's go, whistling, youth of tomorrow.

For many years, the song “Age of Passion” (“Kamgyöksidae,” composed by Pak Sich’un with lyrics by Kang Sarang) has been sung with great affection and frequency as a symbol of Liberation. This is because images like “the breathing streets, shining with joy,” the “youth of tomorrow,” and “love of the streets” have been able to represent Liberation and stand in for its pathos. Worthy of particular attention in this song is the symbol of the “streets” in its metonymic relationship with “joy,” “breathing,” and “love.” The Liberation-era streets were spaces in which the thirty-six years of Japanese colonial rule had been overturned in one single stroke, and as a symbol the streets display the spatiality in which the politics of “August 15” (Liberation Day) were concentrated. In the “shining,” “breathing streets,” the cultural politics of the Japanese Empire were inverted in a single stroke, and Koreans—worn down by the fanatical mobilization of empire and the difficulties of life during wartime—became “human,” “the working class,” and “citizens” again.

For this reason, “Age of Passion” was by no means the only song about the streets of August 15. Im Hwa, Yi Yongak, and O Changhwan all wrote poems “in the streets.”¹ This, as we see in the following poems, was

¹ For example, see Yi Yongak’s “Köriesö” (In the streets) and O Changhwan’s “8-wöl 15-il üi norae” (Song of August 15).

THREE

Days and Nights of Taking up Arms

Guns, Young Men, and Liberation

HYERYOUNG LEE

The Figure of the Student Soldier as a Means of Self-Investigation

The post-Liberation works “Haebangjönhu” (Before and After Liberation, 1946) and “Minjok üi choein” (Traitor to the people, 1949) are well known for their treatment of the question of pro-Japanese collaboration, but an intriguing element common to these works has eluded scholarly attention. In both stories, the protagonists, who are thinly veiled versions of the authors, are visited by despairing young men who are heartbroken for having been conscripted as student soldiers. In Yi T’aejun’s “Before and After Liberation,” protagonist Hyön claims “to have met with a young man who was on the verge of a nervous breakdown within days of his being called by general enlistment or the special student-soldier volunteer program, because not only was he facing the prospect of unexpected death, but he may have to kill, of all people, a Chinese, British or American, or Soviet ally—the very people who were the sole source of hope for [their] nation.” “One young man,” Hyön claims, “sent a suicide letter just a week after seeing him.”¹ In “Traitor to the People,” the narrator “I,” who is giving pro-Japanese lectures, is visited by young men who ask him, “Most of us here today will be dragged to the frontlines as student soldiers or as reinforcements. Must we go and die out there like dogs?”² Yi Kwangsu’s and Ch’oe Namsön’s activities of urging students to enlist were so well known as to have deserved special commentary by Yi and Ch’oe themselves after Liberation.

¹ Yi T’aejun, “Haebangjönhu” [Before and After Liberation], *Munhak* (June 1946): 5.

² Ch’ae Man-sik, “Minjok üi choein” [Traitor to the people], *Paengmin* (January 1949): 50–51.

FOUR

The State as God

North and South Korean Occupation and Mobilization Policies During the Korean War

KIM DONG-CHOON

Introduction

By June 28, 1950, only three days after the outbreak of the Korean War, the North Korean People's Army had occupied Seoul. The North Korean Army and its governmental organization, the National People's Congress, controlled Seoul for three months, until September 28, 1950. The three-month occupation of Seoul was a system of wartime socialist revolution. But by January 3, 1951, the Syngman Rhee regime had restored the system that had been in place before the war and began to punish the people who had cooperated with the People's Army during those three months. For three months at most, and for as little as one month, or even a week, all the people of the entire geographic area of South Korea, excluding one small area in the southeast, had experienced North Korea's "people's democracy." And then they had no choice but to adjust back to the returning South Korean regime.

