

THE 2008 ELECTION

Modern Korean Society

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Candlelight Vigils (in Kang's book)

- **Over deaths of Misŏni and Hyosuni**
 - Mass vigil held in Kwanghwamun (and other places) from November 30, 2002 through December 14th, and every weekend through January 2003
- Against the impeachment of Roh Moo-Hyun
 - March 2004 in Seoul and other cities and led to Uri Party victory In the April National Assembly Elections
- 2006 demonstrators in support of stem cell researcher Hwang Woo-suk
 - Fabricated research claiming to have produced human embryonic stem cells through cloning
- **Against the importation of US Beef**
 - April 2008 President Myung-bak Lee, in an agreement with President George W. Bush, lifted the ban on the importation of US beef imposed in 2003 when a case of Mad Cow Disease was discovered in the US
 - Candlelight vigils from May through August 2008

Kang's research methods (pp 17-20)

- Internet bulletin boards
 - 2002 고 신희순 심미선양 추모 모임 (Commemorative Group for the Late Miss Sin Hyosun and Sim Misŏn)
 - 2008 촛불 소녀의 코리아 (Candle Girls' Korea)
- Web sites associated with activist organizations
- In person interviews with 60 young Koreans between 18 and 27
 - Interviews done in 2006, 2011, and 2012
 - Subjects recruited through bulletin boards and university campuses
 - Semi-structured interviews (ask people a few questions to get them started and then let them talk)
- What's left out?
 - Anti-American activists, members of labor unions, progressive college students, concerned mothers, and casual visitors

Rapid Disenchantment with Roh MuHyun after his election in December 2002

- By time of his inauguration on February 25, 2003 he was being criticized for asking people to moderate their anti-Americanism
 - Traditional visits to US bases after his inauguration made him seem coopted by the establishment
- Roh lost support from both left and right
 - Right criticized social spending as contravening free market principles
 - Left thought social spending was inadequate, and adamantly opposed sending troops to Iraq
 - May 2003—450 military medics
 - April 2004—1400 combat marines
 - South Korean conservatives see this kind of participation as repayment for US military support against North Korea while left-wingers see it as complicity with American imperialism

Vigils as New Repertoire for Social Action

- (based on 2006 interviews)
- Repertoire characteristics
 - Online mobilization
 - Casual participation not based on previous ideological commitment
 - Peaceful, festive crowds
 - Effect of internet architecture, captivation, and context
- Festive Vigils
 - People remembered what they did and how they felt
 - Passion a true sense of justice
 - “connected without sharing a collective identity” p87
 - Some recalled the solidarity of the World Cup finals
 - Some connected the vigils to *kükki hullyõn*—high school training camps that ended with a candlelight vigil in which kids remembered their parents

Slow Decomposition of Authoritarian Repertoire

- Previous framework for some participants
 - Devoted activism
 - Physical and social cost for participants
 - Radical political claims
- Army vets
 - Thought vigils might be infiltrated by North Korean spies (kanch'öp)
 - Had been indoctrinated in military
 - Some were KATUSAs with good English and close work with Americans
 - These interpreted demands for revising SOFA, etc. as “anti-American”
- Others saw the movement as superficial because it didn't demand enough sacrifice

Remnants of Oppositional Movement

- PKC (Pan-Korean Community)
 - 범민족 Pan-Korea is a term that encompasses both North and South Korea
 - Protest songs, shouting slogans, letters to Misŏni and Hyosuni, *salp'uri* (exorcism dance) to assuage their souls
 - Understood protests in terms of the minjok-minju undong
 - Local people should be the leaders (chuin)
 - US presence prevents unification
 - Links present vigils to long line of protest
 - Tend to support confederation unification (understood by the right as North Korea's policy—i.e. Kim Il Sung's 1972 proposal for Federal Republic of Koryŏ—two separate leaderships represent single country in the UN)

Yi Aeju Dancing Salp'uri in 2012 (Minjung dance/Minjung art)



