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Disability History and Minjung as Affect

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Abstract

With the decline of research on minjung history, the argument for a new minjung history that would critically inherit it was proposed. This new minjung history, it was emphasized, should break free from the representation of minjung that centered class or nation and focus on the multivocality of the minjung. This article examines research trends in disability history and explores the relationship between disability history, minjung history, and new minjung history. The discourse on minjung during the 1970s grasped the disabled as part of the marginalized minjung, but this was more as a way of recruiting their bodies at a symbolic level to represent the oppressed and marginalized minjung than any serious contemplation of the structures of discrimination against disabled persons. In the narratives of the minjung movement, which picked up steam in the 1980s, the emphasis on the productivity and subjectivity of the proletariat made it difficult for the disabled, whose bodies were unsuitable for production and struggle, to become visible. Despite this, disabled persons were inspired by the minjung movement and appropriated or parted with the concept of minjung in their own ways in the disability movement from the mid-1980s. This study traces this process, examines how disability history resonates with new minjung history, and proposes that new minjung history approach the minjung as affect instead of a substantial actuality in its encounter with minority history.

Keywords: minjung history, new minjung history, disability history, symbol of the minjung, affect, identity politics

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Introduction

It has been over ten years since the call was made for a new minjung history. This new minjung history was to fill the vacuum formed as minjung history declined in tandem with the fading belief in the power of the minjung and historical progress. As the adjective *new* suggests, new minjung history claimed not to be a resurrection of minjung history of the 1980s but the critical inheritor of it. In other words, it would accept the sharp criticism coming from inside and outside the field of history in Korea following the fall of socialism, such as problems with the concept of minjung as a single body centered on nation or class, the rejection of a teleological belief in historical progress, and the deconstruction of the binary framework of dominance versus resistance. New minjung history would review the limitations of its predecessor (minjung history) and innovate it by posing new critical questions and attempting new methodologies.[1] Accordingly, researchers attempted to newly grasp the minjung as subjects living their everyday lives; as a multivocal subject including all genders and minorities instead of a single collective body; as a contradictory subject that is simultaneously dependent and autonomous, inexplicable by the dichotomous framework of oppression and resistance; and as a transnational subject beyond the modern subject (Yeoksa munje yeonguso minjungsaban 2013).

1. The discussion of a new minjung history began to take place in earnest with the opening of a 2008 symposium held to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Historical Studies (Yeoksahak yeonguso) and titled, "Historical Studies at a Crisis: New Explorations of Minjung History," and a 2009 symposium held by the Institute for Korean Historical Studies (Yeoksa munje yeonguso) titled, "Minjung at the Edge, For a New Minjung History." The results of these symposia were published as *Hanguk minjungsa-ui saeroun mosaek-gwa yeoksa sseugi* (Yeoksahak yeonguso 2010) and as a special issue of the journal *Yeoksa munje yeongu* (vol. 23), the latter of which was later published as a monograph, *Minjungsa-reul dasi malhanda* (Yeoksa munje yeonguso minjungsaban 2013). In 2021, the regular symposium of the Institute for Korean Historical Studies titled, "Ten Years Since the Proposal of a New Minjung History: Rewriting Modern and Contemporary Korean History of the Transitional Period Through Minjung History," reviewed the current status of the argument for a new minjung history.

As the influence of the minjung history that swept through an era dramatically diminished and discussions of its innovation took place on the one hand, minority history began to newly raise its head on the other. In contrast to how minjung attempted to rewrite history from the standpoint of the oppressed majority, minority history aimed to engrave the voices of history's oppressed minorities. Born amid changes in a Korean society of the 1990s marked by an active minority movement, minority history sought to unearth the experiences of new subjects who had until then been overlooked in history, such as disabled persons, vagrants, lepers, and sexual minorities, and began to challenge previous history by writing in their roles.

New minjung history, which criticized how the minjung had been previously understood as a single collective based on class or nation and instead sought to grasp the minjung as a multivocal subject, may appear to resonate largely with minority history. Advocates of minjung history, however, worry that it is unclear how minjung history, which had been conceived as a majority project, can smoothly connect with history from the point of view of minorities (Yeoksa munje yeonguso minjungsaban 2013). Critics of minjung history, meanwhile, point out that no matter how the concept of minjung is innovated, it cannot adequately embrace the voices of minorities and that the efforts made by historians to accept the critical questions raised by minority history is simply to consume minority history in order to expand the range of topics covered in minjung history (Jang et al. 2014; Han 2023). It is evident that the conceptual differences and unfamiliarity between the minjung and minorities do not make the prospects of a relationship between the two very bright.