This short period was a rare circumstance in which the state's political system and its driving subject intersected with a completely transformative revolution, punishment system, and wartime mobilization. In this space, combat and politics, administration, violence, law, and mobilization in the name of revolution or war were so intertwined as to be impossible to separate. The entire peninsula became a battlefield, and in this state of civil war, during which every village became a space of conflict and violence, the distinction between soldiers and civilians turned ambiguous, and the distinction between executions and massacres became meaningless. Seen more broadly, the violence and conflict between unarmed civilians were also a part of the engagement in war. Every civilian was

Morals and Liberal Democracy After the Korean War

LEE BONG-BEOM

Madame Freedom and Postwar Customs

The morals, trends, and customs of a particular era are significant because they best preserve the particularities of that period and tell us about its overarching principles.¹ This chapter is aimed at reformulating, mainly in the context of morals and customs, the dynamic sociocultural changes in Korean society that stood in contrast to the political stagnancy and economic backwardness that prevailed after the Korean War. The rise in prostitution following the Korean War, for example, can be viewed as a product of sociopolitical issues such as the impoverishment of the agricultural sector, the overall failure of the national economy, rising unemployment, and an increase in the population.² It also is the case, however, that changing sexual morality was an aspect of an intrinsic feature of postwar society: the waning of the power of traditional norms.

Few texts illustrate crucial features of postwar sociocultural trends better than Chŏng Pisŏk's *Madame Freedom* (*Chayu puin*),³ a novel serialized in 215 installments in *Seoul shinmun*, from January 1 to August 6, 1954.

¹ Edward Fuchs, *P'ungsok ūi yŏksa* [The history of morals], vol. 1, trans. Yi Kiung and Park Chongman (Seoul: Kkach'i, 1988), 1; originally published as *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1909).

² "Maeŭmnyŏ ūi saengjonkwŏn" [Prostitutes' right to life], *Tonga ilbo*, December 12, 1955.

³ *Madame Freedom* was serialized in 215 installments in *Seoul shinmun* from January 1 to August 6, 1954, and published as a book, selling more than 100,000 copies after Liberation. It drew attention by addressing the social phenomena involving women's rise in economic status and their vanity and decadence in the 1950s. A Seoul National University professor claimed that it humiliated college professors, and women's groups charged the novel with insults against women. The author, Chŏng Pisŏk, was tortured at the Counter Intelligence Corps after being suspected of intentionally describing South Korean society as decadent and obscene and under the direction of North Korea.

Traveling in Asia

The (Im)possibility of Intraregional Traffic

CHANG SE-JIN

Travel Writing and the Asian Imaginary, Past and Present

I looked on as they stood in front of us, providing training on the proper rules and procedures for wearing a parachute. . . . They managed to fit one on my body somehow with the help of others who had already donned their gear, but, on the body of an East Asian woman, these objects that were made for American soldiers who were much bigger and taller gave the impression of a young child in her grandfather's topcoat. I didn't wear so much as get covered by it, and I must have looked hilarious, making me think about how ridiculous it was to strap something as heavy as a fully loaded A-frame carrier to one's body and climb aboard an airplane. What was even worse was that, on the advice of several friends, I was wearing Korean-style clothing [*hanbok*], and despite my overcoat the sight of my black skirt hanging down below the parachute strapped to my body was both funny and sad.

—Ko Hwanggyöng, *Travels to India*

Early one morning in March 1947, Ko Hwanggyöng, the female director of the Department of Health and Human Services for the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), embarked on a long journey to New Delhi, India, via Tokyo, where the Asian Relations Conference was to be held.¹ The plane Ko boarded that day was a Boeing B-54, a US military bomber. There were two others on that plane to New Delhi besides herself, both clad in that peculiar combination of *hanbok* and parachute, who were also participating in the conference. These were Paek Nakchun, then president of Yönhüi University, and Ha Kyöngdök,

¹ Ko Hwanggyöng, *Indo kihaeng* [Travels in India] (Seoul: Üryu munhwasa, 1949), 2–3.