Postauthoritarian Movement

- Candlelight protests remembered as expressing unarticulated feelings, but not along ideological lines
- Not a new generation of activists
- Candlelight protests were a well-established repertory for expressing many things
- Used to express opposition to Rho Muhyun's impeachment in 2004

The 2008 Mad Cow Candlelight Festivals

- April 2008 dissatisfaction with President Myungbak Lee (elected in 2007, inaugurated 2008)
 - Pan-Korean Grand Canal, privatizing medical insurance, increasing competition in education, introduction of immersion English language education, and resumption of beef imports
- Beef imports became the *metonym* for all this in 2008
 - (just as Rho Muhyun in 2002 had become the metonym for dissatisfaction with Korea's lack of standing in the world and subordination to the US as illustrated in Hyosuni and Misŏni)
 - Internet surged with images of victims of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mostly from Britain 1984-2009)
 - Backstory
 - In 2003 one BSE infected cow was detected in the US (Washington State, but calf had been imported from Canada). There have been 4 deaths from BSE in the US, but all are thought to have gotten BSE outside USA.
 - US beef imports were banned in 2003, but Myungbak Lee negotiated with the US a lift of the ban in 2008

Lee Myungbak

- Came up through Hyundai, and mayor of Seoul 2002-2006
 - Got high marks for daylighting Ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn and improving transportation
- Platform in 2007 Election
 - ROK would become world's 7th largest economy (from 15th) with \$40,000 annual income (has moved up to 12th by 2020, but not 7th)
 - Won with 46% of the vote with 62% participation (28.5% of possible votes)
 - One factor in election was South Korean disillusion with “peace and reconciliation policy” with North Korea after North Korean nuclear tests

Cheonggyecheon old and new



Opposition to Lee Myungbak

- Grand Canal Project criticized as environmentally destructive
- Privatization of public corporations and medical insurance were criticized as outsourcing that would hurt the lower classes
- Deregulation of “special purpose” high schools
 - ‘special purpose” high schools are elite schools with limited admissions for arts and music, athletics, foreign language, and the sciences
- Liberalization of university admissions
 - Universities allowed to set up admissions offices where they make their own exams, rather than conform to national standards
- Lee—this expands choice and opportunity
- Opponents—this increases exam competition and favors the rich who can afford private tutoring and schools

Fear of Mad Cow Disease

- Politics of US beef imports
 - Would hurt relatively small-scale Korean beef farmers, while helping wealthy industrial conglomerates
 - Wealthy could still afford Korean beef, but poor, students, military, and incarcerated would be stuck with 'unhealthy' American beef
 - [N.B. no consideration of benefits of cheaper beef for the poor]
- Mad Cow became metonym for discontent with Lee Myungbak's policies
 - Icon of the mad cow used for visual parodies criticizing Lee
 - Issues collapsed around mad cow—competition in schools, vulnerability to disease, government indifference to ordinary people's safety
 - Choice in consumption did not seem real to them

Slogans Held up by Young Girls p111

- 미친 소 너나 먹어 You and I eat crazy cow
- 살려고 나왔다 I came out because I want to live
- 살려면 나서자 Let's come out if we want to live
- 아이들이 무슨 죄냐 What crime have children (committed)
- 부끄럽게 살지 말자 Let's not live shamefully
- (Yi Myung-bak with Cow poster p118
 - 똥박이는 지금 기분이 좋아 Myungbagi's in a good mood
 - 미국산 미친 소를 모시고 Along with American crazy cow
 - 한국으로 금의환장할 Returning home covered with medals
 - 생각을 하니, he's thinking
 - 기분이 좋—다! His mood is go-o-ood