Despite such hesitations, however, affects of hate and exclusion directed towards minorities function as a major political force in Korean society today. The issue of minorities is a growing problem that historians of minjung history cannot ignore; the more historical praxis and minjung solidarity is emphasized, the more the minority issue demands to be confronted and addressed, which inevitably leads to a reflection on the past relationship between the minjung and minorities. In my past work, I have mentioned the importance of the questions raised by minority history and argued that new minjung history must actively accept the point of view and

critical questions raised by minority history in order to innovate minjung history (So 2022).

Compared to how the minority issue has surfaced as an important argument in the discussion of innovating minjung history, however, scholars of minority history regard minjung history as outdated and do not show much interest in the relationship between the two. Yet, considering how the minority is also a concept defined by its relationship with the majority, understanding the history of minorities in their relationship with the minjung is crucial. Without understanding the concept of the minjung and the minjung movement, which were born against the unique historical backdrop of Korea colonialism, developmental dictatorship, and democratization, it is impossible to properly explain the lives of minorities and the minority movement in Korea. Whether minjung history and minority history are seen as existing on a continuum or the products of a rupture, it cannot be denied that the minjung movement also deeply influenced the minority movement. Therefore, dissecting how these two seemingly parallel entitles are in fact enmeshed is necessary not only for the innovation of minjung history, but also to overcome the limitations in the representation of minority history as an isolated realm based on a single identity and to newly understand the history of intersection and solidarity among minorities as well.

In this article, I utilize achievements made in research on disability history to date and attempt to analyze the contributions and limitations of the concept of minjung in the historical representation of the disabled as well as the encounter between disability history and new minjung history. To that end, I present the concept of minjung during the 1970s and 1980s, when the theory of minjung took off, locate and reveal where disabled persons were placed during this period, and examine the relationship between the minjung movement and the disabled movement as well as the relationship between (new) minjung history and disability history. This attempt will show the possibility of new attempt to break free from an ontological approach to the minjung and shed new light on them through the lens of affect.

The Theory of Minjung during the 1970s and the Disabled as Symbol of the Minjung

For a long time, disabled persons existed outside of history. Records of them in historical sources were extremely fragmentary, and it was not easy to discover their voices in history books. This is in some part because the disabled as a collective subject emerged only after the modern period and because the disability movement only became socially visible in relatively recent years (So 2017). The fact that it is difficult to discover the presence of disabled persons even in history books covering the period after modernity, however, clearly shows how the disability problem and the experiences of disabled persons have been systematically left out in the process of constituting historical knowledge.

The disabled became socially visible when the minjung theory of the 1970s named them as one of the minjung. The concept of minjung included various heterogenous beings at that time, including disabled persons. For instance, the minjung theologian An Byeong-mu described the minjung as "suffering people who bear a heavy burden and are defined as sinners in current society; they are the lost sheep, the neglected prodigals, the poor, the disabled, the blind, the limping who roam the large streets and alleys in the neighborhood; they are the unemployed who wander around without a job even after sunset; and they are the oppressed, the prisoners, the hungry and impoverished, the persecuted, sad and wailing" (An 1975, 82). This image of the minjung spread throughout society through such means as situational plays (*madanggeuk*). The play *Mung Bean Flower* (*Nokdu kkot*) included peasant farmers, workers, and intellectuals within the boundaries of minjung, as well as wanderers, prostitutes, beggars, disabled persons, and criminals, who sometimes even performed the leading roles (Kang 2023a). In short, one of the important contributions that the minjung theory of the 1970s made was to capture and visualize disabled persons as part of the marginalized minjung.

