

The Ruling Discourse and Mass Politics of the Park Chung Hee Regime ¹

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The Park Chung Hee period was when a fully fledged modern nation state was formed. As nation state is intimately joined with the process of capitalistic expansion and reproduction, the Park regime's modernization project can be summed up as an expansion of capitalism and construction of national subjectivity. Farmers, workers, and university students, while occupying different sociopolitical locations in society, were unitary subjects insofar as they were actively mobilized for the modernization project. This paper argues that in the process of mobilization, the state exercised both coercion and politics of consent; the state's developmentalism was conjoined with the people's egalitarian desire for a better life. The people did not just passively follow the state, but also actively and enthusiastically participated in the state's mobilization drive.

The Park regime was also an active practitioner of mass politics. The dominant state discourse of developmentalism and nationalism reappropriated as its own the egalitarian pressure coming from below, making its politics not just of repression but also of desire. Unlike the politics of discrimination of the pre-modern period, the Park regime pursued the nationalization of society and people by interpellating the disparate people into a unified national subjectivity.

Keywords: Park Chung Hee, Saemaeul undong, developmentalism, egalitarianism, mass politics, Agrarian Service Movement

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Introduction

The era of the Park Chung Hee regime (1961-1979) was decidedly an age of violence, represented by its draconian Yusin Constitution and Emergency Measures. The regime's will was imposed and realized through the suppression of civil and human rights. At the same time, however, the Park regime was the first and most effective modern state in the history of Korea to mobilize its people. In the process of massive mobilization, the state showed itself capable of modernizing and inducing voluntary participation of people not only through coercion and suppression but also, and perhaps more effectively, through cultivation of its own image as rational and scientific.

The developmental mobilization from the top was intimately conjoined with the desire of a great number of Koreans. The state unified and collectivized with its own code the dispersed desires of its citizens. As such, Park's regime was not only the politics of repression but of desire. The character of the Park regime as the politics of desire can be seen in the following statement regarding the Saemaeu undong (New Village Movement): "The New Village Movement is not imposed from outside but is a movement initiated by an individual with his or her creativity. This movement is not possible through passive self-abandonment but only through active and voluntary self-realization. Even the most altruistic person will not be able to live for others all his life. There is no pure sacrifice. Individual interest, attention, and effort are all indispensable for one's success" (Hanguk gyoyuk hakhoe 1974:29).

The Park Chung Hee system, as the first modern state in Korean history, attempted to monopolize the consciousness and behavior of Koreans through the modern mass political mechanism and discursive practices. One such discursive practice was the discourse of egalitarianism that proceeded with the discourse of modernization. The Korean people's widespread desire and collective will to get rid of poverty and to live better lives joined with the populist urge of Park Chung Hee. Park, unlike previous leaders in Korean politics who flaunted their elite backgrounds, repeatedly emphasized that he was the son of a poor peasant and, therefore, one of "them."

By examining and problematizing the existing understanding of the Park Chung Hee era and the New Village Movement that sees them mainly in a binary opposition of domination versus resistance, I hope to shed new light on the Park era and the modernization project. The forces of domination and resistance were not always clear cut during the process of modernization, nor

was the *minjung* a pre-existing, coherent group that could naturally transform itself from the object of domination to the subject of resistance. Both the state domination and the *minjung* resistance were carried out in the name of nation (*minjok*) and citizen (*gungmin*). The resistance carried out in the name of progressive politics converged with the state-oriented developmental strategy. In other words, domination is not a cancellation of social animosities and tensions but rather a modulation and regimentation of them; for that reason, resistance is a potential object of state appropriation. The modernization project was, therefore, not simply a forceful mobilization by the state but also involved the consent of a great number of Koreans, who enthusiastically embraced the discourse of egalitarianism embedded in the discourse of modernization.

The Discourse of Egalitarianism

To interpellate dispersed individuals into a particular group is a phenomenon generally found in modern mass society. Modern society is sustained by re-territorializing individuals who were de-territorialized from the previous era's status system and land in the modernization process. The rapid industrialization of the 1960s and 1970s in South Korea dramatically increased social mobility and began to eliminate the remnants of "pre-modern" social relations that still remained visible even through the Korean War (1950-1953). Rather than a passive object of the state's mobilization, however, mass society was also an active agent of the modernization project.

As the death of Jeon Tae-il clearly shows, the Park regime's welfare policy was non-existent during the modernization period. Given the weak material foundation and the absence of a welfare policy during the Park regime, how was it possible for the state to mobilize its citizens extensively and successfully? Oppressive domination is one answer, but obviously this is but a one-sided story. The masses of the Park regime cannot be viewed simply as passive objects. With the modernization and its attendant discourse and social movements, such as the Saemaeul undong, countless Koreans were transformed into active subjects. The existing narrative of this period as the "oppressive state and resisting *minjung*" cannot fully explain the phenomenon of the massive and spectacular mobilization of people and their social integration. From this perspective, it is necessary to analyze the state discourse from the perspective of the egalitarian pressure from the bottom.

Park's modernization project had as its foundation the construction of an active and voluntary subject, and the modern notion of "a free and equal individual" was an essential component of this subject formation. The discourse of liberal democracy was the meta-narrative of the Republic of Korea, but the lived experience of the common people offered very little freedom. Moreover, any freedom that was enjoyed by the people was in exchange for equality. People accepted state monitoring of personal matters, such as the length of one's hair and skirt and movements after midnight, because everyone was equally subjected to it.

The popular memory of the past as a time when everyone was poor makes it possible to imagine that in the future a similar deprivation can be overcome as long as it is equally experienced by everyone. The Saemaeul undong can also be seen as a result of the egalitarian pressure to narrow the gap between the city and the village. In other words, freedom and equality, the interpellative signifier for subject formation, was integrated in the discourse of egalitarianism in the case of South Korea. To the people who experienced in their daily lives inequality and discrimination due to their class, gender, and educational status, egalitarianism was a powerful object of desire and one the regime could not ignore.

Park Chung Hee also realized that equality for everyone is the basic principle of human society and actively sought for measures to bring about greater equality.² He called the existence of inequality in the contemporary society "feudal vestiges" and exhorted that the "[c]ontempt for and discrimination against others because of difference in rank and wealth constitute another important cause of national disunity. Such inequality in moral, spiritual or any other aspect of human relationship is the clearest evidence that one has yet to be baptized by the cleansing fire of the modern democratic spirit" (Park 1962 [1970]:33).