Carnavalesque Festivals

- Media images of the Candlelight festivals of 2008
 - Fears of BSE derided as street rumors (koedam) that the government vowed to prosecute on the internet
 - Conservative media (*Donga*, *Chosun Ilbo*) blamed the agitation on leftists and thought of the internet as pathological
 - Liberal media (*Han Kyoreh*, *Kyunghyang Sinmun*) supported the protests as political demonstrations (with policy demands)
- Actual protests, says Kang, were carnivalesque
 - Mass arrests parodied as “chicken coop tours” 닭장차 투어 (닭장차 chicken coop bus, refers to buses with wire over their windows used as paddy wagons)
 - Crowds an undifferentiated solidary group that through their size made state authority ineffective
 - Created *communitas* in Turner-esque terms? (possible anthropological analysis that Kang doesn't make)
 - Demolish fear with laughter

Take a chicken coop bus tour with P'odori



포돌이와 함께하는 닭장차 타고 서울투어~

기간: 미천소 협상
다시할때 까지

일정: 매일저녁 2시
세종로 출발
무박2일

인원: 제한 없음

행선지: 서울시내
각 경찰서(랜덤)

혜택: 숙박및 조식 제공
경우에 따라선 중식도.

참가대상: 미천소 먹기싫은 대한민국 국민

행사주관: 청와대 차량및 숙식지원: 경찰청

Hi Seoul
SOUL OF ASIA

Translation of Ticket (above)

- Seoul tour on chicken coop bus together with P'odori (cartoon police mascot)
- Duration: until crazy cow negotiations start again
- Itinerary: begins every day at 2PM at the entrance to Sejongno. No nights, two days.
- Participants: unlimited.
- Destination: every police station in Seoul (random)
- Benefits: night's lodging and breakfast (in some cases lunch, too)
- Who should participate: People in Korea who don't want to eat crazy cows
- Event sponsor: The Blue House • Transportation, food, and accommodations: The Police Department

What the Protests Were Not

- Not Jürgen Habermas' civil society
 - Group of citizens gathering together to discuss issues as a self-governing collective [i.e. not like the coffee houses of Europe]
- Not Gustav Le Bon's social psychology of the mob
 - Group of people carried away by emotions into mob activity (also Frankfurt School)
- Not political demonstration of “return to democracy being damaged by Lee Myungbak” (argument below)
 - June 10, 2008 demonstration called in memory of June 10, 1987 demonstration that led to democratization
 - Fortress Lee Myungbak—shipping containers blocking Kwanghwamun
 - Older protesters protected the young who were allowed to withdraw
 - This demonstration devoted to institutional goals was more political and the teenagers began to withdraw from the protests at this point as older politically engaged protestors took over
 - Young people's desire was not specific political goals but to express their feelings to authorities, and politicization drowned their voice

New ideological repertoire

- New repertoire
 - Casual participation without preexisting activist identity
 - Temporary alliances among citizens
 - Demand for government openness and transparency beyond formal democratization
 - Direct response to—or parody of—mainstream politics
- What captivates people?
 - Viral phenomena are metonyms for underlying sentiments
 - Misŏni and Hyosuni about subordinate status of Korea to US in contrast to national pride of the World Cup
 - American beef—exaggerated fear of illness perhaps a response to perceptions of government disregard for people's safety, and their vulnerability to international trade pressure

Remembrance of involvement

- Participated without formal objective in mind
- Afterward returned to school and work
- Became politically socialized to think of themselves as independent-minded citizens
- Effect of Protests?
 - Changed expectations
 - More assertive national identity
 - Force government to protect citizens more from outside forces

Youth in 2011-12

- Recall of 2006
 - Anti-American protests
 - Recreation of the solidarity of high school candlelight ceremonies
 - Festivals that fortuitously had political influence
- In 2012
 - Candlelight festivals remembered as personal growth in the context of school and work pressure that left little space for politics
- Tajöng—beginning an alternative path
 - Faltering downer cattle captivated her as a metaphor for the pressure and regimentation of the South Korean school system
 - Participation with an “intimate public” gave her a sense of belonging and alternatives
 - In commodity society individuals exist as isolated consumers, and teachers said, “You must become someone who eats not with a spoon and chopsticks, but with a fork and a knife.” (i.e. you must become cosmopolitan and upper class)
 - Protests gave Tajöng courage to reject college and work for an NGO

