

Transnational Intellectual Networks and their Influence on Social Movements in South Korea

A rediscovery of history through grassroots activism in the 1970s and 1980s

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy of the
Australian National University**

By

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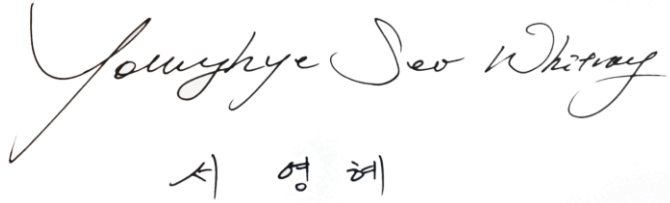
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Declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the material presented in this thesis represents the result of original work carried out by me, during the period 2014-2018 and has not been previously presented for the examination of any degree. This thesis is 42,278 words in length.



Handwritten signature of Younghye Seo Whitney in cursive script, followed by the Korean characters '서영혜' (Seo Young-hye) written in a simple, blocky font.

Younghye Seo Whitney

8 June 2018

Abstract

Younghye Seo Whitney: Transnational intellectual networks and their influence on social movements in South Korea - A rediscovery of history through grassroots activism in the 1970s and 1980s (Under the Direction of Hyaeweol Choi)

What role did grassroots associations in Japan play in South Korea's pro-democracy movement? The end of the Second World War in 1945 finally liberated the Korean Peninsula from 36 years of Japanese colonial rule. The political vacuum this left resulted in the nation being torn in two in 1953, with the formation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). The turmoil continued for decades, with South Korea's population facing ongoing pro-democracy struggles. It was not until 1987 that these struggles culminated in the nation achieving its first directly elected President.

Despite ample evidence that an intricate network of individuals was actively conveying information between Korea and Japan during this period, the narrative surrounding South Korea's pro-democracy struggles is one that is generally told from the perspective of its domestic actors, with rare mention of external actors, aside from those based in the United States. This thesis attempts to add greater nuance to the shared political history between these two nations by rediscovering the role that missionaries and scholars residing in Japan played in supporting South Korea's pro-democracy movement.

Commencing with the broad-daylight kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung in the middle of Tokyo in August 1973, Japan found itself deeply embroiled in the ongoing

turmoil in South Korea. This ongoing engagement proved to be a crucial trigger for intense grassroots interest in the situation in Korea. This engagement also acted as a catalyst for the long-running success of the Letters from South Korea articles that were published each month in the influential magazine *Sekai* between 1973 and 1988.

Using Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model as an overarching framework, this thesis focuses on the personal history of Chi Myŏng-gwan, author of the Letters articles. Through an examination of Chi's early life, this thesis considers important factors which contributed to the success of the Letters project. This thesis argues that a convergence of like-minded individuals who possessed key capacities was crucial in enabling the project to play an essential role in raising and maintaining the awareness of South Korea in Japan and around the world.

This thesis finds evidence that the activities carried out by the actors driving the Project helped to motivate governments beyond Japan to apply pressure on the Park regime and subsequent regimes in South Korea and thus played an indirect, yet important support role in enabling the nation's pro-democracy movement to achieve its goals. By focusing on this under-explored narrative of grassroots cooperation between South Korea and Japan, this thesis attempts to rethink the recent political history between these two nations, with the aim of identifying possible avenues for improving Korea-Japan relations going forward.

Acknowledgements

When starting this research project, I had a deep interest in the social movements in South Korea and Japan in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and in light of the intertwined modern history of these two nations, I wondered whether individuals involved in these social movements might have interacted in any way. I began a search in the resources of the Asian Collections of the National Library of Australia, trying to identify evidence of any person-to-person links between the two nations during this period. After struggling for weeks to find any direct links, I happened to stumble across mention of the Letters Project, and T.K. Sei. The story of a mysterious Korean author writing articles on the situation in South Korea for the *Sekai* magazine.

The story intrigued me, and so I followed this lead, soon discovering that T.K. Sei was, in fact, Chi Myŏng-gwan. I found that his last place of employment was the Institute of Japanese Studies, Hallym University, South Korea. I immediately contacted the Institute and soon after that received a response from Sim Chae-hyŏn, a researcher within the Institute. Sim Chae-hyŏn informed me that Chi was still very much alive and well, and living in Minnesota at that time. Sim Chae-hyŏn kindly provided me with Chi's email address, and I was delighted when Chi promptly responded to my initial email and expressed his happiness for my interest in this topic. In this way, much like Chi's chance encounters with individuals that changed his life, as described throughout these pages, my story relating to this thesis has also been one of chance encounters and good fortune.

I have many people to thank for making my research possible. Hyaeweol Choi, for being my primary supervisor and mentor, and providing wonderful advice and

encouragement, often via Skype, as a result of my relocation to Japan in the middle of this project. Thanks also to my associate supervisors, Simon Avenell and Roald Maliangkay, who also provided ongoing support, guidance and inspiration. Thanks to the generosity of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS) and the support and encouragement provided by many at the School of Culture, History & Language (CHL), ANU, I was able to travel to South Korea to conduct archival research.

Thanks also to Ruth Barraclough for encouraging me in my research and for helping me find much-needed work tutoring and lecturing the Korean language for CHL.

By sheer chance, my relocation to Japan with my family in 2015 overlapped with Chi and his wife, who were in Tokyo for approximately six months. During this time, I was able to meet Chi in person, and attend a number of his lectures. Sincere thanks to Chi and his wife, Kang Chŏng-suk. I will treasure the numerous discussions we had while walking through Jimbo-Chō, famous for its used bookstores, and over lunches in cafeterias near Tomizaka Seminar House near the University of Tokyo. My ongoing correspondence with Chi could not have happened without the kindness and support of Chi's wife, Kang Chŏng-suk, as she not only typed most of Chi's emails to me, she also took a personal interest in my research and continually provided kind words of encouragement.

And finally, thanks to my amazing family. To my family in Korea for their continuing support. To the Yokomichi's, my host-family in Kyushu for accepting me as a part of their family since my first stay in Japan in 1996. To my husband Justin—thank you for always trying to find time to help me write (even though you had your own writing to do). To Liam—now we might be able to have a bit more fun on weekends. The support by everyone mentioned here, as well as many others that I

have not mentioned by name have each played an integral role in the completion of this thesis. It goes without saying that all the flaws, errors and omissions are entirely my own.

Notes on Romanisation and Translation

All Korean words have been romanised according to the McCune-Reischauer system and Japanese words according to the Revised Hepburn system of romanisation.

Exceptions to these rules are for those Korean and Japanese authors who have published in English, the names of well-known historical figures and geographical names.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Korean to English, and from Japanese to English are mine.

