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Seungik LEE 

Jagiellonian University

seungik.lee@uj.edu.pl

EVERYDAY LIFE DURING PARK CHUNG-HEE'S MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN SOUTH KOREA AFTER THE 1972 YUSHIN CONSTITUTION

ABSTRACT

Park Chung-hee seized power through a military coup on May 16, 1961, and in October 1972, proposed the Yushin Constitution to solidify the foundation of his lifelong dictatorship. Following this, a national referendum on constitutional amendments took place on the 21st of November in 1972, with a 92% approval, resulting in the Park Chung-hee's constitutional amendment. This study aims to examine the process of amending the Yushin Constitution and explore the everyday life in South Korea under the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee. Through this article, the author attempts to shed light on the often darkly portrayed life during that period, providing a more colorful perspective to the daily lives of individuals suppressed by the dictatorship.

Keywords: Park Chung-hee, Yushin Constitution, everyday life, everyday history, microhistory

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS¹

*History books are strange.
 They only mention the names of kings and generals.
 Even in the chapter about the Battle of Waterloo,
 it simply says,
 'Napoleon lost in the Battle of Waterloo.'
 Did Napoleon really fight?
 It was the soldiers who fought.
 No matter which page of the history book you turn to,
 There are no lists of soldiers who died.*
 by Ma Kwang-soo

On May 16, 1961, South Korean Army Major General Park Chung-hee initiated a military coup d'état, marking the beginning of the military dictatorship in South Korea. A decade later in October 1972, he proposed the Yushin Constitution to pave the way for a life-long dictatorship. The military dictatorship that began in 1961 came to an end with the nationwide June Democratic Movement in 1987.² Of the nearly 26 years of military rule in South Korea, Park's dictatorship lasted 18 years, ending on October 26, 1979, when he was assassinated by his subordinate Kim Jae-gyu.

Perhaps no figure in South Korea's modern political history receives more polarized evaluations than Park Chung-hee. Conservatives in South Korea remember him as 'the father of modernization,' a leader who alleviated poverty and revitalized the nation,' an industrialization leader who pioneered the miracle on the Han River³ and created the East Asian economic development model,' and 'a president who established strong security and achieved remarkable economic growth.' Progressives, on the other hand, have a different view of Park. For progressives in South Korea, Park was a 'military officer who seized power through a coup d'état,' an opportunistic political soldier who sought only personal well-being and power, whether from Japanese imperialism,

¹ The transliteration used here follows the Revised Romanization of Korean system (2000), officially introduced by the National Academy of the Korean Language (NAKL) and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In exceptional cases, the spelling adopted by the Korean authors themselves has been used.

² There are various opinions regarding the duration of military dictatorship in South Korea. Some consider the period from the May 16 military coup in 1961 to the end of President Roh Tae-woo's term in 1992, during which military-origin presidents ruled, as the era of military rule. Another perspective considers the period from 1961 to June 29, 1987, the success of the democratic movement. However, there is also an argument that it is difficult to classify Park Chung-hee's presidency as a dictatorship, as he was elected through a direct vote by people before he proposed the Yushin Constitution in 1972. In this article, the author will continue the discussion considering the period of military dictatorship in South Korea from the May 16 military coup led by Park Chung-hee to June 29, 1987, when Chun Doo-hwan promised to amend the constitution to establish a direct presidential election, resulting from the June 1987 democratic movement.

³ The term 'the miracle on the Han River' refers to Korea's rapid economic development.

communism, or the United States,' and 'a dictator who was willing to violate human rights for the sake of economic development.'⁴

The period of analysis in this article, from the establishment of the Yushin Constitution in 1972 to Park's death in 1979, a total of seven years, was a time when South Korea experienced full-scale military dictatorship. During this period, however, South Korea's economic growth rate reached 11%, and it is undeniable that South Korea experienced the 'Miracle on the Han River' and achieved its first \$10 billion in exports.⁵ This was also the time when South Korea's economy transitioned from light industry to heavy chemical industry, and the national income per capita surpassed \$1,000 for the first time,⁶ solving the problem of poverty from an economic perspective.⁷ However, during this period, Park ordered terrorist attacks against political opponents, engaged in corruption, violated human rights, and tortured disobedient citizens through his 'Namsan chiefs.'⁸ He also amended the constitution to create a legal basis for a life-long dictatorship.