Park Chung Hee found the source of contemporary society's inequality in the past, and articulated the task and goal of the modernization project as overcoming such vestiges of the past, thereby delimiting or redrawing the boundaries of the egalitarian aspiration within the confines of the state. He also presented the cause of inequality as due to the "privileged consciousness" held

2. Im Su-hwan points out that the idea of economic equality in Korea is a product of the continuous social movements from the peasant movement of the nineteenth century to the independence movement of the colonial period. See Im 1997:128.

by a few elite groups in Korean society. Park thereby delegitimized various social networks of private individuals that were not within the “official sphere.” These “privileged groups” who were criticized for their individualistic behavior included certain elements within universities and Buddhist establishments, and associations based on their school and regional ties (Park 1962 [1970]:22-23).

That the discourse of egalitarianism was appropriated and became state-centered is well illustrated in the state’s articulated notion of equality in the economic sphere. The content of the state’s much emphasized economic egalitarianism was “not so much the communal ownership of property or its equal distribution, but the guarantee of the minimum right to survival and subsistence (Park 1962 [1970]:34). Park was also troubled by the conglomerates’ capacity to destabilize the state by their concentration of economic power. In other words, the egalitarian discourse became the discourse of total control by the state of both capital and the masses.

The state utilized the discourse of egalitarianism for its own political purpose. Park Chung Hee defined the Korean Democratic Party as “supported by big landlords, people in the provincial wealthy class and big businessmen...all of whom were semi-feudalistic and ultra-conservative. Some of [the party’s] leaders had been government officials under the Japanese regime; others were intellectuals with colonialist educations. Most were lawyers, bankers, and merchants who were invariably ignorant about the essentials of a democratic revolution and about reforms directed toward modernization” (Park 1962 [1970]:199-200). According to Park, the New Democratic Party, the main opposition party to the Park Chung Hee’s ruling party in the 1970s, inherited the conservative, aristocratic, landlordly character of the KDP. Park was also keen to identify himself as a “commoner,” distant from “landlords and aristocrats.”

The existence of inequality at the level of individual relations and among interpersonal matters was transposed to the public sphere and became an issue of public ethics. Naturally, nation was established as the highest point of public ethics. Park Chung Hee declared that in order to become a *minjok*, one had first of all to be reconstructed as an individual, and the reconstruction of an individual could not proceed without first revolution in one’s self-consciousness and establishment of one’s self-identity: “Where there is not an established ego but only father-son, master-slave and adult-child relationships, there can be no equality, and no human rights. There is no room in such feudalistic relations for equality or human rights (1962 [1970]:29). Therefore, “[w]ithout an established ego, one cannot enjoy his own human rights....without an established ego, one

cannot have the self-consciousness of membership in the national entity” (Park 1962 [1970]:28-29). In order to construct *minjok*, there first had to be a construction of modern individual subjectivity.

Nationalism as a process of differentiation and integration repeats the process of ideological appellation to transform unequal individuals into equal citizens. In this process of interpellation, the contemporary society’s inequality is sutured in the egalitarian integration of nation/citizen. More importantly for our discussion, however, the very social inequality gave rise to the fervent egalitarian aspiration that in turn allowed itself to be sutured in the state discourse of nation/citizen. Not so surprisingly, as social inequality intensified, the egalitarianism embedded in the notions of citizen/nation was strengthened and the discontented individual was reborn as a citizen and national subject. This process is most visible in the Saemaeul undong (New Village Movement).

The state defined the Saemaeul undong as a movement crossing social, regional, class, and temporal boundaries and as an education project for the whole people of South Korea to revolutionize their consciousness. The essential component of this revolution was the transformation of an individual from the “pre-modern” being of the “era of poverty” to a new “modern” person, capable of realizing the long-cherished dream of Koreans to “live well.”

The Saemaeul undong was not merely a state project or state policy for particular political purposes. Rather it was presented as a way to realize the common aspiration of the Korean people, which derived from their long history of culture, spiritual life, and philosophical tradition. The Saemaeul undong was not limited to only farming and fishing villages but included urban areas, government bureaucracy, and even private companies (Saemaeul yeonguhoe 1976:46-50). In other words, Saemaeul undong was an attempt to reconstruct the “people” into “citizen-subjects” imbued with egalitarianism.

What Saemaeul undong emphasized first was the principle of subjectivity, that is, self-reliance (*jajuseong*) and national revival (*minjok jungheung*). The Saemaeul undong envisioned the individual as “not a vague and universal democratic citizen but one that possesses a firm and clear sense of state within our historical reality” (Hanguk gyoyuk hakhoe 1974:16). Modernization was not simply westernization nor technological culture; it also meant preserving the customs and morals (*mipung yangsok*) and esthetics and emotions of the traditional village community (Hanguk gyoyuk hakhoe 1974:31). It was a modern version of *dongdoseogi* (Korean spirit and external application).

The second principle of Saemaeul undong was productivity. The Saemaeul

undong was defined as a “movement to live better” which was expressed in the egalitarian language of a “movement to have everyone live well.” The spirit of the Saemaedul undong was well within the discourse of modernization and developmentalism.

Developmentalism, one of the core discourses of the Park regime, received wide support from intellectuals. Immediately after the May 16th military coup of 1961, *Sasanggye*, the most influential journal among the intellectuals at that time, endorsed the coup as a “nationalist military revolution”: “While the coup was an unfortunate incident from the perspective of democratic values, it was necessary for the nation in light of the mounting corruption, incompetence, disorder, and the threat of Communists” (Yi 1988:49). Intellectuals across the political spectrum shared this view. Associations of university students issued statements of support for the coup. The ambassador of the U.S. at the time described the general mood among the intellectuals as follows: “A surprising number of intellectuals, journalists, and politicians felt that the coup was inevitable and a good thing to have happened” (Hong 1998:198). Intellectuals were enamored with the modernization discourse of the military regime; at the time, one professor of Philosophy summarized the task of Korean nationalism as “modernization, economic development, industrialization, technology, state development, and national revival” (An 1968:139). At a time when even dissident intellectuals supported the modernization project of the Park regime, it is no surprise that the interpellation and mobilization of the masses as “industrial soldiers” and “flag-carriers of modernization of the motherland” became the imperative of the era.

Developmentalism was not without inherent problems, however. There began to appear cracks and crises in the discourse and policies of the state’s egalitarianism. Differentiation in development led to intensification of inequalities, and the pressure for egalitarianism became an Achilles’ heel for the development process. Incidents such as the death of Jeon Tae-il in 1970 and the Gwangju Settlers’ Protest in 1971³ are cases in point.