SEVEN

The Intellectual Landscape of 1964

*Anti-communism, Nationalism, Democracy,
Liberalism, and Developmentalism*

KIM KUN WOO

The Significance of 1964

In the postwar South Korea of the 1950s, anti-communism took root as an absolute creed. Open resistance against anti-communism was nearly impossible, and even anti-state activities and oppositional discourses were possible only if they claimed to support the state's anti-communist policy. While the appearance of such diverse unification theories as neutral unification and "provisional North-South federation" in the aftermath of the April Uprising in 1960 is evidence that anti-communism did not necessarily saturate South Korean society at the time, it nonetheless was the case that, by the 1960s, anti-communism operated as the fiercest disciplinary mechanism in South Korean society and, as such, became deeply internalized by the Korean people.¹ Self-censorship governed all speech, writings, and activities. The Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA),² together with the National Security Law and the "Anti-Communist Law" enacted in 1961, became the solid bedrock of the Park Chung-hee regime.

In a nation where anti-communism was the "foremost national policy" ("Revolutionary Pledge," clause 1), the act of labeling something or some-

¹ As the readjustment of the Cold War system in the Korean peninsula after the Korean War emerged as a crucial agenda in the Geneva Conference in 1954, there arose discussions on the measures to neutralize the Korean peninsula, as well as the neutralization of Austria. Besides, various proposals for neutral unification formulas were made in the United States and South Korea, thus activating discussions on national unification after the April Revolution in 1960.

² Established as an investigative intelligence agency under the wing of the military junta, the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, the Korean Central Intelligence Agency functioned as an apparatus of the tyrannical regime of Park Chung-hee. It was reorganized later as the National Intelligence Agency under the Chun Doo-hwan government in 1980.

EIGHT

The April Revolution and the May Coup

The Topos of Liberty and Bread

BODUERAEE KWON

April 19, 1960: From Poetry to Prose

A series of events took place in the spring of 1960 that culminated in the overthrow of the autocratic regime of South Korea's president, Syngman Rhee. Different names have been given to these events at different historical moments. Contemporary media coverage in April 1960 referred to the occasion variously as a "student revolution," a "civil revolution," a "civil democratic revolution," and the "4.26 revolution." The post-Rhee interim government led by Hō Chōng labeled the incident the "April Revolution." For thirty-some years following the coup d'état of May 16, 1961, in which General Park Chung-hee took power, it was known as an "uprising." And over the past ten years, it has come to be called the "4.19 Revolution," or often simply "4.19."¹

Many historical events are shrouded by an aura of "poetic" purity, but this is especially true for 4.19 with its signal characteristics: the fraudulent elections on March 15 that sparked it all; the tragically mutilated body of Kim Chuyōl in Masan Harbor; university students rising in nationwide protest; and the 1950s era of war/poverty/chaos and corruption/decay overcome through the march of "young lions" and the crimson blood they shed in the process.

Those attempting historical and ideological assessments have found it challenging to break away from this poetic rendition. Nonetheless, two dominant views have emerged and still reign, the view that the pursuit of

¹ In this chapter, I intentionally use the phrase "4.19" (*sailgu*), thinking of this designation as a placeholder more than anything else. The appellation 4.19 risks impoverishing the revolutionary quality of the events of 1960. The term 4.19 also does little to overcome the bias toward Seoul and university students that exists in the discourse on the events of that time.