During this period of extreme economic growth under military dictatorship, scholarly attention has focused on the myth of the successful economic development led by Park, or, on the other hand, the 18-year military dictatorship that continued behind it. When focusing on the economic aspect, Park is naturally evaluated as a national hero of the Korean economy.⁹ However, when studying his political actions, one inevitably comes to the conclusion that he was a dictator.

⁴ Im, in his research, described Park Chung-hee using the above rhetorical expressions. Im Hyug-baeg, "Bakjeonghui daehan jeongchibhakjeok pyeongga rideosip, geundaehwa, yusin, geurigo mollak", <박정희에 대한 정치학적 평가 리더십, 근대화, 유신, 그리고 몰락> (Political Analysis of Park Chung Hee Leadership, Modernization, Yushin and Park's Demise) *Peace Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2012), p. 62.

⁵ Park Tae-gyun, "Bakjeonghui gyeongjebaljeong sinhwae daehan seongchaljeok approach", <박정희 경제성장 신화에 대한 성찰적 접근> (Reaccessing the Economic Growth Model during the Park Chung-hee Era) *Journal of International Area Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2020), p. 253.

⁶ In 1962, shortly after Park Chung-hee came into power, South Korea's per capita gross national income was recorded at \$82. By 1977, marking Park Chung-hee's 15th year in power, South Korea's per capita gross national income had grown to \$1,034, approximately 12 times its previous value.

⁷ Lee Ju-cheon, "Bakjeonghui sidaeseo gyeongjebaljeongwa minjujuuii yangripseong munje: bigyosajeok gochal", <박정희 시대에서 경제발전과 민주주의의 양립성 문제: 비교사적 고찰> (On the Development Dictatorship of Park's Regime) *Wonkwang Journal of Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2009), p. 100.

⁸ The instigators of the May 16 military coup in 1961 spearheaded the establishment of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), in Namsan area in Seoul. Through the KCIA, they aimed to eliminate obstacles to the military government's tasks. The agency primarily engaged in extreme activities such as surveillance, interrogation, and abduction to carry out the manipulation of the ruling military regime and suppress the basic rights of citizens, even targeting members of the National Assembly for surveillance. The atrocities of these KCIA directors were exposed in the book "The Namsan Chiefs," published in 1992, which became a bestseller, and later in 2019, it was adapted into a film, garnering significant attention.

⁹ Conservative politicians in South Korea still continue to uphold Park Chung-hee as a national hero and frequently utilize his economic success in their election strategies. Yang Dae-young, "Jowonjin hubo, 'Bakjeonghui daetongnyeong eun segye ga nollaneun gijeogeul mandeun widaehan hyeogmyeongga", <조원진 후보, '박정희 대통령은 세계가 놀라는 기적을 만든 위대한 혁명가,'> (Candidate Cho Won-jin: 'President Park Chung-hee Was a Great Revolutionary Who Created a Miracle that Astonished the World') *Newsline Jeju*, 25 X 2021.

Due to such polarized evaluations of Park, attempts to objectively recall the era are mostly bound to end in black-and-white logic.¹⁰ As a result, even 40 years after Park's death, Korean society is still not prepared to make an objective assessment of him.¹¹ Also, due to his strong influence on Korean modern history, there has also been little research on everyday life of Koreans during his time.¹²

In this article, the author aims to shed light on the lives of ordinary people who lived under the political ambitions of Park, rather than engaging in the highly polarized debate over his evaluation. Through this attempt, it will be possible to present a variety of colors to the somewhat gloomy image of that time, which is often associated with the term military dictatorship. Furthermore, the author anticipates the creation of an atmosphere where various opinions can converge on Park's evaluation, transcending the black-and-white perspectives.

Therefore, in this article, the author will focus on analyzing the following aspects of everyday life in Korea from 1972 to 1979. First, the response of Korean society to the introduction of the Yushin Constitution will be examined, which marked the beginning of Park Chung-hee's lifelong dictatorship. This will include the reactions of the political and media circles, as well as the ordinary citizens' perception of the Yushin Constitution. Second, the author will explore how the socio-political context of military dictatorship affected the everyday lives of marginalized individuals, who are often overlooked in mainstream history. The author will examine the extent to which individual daily lives were protected or undermined under the political conditions of dictatorship, using the memoirs, letters, and newspaper articles of people who lived through that time. Finally, the author will investigate how Korean society responded to the sudden absence of a leader after Park's assassination. This will involve identifying the diverse thoughts and perspectives of those who lived at that time, such as their sense of relief at the end of the dictatorship or their concerns about the potential chaos of a leaderless state. By examining these aspects, it will be possible to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Park Chung-hee's era and its impact on the lives of ordinary people.