3. In 1970, the government moved thousands of those living in the slum areas of Seoul to Gwangju, a newly created satellite city of Seoul. The city planned to eventually transfer 20,000 families to the new area and give them pieces of land on which to build houses by promising to give them loans during the next four years. When the promised factories and schools did not follow, nearly eighty percent of the settlers went back to their original squatting places. Those who remained in Gwangju faced unpaved roads, nonexistent sewage and water services, non-functioning toilets, and high taxes for using land. This led to a protest involving thirty thousand settlers in August 1971. See Lee 2007:33-34, 150-151. — Trans.

The above is not to suggest that egalitarian pressure disavowed or resisted developmentalism. The egalitarian pressure from the bottom converged with, and was institutionalized within, the existing order and was instrumental in the nationalization of society and the masses. In other words, egalitarianism was one of the pressures pushing for developmentalism. Egalitarianism also acted as a strong antidote to the unlimited competition of capitalism and provided a certain space for equal opportunity in the competition.

In short, the egalitarian pressure from the bottom had left its visible trace within the ruling order (both in discourse and in its discursive practices) and opened two possibilities: one was to push egalitarianism to the point of imploding the existing order, and the other was to realign it as an institutional practice within the existing order.

Discourse needs to be understood in its institutional practice. Discourse, not as false ideology or as a vague theory but as institutional practice, functions as material that constitutes society. Egalitarian discourse functioned not only in the concept of equality but revealed itself in the institutional practices. Both military conscription (introduced in 1950) and the policy of equalization of high school (introduced in 1974) are cases in point. Equalization of high school was the state's response to the egalitarian pressure from the bottom. Military service was a symbol of egalitarianism par excellence, in that in principle everyone had to serve. In this process and through these practices, the egalitarian pressure from the bottom was transformed by the state into the homogeneity of the nation and was reduced to state power. Park Chung Hee's public image of himself also expressed egalitarianism par excellence:

Poverty is my teacher and benefactor. For this reason, my twenty-four hours cannot be separated from matters related to this benefactor. My hope is to establish self-autonomous Korea based on a diligent, hard-working, and honest civil society....I was born, raised, worked among the commoners, and hope to die in the warmth of the commoner....I have partly attained this dream through the May 16th Revolution that I have carried out because I could no longer ignore the sumptuous feast of the corrupted, privileged class. (Park 1963 [1997]:295-296)

This statement was issued at the time when Park Chung Hee was under international and domestic pressure to hand over power to civilian rule and therefore should be read as a statement to obtain support for his political

ambition. But what is important for our purpose is rather its effect, regardless of what was intended or willed.

Since the establishment of the Republic of Korea, no leader at the top has commended this kind of rhetoric. Park identified himself with the oppressed and downtrodden, sharply contrasting the “sumptuous feast of the corrupted, privileged class” with the “warmth of the commoner.” Regardless of Park’s intention or will, it is clear that his discursive practice of mass politics was in full operation and worked well. Here is yet another example of Park’s narrative as commoner:

Sweat!
Listening to the humming of the machine
as if it is music

The girl
reading French poetry
in the second-class train
I despised
your pretty hands

We have to work. We cannot survive with pretty hands. Those pretty hands, because of you we have endured poverty and deprivation. How could I despise the pretty hands of a girl, but have you seen the hands of the privileged class of less than one percent of the Korean population? Pretty hands are our enemy...Let us finally fire the cannon of hatred at our enemy. (Park 1963 [1997]:275-276)

This “anti-privileged” narrative is echoed by a worker’s narrative of “life as a commoner”:

There are those who complain that their bottom is not comfortable in their own car, while there are those who live contented and happily even if they have to walk miles to save the bus fare of 35 cents. This is how I look at life. I look forward to the future of abundance and happiness that are promised by the frugal living of today. I will make an effort to create an everlasting image of myself as a woman who transcended today’s difficulties for tomorrow and overcame her fate. (Quoted in Kim 2002:97)

In these two accounts, Park's "privileged class of less than one percent of the Korean population" and the worker's people "who own their cars" are portrayed as a group separate from the rest of the Korean society, and the two narratives resonate with egalitarian impulses. In fact, Park's writing is more radical compared to the model worker's memoir in which a sense of resignation, to accept the reality as it is, pervades. These two narratives are a meeting point of the state—initiated developmentalism and the bottom-up pressure for egalitarianism, and from this point the nation is constructed as one that integrates and fulfills the desires for both.

Mass Politics and Mass Mobilization

The Park Chung Hee regime was also the first genuine example of mass politics in the history of Korea. The core of mass politics is the politics of homogeneity. As opposed to the previous era's politics of differentiation, the Park regime constructed a new, undifferentiated and homogeneous mass, based on the principle of free and equal individuals. The state and the citizens both imagined themselves as constituting the homogeneous nation.

It is difficult to find a case in modern Korean history in which the state leader emphasized his identity with the citizenry as Park did. The Republic's first president Syngman Rhee was called "a Bourbon 200 years after the Bourbons of France." Another president, Yun Bo-seon, was a scion of an aristocratic family. The Joseon dynasty's *yangban* and landowners did not disappear with the demise of the Joseon order but rather metamorphosed into new leaders in modern society. Yet even in a changed society, "a person of *yangban* origin" still could not commingle with the "lowly"; the state was still an imposing higher-up and the citizen still the lowly. Park Chung Hee, however, identified himself as a "son of a peasant," declaring that "he was born as a commoner and will die as one." Park Chung Hee's epistemology was fascist; he viewed that "it is second nature for the majority of Koreans to be dominated by powerful discipline" (Wolgan Joseon 1993:484). But at the same time, he knew how to speak the language of "consent." He himself was a model of success story and gave hope to the majority of the Koreans, who at the time were deprived, isolated, and treated unjustly. To those, a new life was given as "a warrior for the modernization of the motherland." Let us first look at the New Village Movement and its major participants, the farmers.

The New Village Movement and Farmers

The Saemaeul undong, starting from 1970 and still continuing, is the largest and longest running state-initiated mass mobilization project. It was carried out in almost all villages in South Korea. The number of various projects rose to 2,667,000 cases in 1978 from 32,000 in 1972, and the state support for the farmers to carry out these projects grew to four billion won in 1979 from 200 million won in 1973 (Jeon 2000:82).