However, the way the disabled were grasped during this period as one of the marginalized and oppressed did not derive from a recognition of their unique experiences of discrimination. Although intellectuals then were

aware of contradictions of class and nation, they lacked the insight that discrimination against the disabled was a structural problem, nor were they interested in this unique structure of oppression. Consequently, the disabled, though summoned as one of the minjung, only functioned as a major symbol of the marginalized and oppressed minjung. A classic literary example featuring the disabled in this way is Cho Se-hui's *Nanjangi-ga ssoa ollin jageun gong* (A Dwarf Launches a Little Ball), a serialized novel that began to be published in 1975. As a representative literary work of the 1970s that gave shape to the lives of the urban lower class, which had been pushed to the peripheries due to industrialization, the novel features disabled characters such as a dwarf, a hunchback, and a cripple. The author uses these figures to symbolically embody the deprived and oppressed by using the metaphor of physical disability. Compared to the vivid portrayal of the pathological phenomena and suffering resulting from industrialization, such as poverty, low wages, the poor working environment and labor conditions of the urban poor, the hypocrisy and extravagance of the haves, and environmental pollution, though, the specific discrimination against or marginalization of the disabled are not clearly expressed. In this sense, Cho's novel well demonstrates the characteristics of the minjung theory of the 1970s, where the disabled do appear as a symbol of the minjung but whose unique world of experience is barely explored. The disabled body was simply needed for the visual representation and symbolization of the minjung as excluded and oppressed people.

Theory of Minjung in the 1980s and Development of the Progressive Disability Movement

Unlike how the minjung theorists in the 1970s broadly defined the minjung and clearly perceived the diversity and heterogeneity within it, after the 1980s, when Marxism-Leninism was disseminated, the concept of minjung gradually diminished and simplified to refer to the proletariat (Kang 2023b). The minjung theorists of the 1980s sanctified labor in opposition to how the concept of labor was being socially depreciated. They strove to awaken pride

in those who labored, emphasized how workers and peasant farmers were agents of production, and even established them as subjects of revolutionary change. The more the emphasis was placed on the proletariat, as those responsible for production, however, the more the disabled, who existed far from productivity, began to be pushed aside, even from their symbolic position. The narration of minjung history, which picked up steam in the 1980s, was centered on the history of the minjung movement in which peasant farmers and workers were the subjects, and as their role of leading revolutionary change was highlighted, the disabled, with their physical bodies ill fit for struggle, were once again expelled from the stage of history, where they had only just managed to make an appearance.

Although the narratives of minjung history omitted disabled persons, the growth of the minjung movement in the 1980s and the spread of the concept of minjung nevertheless had a profound impact on the emergence of the progressive disability movement. The 1980s also happened to be years of great change in regards to the disabled, both internationally and in Korea. For instance, the United Nations (UN) proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons; the Act on Welfare of Mentally and Physically Disabled Persons was enacted in Korea; Korea hosted the Paralympics in 1988; and disability organizations were actively founded in Korea, such as the Korea Organization for Parents of the Disabled, Disabled Peoples' International Korea, Korea Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities, and Ullimteo, the Research Society of the Disabled. Among them, Ullimteo, founded in 1986, began to take on a different color from previous disability organizations and to look at the issue of disability from the stance of a revolutionizing movement (D. Kim 2007). The progressive disability movement, which was born from Ullimteo, continued to develop, exposing the deceit of government welfare policies on the one hand while carrying out struggles after 1988 for the right of disabled persons to live and to work on the other. It was the minjung movement during the 1980s that was decisive in providing the environment for the growth of the disability movement.

Disabled persons, discriminated against, excluded, and marginalized in Korean society, were greatly impacted by the minjung uprisings that spread

like wildfire through the June Uprising in 1987 and acquired a new awareness of the issue of disability. Those who participated in the disability movement at that time refused to accept the view of disability as a result of personal unhappiness and a problem that must be overcome. Instead, they began to problematize disability from a societal level and sought to change the world, asking questions such as why disabled persons were generally poor and uneducated. The progressive disability movement was born in this process (Mun 2021). In contrast to how the disability rights movement in the West began in the context of minority movements, such as the civil rights movement of black people, the gay rights movement, and the feminist movement, and tended to focus mainly on the issues of human rights and welfare, the disability movement in Korea was born upon the groundwork laid by the minjung movement of the 1980s. For this reason, even today a part of the disability movement is still called the disability-minjung tradition within the community because of being strongly rooted in the tradition of the minjung movement (Yun 2012).