¹⁰ Kim Il-young, "*Bakjeonghuicheje 18nyeon: baljeongwajeonge daehan bunseokgwa pyeongga*", <박정희 체제 18년: 발전과정에 대한 분석과 평가> (The Analysis and Evaluation of Politico-Economic Development under Park Regime) *Korean Political Science Review*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1995), pp. 184.

¹¹ Even in 2024, the evaluation of Park Chung-hee remains a highly controversial topic in South Korean society. Particularly, politicians from the democratic camp express concern over the positive assessment of Park, pointing out that many individuals who directly suffered under his dictatorship are still alive today. Cho Jung-hun, "*Bakjeonghui dongsang bipan ssodajin gukgam, gyeongbukjisaneun geollip uiji yuji*", <박정희 동상 비판 쏟아진 국감, 경북지사는 건립 의지 유지> (Park Chung-hee Statue Faces Criticism at National Audit, But Gyeongbuk Governor Stands Firm) *Ohmynews*, 17 X 2024.

¹² It is speculated that this is because history scholars in Korea are still concentrating its research capabilities on macroscopic, social history rather than microhistory or everyday life. The trend of research on microhistory began in the West in the 1970s, whereas it was first introduced in Korea in the early 2000s. Ma Kwang-soo, quoted on the first page of this article, criticized the macroscopic approach to historical methodology through his poetry.

THE YUSHIN CONSTITUTION SYSTEM AND 91.5% APPROVAL

On October 17, 1972, Park announced a nationwide state of emergency and dissolved the National Assembly through a special presidential declaration. Soon after, universities were ordered to suspend classes, and the press, publishing, and broadcasting industries were instructed to undergo prior censorship.

Also, on October 27, the so-called Yushin Constitution amendment was approved and announced by the Emergency State Council. On November 21, it was put to a national referendum, with a turnout of 91.9% and an approval rate of 91.5%, effectively ratifying the constitutional amendment.¹³

Park then lifted the university class suspension, followed by the state of emergency on December 14. The Yushin Constitution was promulgated on December 27, and Park opened the door to lifelong presidency.

In fact, Park's desire for perpetual power had been somewhat predictable. For instance, he had already pushed through the Third Amendment to the Constitution in 1969, which allowed for a third term for the president. Thus, Park Chung-hee gained eligibility to run for president once again in the 7th presidential election of 1971. On April 21, 1971, during a campaign speech in Seoul, Park appealed to the voters, saying: *I have told you that this will be the last time I am asking you to elect me. If you give me your support this time by giving me a large number of votes and supporting me and Republican Party, I will devote all my energy to you for the next four years to create a beautiful capital city, Seoul.*¹⁴

On April 27, Park narrowly won the 7th presidential election against the then-opposition candidate Kim Dae-jung by a margin of 950,000 votes.¹⁵ The day after the election, Park gathered his aides and made a remark that seemed to hint at the upcoming Yushin system: *Look at this. I think I have made the people who were sleeping until now stand up and work and contributed to the country, but what did Kim Dae-jung do that I only won by a margin of 950,000 votes? My name is better than Kim Dae-jung's, and I spent much more money on the campaign than Kim Dae-jung. How much administrative power did I use? Although elections are inevitable for democracy, this can be a big problem. Next time, it could be Kim Dae-jung. If we keep holding elections, someone who is not a great leader can be elected instead of those who can see the future and lead the country. That could hinder the revolutionary task of modernizing the country. So I can't help but think of something special.*¹⁶

¹³ Hwang Byeong-ju, "October Restoration," *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture*, at <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0032425>, 12 III 2024.

¹⁴ Park Chung-hee, "April 27 Presidential Election Seoul Campaign Speech," *Presidential Archives*, 1971, at <https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/index.jsp>, 15 III 2024.