The mass mobilization project, so heavily concentrated in non-urban areas, was itself unusual in modern Korea, a phenomenon that cannot be explained “without the existence of a state that is independent of and free from civil society” (Im 1997:12). The Park regime “actively intervened [in the Saemaeul undong] as a supplier of capital and technology.” The state’s pro-agricultural intervention was such that the price of grain in the 1970s domestic market reached three times that of the price on the international market. The size of loans from the Agricultural Cooperative was also large and gradually expanded from 1.7 billion won in 1961 to 10.5 billion won in 1970 to 87.7 billion won in 1979 (Im 1997:114).

The Park regime exhorted the farmers to carry out the Saemaeul undong through the voluntary mobilization of farmers themselves. Park stated that the government was only an initiator, and the sustaining force of the movement was the farmers’ “will to improve one’s lot.” That the farmers themselves bore the bulk of the financial burden in the end is indicated by the rate of the farmers’ own supply of materials, which increased from 43.9 percent in 1972 to 89.5 percent in 1979. In short, the Park regime, through its system of support and reward, supplied the economic and normative rationale for inducing the farmers’ maximum participation. This system of “differentiated support” based on performance and productivity was highly effective in mobilizing the farmers.

Although there were various reactions to the Saemaeul undong, by and large the farmers felt that “there was an element of coercion but in the end everything turned out all right.” One farmer remarked, “Once things began to change, people realized that it was a good thing. Roads were widened, new roofs were put up, and toilets were installed....In the beginning people were just doing what they were told to, but gradually people wanted to do more themselves and got involved actively [and therefore] the government in the end was a catalyst.” The same farmer expressed his pride about his involvement in the movement: “did the village work even if I could not do my own farming work” (Farmer A 2000).

Park's modernization project took on the characteristics of a "passive revolution" and followed the classical path of industrialization through the sacrifice made by the agricultural sector. The farmers' position was extremely precarious during the period of modernization. Park's policy to support small farmers could not achieve its intended self-sufficiency due to the small scale of production and, in the end, the rise in income in the agricultural sector was achieved through the state's assumption of the increasing financial burden. The Saemaedul undong rescued the farmers from absolute poverty, but it failed to raise their living standard significantly. However, farmers in general had a positive and favorable image of Park and the Saemaedul undong, which cannot be explained simply as a case of false ideology.

Until recent times, the Korean farming villages strictly observed complicated hierarchical relationships based on possession of land and status. This system had its own reproductive structure, and the efforts of the farmers to overcome the system failed each time throughout history. From the perspective of the farmers who occupied the position of the dominated in the hierarchical system, when the possibility of overthrowing the system is dim, the modern state with its "anti-feudal" posture can easily become an attractive object of allegiance.

Another significant factor in the farmers' embrace of the Saemaedul undong can be found in the industrialization project and the expansion of education that was part and parcel of the modernization and industrialization projects. By the 1960s, the effect of the industrialization project greatly increased the farmers' desire for economic betterment as well. The modern value system of development and progress began to replace the long habitual cyclic thinking, and the expansion of the public education from the 1960s also heightened the understanding of and preference for modern thinking and life styles. These expectations were channeled through and focused on the state, however, to the point that farmers expected state intervention in their own village affairs.

Of course, it is not difficult to imagine how the "military mentality of unilateral decisions and unconditional obedience" might have applied to the project. In fact, some participants observed that those who had completed their military duty were the most enthusiastic and worked the hardest. On the other hand, testimonials from the participants include such statements as "we would have been considered rebellious if we had not done our job properly" or "those who did not show up for meetings were treated worse than commies" (Yu et al. 2001:47). The experience of the Korean War has left a strong image of the state as "fearful." During the war, when one's life or death was determined by

whether one was a *gungmin* (citizen of South Korea) or an *inmin* (citizen of North Korea), there was a deeply felt animosity toward and fear of the state. Therefore, it was difficult to oppose the state publicly. It is not surprising that the initial stage of the Saemaedul undong was accompanied by a considerable amount of coercion.⁴

The state also penetrated deep into the village. As opposed to the pre-modern state with limited penetration into the village which could have hoped at best for passive obedience rather than active mobilization of its people, the modern state's extensive and fine-grained bureaucratic network was unprecedented. The Saemaedul undong would have been impossible without the bureaucratic network.

The Minister of Interior declared the Saemaedul undong "a war" and the chiefs of villages and counties responded as such. They were obligated to tour each village and county, and it was not unusual for some to visit their districts anywhere from ten to 30 times a month. Some even resided in the village and actively partook in village life, ringing the village bell in the dawn, for example. Through this process there was much more frequent contact than ever before between the local bureaucrats and farmers, and this contact had a contractual connotation in that it promised promotion for the bureaucrat and more support for the farmer from the state.

To the villagers of the Saemaedul undong, the state was a de-politicized entity. Those who were interviewed by the author for this paper invariably viewed all politicians with suspicion and held a negative attitude toward them, but a number of them did not view Park Chung Hee as a "regular" politician. One farmer stated: "People donated their own land when we were widening roads in the village...The Saemaedul undong was pure." Farmers equated the "purity" of the Saemaedul undong with that of Park Chung Hee. The same farmer stated: "It was the politicians who were oppressed [under the Yusin system] but we farmers were not oppressed, and I'm confident that President Park worked for the people." This farmer's testimonial is also a narrative of identity with Park:

I also grew up poor, and I understood what [Park Chung Hee] meant by revolution. In fact, no matter what others say, a country like ours needs to

4. A recent study shows that the Saemaedul undong also utilized methods of discipline used in traditional farming villages such as isolating non-participants from the village, levying fines, and inducing competition among different lineage groups. See Yu Byeong-yong et al 2001:81-88.

have a stickler...without [Park] we couldn't have gotten highways. No need to do democracy...the government had to do what it had to do. [Park] didn't make any money out of [the Saemaeul undong]. He gave all of his effort for the country. Some scholars say he was no good; he did a military coup and all. But I know one thing, and I'll say it even if my neck is gone for saying it. Why? [Those scholars and politicians] didn't do anything for the country and while they were bad-mouthing Park Chung Hee, how much money have they accumulated themselves? Politicians are all liars. (Farmer B 2000)

This farmer not only identifies himself with Park, but also shows contempt for the idea of democracy, violation of which has been the principal basis of criticism against Park, and relates his own previous economic deprivation as authentication of integrity and purity. His expression of intense contempt for scholars and politicians is also identical to Park's own extreme aversion to the West's modern political system and style.