Despite being born from the traditions of the minjung movement, however, the disability movement was unable to reach the level of proposing its own original framework to view discrimination against disability. Organizations of the disability movement primarily regarded the movement as stemming from a sense of guilt over their so-called original sin regarding the May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement, from hostility towards military dictatorship, like most of the social movements at that time, and concluded that the destitute lives of disabled people resulted from the oppressive political and economic structures built by the regime. This meant that the disability problem was viewed as existing along the same lines as the problems of the entire minjung and therefore shared the causes of the problems: the contradictory structures of the society, such as the anti-minjung, anti-democratic, anti-national, and foreign-dependent properties of the ruling class (Ha 2020).

Activists of the disability movement at that time tried to call the disabled a subject of another class as well. Disabled people, however, were unable to enter the labor market and therefore deemed unqualified to even enter the basic configuration of the antagonistic class structure of worker

versus capitalist, which had been established by the minjung movement of the 1980s. Activists of the disability movement subsequently made gaining the right to work their most urgent task and criticized a reality in which disabled persons could not enter the so-called normal capitalistic labor market and had no choice but to depend on welfare benefits and pity for survival. They self-deprecatingly called themselves the parasitic consumer class, since disabled people, who relied on peddling or begging, were seen as those who had not yet reached the desirable status in terms of class as the worker. Their vision of how this *parasitic consumer class* should organize or what kinds of strategies of activism they were to carry out was unclear (Ha 2020). The term parasitic consumer class itself displays a strong critical stance towards the contradictions of capitalism. It both reveals the reality of disabled persons, who were gradually alienated from the site of production during industrialization, and at the same time takes a derogatory term referring to the extent of productivity of a human and uses it as a tool of criticism. Be that as it may, the argument was not truly an original theory of disability but the product of mechanically inserting disability into the logic of the minjung movement. Such limitations in its framework—existing within the boundaries of the minjung/class movement—was the reality of the early disability movement (Yun 2012).

This way of simply substituting minjung with the disabled led to questions and conflict within the disability movement. Many took particular issue with the way workers were replaced by disabled persons, asking whether disabled persons could actually create surplus or whether they could contribute sufficiently to be considered during the process of distributing capital. Activists of the disability movement back then discovered that they could not completely explain the lives of disabled persons by using the theoretical framework of capitalism of Marx and Lenin. After much contemplation, however, they ultimately reached the rather formulaic conclusion that "the problem of disability was the responsibility of the state so they had no choice but to fight state power." This logic, which was not that different from previously established theories of social science, only "caused confusion…once you delved into them" (Mun 2021, 45).

In sum, although the concept of minjung and the minjung movement

of the 1980s played a decisive role in the birth of the progressive disability movement, they centered nation and class and therefore could not adequately explain the particular experiences and contradictory structures of discrimination that disabled persons had to face in reality.

Energization of the Disability Movement and Rise of Disability History

Even as the minjung movement declined in the 1990s, the disability movement continued to call fiercely for the right to live, to work, and to obtain an education, and made a flurry of demands ranging from the expansion of employment opportunities for the disabled and their attainment of the right to work to the opposition of the demolition of street vendors run by disabled persons, the eradication of corruption at institutions for the disabled, and securing facilities for disabled persons at universities (D. Kim 2007). In particular, the movement to secure the right of the disabled to use public transportation during the late 1990s, which demanded the introduction of low-floor buses and legally guaranteeing the right of the disabled to utilize public transportation, led to the struggle after the 2000s for their freedom of movement, during which people with severe disabilities joined in the struggle alongside the less severely disabled (D. Kim 2007; Ha 2023). Unlike the 1980s, when the death of Kim Sun-seok, a disabled person who committed suicide by poison after leaving behind a will demanding to eradication of raised curbs at crosswalks, was forgotten without any social repercussions,[2] the fight for mobility rights by the severely disabled in the 2000s became a byword for the disability movement and garnered a large amount of social interest.

As the struggle unfolded, disabled persons came to realize after the

2. In 1984, Kim Sun-seok, who was wheelchair bound, denounced how taxi drivers refused to take disabled persons as passengers, the reality in which they could not even enter restaurants because of the threshold at the entrance of buildings, or freely move about because of the raised curb at crosswalks (*Chosun Ilbo*, November 22, 1984).