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Chapter 1

Rediscovering History

- Transnational Actors in South Korea's Pro-Democracy Movement -

1.1 Introduction

In 1972, Chi Myŏng-gwan (1924-), an academic, journalist and pro-democracy activist, and Yasue Ryōsuke (1935-1998), chief editor of the well-known Japanese intellectual magazine, *Sekai*, recognised each other when riding the same bus in Tokyo. It was the second time they had met—the first being a brief meeting in Yasue's office in 1968, when Chi was on his way back from a trip to the United States. This second encounter, which happened purely by chance, led to a sixteen-year collaboration, during which time they published Japanese-language articles on the plight of Korean politicians, religious figures, writers, journalists, students, and workers who opposed South Korea's military regime during the 1970s and 1980s.

A vast transnational network of missionaries, intellectuals and journalists helped to obtain the information required for these articles. As they came to be considered a trusted source by newspapers such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Christian Monitor, they helped to draw the attention of the world to the situation in South Korea at the time. Through a historical narrative of Chi Myŏng-gwan, this thesis will consider the role this mostly Japan-based network played in Korea's democratisation. The next section will provide a short background to South Korea's pro-democracy movement.

1.2 A Brief Background to the Pro-Democracy Movement

The end of the Korean War (1950-1953) saw significant civil unrest. Continued government corruption and economic chaos in the years following triggered student protests against the government under Syngman Rhee (1948-1960). These protests escalated following the 15 March 1960 Vice-Presidential elections, which Rhee's designated successor Lee Ki Bung won amid claims of rigging (J. K. Oh 1999, 40-41). This sparked further protests against the Rhee government around the country by groups mainly comprised of students but also included young unemployed and underemployed individuals. The demonstrations were routinely quashed with brute force (Sö 2007, 57-67). One of the most significant protests was a nation-wide student uprising that commenced on 19 April 1960 during which government troops killed 186 students and injured more than 6,000 over a six-week period (referred to in subsequent chapters as the 4.19 uprising) (Ogle 2008, 71).

The turmoil only subsided when the students' demands for Rhee and the General Assembly to resign and government supporters within universities and colleges to be removed, were met (Ogle 2008, 71). Rhee and his government resigned on 26 April 1960, and the opposition party won the majority of seats in the General Assembly. Chang Myŏn was subsequently elected as Prime Minister and Yun Po Sun as President (Sö 2007, 68-77). However, the leadership under Yun and Chang struggled through a chaotic year, paralysed by social unrest, an economy that showed little sign of recovery, and factional rivalries within the government (Han Yong-sup 2011, 35). Seeing the situation as unsustainable, the South Korean military seized power under Park Chung Hee (1917-1979) in 1961 (Koo 1999, 57).

Social unrest continued under the Park regime (1961-1979), triggered partly by Park's desire to recommence normalisation talks with Japan that had been initiated in 1951 under the Rhee regime. Under Rhee, normalisation talks had been abandoned due to unresolvable differences over the historical understanding of Japanese colonial rule in Korea (Kim and Vogel 2013, 431-432). Such differences included maritime borders, ownership of the Dokdo islands (Takeshima in Japanese), post-war compensation and claims over property (Chi 1995, 58-63). However, economic development was seen as key to Park's political legitimacy, and his economic plans relied heavily on the expected inflow of loans and grants from Japan that would be associated with settlements under a yet to be concluded treaty to normalise relations between the two nations (Yu 2005; Chi 1995, 56; Sö 2007; Kim and Vogel 2013, 431).

Suspicious of Japan's intentions, normalisation talks were unpopular with the South Korean public. It was widely believed that a formal apology from Japan should precede any effort to normalise relations between the two nations. The normalisation talks were also popularly portrayed as an attempted Japanese take-over of the Korean economy that was being actively promoted by the U.S. (N. Lee 2009a, 30-31). The unpopularity of the normalisation talks resulted in numerous protests involving students and other sectors of the South Korean society. One major protest against these normalisation talks occurred on 3 June 1964, when approximately 10,000 students from Seoul National University and other major universities in Seoul demanded that Park stand down in what later became known as the '6.3 *Hangjaeng* (6.3 Student Movement)' (Sö 2007, 105-107). However, despite such protests, negotiations continued with Japan and on 22 June 1965; the two

nations signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea without fundamental differences in historical interpretation ever being bridged.

The period of South Korean history under the series of regimes that commenced with the Syngman Rhee and the Park Chung Hee regimes has been referred to as an age of ‘dynastic authoritarianism’ (N. Lee 2009a, 7), characterised by the ongoing and often violent confrontations between the repressive government and South Korea’s pro-democracy activists (N. Lee 2009b, 41). In terms of human rights abuses and international criticism, South Korea under these and subsequent regimes, up until the nation’s democratic transition in 1987, may be considered a low point in the nation’s modern political history.

1.3 Background to the Study and Research Questions

While a low point in South Korea’s political history, Chi Myŏng-gwan (2005, 128) argues that the grassroots cooperation seen between Korea and Japan through the Letters Project in the 1970s and 1980s was at an unprecedented high. Chi bases this characterisation on the trans-national network that galvanised to produce a sixteen-year series of articles, collectively entitled *Kankokukara no Tsūshin, T.K. Sei* (Letters from South Korea by T.K.) (hereinafter ‘Letters’). The Letters articles covered a wide range of topics but were carefully framed to emphasise the repression of the pro-democracy activists in South Korea, and rally the support of the magazine’s readership.

The *Sekai* magazine was considered central to the grassroots cooperation between Korea and Japan. According to Wada Haruki (2013, 166), historian, civil

activist, and professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo, the Letters Project helped the *Sekai* magazine to become known as a 'bible' for people in Japan wishing to know about the situation in South Korea. Political scientist and professor at Waseda University, Hori Makiyo (2011, 114), suggests that no other publication in Japan provided its readers with a better understanding of contemporary Korean history.

The magazine also had international reach. Oh Chae-sik (1933-2013) (2012, 202), a peace activist who served as secretary of the Council of Churches in Asia during the 1970s, for example, alleges that during the 1970s, North Korea imported as many as 300 volumes of the magazine per month, and while banned in South Korea, many intellectuals and students in the South studied Japanese so that they could read the *Sekai* articles.¹ The articles were also translated into many languages, and newspapers such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Christian Monitor regularly published stories based on the information the articles provided.

Its worldwide circulation resulted in the magazine also being placed on the top of the list of forbidden books in South Korea. However, despite such censorship, missionaries and Christian groups still managed to smuggle the magazine into South Korea through informal channels (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 202). In this way, *Sekai* and the Letters Project provided a crucial pathway through which information could flow both ways between South Korea and the rest of the world.