¹⁵ More precisely, Park Chung-hee won the election by defeating Kim Dae-jung with a margin of 946,928 votes. Author Unknown, "The 7th Presidential Election," *National Election Commission*, at https://museum.nec.go.kr/museum2018/bbs/2/1/1/20170912155756377100_view.do?bbs_id=20170912155756377100&article_id=20171208141031044100&article_category=1&imgNum=%EB%8C%80%ED%86%B5%EB%A0%B9%EC%84%A0%EA%B1%B0%EC%82%AC, 18 X 2024

¹⁶ Kim Jong-pil, "Kim Jong-pil's Memoir, 'What Did DJ Do to Get 950,000 Votes?' Park Chung-hee Made Up His Mind to Yushin That Day," *The Joongang*, 2023, at <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25206028>, 15 III 2024.

Based on the comment above, it appears that Park viewed Kim Dae-jung, a rising political figure, as a significant threat. Park seemed embarrassed by the popularity of a young politician Kim in his 40s, believing himself to be the only leader capable of guiding the future of Korea.¹⁷

Furthermore, the economic growth-centered policies that have persisted since Park's regime began to show their drawbacks. From the early 1970s, the anger and despair of the masses who had been marginalized and oppressed during the industrialization process began to erupt.¹⁸ For instance, labor unrest emerged, primarily among the working class, as evidenced by events such as the self-immolation of Jeon Tae-il in November 1970, the 8·10 Seongnam Civil Rights Movement in August of the following year, and the arson attack on the Korean Air Building by Powell laborers.

Meanwhile, the Nixon Doctrine, announced by US President Richard Nixon in 1969, is also considered to have provided Park with the justification for promulgating the Yushin Constitution. The Nixon Doctrine ushered in a rapid period of détente in international relations in East Asia, and Park responded by officially announcing the 'Peaceful Unification Plan'¹⁹ (Presidential Archives 1970) on August 15, 1970. In this sudden détente situation, Park aimed to pursue peace with North Korea externally to prevent either side from miscalculating and launching a surprise attack. However, domestically, he used this as a pretext for imposing martial law. When Park declared martial law on October 17, 1972, two months before the promulgation of the Yushin Constitution, he justified his actions in the following speech: *My fellow citizens, Standing before you today, I am honored to share my solemn decision, driven by the heartfelt aspirations of all our citizens who yearn for peace, unification, and prosperity for our beloved nation. I embark on this momentous journey to carve a glorious new chapter in the annals of our national history. The essence of détente is that the major powers sacrifice third-world or smaller nations. It seeks to overturn the existing order in Asia and harbors threats and thus, a Yushin reform is imperative.*²⁰

In short, domestically, the sudden rise of politician Kim Dae-jung, the unrest among the working class, and externally, the shift in East Asian international relations due to Nixon's Doctrine, can be assessed to have influenced Park's proposal of the Yushin Constitution.²¹

¹⁷ Meanwhile, during the election period, Kim Dae-jung warned that if Park Chung-hee succeeded in his third term, South Korea would fall into a state of permanent authoritarian rule without elections, leading to the erosion of democracy. Kim Dae-jung's prediction was accurate, as Park Chung-hee soon announced the Yushin Constitution amendment proposal, paving the way for lifelong dictatorship.

¹⁸ Im Hyug-baeg, "Yusinui yeoksajjeok giwon: bakjeonghuiui makiabellijeogin sigan", <유신의 역사적 기원: 박정희의 마키아벨리적인 시간> (The Historical Origin of Yushin) *Journal of Korean Politics*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2004), pp. 248-249.

¹⁹ Park Chung-hee, "Presidential Special Declaration on the 17th of October," *Presidential Archives*, 1972, at <https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/index.jsp>, 15 III 2024.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kim Ji-hyung, "Bakjeonghuiui 1979nyeon 8.15 pyeonghatongil gusang seoneonui naejeok baegyeong", <박정희의 1979년 8.15 평화통일 구상 선언의 내적 배경> (The Internal Background of Park

On November 21, 1972, a national referendum on the constitutional amendment was held. Surprisingly, the number of people in favor of the constitutional amendment was a total of 91.5%.²² However, it is somewhat unbelievable that 91.5% of the people supported the Yushin Constitution,²³ which includes provisions guaranteeing the constitutionalization of presidential dictatorship, such as the abolition of the presidential direct election system, the removal of term limits for the president, and the assurance of the president's power to dissolve the National Assembly and appoint judges.²⁴

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE 1970S: DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

In the rapidly changing society of the 1970s, what kind of everyday life did people experience? To answer this question, which is also the main purpose of this article, the author will examine the everyday life of that time through personal records such as diaries, autobiographies, letters and newspaper articles as well.