1990s that the ontological reality and experiences of the disabled could not be reduced to those of the minjung or workers. They gradually began to grasp and problematize structuralized discrimination against the disabled in everyday life that could not be easily attributed to contradictions of class or nation. It was through this process that the disability movement gradually broke free from the conceptual framework of the minjung movement and its focus on contradictions of class and nation and became critically aware of the ableism and normality assumed in Korean society.

Along with the growth of the disability movement, research on the history of disability, in which disabled persons were established as historical subjects, began to take off. Researchers in this field criticized how previous historical narratives had inadequately covered or omitted the experiences of disabled persons and devoted themselves to writing in these experiences in history. They historically traced the distinct conditions of the lives and experiences of the disabled on the one hand while arguing that the concept of disability was a historical category that had been socially constructed and investigated this process of change on the other. Such efforts challenged previous historical hypotheses, especially modernism and the developmental view of history presupposed by minjung history.

Unlike the stance of researchers of a more traditional minjung history, who had regarded modernity as a project of liberation, researchers of disability history focused on the problems of discrimination, exclusion, and violence that were produced as modern society took shape. In their view, the modern period was not an era when human freedom and rights expanded and improved. Instead, the various forms of discrimination against and exclusion of disabled persons reveal just how false the image of modernity as an era of enhanced freedom and rights is. In fact, the organizational principle of modern society itself, which was based on reason, efficiency, and productivity, fueled the discrimination and exclusion of the disabled. For example, the social structure that made its members perceive disability as deviant and abnormal was created during the period when the modern state was formed. Although the concept of what was ideal had already existed previous to that, the concept of what was normal, or the norm, did not. With the formation of the modern state, however, it became important

to control the population, leading to the construction of abstract categories such as standard, average, and normal. The emergence of an abstract human being with an average personality subsequently allowed the conceptualization of an abnormal human being who deviated from average, giving birth to the cultural perception of disability as abnormal (Davis 1995). The oppressiveness of state power and the exploitation of capitalism manifested both directly and indirectly with this category and perception of normality.

Recent studies on the history of disability in Korea have shown how modern society has brought on the problems of exclusion, discrimination, and violence in various ways. For instance, the category of disabled persons has changed through history, and the category in fact did not exist at all during the Joseon dynasty. It was only after the modern period that the concept of being crippled (*bulguja*) emerged to refer to disabled persons (C. Jeong 2011; So 2017). Ju Yunjeong, who analyzed the history of the visually impaired, points out that the exclusion of and discrimination against the disabled were not due to traditional perceptions or social customs but were reinforced in the process of applying modern law based on ownership. When the Japanese Civil Code was applied as modern law in colonial Korea, the visually impaired were defined as quasi-incompetent (*jun gumchisanja*) persons who lacked the ability to think or act and were subsequently restricted from exercising all kinds of rights (Ju 2020). This kind of exclusion can be seen in the issue of education as well. The establishment of compulsory education for elementary school after liberation led to the expansion of benefits, but as competition to enter a better middle school became overheated, the physical ability test included in the middle-school entrance examination functioned to filter out disabled students, resulting in their exclusion from school education (So 2019). The 1973 Mother and Child Heath Act, which was adopted to facilitate family planning, used the logic of eugenics to make it possible to forcibly sterilize disabled persons, thereby depriving them of their reproductive rights. The sterilization surgery at that time was justified by arguing that it was socially desirable for the common good and prevented human unhappiness in advance (So 2020). As this forced sterilization of the disabled shows, the highly extolled modern medicine did contribute greatly to enhancing the health of human beings

and increasing life expectancy, but it also played the role of justifying discrimination against and exclusion of disabled persons and groups of patients suffering from a certain disease. Modern violence towards the disabled also manifested itself in the form of institutionalization, where the disabled were imprisoned and excluded from society. The social welfare facilities that continued to increase after the Korean War became the leverage to isolate and exclude the disabled and mentally ill from social life (Seoul daehakgyo sahoe hakgwa hyeongje bokjiwonwon yeongu team 2021). The example of Seoul Women's Shelter for Protection and Guidance (Seoul sirip buneyo boho jidoso) demonstrates how the heteronormative family standards and the residual welfare system played an important role in the institutionalization of mentally disabled women (Hwang 2023). Social welfare facilities were not merely physical spaces that signified separation, deferred time, or a closed-off life but a mechanism that named what a normal human being looked like (S. Kim 2020). In this sense, the institutionalization of disabled persons is a modern political strategy to create normal human beings to maintain and reproduce social order and therefore has social implications that are not limited to the experiences of the disabled.