NINE

The April Uprising of the “Youth Generation” and the Rituals of Resistance

KIM MIRAN

In the evolving body of research on the character of the April Uprising and its diverse participants, it is increasingly clear that the “youth generation,”¹ the young people praised in many records as the heroes of the uprising, refers in particular to university students. Standing at the forefront of the protests, these students considered themselves the leaders of the uprising and representatives of the masses, and they received widespread support from the older generation. The college student group instantly emerged as leaders of the revolution, as they were the only group that could turn itself into a political force, though they joined the revolution belatedly. This youth generation called for liberal democracy, condemned fraudulent elections, and demanded the resignation of President Syngman Rhee. In the view of most scholars, these protests created a historical momentum that invigorated liberal democracy in Korea. There is little research, however, on how those university students understood the meaning of their political action. There also has been little examination of how liberal democracy was expressed by verbal and nonverbal methods—such as slogans, songs, marches, and protests—to ritualize resistance. My inquiry seeks to carefully examine how the political consciousness of these university students underwent changes in the course of interactions with the discourses of the time, how their orientation toward liberal democracy was expressed and reinforced in the course of the uprising, and the rituals of resistance they adopted during the uprising. Such rituals often serve to

¹ Youth at that time was associated with the concept of generation, above all. In the discourses on generation, youths were represented as a new generation that broke with the past or as an older generation and chiefly referred to college students.

TEN

A Spatial Sociology of the April 19 Uprising and May 16 Coup

KIM BAEK YUNG

Introduction

Repeated collective actions characterize the history of Korean democracy. Just a selection of significant incidents yields the following list: the April Revolution (hereafter called the April 19 Uprising) in 1960, the June 3 Protest in 1964, the “Seoul Spring” in 1980, the June Uprising in 1987, the May Struggle in 1991, and, most recently, the candlelight vigils of 2008.¹ Such collective eruptions of bodily energy in the central urban districts—represented by assemblies in the squares and protest marches in the streets—dramatically punctuate the main historical scenes of Korea’s “compressed democratization.”² Noticeable in the previous list of exercises of “square politics,” however, is an absence of collective actions that begins in the mid-1960s and continues until the late 1970s. While numerous studies have offered explanations for this absence, the present chapter will focus on a particular aspect, the “spatial politics of the square,” to analyze the success of the April 19 Uprising and its diminished aftermath.

¹ The “candlelight vigil” was a new peaceful mode of demonstration for the purpose of mourning or protest, designed to bypass the ban on nighttime demonstration under the law on assembly and demonstration. The first candlelight protest in Korea was the one held to oppose the policy to introduce paid online service in 1992. It became a major mode of nighttime rally, starting with the one to mourn for the girl students killed by a US armored vehicle in 2002 and the one to protest the impeachment of President Roh Moo-hyun in 2004. The largest candlelight rally was held in 2008 to denounce the import of US beef. In 2011, college students staged a candlelight protest against the call to reduce university tuition fees.

² “Compressed democratization” is a term coined by the author to refer to the rapid pace of democratization, which accompanied the “compressed industrialization” in South Korea in the latter half of the twentieth century.

ELEVEN

Those Deprived in 1971

The Housing Protests

KIM WON

Introduction

The Kwangju Complex Uprising (or “August 10 Incident”), which occurred in Kwangju, Kyönggi Province, in 1971, was the first uprising of the urban poor to occur in Korea’s period of rapid economic development. Labeled merely a “rampage” or “mayhem” by the press at the time, it subsequently has been regarded in the realms of both Korean modern history and the history of the democratic movement in Korea as an accidental or one-time occurrence or an inevitable “sociostructural consequence” of the gap between rich and poor that had widened in the process of export-driven industrialization. In contrast to the usual focus of studies of Korea’s democratic movements—the intellectual elite, students, activists, politicians, and the labor unions—resistance movements by nonorganizations or nonorganized citizens in Park Chung-hee’s developmental dictatorship period have remained unexplored territories.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the Kwangju Complex Uprising as an urban uprising organized by impoverished and lower-class citizens in response to policies of the developmental dictatorship. By addressing the following two key questions, this study further seeks to explore the historical meaning of the incident. First, what were the perspectives of the various actors in the August 10 Incident on the Kwangju Grand Complex as a social space, before and after the incident? Second, in what ways was the incident different from other democratic movements that took place in the same period, such as student or *minjung* (people’s) movements?