¹ At this time, South Korea used a mix of *Hanja* (Chinese characters) and *Han'gŭl* (Korean alphabet), meaning that many were able to comprehend Japanese text with little difficulty.

The Letters Project was both complex and dangerous but was made possible by a network of Christian missionaries from around the world, and Japanese and Korean intellectuals who performed a range of roles relating to the collecting, compiling, and conveying of information. This network of individuals, which spanned multiple countries, was connected through central principled values relating to promoting and protecting human rights and democratic ideals. Through their activities, this network managed to leverage legacies of Japan's colonial expansion, as well as build new links between Japan, Korea and the world. These links provided additional pathways for Korean activists to convey their plight to the outside world at a time when opposition to the incumbent government was harshly oppressed. Thus, in every sense, this network was consistent with what political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998, 1–2) refer to as 'transnational advocacy networks', defined as a network of 'actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information'.

As will be described in greater detail in subsequent chapters, South Korea transitioned to a democratic system which allowed the direct election of the President in the months after the 1987 'June Struggle'—a nationwide rally that occurred from 10 to 29 June 1987 and saw large numbers of students, labourers, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens take to the streets to demand the resignation of President Chun Doo Hwan (Sö 2007, 191; N. Lee 2009a, 265). The Chun government subsequently agreed to introduce direct Presidential elections, and in December 1987 Roh Tae Woo was elected President, in what was considered South Korea's first clean election (Kihl 2015, 85). While many factors contributed to what can be

considered an essential first step to a democratic nation, it is commonly argued that the strong linkages between students, labourers, farmers, religious organisations and the general public were a crucial factor (N. Lee 2009a, 214–215; Chang 2009). However, this recognition of the importance of linkages is based on domestic stakeholders alone. While there can be no doubt that domestic actors played the central role in the pro-democracy movement, there is also significant evidence that external actors played a crucial part.

There has been significant research that acknowledges that Korea's pro-democracy movement received support from overseas. However, this research tends to focus on the support and activities that were provided to the movement by Christian groups, primarily linked to the U.S. (see Stentzel 2006 for example). There has also been significant focus on the role played by the U.S. in the Kwangju Uprising of May 1980 (see Yi Sam-sŏng 1996 and; Yi Sang-u 1998 for examples). While such research on South Korea's pro-democracy movement provides important and detailed insights into South Korea's transition to democracy and some of the international networks that played a role, much of this research tends to overlook the significance of several important events that were closely associated with Japan. These events include the assassination of Korea's First Lady, Yuk Young Soo, in August 1974 by Korean-Japanese Mun Se-gwang, and arguably the most salient, the kidnapping of prominent opposition leader Kim Dae Jung in Tokyo in 1973.

These events triggered significant interest in the situation in South Korea by many Japanese and were an important catalyst for the development and maintenance of a network of groups and individuals that provided support to the

South Korean pro-democracy movement. The Letters Project was an integral part of this network and also provided linkages to other actors both within South Korea and in other countries around the world. Yet despite ample evidence that an intricate network of individuals and groups were actively conveying information between South Korea and Japan, current scholarship tends to focus on the narrative of Japan's annexation of the peninsula (1910-1945). Consequently, the connected history between the two nations remains highly sensitive and includes disagreements relating to war reparations, unpopular treaties, Japan's treatment of Korean comfort women and Korean labourers during wartime, history textbooks and territorial sovereignty (Lind 2011, 26-100).

Overshadowed by such highly sensitive issues, this network of groups and individuals that operated between South Korea and Japan has remained underexplored. By examining the activities carried out by the network of groups and individuals responsible for the Letters Project, this thesis sets out to rediscover this largely forgotten aspect of recent history between South Korea and Japan, and consider the role it played in South Korea's democratisation. To this end, based on archival research conducted in South Korea, Japan and Australia between 2014 and 2017, and several interviews and ongoing direct correspondence with Chi Myöng-gwan, the central figure in the Letters Project, this thesis considers the following questions:

- 1) What factors led to the formation of the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project?
- 2) Did the Letters Project have any meaningful and lasting impact on the South Korean pro-democracy movement?

- 3) What was the fate of the transnational advocacy network responsible for the Letters Project once the goals of the pro-democracy movement had been achieved? and
- 4) Why is this history important?

By focusing on this underexplored narrative of cooperation between South Korea and Japan, this thesis attempts to rethink the recent history of South Korea – Japan relations through the lens of grassroots transnational connections. By examining these transnational connections, this thesis also builds on the recognition of the importance of cross-sectoral domestic linkages in the success of the South Korean pro-democracy movement, and extends research on the transnational linkages associated with the movement beyond the United States. The next section describes the approach adopted for this study.

1.4 Research Approach

How can we best rediscover this connected history of grassroots activism between South Korea and Japan, and inject a greater degree of nuanced understanding into the South Korea-Japan relationship? Morgan-Fleming, Riegle and Fryer (2007, 82) remind us that history is an interpretation of facts and that the following questions need to be asked when exploring the past: ‘Whose story is it? Who authored this tale? Whose voices were included? Whose voices were silenced?’ This thesis adopts a narrative approach, in which I focus on the stories told from the perspective of the individual, in this case, Chi Myŏng-gwan, and attempt to re-tell or ‘restory’ his

account within the broader chronology of South Korea's recent history (Cresswell and Poth 2017, 103).²

Cresswell and Poth (2017, 70–71) suggest that an examination of narratives provides an opportunity to rediscover those silenced voices by capturing detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or small group. According to Morgan-Fleming, Riegle, and Fryer (2007, 87), through the examination of the narratives of individuals, which may be found in personal correspondence, pictures or oral histories, it may be possible to provide greater nuance to how a society and its institutions are historically understood. With this goal in mind, this thesis explores the life of Chi and his interaction with Yasue Ryōsuke and the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project, within the broader connected history between Korea and Japan.