One farmer interviewed by the author remembers fondly of Park: "[Park] is from a farming village, and he also drank *makgeolli* (unrefined rice wine). It was the best time for us farmers" (Farmer B 2000). What was also important for him and many others was perhaps that although Park had left the village and became successful, he did not forget his background and retained respect for where he came from. For these reasons the farmers considered Park as one of them. Park may have been the president of South Korea, but unlike other politicians with an elite background, Park was "just like us" (Farmer B 2000). At this point the state was no longer outside the farmers' life but was intimately involved in daily life, having become an object of trust. At the same time, the farmers made links with the state selectively and competitively, and through this relationship the state was seen not as the object of opposition or resistance but rather as a supplier of materials to realize their dreams. In short, through the Saemaeul undong the state and farmers established the relationship more as patron and client than dominant and dominated (Han 1995:48).

The desire on the part of the farmers for economic betterment and for meaningful lives as members of society was met by Park's policy. What remains important in the memory of many farmers was that they were treated with respect and dignity, which was probably more meaningful and important than their economic achievement. This experience was akin to going through a social revolution. It is reported that through the Saemaeul undong the residual elements

of the status system and tensions between lineage groups were greatly reduced. One village in particular had had long-standing issues among three lineage groups, but these were said to have been resolved through the Saemaoul undong. Yet another village had two lineage groups that were divided into left and right during the Korean War and had a great deal of enmity toward each other, but gradually reconciled during their joint participation in the Saemaoul undong.

Most of the leaders of the Saemaoul undong were in their twenties and thirties. Most of them had served in the military and also a significant number of them had graduated from middle school. As young people in the village were also organized around 4-H,⁵ the leadership in the villages shifted rapidly from older people to younger people. The new leadership composed of younger people was more receptive to new ideas and values, and became a central motor for the Saemaoul undong. As previously mentioned, the new leadership also helped to resolve, with the consultation of local bureaucracy, some of the long-standing issues stemming from the old village order such as lineage groups. The Saemaoul undong also helped to do away with various superstitious beliefs and practices. In other words, the farmers experienced their “modern” social life through the unit of their village. One of the guiding principles of the Yusin system was stated as follows:

Democracy can gradually root itself after practiced by farmers first. The village is a small unit in which participation is easy since it is easy to collect ideas and carry out serious discussions, which is one of the basic principles of democracy...The small unit of village makes human relationships cooperative and imbues individuals with a sense of membership in the community, thereby training them as responsible citizens. (Hyeondae jeongchi yeonguhoe 1976:130-133)

It is evident from the interviews with farmers that this was very much the case. Although the Yusin period is generally remembered as a period of coercion and violence, paradoxically the villagers in the Saemaoul undong were experiencing “real democracy.” Elections were held for village heads, numerous meetings were called, and decisions were made among the villagers. All these processes

5. “4-H” stands for “Head, Heart, Hands, and Health,” and is the youth education branch of the Cooperative Extension Service, a program of the United States Department of Agriculture. It was introduced into South Korea in the early 1940s by the U.S. Military Government in Korea.

took place without much intervention from bureaucracy. Through this experience, the farmers gained political experience in negotiating and settling various differences and tensions in the villages. It was through these processes that Saemaetul undong became their own project and its result also their own. Of course, tensions and contradictions existed between those that were more active and those that were less active, but no one disavowed the movement itself.

The mass media began to carry regular programs of the Saemaetul undong; in 1973 alone, the ten major dailies in South Korea carried more than ten regular features on Saemaetul undong. TV and radio each had six new programs covering Saemaetul undong. In addition, numerous “news movies” and “cultural movies” (*munhwa yeonghwa*) were made and distributed nationwide. There were a total of sixty-five films made between 1973 and 1979, and these were distributed to 9,850 places. The titles of these movies say it all: for example, *The Miracle of Yongsan River*, *The Village That Does Not Sleep*, *The Couple Who Overcame Poverty*, and *Progress Without Stop* (Saemaetul yeonguhoe 1980:77).

The magazine “Saemaetul,” which began publication in May 1974, shows symbolically the modality of the farmers’ transformation into citizens.⁶ In the past, it was rather unusual to have farmers appear in mass media, let alone as social leaders. In these magazines, however, the farmers were the main focus. Each month the magazine introduced ten leaders of Saemaetul undong with their names, ages, experiences, and major achievements along with photos of them and their activities. It was a novelty to adorn the stories of hitherto unknown village heads or leaders of the Saemaetul undong with the narratives of achievement.

The village women also were remade through this process. Many village women of the period have a favorable image of themselves as they were duly recognized for their abilities and commitment. One former president of a village women’s association is a good example. For her role as a president, she was treated as someone important and serious by the villagers and the bureaucrats, who until then had been an object of fear. She “cannot forget the experience” and remembers receiving much praise for her work: “People recognized me as

6. This magazine was published by the Ministry of Culture and Information and distributed to each village and city in South Korea. It is evident from perusing the issues that great efforts were made for agrarian appeal by featuring success stories of Saemaetul undong, interviews with local villagers, and introductions of individuals related to their Saemaetul undong activities. Well-known intellectuals of the time as well as entertainers were also featured in these magazines.

the president of a women's association of my village [and] I worked hard to fulfill the directives from the top." She did her work "with ease, energy, and passion."

She participated at the Saemaeul leaders' training camp in Suwon and had a memorable experience performing in skits—it was her first "cultural" experience. The enthusiastic audience clapped wildly for her, again for the first time in her life. Her mundane life was transformed through these kinds of experiences, and she remembers the time as "the most exciting time" of her life.

An important element in the Saemaeul undong that gave the participants specific experience as equal members of the society was its education program. The training program of the Saemaeul undong leaders was headed by the office of the Presidential Secretariat, an indication of the importance the state assigned to it. The number of trainees in camp totaled 677, 900 between 1972 and 1979. (Far fewer trainees—69,533—were not in camp during this period.)

The Saemaeul undong education was initially limited to men only. The trainees themselves requested a separate women's program and asked that the program be extended to all government bureaucrats including police and high ranking government officials. Cabinet ministers also participated in the Saemaeul undong education from 1974 on. It must have been a new experience for the trainees to be the initiators of new programs when they were used to being only the recipients and objects of programs and projects initiated from outside. Nevertheless, the authority of the farmers was difficult to sustain without Park Chung Hee as mediator and amplifier of their authority.

At the training institutes and camps, the farmers and social leaders were recognized and treated as equal. In their everyday lives, it would not have been possible for the two groups to meet as social equals, but at least during the training session they were. A report of a meeting between three Saemaeul undong leaders and three socially prominent leaders in one room (the director of the training session, a vice president of a corporation, and a vice minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) was featured as one of the lead stories in the "Saemaeul" magazine (1974). The equality enjoyed by these trainees from diverse backgrounds also symbolized their equal standing as citizens.