While personal records of everyday life have the limitation of subjectivity, they can provide a diverse spectrum of life that is difficult to find in macro-historical or social historical narratives. For example, if one wants to know how often meat dishes appeared on the dinner tables of ordinary households during the rapid economic growth of the 1970s, there is no other way to confirm it than to look into personal records of daily life.

Meat dishes appear to have become more common on the tables of ordinary families in the 1970s compared to the 1960s. Mr. Park Seung-chan, born in 1958, the Year of the Dog²⁵, describes the difference in eating habits between the 1960s and

Chung-hee's 1979 August 15th Peaceful Reunification Conception Declaration) *The Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2023), p. 558.

²² Author Unknown, "The 3rd Referendum," *National Election Commission*, at https://museum.nec.go.kr/museum2018/bbs/2/1/1/20170912155756377100_view.do?bbs_id=20170912155756377100&article_id=20171208141139088100&article_category=1&imgNum=%EA%B5%AD%EB%AF%BC%ED%88%AC%ED%91%9C, 18 X 2024.

²³ In a 2016 interview with the Pressian, Seo Joong-seok, the director of the Institute for Korean Historical Studies, mentioned fraudulent voting practices carried out during the Park Chung-hee era. He assessed that the referendums held at the time were merely tools used to legitimize the dictatorship. Kim Deok-ryeon, "27myeongbun tupyongnoedo bakjeonghui tsineun naege jungchaegeul", < 27명분 투표 폭로에도 박정희 '신은 내게 중책을...' > (Despite Vote-Rigging Exposé Involving 27 Ballots, Park Chung-hee Says, 'God Entrusted Me with a Great Responsibility...') *Pressian*, 31 III 2016.

²⁴ Kang Jun-man, *Hanguk hyeondaesa sanchaek*, < 한국 현대사 산책 > (A Walk through Modern Korean History) vol. 1, Seoul: 인물과 사상사, 2002, p. 231.

²⁵ People born between 1955 and 1963 are referred to as the "baby boom generation" in South Korea. Especially, literary and artistic works depicting the experiences of those born in 1958, known as the "Year of the Dog" in the Chinese zodiac, frequently appeared, leading 'born in 1958 – dog zodiac' to become a unique noun representing a generation that experienced the tumultuous changes of modern Korean history. According to population estimates from the Statistics Korea, the population born in 1958 was 920,170, surpassing the 900,000 mark for the first time. However, considering that birth registrations were not properly conducted at the time, there are data suggesting that the actual number

1970s as follows. *The 1960s were cornbread, the 1970s were meat dishes.* According to Mr. Park, he recalls always being hungry in the 1960s and not being able to eat enough of the cornbread that was distributed at school. However, he said that he could feel the rapid economic development between 1972 and 1974, such as the sudden appearance of a TV and refrigerator in his house and the start of meat dishes appearing on the table.²⁶ In addition, he recalled that the number of people using public baths increased significantly and that people's appearance and clothing also became more modern.²⁷

Seo Jeong-hong, also born in 1958 from city of Masan, Gyeongsang province, had a childhood in poverty. However, he said, *No matter how poor and difficult it was... I don't think I was anxious or unhappy.* He recalled the presence of affection between people and always felt that there were neighbors who helped each other. He reminisced about the 1970s, where there was less of a wealth gap, and anyone who worked diligently could find opportunities.²⁸

On the other hand, looking at the letters exchanged between Lee Jong-ik and his mother during the 1970s shows the life in rural areas that received relatively fewer benefits from economic development. Lee Jong-ik, the eldest son among five siblings, worked at a company in Gyeonggi Province in the early 1970s and exchanged letters with his family living in Yesan, Chungnam Province, a less developed region at the time. Lee Jong-in, Jong-ik's younger sister, was a high school student in 1973, and through letters, she often asked her older brother Jong-ik for pocket money. Most of this money was used to buy books. From the letters, it can be seen that she was unable to ask her mother about the money due to the family's financial difficulties and was instead asking her older brother, who was earning money through his work, for help.²⁹

could exceed 1 million. Due to the large number of births, they typically studied with around 70-80 classmates during their school years, and when they reached adulthood in 1979, they vividly experienced the collapse of the Park Chung-hee regime. They spent their twenties resisting the military dictatorship of Chun Doo-hwan, and as the unfortunate generation experiencing the IMF financial crisis in their 40s, the 'born in 1958 – dog zodiac' are now recognized as a unique noun symbolizing a generation that witnessed, remembered, and experienced the turbulent changes of modern Korean history.

