

Labor and Environmental Movements in Taiwan and South Korea

- Social Change in Asia
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Labor Power and Nature in Capitalist Production (disenchantment)

- “Social protectionist movements” (Polanyi) emerge in response to market expansion in order to protect labor or nature from commercialization
 - With industrialization producers are alienated (separated) from the means of production (i.e. no longer own them), and are turned into a commodity (labor sold on the market)
 - With commercialization nature/land/water/air also become commodities (commons were fenced, land bought, sold, rented, traditional rights abrogated, water appropriated, air fouled)
 - Old forms of social organization (kinship groups, neighborhoods, parishes, guilds) were dissolved by the new relations of production

What is a commodity?



An economic good or service that has *fungibility*

Each unit of the good or service is considered equivalent so one can be substituted for another, no matter who produced it
Price is determined by supply and demand of the market as a whole



Market determines how much of the good or service is consumed without regard to other values

Other possible values: nationality, human welfare, environmental sustainability



Commoditization is the process by which a good or service becomes a commodity

Something unique, such as a new drug, may not be fungible at first but as the knowledge for making it becomes widely known, it becomes a commodity

Huaren Liu begins in 1970

In Nov. 1970 South Korean labor activist Chun Tae-il immolated himself yelling, “We are not machines! Enforce the labor code!”

- This didn’t start the labor movement in South Korea, but it was a galvanizing moment
- Back story: South Korea had a vigorous post Korean War labor movement that was suppressed in 1969, and also had progressive labor law (to look good for the UN in competition with North Korea)

In July 1970 Taiwanese farmers protested toxic chemicals released into their water

These are two examples of protest patterns

- In South Korea in the 1970s and 1980s usually 75% or more of protests were labor protests, often violent
 - In South Korea labor protests peaked in 1987 in the wake of democratization
- In Taiwan in the same period the majority of protests were environmental protests
 - In Taiwan labor and environmental protests both peaked as Taiwan moved toward democracy in the 1980s

Historical Similarities of Taiwan and SK



Both Japanese colonies (Taiwan 1895-1945, Korea 1910-1945)



Both China and Korea were divided after 1945 between Nationalists and Communists with Nationalists in Taiwan and in South Korea



Both Taiwan and South Korea were post-war protégés of the United States (who gave them aid, advice, and favorable tariff treatment)



Both had Initial authoritarian regimes (Taiwan 1949-1997, South Korea 1949-1987) that then democratized with direct election of their President

Structural Similarities

Structural similarities of Taiwan and South Korea

- Resource poor and densely populated
- Industrialized at about the same time (1960-1990s) through export-led industrialization
- Urbanized at similar rates (though South Korea more in larger cities than Taiwan)

Should not have differential sequencing of labor and environmental movements, then, if *structural conditions alone* caused the movements

Kinds of Movement Power (page 16)



Labor has the power of *leverage* in that workers are structurally indispensable for production (but replaceable if labor is truly commoditized)

Victims are mistreated/underpaid wage workers

Laborer's willingness and ability to withhold labor (go on strike) is their operational principle, so leverage is at the economic or corporate level

Organizing unions is the way this is done

This requires intra-class solidarity



Environmental movements have the power of *universalistic ideas and broad persuasion*

Victims are those who have suffered from pollution who are joined by the educated classes

They work by swaying public opinion through mass communications

- This means working at the hegemonic (Gramsci) level where universalistic ideas elicit popular consent by elaborating lived experience and presenting a better way to live universalistic ideas

Organize usually as voluntary civic associations (NGOs)

This requires cross-class solidarity

Two movements, two countries

Liu wants to challenge evolutionary explanations of social movement formation that argue that labor movements inherently must be first to develop in response to capitalist development only to be followed by other types of movements in post-industrial times (service economy



Grievance generated?

Then labor and/or environmental movement should develop depending upon how bad labor conditions are, and how bad environmental degradation is (i.e. environmental Kuznets curve that ties environmental activism to development of consumer economy)

- Corollary—industrial societies have class-based movements, post-industrial societies have new social movements (identity-based)

Three Other Possible Explanations



Resource mobilization theory?

Grievance and the capacity to act don't necessarily correlate, and it is the availability of resources (leadership, financing) that determines whether movements arise or not



Discourse-based theory?

Traditions, conventions, local **culture** may provide discursive resources for successful mobilization



Institutional theory?