Throughout this process, farmers responded actively and enthusiastically to the call of nationalization with statements such as: "I've chosen this life to live a worthy life," and "I'll die without regret while fighting against the communist North Korea." Some even expressed enmity toward those who would not participate in the movement, "those who prefer foreign wines over *takju*

(another name for *makgeolli*, unrefined rice wine) and foreign cigarettes over Saemaetul brand” (1974). Through their active participation in the various programs of the state, the farmers had become nationalized, echoing the demands of the state power as their own.

Those farmers interviewed for this paper had strong nostalgia for and attachment to the experience of the Saemaetul undong, and harbored ambivalent feelings about “equalized society,” by which they seem to imply a changed relationship between the state and citizens towards the end of the Park period. One farmer recalled: “In the beginning of the 1970s, the government said, ‘Let’s do it,’ and we followed it. At the end of the 1970s, it was no longer so. As people were becoming well-off, the morale became loose” (quoted in Yu et al. 2001:105). Another had a similar reaction: “The power of the Saemaetul undong was that we followed [the government]. The spirit of the Saemaetul undong made it possible for us to give up our own land...Now it’s different, now that the society is more equalized. Now that people are no longer hungry, they pay more attention to their own family affairs and their own share [of profit]” (quoted in Yu et al. 2001:105). These statements suggest that the Saemaetul undong is remembered as state-led but also that a certain amount of coercion in its implementation was anticipated or expected by the participants themselves.

Between the “Working Class” and “Industrial Soldier—Citizen”

The eighteen years of the Park regime also saw the formation and maturation of Korean capitalism. The expansion of capital-wage labor also meant the rapid increase of the number of wage laborers. South Korea’s worker was simultaneously capable of three subject positions: as a member of the proletariat, “digging the grave of bourgeoisie;” as a *minjung*, endowed with historical consciousness to change the existing order; and as a citizen, participating in the motherland’s modernization project as an “industrial soldier.” In reality, a worker was often a *mélange* of all three subject positions. A recent survey by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (*Minju nochong*) shows that most workers, who—with very few exceptions—were union organizers and activists, identified themselves first as a citizen of South Korea before they identified themselves as a worker. In the case of women workers, they chose “woman” as their foremost identity, then “a member of family or lineage” as their second identity (Minju nochong 2003:82-93).

In short, class identity and national identity can be mutually antagonistic but also interrelate to constitute a group identity. The working class has become a Korean working class, but an individual is a citizen before he is a worker. Through everyday, unconscious, “voting” activities, he has become nationalized. There is no doubt this process of nationalization of workers began in earnest during the Park regime.

The first generation of Korean factory workers was highly motivated and enthusiastic about modernization and industrialization. Between 1972 and 1981, the loss of work days due to labor disputes averaged only 4,000 days per 1,000 workers, a number that was overwhelmingly low compared to other Asian countries, such as the Philippines (56,000 days) or Singapore (8,000 days) (Kim 1995:2). According to Professor Choe Jang-jip, for twenty years from 1960 to 1980 in Korea, “there were no significant or large-scale labor disputes that would have jeopardized the industrialization process or political stability. The first generation of industrial workers was docile, rather than combative and resistant to the industrialization process, and showed a high degree of dedication and enthusiasm” (1988:11).

This is partly due to the fact that the proletarianization process of the workers during the Park regime was led and monitored by the state. According to Gu Hae-geun:

The dominant language effecting Korean workers’ perceptions of their industrial experiences was provided by the state, including the language of nationalism, familism, harmony, and national security. The state defined the economic development in terms of the national goal of “modernization of the fatherland,” [promoting it] as a project to make the nation rich and powerful so as to protect itself from the hostile communist north and other foreign powers. It praised workers’ hard work and sacrifices as patriotic behavior. (2002:35)

This particular proletarianization process took place also because the working class hailed mainly from farming villages. From 1962 to 1975, as many as 7.5 million farmers migrated to the cities. This implies that, unlike in Europe’s early modernization, “[t]here was no culture of mutuality, no sense of pride in workmanship, no cherishing of autonomy and independence, in short, no cultural and institutional basis on which to form a positive self-identity” (Gu

2002:34). In the absence of a strong tradition of working class identity, there was a strong possibility—and tendency—to be appropriated by the capital and state by rural village ties or paternalism.⁷

But the workers' identity cannot be reduced to their agrarian background. The various experiences of factory work and everyday life must have played an important role in the identity formation of individuals and groups. We need to understand various experiences and the world of consciousness of the nameless, unorganized workers whose youth was spent in the factories. We also need to understand in greater detail the various material and ideological control mechanisms utilized by the state and capital to mobilize workers (Kim 2002:62).

The representative case of the state's mobilization of workers was the Saemaedul undong carried out at factories. Let us look at the case of the Korea Shipbuilding Corporation (KSC). KSC started its Saemaedul undong in 1975, and by 1976 it had its own Saemaedul training institute, and by 1977 it had trained 3,000 workers in 48 sessions. Its programs included, among others, early morning clean-up, construction of flower beds along roads, a mass marriage ceremony, early morning exercise competitions, and a campaign to walk fast (Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:90-91). KSC's factory Saemaedul undong was at once a movement for individual reform as well as for management-labor cooperation and for the spirit of "corporation as family," which naturally was extended to patriotism. One participant in the training camp wrote:

We wake up at five in the morning...we sing our national anthem up to the fourth stanza and do our "citizen exercises." Then we shout our morning slogans, "Let's unite!" "Let's go crazy!" and "Let's perform!" We also jog while we shout. As "Miss Lee" is transformed to "Comrade Lee," I sometimes feel like I'm a character in a movie about the [Korean] independence fighters....Even before we're reminded by our instructor, we push our recording machine and the message comes out of our

7. For example, many of the workers at the YH Trading Company, a wig manufacturer, were recruited from the company president's hometown. It was the sudden closure of this plant and the workers' protest that resulted in a brutal police response. "Workers fled to the office of the opposition political party for protection. Kim Kyeongsuk, a twenty-three-year-old worker at YH Trading, was killed during the melee when police forced the workers out of the building. Kim Young Sam, the chairman of the party, was subsequently removed from his chairmanship and from the National Assembly by Park Chung Hee. This incited the citizens of Busan and Masan to protest, which is widely attributed to have led to the ultimate downfall of the Park regime" (Lee 2007: 226).