²⁶ Han's article, which examines the economic life of Korean households in the 1970s using Ms. Park's household account book from 1974 to 1976, provides evidence supporting this claim. The records show that in 1974, Ms. Park's family consumed meat roughly once a month and purchased their first TV on October 26 of the same year. an Hyung-sung, "1970nyeondae hangukgajeongui gyeongjesaengbwal", <1970년대 한국가정의 경제생활> (Economic Life of Korean Households in the 1970s) *The Journal of History*, no. 38 (2019), pp. 566-583.

²⁷ Shin Seung-min, "Gananhaetseodo iut gan jeong(情) eun dondok...yeolshimbi ilbamyon nuguna gi-boe eodatta", <가난했어도 이웃 간 정(情)은 돈독...열심히 일하면 누구나 기회 얻었다> (Even Though We Were Poor, Neighborly Affection Was Strong... Anyone Could Seize Opportunity If They Worked Hard) *Monthly Chosun Newsroom*, II 2018, at <http://monthly.chosun.com/client/news/viw.asp?ctcd=&nNewsNumb=201802100003>, 24 III 2024.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Lee Jong-ik, *1970nyeondae comeoniui pyeonji*, <1970년대 어머니의 편지> (A Mother's Letters from the 1970s) Seoul: 자연과 사냥사, 2021, 89.

There is also an interesting anecdote. On January 15, 1976, Jong-ik's younger sister, Jong-ran, wrote a letter saying that parents had purchased a Goldstar television on instalments. At the time, Korea's TV penetration rate was about 30% per household, and it was rapidly increasing. However, after purchasing the TV, Jong-ik's parents found it difficult to pay the instalment and asked him to help.³⁰ It reflects the disparity between urban and rural areas in Korean society at the time, as the eldest son from the countryside was the first to seek employment in Seoul or the metropolitan area, but much of his income was relied upon by the rural family. This also illustrates the role of the 'first-born son' in Korean society, who was expected to work hard to support his siblings' education and take care of them.³¹ And, the fact that Jong-ik also fully accepted the burden of the eldest son without any complaints clearly shows that the concept of family community at the time was very different from the present Korean society in 2024, making the anecdote a meaningful record.³²

Tracing back in the memories of Moon Jae-in, who served as the 19th President of South Korea from 2017 until 2022, in the 1970s can also be a meaningful task. Moon recalls the atmosphere of the 1970s when universities in Korea were all immersed in a full-scale confrontation with the authoritarian regime. When he entered university, the Yushin Constitution had just been established, so he remembers that time vividly. October 1972, when the Yushin Constitution was promulgated, remains a dark memory for Moon Jae-in. He reminisces as follows: *The Park Chung-hee regime declared Yushin in October... It aimed to perpetuate power. Tanks raced through the streets the night before...Tanks were stationed at every university...Instead of attending lectures, students gathered in bars or dormitories to lament the situation and express their frustration.*³³

Afterwards, Moon led protests at Kyung Hee University against the Park Chung-hee regime. As a result, he was arrested in April 1975 on charges of leading demonstrations and was also expelled from university. Ironically, it was during this period that he met his wife. Their love story began when she visited him during his imprisonment.³⁴

Looking back on the era of Park Chung-hee's dictatorship from the present perspective, it is easy to make evaluations based on black-and-white logic. However, setting

³⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

³¹ Bae Sun-hee, Kim Soon-ok, "Gihonnamseongui gobugwangye insik jangnamyeokal namseongeul jungsimeuro", <기혼남성의 고부관계 인식 장남역할 남성을 중심으로> (The Married Man's Perception on the Mother and Daughter-in-laws Relationship – Focused on Man Playing the Role of Mildest Son) *Journal of Korean Home Management Association*, vol. 19, no. 6 (2001), p. 52.