Political opportunities vary in different kinds of society (democracy versus autocracy)
Different patterns of industrialization create different class structures (chaebŏl versus SMEs)

Liu's argument

Labor and environmental movements are based on different kinds of power

- Labor—economic power
- Environment—hegemonic power (ability to sell universal ideals)
- Here Liu defines “ideology” as oppositional (counter-hegemonic)

Thus you can't explain their differences based on society-wide characteristics that would be the same for both movements

However, other factors (degree of grievance, availability of resources, tradition and culture, institutions) can all condition how these different movements develop in each case

- One also has to consider the degree of threat that each type of political movement might present to the existing establishment—i.e. the amount of push-back from the establishment

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) & 2-way development of social movements



Movement from economic-corporate (guilds), to economic class, to a hegemonic level (Gramscian working class movement) as society moves from agrarian, to industrial, to service-based economy

For example: move from hired labor to a self-conscious working class that pursues its political and economic interests (working class political party), to a hegemonic movement that benefits all (perhaps welfare state)



Movement from hegemonic struggle over ideology, to an economic/corporate level, to a leverage movement (reverse Gramscian environmental movement)

For example: convince people that climate change is happening, create powerful NGOs, use the NGOs for political leverage and/or the regulatory state



(Note that all this discussion is a question of emphasis and proportion, rather than an absolute distinction between types of movement)

Gramscian hegemony

Cultural hegemony

- the ruling class of a culturally diverse society creates beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values and mores that reflect their own worldview
- When this worldview becomes so dominant that everybody in society accepts it as common sense, and most people have a hard time to even imagine an alternative—then that worldview is said to be *hegemonic*
- “*anti-hegemonic*” movements would be those that contest the dominant values and worldview

Hegemony by itself implies rule through indirect means rather than direct control

What to look for in social movements?



Protest activities

Note Weller's ladder of protest escalation



Organizations

May be religious (Weller's discussion of temple and lineage organizations in Taiwan would be a discourse-based resource mobilization theory)
May be unions or NGOs or ministries



Collective consciousness or beliefs

For labor movements (class consciousness, belief in unions)
For environmental movements (importance of nature, wildlife and wilderness; ideas of well-being related to clean environment)



Note that in Taiwan and South Korea these two movements are understood in the context of "democratization" but what about PRC?

When does a *movement* emerge?

Protests markedly increase outside institutionalized activities

Formation of a new (counter-hegemonic) consciousness

- These must be **synchronized** for it to be a social movement for Liu
- ‘everyday forms of protest’ (James L. Scott) can be excluded as not rising to the level of “movement”
- Mere foundation of an organization (without protest) is also excluded as not rising to the level of “movement”

So look closely at escalation of protests, and the struggle to carve out a new intellectual vision that takes hold in society

Stages of Movement Development

Premovement stage

- Protest activities without systematic reflection on the issue
- Activities emerge from immediate lived experience, and are justified in terms of existing ideologies
- For example, farmers complaining of economic loss due to environmental damage, or damage to private property
- Emphasis on “legality” under the capitalist system (i.e. Korean labor law)

Korean Labor Movement (as a social movement à la Liu)

- Chun Tae-il’s immolation in 1970 mobilized society
- Workers inspired, students radicalized, liberal Christians mobilized

Taiwanese Labor by contrast did not become a social movement until 1990s

- 1984 coal mine disasters made publicity, but activists appealed largely to the legal system
- Worker action (strikes, slow downs) only occurred in 1987-8 at which point Liu would call it a movement

Environmental Movements

Intellectual thought and newspaper discussion of pollution began in Taiwan and South Korea in the 1960s, but did not connect with a movement at that time

Green thinking in Taiwan was spurred by environmental disasters

- 1976 oil spill, 1978 hydride gas escape with multiple casualties, 1979 contaminated cooking oil harms thousands

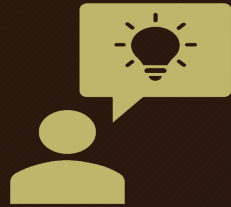
Green thinking in South Korea was spurred by Onsan illness