mouths automatically: “We believe firmly in our motherland as a community.” “We believe firmly in our neighbor as a community.” “We believe firmly in our comrade as a community.” On the sixth day of training, I feel like I have become reconstructed. At the graduation ceremony, I stand before an exhibition of a previous trainee’s “Declaration of My Resolve” written in blood, and I renew my determination afresh. (Quoted in *Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon* 2002:91)

Through the military-like training camp, the worker-cum-national subject has become an automatic recording machine calling others “comrades,” and looks up with awe at her fellow trainee who had written his declaration in blood. The group-ism that starts from one’s fellow workers to one’s neighbor to finally one’s nation shows the image of workers unified in the life of the nation (*minjok*). As the training, that was as unrealistic as a movie, comes to an end, the trainees have a firm resolve just like independence fighters during the colonial period. Of course, we cannot take at face value everything that is written in this memoir or believe that every participant felt this way. It is not difficult to imagine, however, that without strong will and effort, the trainee, removed from his or her everyday life, would have easily approved or accepted what he or she was experiencing during the training session.

The ritual of resistance was also not detached from the ritual of state; rather they imbricated one another. The YH workers, whose protest partly contributed to the demise of the Park regime, sang the national anthem and paid their respects to those who died for Korea at the end of their occupation of the New Democratic Party building. During the Gwangju People’s Uprising in 1980, the “rioters” also sang the national anthem. In short, the identity as a citizen experienced and cultivated in quotidian life makes an abrupt appearance even in times of resistance. From this perspective, the above quote from the worker in training can be seen as a process of state discourse being inscribed in everyday ritual and the consciousness of the worker.⁸

8. Kim Jun writes: “It must have been a radically shocking experience for an individual to have had a chance to connect to a larger world through the *saemaoul undong* education, or...to have one’s own experience be given the meanings related to such grand words as state, nation, and national economy, and there was all the more possibility that this experience was absorbed easily and completely” (2002:80).

The logic of nationalization acted as a logic to rationalize the participation of workers in the distribution of their labor's fruit. In 1978 the slogan of KSC was "Production first and profit first." This campaign extended further to include improvement of productivity and intensification of labor regimentation, as shown below:

There are several movements of our own initiative that we're carrying out concurrently with the factory Saemaedul undong, such as "no talk during work," "no smoking," "no throwing of cigarette butts," and "get a standard haircut"...Among these we're quite successful with the campaign to "show up at work one minute before the start-up time" so that about 80% of our employees show up by 7:40 am. (Quoted in Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:92)

At this point we may say that the Saemaedul undong became no longer a project directed by the state. The slogan of profit increase through improvement of productivity shows how the desire of the workers conjoined with demands of the state and capital. The absence of any critique toward the ideology of state competitiveness in the aftermath of the IMF crisis (in 1997) can be explained in the previous state discourse of "production and profit first" of the Park era. The quotidian desire of the workers was simple:

Wages were high. Work was for 8 hours - with dormitory and bath. I just thought it was heavenly. I just couldn't understand why people protested for higher wages and unionization. I moved into the dormitory of Dongil Textile's modern white building and, having lived in a shack in a slum area, I couldn't believe I was sleeping in a heated room. (Quoted in Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:161)

The above testimony of an active member of the legendary Dongil Textile's labor union of the 1970s, before she became a union activist, allows a glimpse into the quotidian dreams and desires of the majority of Korean workers at the time. A recent study classified the women workers employed in light industries in the 1970s into four groups: "those who study and read in dormitories and at night schools, those who devote themselves to religion, those who follow popular cultural trends and look for marriage partners, and those who are conscientized through night schools and small group activities." According to

this study, most women workers of the 1970s belonged to the second and third groups (Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:40-41).

The existing scholarship of the Korean workers approaches the workers mainly from the perspective of the history of the labor movement and, therefore, neglects the majority of the workers. According to another recent study that analyzed the memoirs of “model workers” of the 1970s, the writers of these memoirs “sought the reasons for their unhappiness in poverty that was not of their choice and saw their life as a worker as temporary that would be passed by once they made money.” They also called themselves “industrial soldiers,” “export soldiers,” and “Miss Saemaedul” in order to boost their self-image (Kim 2002:97). In other words, they chose not a path of “class” but of “citizen.” The specifics of this phenomenon are as follows:

People look down on me just because I’m a bus conductress, but I can laugh it off. I’ve received a big award, and I’m recognized by people around me and by my company. I must confess there were times when I got really depressed about my situation before I was awarded, but now I can overcome any problems in the future. (Quoted in Kim 2002:79)

Another factory worker declared: “I’m a leader in the [night school] class, president of my dormitory, dutiful daughter to my mother, good sister to my younger siblings, and model worker in my factory” (quoted in Kim 2002:80).

It is not difficult to imagine how the social recognition through the system of award and promotion must have compensated for the discrimination and frustration experienced as the daughter in a family and a woman in society and how this kind of psychological compensation would have motivated them to become a model worker demanded by the capital and the developmental state. The last quote also reveals the factory workers’ multiple identities that crossed boundaries of school, factory, and family. But it is not too difficult to imagine how the multiple identities are integrated into one national identity.

A recent study of women workers also shows that they tended to echo the dominant discourse of sexual inequality. In 1980, for example, a group of women workers were asked about differential wages, and 61.9% of the respondents retorted, “Why do you ask such questions? Women naturally receive less than men because they’re women” (quoted in Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:183).

What is significant in this process of co-optation is the act of speaking on the

part of the co-opted. In the process of speaking in which the rationale of state and capital is internalized, what may be more important is the act of speaking itself rather than the content. The dominant does not simply silence the dominated. On the contrary, the dominant tries to engage the dominated in active and voluntary speaking. The dominant discourse is activated fully when the dominated speaks its language. The dominant discourse that has been internalized and spoken in the language of the dominated becomes natural, and is seen as internal vibration without any stimulation from outside.

Domination is never complete and always faces the imminent danger of resistance, rupture, and crisis. The point from the perspective of the dominant is not necessarily doing away with resistance and fissures but rather how to sustain the tension, incorporating the resistance and fissure within. Domination functions, and is also effective, in resistance.