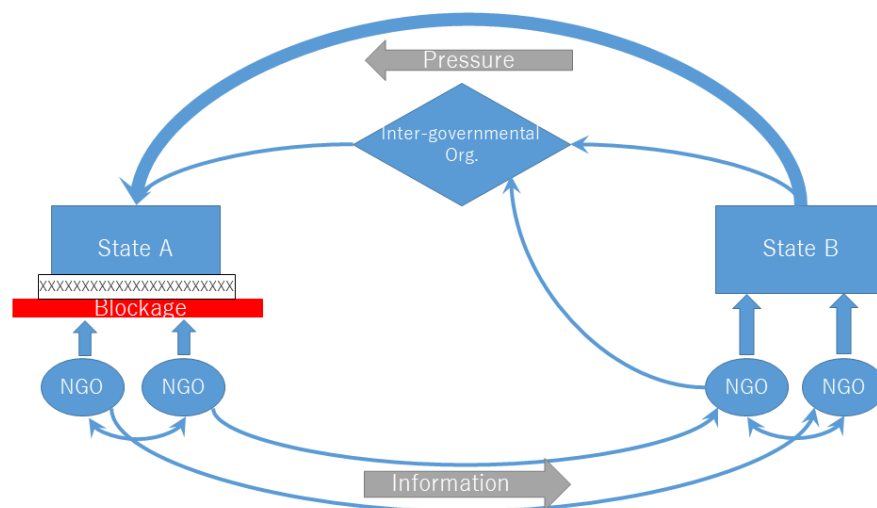
Given the transnational nature of the Letters Project and its associated network, this thesis adopts Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model as a scaffolding around which to build the historical narrative. This model, which will be explained in greater detail below, has been chosen as it shares close similarities with the various triggers, problems, activities and information flow associated with the Letters Project. Although this thesis is primarily a work of historical analysis, a secondary objective is to use the Letters Project to offer some new perspectives on Keck and Sikkink's boomerang model, particularly in the context of modern East Asian transnational social movement history. It is thus critical to set out how this thesis applies the model to the Letters Project and where the flow of information

² I commence this analysis with 1924, the year of Chi's birth, as this period provides important contextual background for Chi's actions later in life.

differs between that expected according to the model, and that which actually occurred through the Letters Project.

The boomerang model proposes that a non-state actor will seek alternate routes for pressuring its government if its actions are met with blockage or oppression. These alternate routes may be either state or non-state actors in third-countries or the international arena (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 12). One central action that is specified by the boomerang model is the transfer of information (Tarrow 2005, 146–147). The diagram below illustrates the flow of information of the boomerang model.

Figure 1.1 The Classic Boomerang Model



Source: (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 13)

Based on the focus on information flow and the overall goal of effecting change on the Korean Peninsula, the Letters Project and its transnational advocacy network represent an ideal case upon which to overlay the above diagram for three main reasons. Firstly, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3, the South Korean pro-democracy movement continued to oppose successive governments for

more than three decades after the end of the Korean War. Social movement activists, including politicians, religious figures, writers, journalists, students and workers, were often met with force by police and military, often resulting in imprisonment, injury and even death. To echo the terminology of Keck and Sikkink (1998, 12), 'the channels between the [South Korean] state and its domestic actors were blocked', impeding the efforts made by the domestically based pro-democracy movement to achieve its goals.

Secondly, as predicted by the boomerang model, the harsh repression by the military dictatorship resulted in the movement seeking other ways of pressuring the South Korean government. The search for such alternate routes can be seen in the outflow of Korean intellectuals to Japan, such as Chi Myŏng-gwan, politicians such as Kim Dae Jung, who later became President of South Korea (1998-2003), and Christians such as Oh Chae-sik.

Thirdly, the advocacy network which drove the Letters Project provided it with essential resources, which included a means for obtaining information from South Korea, a method for disseminating information, and a well-established and educated readership that importantly extended beyond the borders of Japan. These resources enabled the Letters Project to become an alternative pathway for externalisation of the South Korean pro-democracy movement's attempts to pressure their military dictatorship to move towards a government that embraced democratic ideals.

1.5 Methodology and Data Collection

In line with the narrative research approach (Creswell and Poth 2017, 72), to capture detailed stories and life experiences of the individuals and groups involved in the Letters Project, I first selected the key players of the Letters Project and collected data based on their goals for establishing or joining this project, the resources and capabilities at their disposal, and the methods they use to achieve their goals. I also trace the story of how these individuals linked up to form the broader transnational advocacy network, how this network functioned, and what happened to this network following the democratisation of South Korea.

The information upon which this analysis is based was sourced mainly from archives and libraries in South Korea during fieldwork in July and August 2014. In addition, I obtained important information during fieldwork conducted in Japan, including articles from the *Sekai* magazine that were published between 1972 and 1988, books published in Japanese on this topic including those written by Chi Myōng-gwan and Yasue Ryōsuke, and the *Modern Praxis Magazine*, a rare intellectual magazine that was edited and published by Chi between 1985 and 1996. I also had the opportunity to interview and conduct ongoing correspondence with Chi between 2014 and 2017, which shed light on his personal motivations relating to the Letters Project and allowed me to obtain undocumented details of his personal trajectory. An overview of the documents obtained from each of the key repositories is included in the Appendix.

1.6 Chapter Outline

The structure of this thesis is broadly based on the above illustration of the boomerang model. Focusing on events which triggered Chi's relocation to Japan, Chapter 2 explores the early life of Chi Myŏng-gwan in the context of the transition of the Korean Peninsula from a part of the Japanese Empire, to a divided nation, and its influence on Chi's thinking. This chapter also considers what factors contributed to Chi's perception of Japan and how this impacted on Chi's framing of the issues facing the South Korean pro-democracy movement for Japanese and Korean audiences (mainly through *Sekai*).

Chapter 3 explores the formation of the Letters Project by identifying and examining its various components and then considers how these components coordinated to function as a transnational advocacy network. This chapter proposes that the Letters Project was able to function thanks largely to a convergence of two elements. Firstly, the repression in South Korea by the Park regime, which spilled over into the Japanese mainstream society through events such as the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung, and helped to establish a mutual cause between Japanese and Korean grassroots movements. Secondly, Tokyo became the location where individuals with the right combination of skills and capacities were able to cooperate and conduct their oppositional activities in relative safety from the turmoil in South Korea, yet remain in relatively close proximity.

Chapter 4 analyses the Project's impact on the pro-democracy movement. As discussed above, the secretive nature in which the actors involved in the Letters Project were forced to operate presents challenges in understanding its impact on the pro-democracy movement in South Korea. Thus, as a way of identifying the

project's impact, this chapter firstly examines how the Letters articles described a series of pivotal events for the South Korean pro-democracy movement between 1973 and 1975 that directly involved Japan. Secondly, this chapter searches for evidence of mention (and nature of this mention) of the Letters Project in official documents, or by public officials in both South Korea and Japan. And thirdly, this chapter examines how content that was published in the Letters articles influenced South Korean newspapers and other publications.

Chapter 5 considers post-democratised South Korea and how the political environment in South Korea at that time triggered a transformation of the transnational advocacy network that supported the Letters Project. This chapter draws on the work of Frederick D. Miller (1999, 303–324), who explores strategies that may be adopted by organisations that comprise social movements to reduce the likelihood of organisational decline following the success or failure of a social movement. Based on the following four strategies proposed by Miller (1999, 323–324): 1) promoting structural flexibility, 2) seeking new membership, 3) addressing gaps between tactics and goals endorsed by leaders and those sought by members, and 4) seeking new collective goals, this chapter explores the strategies this transnational advocacy network adopted to maintain the connections it had developed during the 1970s and 1980s.