- Onsan a port south of Ulsan (Hyundai Heavy Industries) where chemical industries were centered by government plan from 1972
- Gas leaks in 1982 and 1984 hospitalized hundreds, and from 1985 newspapers reported hundreds of residents with an unidentified disease
- Predecessors of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement 환경운동연합 brought attention to this cluster that is thought to have been Cadmium poisoning (first identified in Japan in 1912 as itai-itai disease—neuralgia in spine and joints—in Toyama Prefecture)

From this time contending discourses on the environment became widespread and legitimated further protest activities

- Discourse of minjung 民衆 (Korean), caogen 草根 (Chinese “grass roots”), minjian 民间 (popular) became common

Synchronization of thought and action



Labor movement

Protest activities led to elaboration of
oppositional consciousness and counter
hegemonic thought

Working class consciousness developed
through labor activity

Intellectual activity on how to sustain and
strengthen the movement

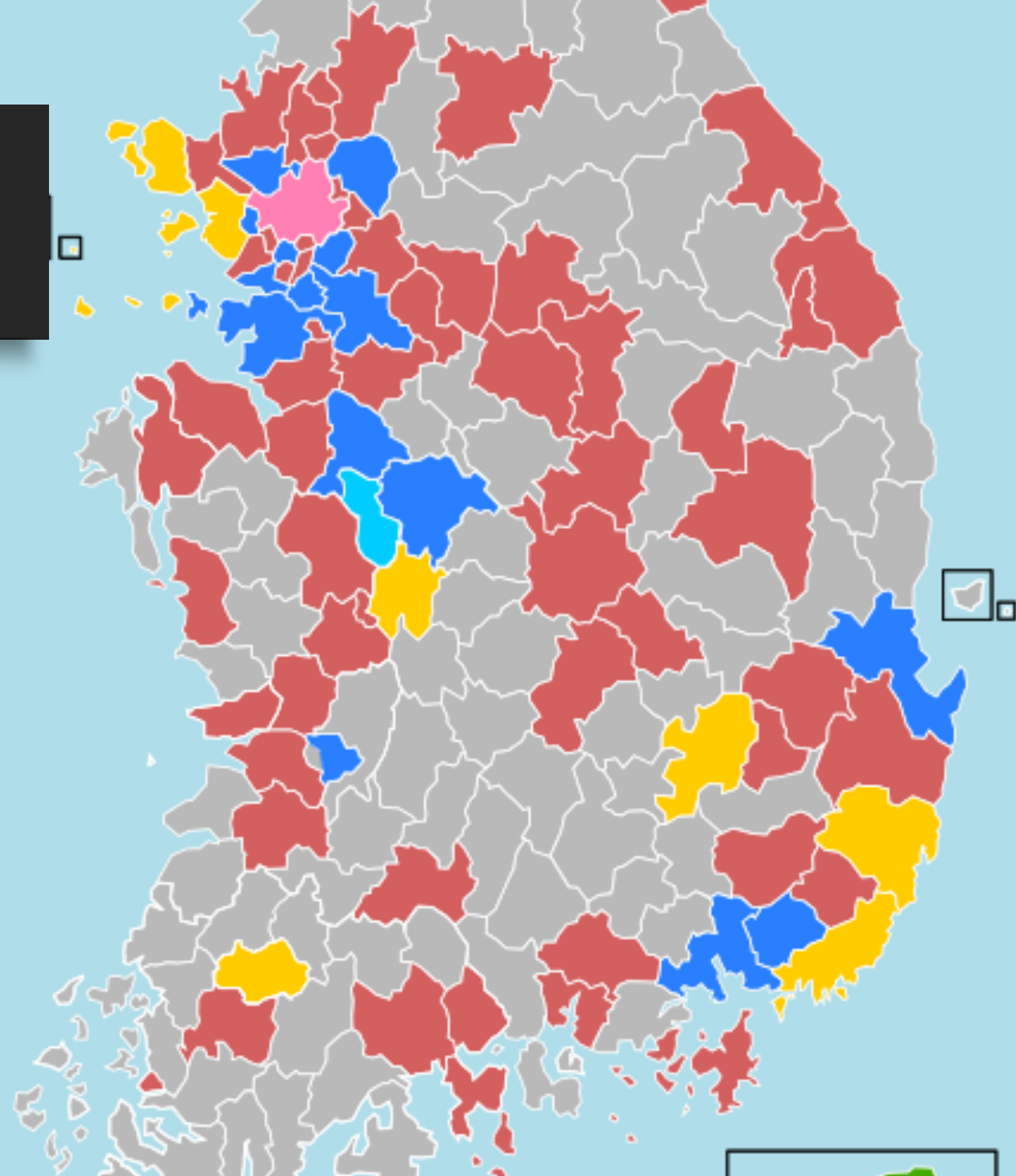


Environmental movement

Dissemination of environmentalism
important for starting the movement
Protests followed from publicity about
horrific pollution and environmental
accidents