In short, recent studies from Korea on the history of disability cast a sharp gaze on the structures of systemic exclusion of and discrimination against disabled persons in Korean society after the modern period. Of course, the hasty conclusion that exclusion and discrimination are modern products can lead to problems of romanticizing the premodern era. The important task at this point is to trace the past time of disabled persons while at the same time avoiding the creation of a transhistorical reality of discrimination against them.

Disability History, New Minjung History, and Affect

New minjung historiography, which has criticized how previous minjung historiography was deeply infiltrated by belief in a linear development of history, from the traditional to modern period, and by the modernist view

that regards the modern period as a project of liberation, largely resonates with disability history in its criticism of modernity. New minjung history also takes a critical stance on the earlier concept of minjung that centered nation and class and instead emphasizes the multivocality of the minjung. Would it then be possible for new minjung history to encounter disability history without causing any friction? Will the attempts of new minjung historiography to criticize modernity and highlight the multivocal pluralism of the minjung be useful in historicizing the experiences of minorities, including disabled persons?

It is well known that new minjung historiography parted from the concept of minjung of the 1980s, which was formed by discounting any internal differences among the minjung, and has instead focused on the heterogenous voices of the minjung on the one hand while fundamentally questioning the actualness of the minjung. For instance, Hur Youngran (2013) highlights how the minjung was a multivocal subject with heterogenous and diverse voices depending on class, nation, race/ethnicity, sex/gender, region, and social status. Lee Yong-ki (2013) goes one step further and points out how the minjung is not an actual entity with fixed categories and boundaries but an existence deriving from the arrangement and operation of certain powers as well as a fluid construction that is endlessly constituted and reconstituted based on specific situations and circumstances (Hur 2013). Considering how certain minorities become excluded the moment the minjung is assumed to be an actual and tangible entity, the rejection of this view can provide the basis for the advancement of a new minjung history that takes into consideration the minority issue. At present, however, these discussions remain abstract and theoretical and have not yet reached the level of being able to propose a new methodology or an original interpretation that reflects these concerns.

In this regard, I propose that the research methodology of affect, which has recently attracted the attention of the academic community, be utilized to newly understand the relationship between the minjung and minorities. Early on, Kim Ji-ha, in explaining that the minjung was not a universal, original, or absolute actuality, but could only be defined relatively, described the minjung as what "endlessly changes, flows, full of life; ceaselessly changes

its kaleidoscopic and chameleon-like outer shell" (J. Kim 1984, 491). It is intriguing how attempts to grasp the minjung as an ever-changing and flowing, vibrantly alive entity and reject the notion of the minjung as an actual entity in reality can already be seen in the way the minjung was imagined during the 1970s. Kim Ji-ha's notion of the minjung shares many aforementioned points made by Lee Yong-ki—that the minjung is an endlessly (re)constituted fluid and situationally contingent existence deriving from the distribution and workings of power. However the fluidity of the minjung is due not only to the arrangement and mutual interaction with certain powers, as Lee Yong-ki argues, but also to the emotional relationships and forces that are formed as diverse subjects mutually impact one another. This is none other than the element of affect, a product of relationships with others. In spite of its importance in understanding the minjung, affect has barely attracted any interest in previous discussions.

According to Brian Massumi (2015), affect is not merely emotion but the power to affect and be affected and refers to the way humans are connected to other people and situations. As a result, the minjung as affect leads to the understanding of the minjung not by approaching them as an actually existing subject but as an event in the broader horizons of forming a relationship with the other. Understanding minjung as affect then makes it possible to avoid excluding minorities, which inevitably happens when the minjung is reduced to a certain group or existence, and the dangers of a representation that repeats the hierarchization of center and periphery.