Chapter 6 considers the broader implications of the activities undertaken by the Letters Project and its network, specifically concerning the present understanding of Korea and Japan's shared history. It also outlines the contributions of this thesis, firstly by proposing a modified boomerang model that describes the conditions in Japan that enabled grassroots organisations in Japan to function as an

information hub that helped to convey the plight of the South Korean pro-democracy movement to the outside world. Secondly, the chapter reiterates the potential role of the Letters Project in assisting us in rethinking the recent history of South Korea-Japan relations through the lens of grassroots transnational connections. Chapter 6 also provides a brief critical discussion of the approach promoted by Chi Myŏng-gwan in establishing and maintaining South Korea-Japan relations after the democratisation of South Korea and the end of the Letters Project. Finally, this chapter proposes directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Overcoming Adversity

- Chi Myŏng-gwan before commencing the Letters Project –

1924-1972

2.1 Introduction

How did Chi Myŏng-gwan's early life influence his thought and activities associated with the Letters Project? This chapter firstly sets out to explore the life of Chi Myŏng-gwan before his relocation to Japan in 1972 and to examine factors that influenced his sentiment towards Japan and his activities there. Secondly, this chapter provides some historical context to the South Korean pro-democracy movement by reflecting upon the Korean Peninsula's turbulent transition from a part of the Japanese Empire to a divided nation under dictatorial rule.

Chi Myŏng-gwan's activities as an individual and his activities in Japan during the 1970s and 1980s can only be fully understood in light of the past. It is thus vital to start with a pre-history of the Letters Project, as it provides us with some idea of the factors that influenced how Chi framed the issues facing the South Korean pro-democracy movement for the Japanese audience, through his Letters articles and other publications. To this end, this chapter examines the historical context within which Chi grew up, the challenges he overcame, and the people who influenced his early life. It describes the ironic twists of fate that helped to shape his life and equip him with the skills necessary to carry out his part in the Letters project.

2.2 Chi Myŏng-gwan Growing up Under Japanese Colonial Rule.

Chi Myŏng-gwan was born in 1924, in Chŏngju, P'yŏnganbuk-do (North P'yŏngan Province), in what is now North Korea. It was at a time when the Japanese occupation (1910-1945) had already become well entrenched in Korean society. His father, Chi Ŭng-ha was a poor peasant, who died after being injured while working at the timber mill of a distant relative when Chi was just three years of age.

According to Chi (2005, 2-6), his mother, a Christian woman by the name of Choi Wŏn-ha, felt unable to remarry due to the Confucian values which strongly influenced society at that time. Consequently, she was left to raise Chi single-handedly, and worked hard to provide her son with a good education.

Chi demonstrated a high level of academic aptitude from a young age, a trait that provided him with opportunity throughout his life. In 1931, Chi entered *Chŏngju Pot'onghakkyo*³ (Chŏngju elementary school), where he encountered Chŏng Pu-in, a nationalist Marxist who became Chi's teacher from the time he entered the elementary school until his graduation. Upon completion of Chi's elementary schooling, Chŏng strongly urged Chi to continue to higher education, recommending that he attend *P'yŏngyang Kodŭng Pot'onghakkyo* (P'yŏngyang middle school), and also provided financial assistance to make it possible.

According to Chi (2005, 11), Chŏng's support was driven by his belief in Chi's

³ At the time, there were two types of elementary school for the Korean in Chŏngju: Public schools, '*Pot'onghakkyo*' and Christian private schools, '*Shinanhakkyo*'. The Japanese Government discriminated against Korean Schools through the names they used for each institution. '*Pot'onghakkyo*' was the word used for Korean elementary schools and '*Sohakkyo*', for Japanese students. Similarly, for Junior secondary education, '*Kodŭng Pot'ong Hakkyo*' was used for Korean students and '*Chunghakkyo*' for Japanese students.

abilities and his feeling of sympathy for Chi's mother's strong desire to educate her son.

Just before the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), Chi relocated to *P'yŏngyang Kodŭng Pot'onghakkyo*, a school that was located on the northern side of the city. Since Korea's annexation in 1910, the Japanese government had gradually shifted away from the belief that cultural and historical similarities would guarantee assimilation, to one that included legislation that severely restricted anti-Japanese activities in 1925, and the closure of indigenous newspapers soon thereafter (Caprio 2009, 119-141). As the Japanese authorities sought greater control over the Korean population, they increasingly saw language education as a cornerstone to the assimilation policy. Propagation of the Japanese language became considered crucial to imposing an ideological program that was designed to 'produce loyal colonial servants with the necessary skills to run the colony' (Pak Sun-yong and Hwang 2011, 387).

The goals of Japan's assimilation policy contradicted their actions. While on the one hand, rhetoric revolved around "coexistence and co-prosperity" (Caprio 2009, 120) actions by the Japanese government only served to reinforce the continued discrimination against Koreans. Discrimination was evident throughout the entire education system that had been established on the peninsula. Elementary schools established for Koreans offered five-year programs compared with the six-year programs for Japanese, middle schools offered Koreans four years compared with five for Japanese, and universities were generally unavailable to Koreans until the establishment of Kyŏngsŏng Cheguk Taehak (Keijo [Seoul] Imperial University) in 1924. The content of schooling was also different for Koreans, focusing on

Japanese language, the indoctrination of values, and the development of technical skills that facilitated the 'creation of semi-skilled employees in the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors' (Pak Sun-yong and Hwang 2011, 382) who would carry out mainly menial work in mines, on assembly lines and on farms.

Given the monumental task of turning the entire population of the Korean peninsula into loyal subjects of the Japanese empire, it was evident that the Japanese administrators did not have the capacity to carry the policy out in full. Loopholes in censorship laws enabled exploitation by Korean publishers, and Korean language newspapers and other publications increased under Japanese occupation (Robinson 1984, 334–336). Further, while the Japanese could closely monitor the public schools, particularly at the elementary school level, there were a significant number of private secondary schools run by Koreans and Western missionaries that continued to provide education in the Korean language. Many of these schools struggled to compete with the resourcing of Japanese schools, but demand for these schools which operated largely beyond the reach of the already stretched Japanese authorities remained strong (P. E. Tsurumi 1984, 305–306). Thus, while Japanese authorities required that public institutions follow colonial policy, in reality, the Japanese could not adequately monitor the private sector, which included churches.