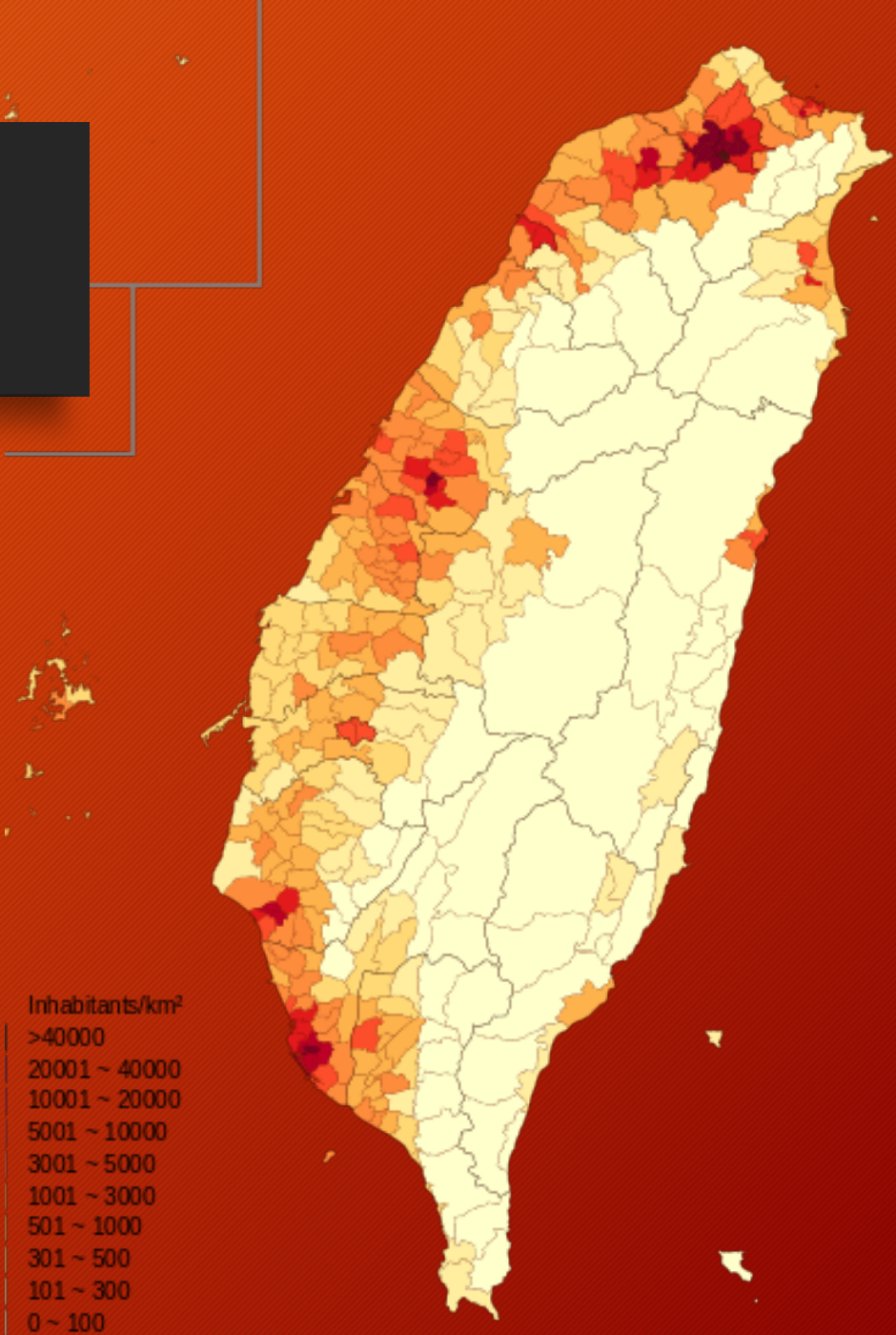
South Korean Concentrated Industrialization