Research on affect, although still somewhat new in the field of history in Korea, has recently been taking place in various ways. For instance, Ki You-Jung, who has analyzed crowd protests during the March First Independence Movement, focuses on rage to argue that participation in the uprising was not the result of deep thought or conceptualization of the situation but due to immediate physical responses and emotions (Ki 2018). Meanwhile, Park Kyung Seop, in analyzing the May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement, points out how the motivation to join the struggle and its impact cannot be neatly interpreted through a logical explanation based on reason and rationality, and suggests an examination of the emotions and feelings of the participants and witnesses. Among the

complex feelings that citizens felt when facing the martial law army and joining one another, Park pays attention to the feeling of embarrassment, which he explains does not come from individual psyche but within relationships, as an affect resulting from bodies coming into contact. This affect of the citizens, Park argues, cannot simply be reduced to class and was both the cause and outcome of the movement (Park 2022). These are a couple of examples of studies that focus on affect to newly understand the minjung movement.

The exclusion of and hate directed towards minorities as well as the possibility of solidarity among them also cannot be understood without examining the aspect of affect. As a topic that has attracted almost no attention in previous traditional minjung history, the discussion of affect can be effective to breakthrough the difficulties of understanding the hate or solidarity felt by people towards certain events, groups, or movements only through the lens of class or interests.

Interestingly, Paik Nak-chung, who led the minjung discourse in the 1980s, focused on the selfishness and desires of the minjung, particularly on negative affects in these desires, and diagnosed that "in the desires of the minjung, there lies the selfish desire to lead a better life the more they are oppressed and the desire for revenge that wishes others will fail even if it does not necessarily benefit themselves" (Paik 1984, 26). While Paik pointed out that selfish desire and desire for revenge functioned as an impetus for historical development, he did not appear to realize that it could manifest as the affect of hate towards the socially disadvantaged and minorities. As new minjung history was proposed, violence towards the minority within the minjung has garnered attention (Yeoksa munje yeonguso minjungsaban and Asia minjungsa yeonguhoe 2017), but the discussion of the affect triggering such violence or of its destructive effect is still much lacking. Considering how playing socially disadvantaged groups against one another to produce hate and division is one of the governing strategies of the ruling power, elucidating the context and conditions of the formation of hate and how this affect unfolds will be an important task for understanding the relationship between the minjung and minorities.

The problem of how solidarity can be formed among minorities is

another important point that must be discussed while using the framework of affect to think through the minjung. The history of the disability movement until now has not just been about a movement carried out by the disabled, but a history of struggle in solidarity as well. One example is the Ebada (Ephphatha) Struggle, which was sparked after the residents of the institution for the disabled run by the Ebada Welfare Organization in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi-do province, exposed the corruptions committed by the foundation in 1996 and persevered for seven years to gain a valuable victory. Teachers, students of Ebada, as well as labor unions and even local citizens' organizations all actively joined the fight (Yi 2003) Various social organizations including labor unions also joined in solidarity during the struggle for mobility rights during the 2000s. Such acts of solidarity are called minjung solidarity.

Of course, not all instances of solidary were successful. While many able-bodied young adults have joined the disability movement, it has been pointed out how such solidarity is merely a surface unity and does not develop relations of comradery in everyday life. Such ups and downs have sometimes easily led to the rejection of solidarity and the argument that only those afflicted or directly involved can participate (Yun 2012). The hate, burden, and hurt emerging from encounters and contacts in everyday life can often lead to cracks and fissures in relationships (Hong 2016).

Truth be told, it is not easy to transcend differences and to bond in solidarity. To bring about political change, different issues and identities must be recognized and brought into sharp relief. Working together with people coming from different standpoints and histories invariably leads to conflict. Furthermore, it is all too easy for socially critical groups based on different categories such as sex/gender, class, and race/ethnicity to resort to arguments that discriminate against other groups in order to persuade mainstream society. In face of such limitations, Alison Kafer argues that the process of understanding solidarity between minorities should be regarded as an open process in which discussions and arguments of interests and identities may always occur rather than as a process dealing with interests and identities that have already been formed (Kafer 2013). In other words, it is not a negotiation among closed identities; the identities themselves should

be understood as constantly being constituted and changing within relationships with others. This is reminiscent of Massumi's argument that a "politics of belonging instead of a politics of identity, of correlated emergence instead of separate domains of interest attracting each other or colliding in predictable ways" must be pursued (Massumi 2015, 18). The affect stemming from the encounter with the other is an extremely crucial element in such relational politics.