Further, although there were also many Christians who supported the Japanese annexation of the Korean peninsula (T. S. Lee 2010, 60), a scholar of the history of Christianity in Asia, Timothy Lee, argues that churches represented the only open institutional resistance to the Japanese (2010, 60–69). Schiffman (2012, 65),
professor of linguistics and culture, suggests that the close ties maintained by some
churches with foreign missionary groups throughout much of Japan's occupation

provided a degree of protection for the churches. Indeed, this resistance of the Japanese assimilation policy by some churches was witnessed first-hand by Chi, who recalls that during the time that he regularly attended church as a middle-school student, many churches were strongly ethnic nationalist, and carried out sermons in Korean rather than Japanese Chi (2005, 15).

For Chi, the church was considered a safe-haven where scholars like himself could access literature on independence and Korean nationalism (2005, 15–16), yet there is ample evidence of churches and western missionaries supporting colonial policies of Japan. Frederick Arthur McKenzie, a correspondent in East Asia during the early 1900s, wrote in his book *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, 'when the Japanese landed in Korea in 1904, the missionaries welcomed them' (McKenzie 1920, 210). However, the relationship between missionaries and Japanese authorities was often far from affable and deteriorated over time as Japan endeavoured to eliminate missionaries who showed sympathy towards Koreans. McKenzie later describes the deteriorating relationship as missionaries were increasingly pressured into supporting Japan:

Neutrality does not satisfy Japan; she wants them to come out on her side. Unfortunately, her action this year has turned many away from her who tried hard up to then to be her friends (McKenzie 1920, 217).

The relationship between missionaries and the Japanese authorities was complex and at times volatile. Historian of religion in East Asia, Henrik Hjort Sørensen (1993, 57), suggests that while missionaries tended to support Japan's colonial policies, such sentiment did not stem from any great love for the Japanese Empire, instead, they saw Japan as the lesser of two evils. Sørensen argues that while Japan was an

occupying force, it was broadly considered by western missionaries as a means to ensure political and social stability, thus making their work of evangelisation easier.

Regardless of the motivations behind the churches and missionaries supporting colonial policies, it is important to point out that Chi's experience was not necessarily representative of the relationship between the church and the Japanese colonial government at that time. Indeed, it may have been their acquiescence that enabled churches and missionaries to continue to be largely overlooked by the Japanese authorities, enabling some churches, like those described by Chi, to provide safe-havens for scholars—that is, at least, until the late 1930s, when the second Sino-Japanese war triggered a tightening of censorship laws and the implementation of assimilation policies by the Japanese authorities that were designed to eradicate Korean culture and identity (Caprio 2009, 141–142).

The efforts made by the Japanese under the assimilation policy to stamp out Korean culture and language paradoxically may have had the opposite effect. The combination of an overstretched colonial government, and groups within the Korean society that tended to centre around churches with links to international Christian organisations facilitated the preservation of the Korean language. Further, the emphasis on education by the Japanese authorities not only helped to raise Japanese language literacy levels of the Korean population, it is also seen to have helped to drive literacy levels of the Korean language. This, in turn, helped to increase the demand for private secondary schools run by fellow Koreans or by missionaries (P. E. Tsurumi 1984, 305), and expansion of Korean language publications (Robinson 1984, 323, 342).

The paradox of the assimilation policy does not end here, as it was this policy, in which Japan used education as a tool to control the Korean population, that equipped Chi with the ability to communicate the repression of the pro-democracy movement in Korea to a Japanese readership during the 1970s and 1980s. Chi was a first-year student at middle school in P'yŏngyang at the time of the second Sino-Japanese War. This war resulted in many schools that had continued to offer Korean language courses until that point in time, to replace them with classes taught only in Japanese (Pak Sun-yong and Hwang 2011, 391).

Despite the escalating efforts to reduce access to Korean language materials by the Japanese, Chi continued to read literature by Korean writers and poets, such as Yi Kwang-su (1892-1950)⁴ and Kim So-wŏl (1902-1934). Yi's novels, in particular, left a deep impression on Chi (Chi 2005, 14), so deep in fact, that in 1981, while teaching in Japan, Chi worked with his Japanese students to translate and publish one of Yi Kwang-su's novels in Japanese.⁵ Yi's work was first introduced to Chi by the son of a landlord, who Chi never named, and was Chi's senior at school. This individual was an avid reader of Korean literature, who, in Chi's autobiography is listed as one of Chi's most important influences for his interest in literature (Chi 2005, 14-15).

⁴ Referred to as 'the Natsume Sōseki of Chōsen', Yi Kwang-su was a Korean literary pioneer and independence activist. Originally a nationalist, Yi was later recognised as a pro-Japan collaborator, following his return from Shanghai in 1921 where he had served as a member of the Korean Provisional Government. His pro-Japan stance was reflected in his writing and speeches, but more recent examination of Yi's life has raised some questions as to whether he was in fact a supporter of the Japanese empire. Chi was particularly moved by Yi's historical fiction, 'Tanjong Aesa' (A tragic story of Tanjong [the 6th King of the Chosŏn Dynasty])(1929) as he felt parallels between this story and what was happening between Korea and Japan at that time (Yi Sŏng-jŏn 2014).

⁵ Yi Kwang-su, 'Yujŏng', Chi Myŏng-gwan supervisor of translation, Koryŏ Sŏrim, October 1983.

Chi also attributes much of his interest in Korean literature to his association with churches in Korea (Chi 2005, 14–15). At that time, according to Chi, many of the churches in his hometown, Chŏngju, tended to be nationalistic with the pastors often refusing to use the Japanese language.⁶ Chi's ongoing engagement with the Christian churches in Korea profoundly influenced his later life. Chi not only credits these churches with his survival through his early, poverty-stricken years, he also attributes his ability to access literature to these institutions, which in turn helped to shape his understanding of history (Chi 2005, 4–6).

Chi completed his schooling as the Second World War (1939–1945) gradually turned against Japan, in favour of the allied forces. In a desperate effort to boost its waning military strength, the Japanese administrators attempted a range of superficial measures to camouflage the ongoing discrimination of the Koreans and to promote the slogan *Naisen Ittai* (Japan and Korea as One Body) (Pak Sun-yong and Hwang 2011, 390). Such camouflage measures included the renaming of Korean schools so that they were similar to their Japanese counterparts.

The Japanese authorities thus renamed Korean schools from their original *Kotŭng Pot'onghakkyo* (higher common school) to *Chunghakkyo* (middle school), in line with the term used for schools established to educate Japanese children living in Korea. However, in reality, the Japanese authorities exchanged one kind of discrimination for another. In cases where Korean and Japanese schools shared a name, numbers were used to distinguish between them, with Japanese schools invariably being referred to as 'No. 1' and Korean schools 'No. 2'. This merely

⁶ While Chi describes many of the churches as being nationalist during Japanese rule, it is important to note that there were cases where church leaders actively cooperated with the Japanese (see T. S. Lee 2010, 60 for example).

perpetuated, if not exacerbated the discrimination towards Koreans (Caprio 2009, 153–154; Chi 2005, 13–14).