- Light pink, orange—industrial cities
- Blue—other cities
- Dark pink—smaller cities
- Workers, pollution, and disputes largely in orange areas (Seoul, Inch'ŏn, Pusan, Ulsan)
- By 1974 44% of South Korea's industrial workforce in Seoul and Pusan, by 1984 50% in Seoul and 40% in Taegu/Ulsan/Pusan/Ch'angwŏn



Taiwan dispersed industrialization

- Taibei only really large city
- Taizhong, Tainan, and Gaoxiong only other large cities
- 1971 50% of manufacturing outside cities through subcontracting



Consequences of industrialization pattern



In Taiwan, many industrial workers lived at home in rural places and commuted to work nearby

Laid off workers could be reabsorbed by the farm economy
Many small enterprises spread pollution around, and being small and undercapitalized meant they probably didn't invest in pollution control equipment



In South Korea, industrial workers had to migrate to the big cities to work, and became concentrated in workers neighborhoods

Chaebŏl, large scale enterprises, concentrated pollution in a few places
Labor disputes were larger, and workers couldn't opt out



These patterns created different grievance structures and institutional resources in Taiwan and South Korea that conditioned the way these movements developed

“Incorporationist” (Liu) Taiwan under Martial Law 1949-87

Guomindang 国民党 organized along Leninist lines (democratic centralism)

- Single entity that supposedly represented all people's interests had branches in each administrative unit down to the village
- Needs discussed at lower levels and passed along to higher levels that made decisions binding on lower levels

1971 UNR 2758 transferred China's UN seat to the PRC; in 1979 US transferred diplomatic recognition to PRC triggering a “crisis of legitimacy”

- Government economic planning shifted from light to capital intensive industry
- Policy of “Taiwanization” announced (incorporate native Taiwanese into the political system that had been dominated by those of recent mainland origin)
- Local “service stations” 服务站 in rural townships and urban districts employing full-time party cadres

Management of Labor Disputes in Taiwan



Effort to organize labor unions and incorporate them into the GMT system, planting party cells in factories of large corporations

Combination of party activists and security agents at workplaces dampened union activity



Liberal labor law put into place



SME's labor problems dealt with by mediation and compulsory arbitration, and this is where protests took place



SOEs had Chinese Federation of Labor (KMT controlled) unions

Environmental Disputes in Taiwan

Environment

- Building on the land reform of 1953 Taiwanese small-holder (peasant) agriculture was highly developed and commercialized
- Rural factories often flushed effluent into irrigation canals ruining land, and this caused rural environmental protests
- Public nuisance arbitration committees 公害及藕粉调节委员会 organized in rural areas only in 1993
 - Without environmental regulations compensation could be arranged, but no solution to pollution emerged, so disputes continued throughout the 1970s
 - Scattered nature of the problems and disputes hindered the formation of national organizations, or a national solution

Arguments about labor and environmental movements both are institutional and resource related arguments

Labor Movements in Korea

Liberal labor law combined with corporatist labor movement (company unions controlled through the Ministry of Labor) worked until an economic crisis in 1970 led to massive layoffs and a wage freeze

After 1969 repression of labor and in 1971 imposition of martial law

- Ban on demonstrations, appointment of 1/3 of legislature, wage and price controls, KCIA (organized 1961) more active to repress politics

Heavy and Chemical Industrialization from 1973

Compulsory arbitration didn't resolve labor disputes. Why?

- Wage and price controls part of "cheap labor for export" policy that didn't give labor any benefits of economic growth
- Ban on strikes banned a right that Korean workers had gotten used to during 1950s and 1960s
- Military-style corporate governance antagonized workers
- Female democratic unions struggled against government unions for "humane treatment" 인간다운 대우
- Kwangju uprising of 1980 motivated worker-student alliance, and anti-worker goon squads 救社團 created a violent atmosphere that led to labor opposition

Environmental Movements in Korea

- Because environmental criticism was tolerated (was not considered political) by the government labor activists looked down on environmental activism
 - Activists (undonggwŏn 运动圈, hwal tongga 活动家) emphasized “political liberty, labor rights, and social and economic equity” and were proud of their sacrifices for the movement
 - Activists considered environmentalists to be elites coopted by the government (i.e. lured into cooperating with the government and tempering their demands because of it)
- Rural pollution was an issue, but South Korean agriculture was less commercial and productive than Taiwan’s and most farmers wanted to move to the city to get factory jobs that paid better
- Pollution, thus, was more easily dealt with through relocation of populations located in polluted factory areas (Onsan)
- Large chaebŏl in South Korea were harder to bring to heel than SME’s in Taiwan