Until the “Great Labor Struggle” of 1987, one of the workers’ persistent demands had been to be treated with dignity as human beings. What insulted the workers most was that they were treated as ignorant and uneducated. The society’s ideology of education was deeply internalized in the workers. One of the most representative of the democratic unions of the 1970s was Control Data, and it is known that its union workers were mostly graduates of high school and had a strong sense of being different from other “gongdori” and “gongsuni” (derogatory terms referring to male and female workers, respectively). However, in spite of accepting the dominant ideology of education, there was also a strong egalitarian impulse. In other words, both the internalization of hierarchical order and the egalitarianism coexisted in the workers (Seonggonghoedae sahoe munhwa yeonguwon 2002:193-210). The worker’s self-consciousness as a free and equal modern subject sometimes clashed with the hierarchical order based on education and gender and yet also was bound by it.

University Students’ Agrarian Service Movement

During the Park regime the university students, along with Christian and dissident intellectuals, constituted the most forceful resistant group to the Park regime. But at the same time, there were university students who were more like model factory workers. In particular, the university students who participated in the agrarian service movement (*nongchon bongsa hwaldong*) are usually contrasted to the students who protested against the Park regime.

As Saemaoul undong expanded to the whole society, university students

were also mobilized. The National Association of University Students' Research on Agriculture was organized in 1961 and was active until 1969. In 1970, the National University Association for Service was organized under the slogan of the "establishment of national subjecthood" and "let us save the nation through saving agriculture" (*gunong guguk*). The Ministry of Education supplied funds for their activities as well as administrative assistance, such as collection and distribution of books and medical supplies, advertisement of its activities, and holding contests of memoirs of participants. For ten years starting from 1970, approximately 296,900 students were mobilized from 2,008 universities, and they were active in 10,517 villages (Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:9-35).

The activities of the Joseon University's student organization "Mukyeonhoe" in 1978 provide a glimpse into specific activities of these groups. "Mukyeonhoe" was composed of two faculty advisors and thirty members. Their programs were divided into five departments: education, labor, medicine, technology, and enlightenment. They operated summer schools in farming villages, sponsored athletic competitions and recreational activities, showed the villagers how to put up flags and name plates on doors, worked on the farms, repaired roofs, toilets, and household electric items, gave haircuts, provided emergency medical treatments, and gave lectures on family planning and anti-communism among other activities. The participants of these activities seemed to have firmly believed in their mission:

Our club carried out the activities under the slogan of national equalization....For a long time modernization of villages has been our nation's long-cherished dream. It is the task not only of politicians or farmers but that of pan-citizens. (Quoted in Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:1046-1056)

Another participant exhorted the farmers:

We must first of all awaken your consciousness in order to get rid of our embarrassing label as an underdeveloped country. What we can do for you is not just medical treatment or simple surgery. We can also arouse passion for struggle in life....as your life has been unchanging and without stimulation. Also important is the introduction of the notion of rationality. Look at the broad Yeongdong Highway. How can this be only for the

benefit of urbanites to reduce their travel time? No. That is not so. You can see it as a catalyst to arouse your stimulation and as a vision for future. (Quoted in Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:902)

The discourse of egalitarianism expressed in the “national equalization” and the terms such as modernization, nation, and pan-citizen are all echoes of the state’s demands. The second quote also shows how the project of the state is expressed in the students’ elitist and enlightenment language. These students did not think of themselves as the object of mobilization but rather as its subject. In their relations with the farmers, they thought of themselves as leaders and as active agents implementing the state’s projects. Moreover, they were imbued with nationalistic sentiments:

How can I possibly express the beauty of our motherland that blinds my eyes, the grandeur of the primitive added with man-made order? Why is it that the train that I am on cannot run its course [through the thirty-eighth parallel]? I am again indignant, as I was the first time I saw the sign, “The iron horse wants to run.” When will be the day that I see Geumgang Mountain, the cities of Weonsan, Sinuiju, and the Manchurian plain where our ancestors’ souls must have been buried? (Quoted in Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:897-902)

This intense nationalistic sentiment was not only his. This narrative of reunification, of Manchurian plain, and of national autonomy is familiar stock of Korean nationalism. This nationalism was not far distant from the nationalism of the protesting students.

The students in the service movement interpellated their fellow students to the tasks of the nation. One student remarked: “Today’s youth who waste their lives are spiteful, but I am sure someday they will also hear the clarion call of the motherland. I act as if I can shake the universe with the scribble of my limited knowledge, but I am thankful to my country for setting me straight to hold my pen firmly” (quoted in Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:1046-1056). The state was already inside the students; the statism was operating no longer in the structure of “state versus students” but rather in the structure of “student versus students.” However, the students of the

agrarian service movement were not all that different from the students of the anti-government movement in their epistemology. A student who participated in the agrarian service movement of the early 1980s reported:

Every [student] was reprimanded for accepting the snack provided by the village head. Strong disciplinary measures were fully in operation, such as holding assessment sessions until wee hours of the morning. In the morning we sang military songs and marched. (Quoted in Jeonguk daehak hakdo hogukdan pongsa yeonhaphoe 1982:1046-1056)

The rejection of snacks provided by villagers, the never-ending assessment sessions, and the morning marches were all very familiar features of anti-government student movement activities in the villages in the 1980s, which were also carried out under the same name of “agrarian service.” Perhaps the only marker of difference between them was the songs they sang during the march. The students’ “pro-government” agrarian service of the 1970s was characterized by its “strong enforcement of disciplinary measures” and its attempt for rational, efficient, productive organization. Discipline functioned as a rule of life that cannot be ignored by anyone whether one is in agreement with or in resistance to the state.

Concluding Remarks

Park Chung Hee’s regime as Korea’s first modern nation-state successfully carried out its modernization project through capitalistic expansion and construction of national subject. The modernization project was the process of conjoining the egalitarian push from the bottom, the dream of a large number of Koreans for a better tomorrow, and the developmentalism of the state.

The Park regime also actively mobilized the techniques of mass politics. Unlike previous regimes, the Park regime interpellated the multiple identities of individuals as homogeneous subjects and pursued the nationalization of society and citizens. Farmers, workers, and university students lived and occupied different sociopolitical locations in society, yet they shared the common experience of being the object of the intense mobilization by the state.

Although the Park regime was a period of oppression and denial for many in South Korea, at the same time it was also a symbol of development, progress,

productivity, and integration for a large number of Koreans. The desires of the masses were expressed and realized through the state's dominant discourse of nationalism and developmentalism. The state met with much resistance, but that resistance was complicit with the dominant discourse. The domination was realized through, and functioned in, resistance. It was during the Park regime that a nationalized and capitalistic life was established and attained by individuals. Even after the collapse of the regime, the statism, mass politics, developmentalism, and nationalism continued, especially channeled in the everyday routines and unconsciousness of the people.

(translated by Namhee Lee)

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