The revival of the *Naisen Ittai* slogan and the associated efforts to convince the Koreans that they were loyal subjects of the Japanese empire closely coincided with the introduction of a conscription system in Korea, which was established in March 1943. The cost, in terms of lives, of the ongoing war, was extreme for the Japanese, and Korea came to be considered as an important source of young men who could be sent to fight. Following the introduction of the conscription system, approximately 200,000 young Korean men were drafted to fight for the Japanese empire (Pak Sun-yong and Hwang 2011, 390).

In order to avoid being drafted, Chi, hearing a rumour that single children with only one remaining parent would be exempted from conscription if they became a teacher, promptly enrolled in a teacher training institution. Chi was subsequently appointed to teach at the elementary school from which he graduated—*Chǒngju Pot'onghakkyo*—in April 1945. On 15 August of the same year, the allied forces defeated Japan, which in turn, ended the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Chi had successfully made it through the Second World War without being drafted by the Japanese.

2.3 End of Japan's Colonial Rule and Chi's Defection to the South

The liberation of the Korean Peninsula from Japan brought with it uncertainty for the future of the nation (Chi 2005, 32–35). Just two days after Japan's surrender, on 17 August 1945, the United States Army issued plans for the surrender of the

Japanese forces. These plans, embodied in General MacArthur's General Order No. 1 provided that:

...senior Japanese commanders and all ground, sea, air and auxiliary forces within [...] Korea north of 38 north latitude [...] shall surrender to the Commander in Chief of Soviet Forces in the Far East [...and...] [t]he Imperial General Headquarters, its senior commanders, and all ground, sea, air and auxiliary forces in [...] Korea south of 38 north latitude [...] shall surrender to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Army Forces in the Pacific (MacArthur 1945).

The Soviet Forces had already entered the Korean Peninsula just before Japan's surrender and accepted the 38th Parallel as the informal boundary line.

Consequently, the Soviet Forces commenced the occupation of the Peninsula north of this latitude, with the United States forces occupying the Peninsula to its south (Cumings 2011, 104), with each occupying force supporting a different prospective leader for Korea. North of the 38th Parallel, with Soviet support, the North Korea National People's Congress under Kim Il Sung quickly established control.

According to Chi, the National People's Congress mandated that every school had to denounce Kim Gu, the final Premier of the Provisional Government that had resided in China during the Japanese occupation,⁷ and Syngman Rhee, leader of the independence movement in the United States during the Japanese occupation.⁸

From 1946 onwards, in the North, defamatory caricatures were to be hung in every classroom and teachers were expected to promote Communist ideologies among

⁷ Kim Gu was the final Premier of Provisional Government that had resided in China. He opposed the North-South division and hoped for unified country. Kim was assassinated in June 1949 in South Korea.

⁸ Syngman Rhee was a leader of the Independence Movement in the United States, later he became the first President of South Korea.

students. As a teacher, Chi felt strongly that education should not be used as a tool for indoctrination under any circumstances. Chi believed that he could no longer comply with the demands of the National People's Congress and resigned from his teaching position soon after (Chi 2005, 36).

On his last day at school, Chi recalls confessing to his students his confusion and embarrassment regarding his role as a teacher:

I do not know who is correct, but I have praised both Syngman Rhee and Kim Gu as patriots of this nation almost every day in the classroom. But now I am expected to denounce these two as traitors and hang their caricatures in the classroom. As everyone knows, I also praised Japan and the Japanese Emperor, a fact which has caused me embarrassment after Korea's liberation. As a teacher, I do not think that I could bear to experience the same thing again (Chi 2005, 36).

Chi had difficulty reconciling his role as an educator under both Imperial Japan and this north-south confrontation. This was because, under both regimes, Chi saw himself being used as a tool to communicate policy and propaganda. Under colonial rule, he was forced to indoctrinate students to believe they were subjects of the Japanese Empire and under the North Korea National People's Congress, he was required to make students believe in the communist doctrine perpetuated by yet another overlord.

In September 1946, while Chi was still contemplating his future following his resignation, Kim Il Sung University opened its doors as the first university north of the 38th Parallel. Its campus was a repurposed imperial girls school. As a national university, there were no fees, and accommodation was provided to all students. After resigning from his teaching position, Chi felt that there was no alternative

other than to enrol as one of the University's first students and decided to pursue educational studies (Chi 2005, 38).

While the university openly promoted the four activities of study, debate, discussion, and labour, the reality disappointed Chi. Most of the faculty at that time were Koreans that had been educated in the Soviet Union. According to Chi, the Dean of the university was one such individual, described as being fluent in Russian but weak in Korean. Chi also noted that there were two academic members in the Education Faculty who taught topics including the Russian language, Marxism–Leninism, the history of Communism, and Philosophy. Chi attended classes offered by these teachers but was shocked by the one-sided lectures, the ideological attacks, and the complete absence of academic debate (Chi 2005, 38–41):

For example, in the philosophy class, the topic would first be announced, and then some kind of argument was added. As an example, a statement such as 'Marxism-Leninism is a philosophy to serve the people' would be presented and questions such as 'why is this the case', and 'what is meant by 'the people', would be logically expanded and explained. But there were no interjections of questions, nor was there any debate (Chi 2005, 38–39).

Chi also recalled a representative of the National People's Congress always being present during class. The representative would monitor the lecturers and students for signs of dissent and report any such suspicions to the National People's Congress. While at the university, Chi witnessed the public denouncing of a classmate on one occasion (Chi 2005, 39).

Given the food shortages plaguing the peninsula, one major motivating factor for Chi deciding to enter the university was the fact that it was free and provided

food and accommodation for its students. However, the food shortages also meant that each day students were required to work with shovels and hoes in a field that was once a training ground for the Japanese military. The intention was to grow food, but the university set a daily quota for the area that students were required to plough. As the quota was always beyond their capability, the students would adopt deceptive methods, such as thinly spreading ploughed soil over the hard, untilled ground to make it appear as if they had met their daily quota (Chi 2005, 39–40). As a result of such practices, crop yields were often poor.

To save on operating costs and manage the limited food supplies, the university would give extended vacations to students, which lasted approximately three months at a time. Further, from December each year, all students were sent to rural areas to participate as volunteers in ‘enlightenment and ideology education’ and to improve literacy in rural communities. The students would provide education to farming communities, as well as assist with farming activities to ‘experience first-hand the livelihood of *inmin* (the people)’ (Chi 2005, 40). Chi found a stark contradiction in the four activities extolled by the university and reality. The three activities of study, debate, and discussion were far from adequately addressed and were limited by the university’s attempts to conserve resources. Further, the final activity—labour—was severely undermined by the deception driven by unrealistic demands.