Lessons of Chapter 3

Environmentalism

- Flourished early in Taiwan because of widespread SME pollution and failure of government incorporationist strategies in rural areas (Liu)
- Was there an ethnic element here? (Sorensen)
- Was late to flourish in Korea because of institutional constraints (pro-environmental forces constrained by gov't window dressing, and lack of ideological charisma among activists)
- Korean victims of pollution had exit options (move away with government support) that Taiwanese lacked

Labor Movement

- Flourished early in South Korea because top-down repression failed to respond to even modest demands of workers on wages and working conditions, and industrialization concentrated workers together
- Taiwan workers couldn't get leverage because of dispersed workplaces and incorporationist labor policies
- Taiwan's workers had an exit option (into agriculture)

These are not “grievance” explanations, but rather based on idea that institutional failure to address grievances causes early development of environmentalism in Taiwan and Labor movement in Korea

- Patterns of industrialization conditioned *how* these movements developed and whether exit options existed
- For workers class solidarity was required, while for environmental movements cross-class solidarity was required, and in each case structural features facilitated one kind of solidarity and hindered the other

What about Japan Labor History?

- Sporadic strikes and union organization before 1945, but the legal system was anti-labor hindering development of a mass movement
- During US occupation (1945-53) US changed labor law to enshrine a right to organize and encouraged union organization—this is the strongest evidence of synchronization of thought and action, but it came with an outside push
- Until 1980s when unions began to decline there were four large labor federations, and highly ritualized “Spring push” each year to meet union demands
- Since 1980s unions have declined as Japan has moved from a manufacturing to a service economy, and neoliberal reforms has led to many types of contingent labor

Japan Labor a semi-movement (Liu)?



Protest activities?

Protests took place after 1945, but most labor protests took place within institutional structures put in place by the Occupation (legal unions, negotiation with management with guidance from Department of Labor), and had an almost ritual form (Spring struggle—shuntō 春闘)



Organizational activities?

Unions powerful, but within a framework very structured by the state (enterprise unions organized into confederations)



New collective consciousness?

Labor is conscious of a distinctive place in society, but since labor reforms came from the top down, and enterprises encourage family-like loyalty (uchi no kaisha うちの会社) maybe the synchronization of thought with action doesn't reach the level of a social movement as Liu defines them

Japan Environmental Movement?

- Big Four Pollution Diseases of Japan
 - Minamata disease (methylmercury poisoning) & Niigata Minamata disease (2)
 - Identified in 1956—leads to numbing, poor balance, mental defects, birth defects, death
 - Itai-itai disease (cadmium poisoning)
 - Mitsui Mining in Toyama Prefecture (eastern Japan near the Noto Peninsula)
 - Disease named in 1912, but its aetiology wasn't understood until research 1955-60 identified Cadmium as the source, and the government instituted medical care and clean ups
 - Yokkaichi Asthma 1960-72
 - Mie Prefecture (where Ise Shrine is located)
 - Burning of petroleum and crude oil released sulfur dioxide that caused chronic bronchitis, pulmonary emphysema, and bronchial asthma following construction of first Yokkaichi complex in 1956
 - Appeared because of switch from coal to petroleum starting around 1955 and large petrochemical complex constructed in 1960 in Yokkaichi as part of “income doubling project”
 - Class action suit against Showa Yokkaichi Oil in 1970
 - At first raised smokestacks but this was ineffective
 - Then scrubbed sulfur out of the smoke, and this was more effective
 - (Yokkaichi Asthma has subsequently been identified in Mexico City and mainland China)

Political Action on Environment

- Anti-pollution activities didn't develop into a “movement” until stimulated by citizen's movements against the US Japan Security Treaty and the Vietnam War in the 1960s
 - People organized to pressure the government first for political reasons, and only later for environmental reasons
- LDP convened “Pollution Diet of 1970” in which 14 anti-pollution laws were passed at once (Basic Law for Environmental Pollution Control)
 - Air pollution improved dramatically in the years following this
 - Minamata disease wasn't recognized as due to dumping by Chisso chemical until 1968
 - Even at late as the 1990s Japan didn't fully comply with its own laws