Other Participants

- Chiyun—losing touch with politics
 - Originally participated because of the introduction of Period 0 in school
 - Went to rural occupational university, though, and lost touch with politics because other students were only trying to qualify for jobs
- Surin and Minji—Ideal of participatory politics
 - Initially participated in the protests out of curiosity, but came to resent the, “You’re just students. Go back and study.” attitude of critics
 - Protests allowed them to express their political views and connect with like-minded people in a context in which their ability to express political view is limited

Still More Participants

- Kōnho—self-correcting conservative
 - Initially blogged with progressives, but came to the conclusion that the internet spreads false information and street protests are meaningless
 - Thinks of himself as an independent critical thinker, and has plans to break into photography
- Binna—entrepreneurial activist
 - Initially actively involved in opposition to the naval base at Kangjōng on Cheju Island
 - opposition was based on environmental destruction, and suspicion it was for US opposing China rather than Korea
 - Later worked for NGO and candidate's campaign, but also kept up her GPA
- Ch'anki—Elite Lifetime activist
 - Politically aware, but enjoyed the festive atmosphere of the protest
 - Good English typical of more entrepreneurial students (KATUSA)

“Spoon Theory” and the Fall of a Populist Princess in Seoul

- Hyejin Kim (Journal of Asian Studies 76(4), Nov. 2017: 839-849
- Candlelight protests in December 2016 as Park Geun Hye impeachment was being voted on (up to 8 million)
- Question: Why the Ch’oe Sunsil scandal, and not others, led to impeachment?
 - Choi Sunsil was daughter of cult leader Ch’oe T’aemin, and ex-wife of Chŏng Yunhoe, former chief of staff for Park Chung Hee who made a fortune in Gangnam real estate
 - She and Park Geun Hye became close when Park was injured
 - Choi Soon-sil was officially charged for intervening in state affairs and forcing chaebols to donate tens of millions of dollars to foundations and businesses over which she had control
 - Daughter Chŏng Yura got good grades for never attending Ehwa Women’s University (was admitted for being a good equestrian, not for grades)
 - Chŏng Yura Facebook post: “Blame your own parents if you don’t have ability . . . I don’t take my affluent parents, tell them to shut up and give it away: Money is skill, too.” (능력 없으면 니네 부모를 원망해 . . . 있는 우리 부모 가지고 감놔라 배놔라 하지말고 돈도 실력이야)

The Gold Spoon Metonym

- Spoon discourse about privilege
 - 2015 phrases gold and dirt spoons hit the internet 금수저/흙수저 (gold spoons can live off the wealth of their parents)
 - Way of talking about increasing inequality in South Korea, and the fact that social mobility has become difficult
- Park Geun-hye won in 2012 election by promising to restore the middle class
 - 2012 National Intelligence Agency helped Park on internet
 - Park lived off assets her father had confiscated
 - Park facilitated Ch'oe Sunsil's corruption and gold spoon Chŏng Yura was the perfect metonym for all of this to capture the internet

Occult of Personality? (i.e. cult of p)

- Jamie Doucette, JAS Vol 76 No 4 (November 2017) 851-60.
- Cult of Park Chung Hee
 - Cultivated in the 2000s to recall a (mythologized) era of strong leadership, government planning, anti-communism, and economic growth
 - Park Geunhye inherited this mantle to return South Korea to rapid economic growth (as Myungbak Lee had also promised)
- Personality (Weber)—ideal type that reflected the internalized values of a culture (passion, responsibility, charisma, shame—i.e. occult elements)
- Persona (Gramsci)—an interpenetration and concentration of *social relations* in a determinate, particular individual (the social role one adopts)

Application to Park impeachment?