Conclusion

Minjung history and disability history resonate with each other in their common attempts to find and reinstate the names and histories of the nameless and history-less people who have been marginalized from power. As this article has shown, traditional minjung history was based on a concept of the minjung that centered nation and class could not adequately capture disabled persons as historical subjects. The large wave of the minjung movement of the 1980s and the discourse on the minjung, however, inspired the disabled to interpret their lives in a new light and advance the disability movement. This invigoration of the disability movement also led to the emergence of research on disability history, finally allowing disabled persons, who had merely been emblems of the minjung or omitted from history all together, to appear on the stage of history as subjects with their own voices. The minjung movement and minjung history of Korea thus contributed to the development of the disability movement while simultaneously excluding disabled persons from history, thereby revealing its representational limitations and ultimately providing the context for the appearance of disability history.

The findings of recent studies on disability history show how such research achievements can have significant implications for deconstructing previous minjung history and further developing new minjung history, even if disability history grew out of a distinct context and the critical questions raised in the two fields do not always coincide. New minjung history, for instance, emphasized but was unable to give specific shape to the

multivocality of the minjung. In this regard, disability history, by revealing the modes of existence and experiences of disabled persons and investigating the structures of discrimination, provides a way to think through differences within the minjung. Disability history also criticizes the violence, normality, and standards of modernity based on rationality and productivity, which previous minjung history's focus on the contradictory relations called nation and class had obscured, and specifically demonstrates the multi-layeredness of dominance and oppression. All this, in addition to propounding the need to reflect upon modernity, suggests a new perspective to view the complex structures of power relations by breaking free from the hierarchization of contradictions set by previous minjung historiography and by investigating the relations and intersections between contradictions. Finally, disability history exposes how the majority is complicit in the exclusion and violence suffered by disabled persons and foregrounds the problem of the relationship between two groups of very different nature called the majority and minorities. Doing so opens up a new discussion about new minjung historiography's attempt to explore the minjung as a contradictory subject that does not fit neatly into the binary mold of dominance versus resistance, particularly regarding the issue of inflicting harm and being subject to it.

Disability history has made it clear that identity is not an innate and essential nature but a historical construct. The disability movement, however, at times insists on allowing the participation of only those afflicted or directly involved and stubbornly holds on to exclusive identity politics. Overcoming such limitations requires in-depth consideration of the problem of solidarity. Solidarity here does not indicate a return to a politics of universality called minjung to overcome internal differences. Rather, the work that should be done at this juncture is to trace how different subjects exchanged affect at certain historical moments and set new boundaries of solidarity.

Disability history does not aim merely to write the experiences of disabled persons into the lines of history. Along with aging and illness, disability is not just the problem of disabled persons but a condition of human existence that anyone and everyone may or will experience at some point in their lives. The narratives of disability history thus are not limited to

the stories of disabled persons; it must be enrichened by bearing in mind the history of concepts and categories such as disability, injury, or disabled persons and the relationships with others. The latter aspect—as relationships with others—is where minjung history and disability history can come into contact. In this sense, minjung as affect warrants attention in disability history as well.

At the present, however, disability history seems to be repeating that familiar dichotomy previously demonstrated by minjung historiography, namely, as being a history of oppression versus liberation. How then can new critical questions that move beyond the dichotomy of oppression and liberation be possible? This is where I point to the question proposed by Ars Vivendi (The Art of Living) that asks about the possibility of grasping the wisdom cultivated by people living with disabilities and illnesses.[3] The unquestioned vision of creating a future society in which every single person is healthy and disability does not exist is a political ideology that oppresses everyone. The experiences, knowledge, and lives of disabled persons are essential in building the future of humankind. By asking such new questions, it will be possible to break from the familiar binary schema of oppression and liberation that minjung history has repeated and find a fresh, alternative path to tread. Finally, the discussion of the affects of hate and solidarity calls for further investigation into the specific relationship formed by the encounter between disability history and new minjung history.

3. https://www.ritsumei-arsvi.org/aboutus/aboutus-2/.

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