Lifestyle Pollution Discovered

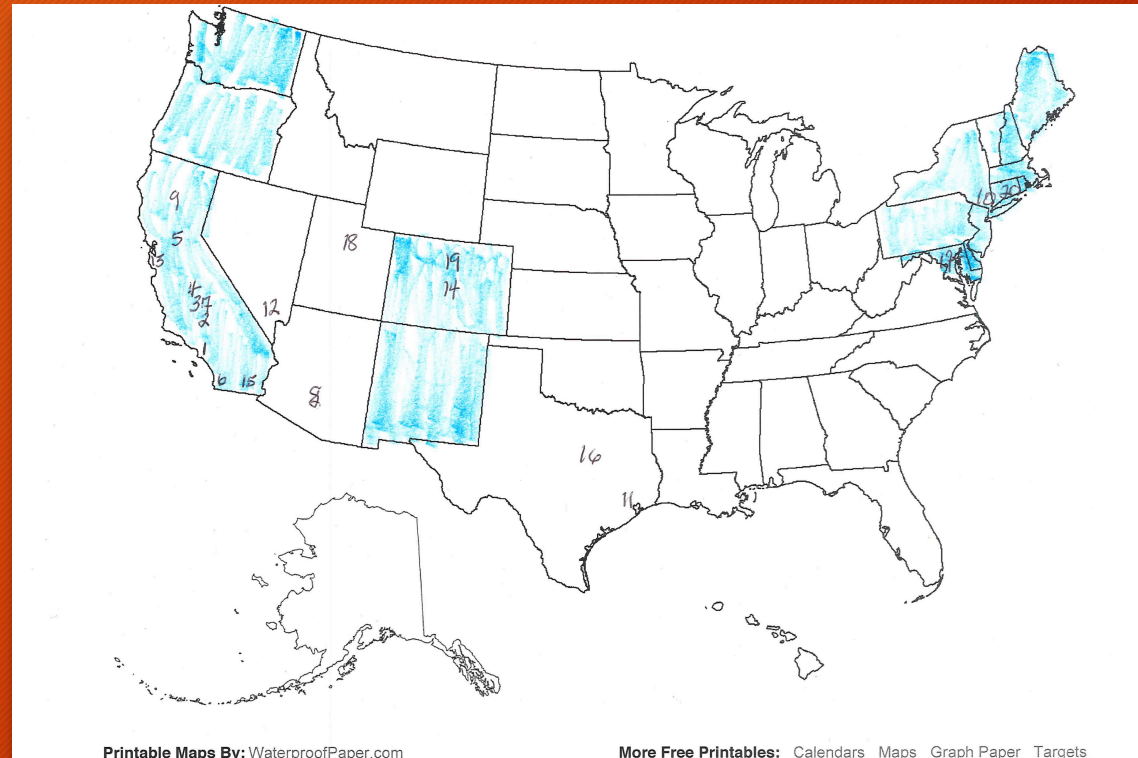
- 1977 Red Tide in Lake Biwa because of phosphorus contamination by detergents
 - Homemaker's campaign to substitute soap for detergent
 - Recycling and other programs set up
- “Third Phase Movement”
 - After 1992 Earth Summit general environmental awareness began
 - After 1997 Kyoto Climate Change conference NGOs began to work on climate change
 - 1998 new law on NGOs allows registration and national recognition
 - Now NGOs linked into international networks, export of pollution expertise to China to help prevent spread of air pollution across international boundaries

Los Angeles in the 1970s and under Corona lockdown 2020



States Adopting California Car Emission Standards & Top 20 Polluted US Cities

- 1-7 in California
- 8 Phoenix
- 10 New York
- 11 Houston
- 12 Las Vegas
- 14 & 19 Colorado
- 15 California Coachella Valley
- 16 Dallas/Forth Worth
- 18 Salt Lake City



Discussion Questions

- What type of explanation does Liu have for the different timing of labor and environmental movements in Taiwan and South Korea (and can we extend it to Japan?)
 - Simple response to grievances (stimulus/response)
 - Resource mobilization
 - Ability of aggrieved to get together, finance a movement, be heard
 - Whether local cultural traditions provide resources that facilitate mobilization
 - Institutional factors
 - Political opportunity structure and/or cost of activism (repression)
 - Structure of labor and capital deployment