- Initial analysis of Park focused on national feelings of shame, embarrassment, and damaged pride (personality)
 - If so, overcoming Park's personality (and gender?) would be the solution to the issue, and would reinscribe the Park cult
- What about social relations?
 - Advisors during the election were moderate conservatives, who were replaced by hardline conservatives (anticommunist, public service prosecutors) after her election—red baiting and witch hunts followed
 - Banned United Progressive Party and deregistered the Korean Teachers Union, and later a blacklist was leaked
- Park Chung Hee myth includes idea of developmental state being peopled by autonomous, rational, bureaucrats
 - Ch'oe Sunsil, to the contrary, points to a legacy of influence peddling going back even to the Park era
 - Ch'oe's corruption showed her to be organically linked to the chaeböl aristocracy—hence the golden spoon discourse
 - Seweol disaster also uncovered systematic corruption among monied elites
 - [in this sense Park Geun-hye would become a metonym for the corruption of the developmental state, and the candlelight protestors would be rejecting the developmental state]
- Mun Jae-in may have to do more than overcome Park's *personality* and introduce structural reform

Candlelight Relevant in 2018?

- “South Korea’s Candlelight Revolution and the Future of the Korean Peninsula” by Nak-chung Paik (Japan Focus, Dec 1, 2018)
 - “current changes in the peninsula cannot be adequately grasped without taking into account the crucial role of South Korea’s Candlelight Revolution”
 - What current changes?
 - Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s Address (missile and nuclear moratorium), DPRK visit to ROK Winter Olympics (2018 events)
 - Mun/Kim meetings: (1) P’anmunjöm 2018.4.27, (2) P’anmunjöm 2018.5.26, (3) P’yöngyang 2018.9.18
 - Trump/Kim Singapore meeting 2018.6.12, moratorium on US/ROK military exercises [second Hanoi meeting 2019.2.28, P’anmunjöm 2019.6.30]
 - Train crosses from south to north for rail survey 2018.11.30

Paik Nak-chung's "Candlelight Revolution"

- From late October 2016 until early March 2017
 - Loosely organized with NGOs by People's Action against President Park Geun-hye
 - Up to 2 million came out in December 2016, the peak of action
- No organized leadership, yet peaceful and festive
 - In wake of these demonstrations Park Geun-hye found guilty and Mun Jae-in elected
- Was this a "real revolution"?
 - Korean name 촛불 항쟁 "candlelight resistance"
 - PNC says, yes, because "it was the *activation for the first time* of the constitution as such" p4
 - In the past constitutional protections were suspended at times because of north/south confrontation, but this time change was brought about constitutionally
 - Because of candlelight those who indulged in corruption and flagrant abuses of power were brought to justice

Why a “real revolution”?

- The Korean Peninsula exhibits a “division system” by which two nation-states of the same ethnic group confront each other
- Candlelight demonstrations continues Korean political tradition of national demonstrations inaugurated 1919.3.1
 - May 18, 1980 “Kwangju Democratic Uprising” 5-1-8 민주화 항쟁
 - June 10, 1987 “Democratization Movement”
 - 2016-17 Candlelight demonstrations
- It doesn't have to be violent to be a revolution so long as real change is brought about
- Whatever Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump's role in North-South détente “it is doubtful that the whole process would have started at all if South Korean citizens had not risen up and produced a new government determined to reject any military solution by the United States and ready to engage P'yŏngyang in a common endeavor to build peace” p7

Assessment

- Notice this assessment parallels other political assessments of candlelight demonstrations
 - For example, the politicization of Myungbak Lee fortress on 2018.6.10 marked the point when young people began to withdraw from the candlelight demonstrations as violence threatened (see Kang p127)
- Notice how Paik's attribution of specific political meanings to the demonstrations may over-interpret the specificity of their political content
 - Mun "as a 'candlelight president' had no choice but to comply with the popular mandate for a peaceful peninsula" p7
 - Progress on a North/South confederation (낮은 단계의 연방제) is a prerequisite to denuclearization and for "the implementation of the domestic agenda of the Candlelight Revolution."
 - "Without continuous progress in inter-Korean relations and a heightened degree of institutionalization of that progress, the peculiar task of 'carrying out the revolution by non-revolutionary means' will soon lose momentum"