Hostess Movies and the Hypernationalization Project of the Mobilization Regime

YOO SUN YOUNG

Hypernationalization Projects, the Politics of Sentiment, and Movies

Many authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships have resorted to nationalism to elicit sentimental and emotional consensus as a means to suppress and control the diverse and disparate demands of their peoples. "Hypernationalism," as Mabel Berezin explains in defining the fascist regime of Italy, is an aggressive mobilization of nationalism to elicit a sense of collectivism and communitarianism that contradicts the features of liberalism that tend to alienate individuals from society in the modern era.¹ Using the politics of sentiment, which has persuasive appeal and arouses pleasure, excitement, and admiration, the hypernationalization project stirs the masses to emotionally attach to the anti-democratic and anti-liberal regime. In the arena of mass culture, the resulting fascist aesthetics hyperstylized the collective will and established an entertainment industry of popular fare: tunes, concerts, fashion, glossy commercials, household appliances, and films.²

Among these, film was central to fascist cultural policies and played a decisive role in modeling life under state socialism.³ Italian fascist movies

¹ Mabel Berezin, "Political Belonging: Emotion, Nation, and Identity in Fascist Italy," in George Steinmetz, ed., *State/Culture: State-Formation After the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 355–377.

² Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1996] 2002), 1–22.

³ David Welch, "Hitler's History Films," *History Today* 52, no. 12 (2002): 20–25; Linda Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusion of Wholeness in Nazi Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 17–19; and Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, *Nazi Cinema as Enchantment: The Politics of Entertainment in the Third Reich* (New York: Camden House, 2004), 3–9.

The Boom in Nonelite Writings and the Expansion of the Literary Field

KIM SUNGHWAN

In the 1970s, as Korea's rapid state-sponsored industrialization program under Park Chung-hee intensified, a new form of popular literature emerged. This "journalistic writing" for popular media, such as magazines, was not distinct from literature in the minds of many readers.¹ Magazines carried news articles and novels without identifying their genres, so both were read and accepted as stories that reorganized reality to expand the scope of readers' experience. Journalistic writing, however, was a blend of two modes: in addition to delivering information, it provided a social perspective combined with literary imagination.²

The magazine *Sindonga* (New East Asia) led the way in experimenting with this new style of writing to construct a new reality.³ This began with the nonfiction contest held by the magazine in 1964. The contest, designed to publicize the reissue of the magazine, helped to secure new

¹ "Journalistic writing" is a term that refers to a style of writing that is based on facts and has a deep narrative, different from fictional writing and news articles. "Journalistic literature" is used synonymously with "journalistic writing." For a general discussion of the term, see Shelly Fisher Fishkin, *From Fact to Fiction: Journalism and Imaginative Writing in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Doug Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700–2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

² Fishkin, *From Fact to Fiction*, 8–9.

³ As a general interest magazine, first published in 1931 by *Sindonga* under the wing of the *Tonga ilbo* newspaper, it sought to educate Koreans about democracy and promote Korean culture. Under the rightist Song Chinu, the journal enjoyed wide popularity but was forced to fold due to the "Japanese flag erasure incident" in September 1936. While *Tonga ilbo* was reissued right after national liberation, the magazine did not appear again until September 1964, drawing attention by publishing many memoirs through its nonfiction contests. See also Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel*, 4.

Counter-Violence and Anti-Violence

The May 18 Armed Struggle and Social Movements of the 1980s

KIM JUNG HAN

The social movements of the 1980s began in 1980 with the May 18 Democratic Uprising in Kwangju. The uprising epitomized what a social movement should be: it overcame the limitations of the movements of the 1970s and served as a source of inspiration for all those with a “dream of revolution” in the subsequent decade. Early on the morning of May 27, in the face of a raid by martial law forces on the provincial government building in Kwangju City, the uprising ended. Yun Sangwŏn, who died that day,¹ emphasized the historical meaning of the last fight against the government’s forces in his speech to the remaining protesters:

All of you, we have to fight against them until the end. If we retreat and evacuate this provincial government building, our struggle thus far would have been for nothing, and that would be a sin against history and those who died before us. Let us keep fighting without fear of death. Even if their bullets kill us, it would be the only way for us to live eternally. For democracy in this country, we have to unite and fight until the end. We all should leave a proud record of a struggle against injustice. Morning comes after dark.²

Yun Sangwŏn proved to be right in his assertion that “death is the way to eternal life,” as the Kwangju Uprising was reenacted as the “May Movement” every year and influenced the pattern and method of the social movements of the 1980s. In particular, the first appearance of armed

¹ Yun was the spokesman of the Kwangju Citizens’ Army who died on May 27, 1980, the last day of the Kwangju Uprising.

² Pak Ho-jae and Im Nak-p’yŏng, *Yun Sangwŏn p’yŏngjŏn* [A critical biography of Yun Sangwŏn] (Seoul: Pulbit, 2007), 406–407.

Afterword

BRUCE CUMINGS

Anyone who wants to know the benefits of freedom and democracy can learn them from this book. The young authors included here work in an era radically different from the years of dictatorship (1948–1987), when most of them would have gone to jail and faced torture for what they write in this volume. They are the beneficiaries of Koreans' long struggle for democratization, and the high quality of their work is a precious fruit of that decades-long movement.

Yerim Kim is gracious enough to quote from my first book in her essay; I thought from the beginning that the huge Korean diaspora—more than three million Koreans in Japan and Manchuria (by stark comparison, Taiwanese in Japan totaled 35,000 in 1945)—would have a dramatic effect on post-Liberation Korea, but I think that effect was felt most deeply in towns and villages rather than in cities. For here, Koreans who were mobilized or dragooned into one Japanese outfit or another—the army, mining, steelworks, “comfort women”—could hope to settle accounts with those people (often Koreans) who sent them packing in the Japanese interest. The more this happened, the more radical the local politics was likely to become. This phenomenon might be thought of as a contrast to Kim's excellent depiction of *lumpen* refugees in Seoul.

Cheon Junghwan brings back another critical aspect of the period just after Liberation, that is, the ecstatic sense of freedom and the universally assumed bright future laying before the country and its people. In the first few weeks, particularly in the South, where the Americans did not arrive until three weeks after the Japanese surrender, these were heady days when all things seemed possible. As Dr. Cheon says, there was a “politics of the street” and a “democracy of the street” unprecedented in Korean history. That the Americans came in and supported the political organizations that were the outcome of all this ferment, the people's committees—for example, in the Southwest—and simultaneously began suppressing the committees in the Southeast, leading to the Autumn Harvest Rebellion in October 1946: here the first foundations of civil war were laid.

Chronology

(National Independence to 1980s)

Post-Independence Era

Aug. 15, 1945

National Independence

Upon Japan's surrender in World War II, Korea gained independence from Japanese colonial rule. At the war's end Soviet forces occupied the northeast of Korea. The Soviet Union agreed to a US proposal—designed to check Soviet influence over the peninsula—to divide the occupation along the 38th parallel. In spite of the contributions to national independence by numerous national liberation fighters and their organizations at home and abroad, Korean sovereignty was not internationally recognized. Therefore, many decisions on the establishment of new governance on the Korean peninsula were made by the United States, Soviet Union, and China.

Aug. 15–Sep. 6, 1945

Activities of CPKI and Establishment of Korean People's Republic

Immediately after Independence, Lyuh Woon-hyung (Yŏ Un-hyŏng) organized the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence, which succeeded the Korean Restoration Brotherhood (Kŏn'guk tongmaeng), established in 1944 at the Sam-gwang Oriental Medical Clinic in Seoul. Joined initially by representatives of both the political left and right, it later became predominantly leftist. In a bid to establish a Korean state before the arrival of the US Military Government, the committee proclaimed the founding of the Korean People's Republic (Chosŏn inmin konghwaguk). However, it was not recognized by the US Military Government and was dissolved.

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