³² Kim Soo-young, Jang Ji-hyun, and Kim Hyun-ok, "Hyundaesahoeui godokhan salmgwa jugeotum – godoksa collonbodo gwanhan bijeonghyeong bigdeiteo bunseok jungsim", <현대사회의 고독한 삶과 죽음 – 고독사 언론보도에 관한 비정형빅데이터 분석 중심> (Lonely Life and Lonely Death in Modern Society: Focusing on Unstructured Big Data Analysis on Media Coverage of Lonely Death) *Korean Journal of Social Welfare*, vol. 75, no. 3 (2023), p. 427.

³³ Moon Jae-in, "University and Resistance," in *Mun Jae-inui unmyeong*, <문재인의 운명> (The Destiny of Moon Jae-in) Seoul: 더휴먼, 2017.

³⁴ Moon Jae-in, "Meeting my Wife," in *Mun Jae-inui unmyeong*.

aside political evaluations and looking at the lives of individuals living at the time can reveal a spectrum of colors in life. Some remember the abundance of meat dishes appearing on the dinner table, while others recall it as a time when hard work could lead to opportunities. Through the life of Jong-ik, who supported his family, it is possible to see the family relationships in Korean society at that time. Similarly, there were those like former President Moon Jae-in who directly resisted the Yushin constitution. What this tells us is that evaluating 1970s Korean society dichotomously only reveals half of the landscape. If more individual lives are reflected upon, the past can provide us with a more diverse range of stories.

THE ASSASSINATION OF PARK CHUNG-HEE, AND THE CHAOS

On October 26, 1979, Park Chung-hee was assassinated by his trusted subordinate. Kim Jae-gyu, who assassinated Park, made his final argument in court, saying, *He had no choice but to assassinate for the sake of democracy.*

Meanwhile, Park's sudden death brought a great shock to society. The reaction of citizens upon hearing the news of the assassination was mostly one of shock, sadness, and mourning. Kim Myung-gi, who ran a pharmacy in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul, said, *It's so shocking and regrettable.* He closed the pharmacy early and went home to mourn. Choi Si-cheong, who heard the news on his way to work, expressed concern, saying, *I worry that North Korea might take advantage of this difficult time.* There were people crying in the streets, and believers lined up early in the morning at churches and temples to pray for Park Chung-hee's soul.³⁵

The reaction of Korean society to the news of the national leader's sudden death was a manifestation of collectivism itself. Restaurants and bars in the center of Seoul voluntarily closed to mourn the president, and citizens were also convinced that they should not travel leisurely during a national emergency, so they canceled their booked tours. Most events planned for the weekend were also canceled, and people hurried home to spend quiet time with their families.³⁶

Hwang Byeong-ju, a historian, was a first-year middle school student when Park died. He remembers the moment as follows. *I was quite shocked by Park Chung-hee's death. It was like some sense of loss. I think it's because Park had a significant presence in my inner world. At that time, he seemed to be a part of my life.*³⁷

³⁵ Author Unknown, "Joyonghi jisen gyeom cheotbam seodulleo gwiga iljik eoduwojin dosim", <조용히 지센 계엄 첫밤 서둘러 귀가... 일찍 어두워진 도심> (On the first night under martial law, citizens quietly made their way home in haste... The city center grew dark earlier than usual) *The Dong-a Ilbo*, 28 X 1979.

³⁶ Author Unknown, "Geu eopjeok girimyeo jeongungmini aedo", <그 업적 기리며 전국민이 애도> (The entire nation mourns, honoring his achievements) *Maeil Business Newspaper*, 28 X 1979.

³⁷ Hwang Byeong-ju, "Minjung, huisaengjainga gongbeomjainga: bakjeonghui sidaeui gukgawa minjung", <민중, 희생자인가 공범자인가: 박정희 시대의 국가와 '민중'> (The People: Victims or Accomplices? The State and the 'People' in the Park Chung-hee Era) *당대비평*, vol. 12 (2000), p. 27.

On the other hand, there were also people who rejoiced at the death of the dictator. Rhyu Si-min³⁸, who was a university student at the time, recalls being excited with his friends in their rented room upon hearing the news of the president's death. The landlady of the room, upon seeing their joy, rebuked them, saying, *Don't be too happy. After all, someone has died*, which made Rhyu Si-min feel guilty about his happiness.³⁹ Moon Jae-in also mentioned in his autobiography that it was difficult to concentrate on studying after Park Chung-hee's death because he felt so elated.

Both of them couldn't help but feel somewhat pleased despite someone's death because they anticipated the end of the long military dictatorship and the beginning of democracy, the fact that 'Seoul Spring'⁴⁰ had finally come.

Moments of mourning, sadness, joy, and cheers were fleeting; Korean society plunged into confusion once again. Taking advantage of the national chaos, Chun Doo-hwan and his followers succeeded in a coup d'état on December 12, 1979, seizing control of the military. Subsequently, Chun Doo-hwan declared martial law nationwide on May 17, 1980, and was inaugurated as the 11th President of the Republic of Korea through the 'Gymnasium Election'⁴¹ on August 27 of the same year. It was another moment when the dark shadow of military dictatorship loomed over Korea once again.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Under the Park Chung-hee regime, which lasted for nearly 20 years, South Korea achieved remarkable economic development, but at the same time witnessed a regression in democracy, and human rights violations were constant. Political repression against dissenters became commonplace, culminating in the proposal of the Yushin Constitution in October 1972, in a bid to solidify his life-long dictatorship. The 'father of the country's modernization' and at the same time, 'dictator', Park was assassinated on October 26, 1979 by one of his subordinates.

This article focuses on the period from October 1972, when Park firmly entrenched his life-long dictatorship, until his assassination in October 1979. However, the author particularly concentrates on the stories of ordinary individuals living amidst the rapidly

³⁸ A former member of the 17th National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, served as the 44th Minister of Health and Welfare, and currently active as a writer.

³⁹ Rhyu Si-min, *Naeui hanguk byeondaesa 1959-2014, 55nyeonui girok*, <나의 한국 현대사 1959-2014, 55년의 기록> (My Modern Korean History 1959-2014, A 55-Year Record) Gyeonggi: 돌베개, 2014, p.222.

⁴⁰ The term 'Seoul Spring' referring to the period from October 26, 1979, to May 17, 1980, during which numerous pro-democracy movements occurred. The concept was inspired by the Prague Spring of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

⁴¹ Chun Doo-hwan became president through 'indirect election' at the Jangchung Gymnasium in Seoul. The 'Gymnasium Election' is a term that refers to Chun Doo-hwan's undemocratic process of seizing power.

changing society of Korea during the so-called Yushin period, aiming to present various perspectives on South Korean society during the Park Chung-hee era.

Economic progress was advancing rapidly, noticeable even to young students. Meat dishes began appearing on dinner tables, and households saw the introduction of TVs and refrigerators for the first time.

However, this economic development was perceived differently depending on the region, with urban areas experiencing more active economic activity compared to rural regions. This regional imbalance was somewhat mitigated by familial support, and compared to present-day South Korean society, there was less economic disparity – a society where anyone who worked hard had a higher likelihood of success.

Some resisted Park's dictatorship, opting for a somewhat more difficult life. They faced consequences for opposing the military regime, including imprisonment and expulsion from universities. Yet, even in such challenging circumstances, young people loved each other and promised a future together.

After Park's sudden death, Korean society plunged into chaos. Many mourned his passing, feeling disheartened by the loss of the national leader. However, there were also those who looked forward to a hopeful future, anticipating the beginning of Seoul Spring and envisioning a bright future.

Viewing the Park Chung-hee era from a macroscopic perspective creates a certain amount of confusion, as the negative impression of military dictatorship clashes with the positive impact of rapid economic development. This article, instead, adopts a microscopic view, showcasing the everyday lives of ordinary citizens as they were. Through this approach, the author aims to paint a more colorful picture of a time often depicted in stark black and white. The author intends to find and supplement more materials reflecting everyday life, continuing to introduce the lives of those marginalized in history.

As Ma Kwang-soo said, occasionally examining the lives of ordinary people – soldiers – alongside macroscopic history – Napoleon – can hold its own significance. This can be considered a study of everyday life, a contemplation of humanity, and a record left behind by those who remember that period before they disappeared.

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Seungik LEE – earned his PhD from Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Since October 2019, he has been teaching at the Department of Korea at the Institute of the Middle and Far East, Jagiellonian University. His research interests include comparing modern history and culture between Korea and Poland, analyzing business culture in these countries.