It was around this time that Chi had two separate encounters with old acquaintances that consolidated his resolve to move south of the 38th Parallel. Perhaps the most significant encounter was that with his elementary school teacher, Chông Pu-in in early December 1946. Chông, whom Chi had long considered a

father figure, had become the Chief Secretary of the Chŏngju National People's Congress and had travelled to P'yŏngyang on Congress-related business. Upon meeting, the two became engaged in a deep ideological debate, which resulted in Chŏng accusing Chi of being a reactionary. Chŏng warned Chi that he could easily report him to the authorities but that he would not, instead suggesting that Chi follow his own path (Chi 2005, 40–41). This was the last time Chi ever saw Chŏng.

Despite the urging of Chŏng to pursue his own path, Chi lacked the courage to move south as he knew no one on that side of the 38th parallel. It was just days after that meeting, however, that Chi met with his middle school friend, Ch'ae Jae-sŏn who had returned from the south to visit his family in P'yŏngyang. Ch'ae was a close friend of Chi's who would often listen to Chi's concerns. Ch'ae was a talented mathematician who went to *Kyŏngsŏng Cheguk Taehak* (Keijō Imperial University)⁹ to study physics. Following his graduation, Ch'ae had taken up a job teaching mathematics at *Ch'ungju Sabŏmhakkyo*¹⁰ (Ch'ungju Teachers' College of Education) (Chi 2005, 42).

During their conversation, Chi spoke of his misgivings about the situation in the north. Ch'ae did not agree with Chi's views and described the situation in the south as also being problematic under the U.S. military. Nevertheless, Ch'ae admitted that there would be a far better chance to study freely in the south than in the north and conceded that his main reason for returning to P'yŏngyang was, in fact, to convince Chi to join him in the south. Ch'ae spoke of work opportunities for

⁹ *Kyŏngsŏng Cheguk Taehak* was closed in 1946 and Seoul National University was established in the same year incorporating many of the same buildings.

¹⁰ Ch'ungch'ŏng-bukdo (North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, South Korea)

Chi at the elementary school belonging to his college, which was due to open in the following year. Ch'ae provided the courage Chi needed, convincing Chi to leave P'yŏngyang and travel south. At the time Chi agreed to travel south with Ch'ae, he had only attended the Kim Il-Sung University for four short months (Interview with Chi 2015a).

Chi and Ch'ae fled south of the 38th Parallel in March 1947. It was at a time when negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union relating to the phased withdrawal of foreign troops and the establishment of a single Korea under the Moscow Agreement¹¹ of 1945 had begun to deteriorate (Millett 2005, 68–94). The deteriorating negotiations resulted in an increased policing of the 38th Parallel and meant that Chi had no choice but to leave for the south in the middle of the night from the coastal city of Haeju, travelling by boat.

Soon after arriving in the south, Chi began working at the elementary school in North Ch'ungch'ŏng province, where he worked for approximately one year. In 1948 Chi moved to Seoul, where he hoped to find a teaching job. However, given the fact that he was from the north, he was unable to find work there due to increasing ideological polarisation. Faced with little prospect of finding a teaching job, Chi sat and passed the entrance examination to the Department of Religious Studies of Seoul National University in the autumn of 1948 (Chi 2005, 42–45).

Chi's mother was in Manchuria at the time Chi fled south. Upon return to Chi's hometown of Chŏngju, she learned of her son's decision and immediately

¹¹ The fundamental differences between the U.S. and the Soviets regarding the withdrawal process led to the eventual abandonment of the Agreement in October 1947 (Millett 2005, 120).

followed.¹² Chi's mother arrived in the south soon after he was accepted into Seoul National University, and they were reunited at a relative's house in Seoul. Chi's mother had always emphasised the importance of education for her son and while in Seoul played a crucial role in making his studies financially possible, selling hand-crafted bamboo knitting needles and hand-woven woollen cloth (Chi 2005, 45–46). Chi's mother continued to live with Chi and his family until she passed away in the early 1990s.

2.4 The Korean War and its Influence on Chi – the Corruption of Power

The cause of the Korean War has been debated over the sixty years since its end. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss what triggered this war. However, to summarise in broad terms, this was a tragic war during which, 'Koreans helped kill more than two million of their countrymen', the ideological and physical divisions of the two Koreas that were established along the 38th Parallel at the end of the Second World War were consolidated (Millett 2005, 5), and the present-day overseas U.S. military base structure was established (Cumings 2011, 146).

Chi was studying at his university on the day war broke out between the two Koreas. It was Sunday, 25 June 1950 and Chi recalls seeing military aircraft flying overhead as he walked home from university late that evening. From the next day, all classes were cancelled, and so Chi decided to head south with his friend Ch'ae

¹² At that time, merchants were able to trade freely between the north and south and therefore defecting from North Korea was relatively easy.

Chae-sŏn for safety. They headed for Masan City, on the south coast of the peninsula.

When they arrived in Masan City, they were suddenly accosted by the national defence force. The defence force at that time lacked discipline and rules and individuals they deemed fit were automatically drafted. Those that were found unfit escaped the draft, and Ch'ae, suffering from a lung-related illness, was released after being physically beaten. Chi was deemed fit and was immediately marched off with a group of other conscripts and recalls seeing his friend waving to him in the distance. It was the last time Chi was to see Ch'ae, who died two years later, at the age of 27 (Chi 2005, 49–51).

While in the military, Chi served in a variety of roles ranging from a cook, to a regular foot soldier. From June 1951, he found himself in the position of translator for the U.S. Military and relocated to Taegu. It was his interest in literature and religious philosophy that helped prepare him for this role. With only two weeks of training, he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant. It was a meteoric promotion that Chi himself found hard to believe and thus treated it with cynicism (Chi 2005, 60–61).

Military life left Chi with a negative impression about the abuse of power by high-ranking officials. He did, however, have some very positive encounters with individuals that influenced his later life. Genuinely interested in religious philosophy, he had long wanted to read some of Reinhold Niebuhr's work.¹³ In May 1953, just before the end of the Korean War, one of the U.S. Military councillors for

¹³ Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971). American theologian, ethicist, public intellectual, commentator on politics and public affairs, and professor at Union Theological Seminary for more than 30 years.

whom he was interpreting, gave him a copy of Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1943). The councillor also assisted Chi by allowing him to use his military postal address, which enabled Chi to correspond directly with Niebuhr. Chi immediately wrote to Niebuhr, expressing his appreciation of the book and seeking further information about other publications by Niebuhr. Niebuhr responded soon thereafter, indicating that he would be publishing a book on Christian Realism (Niebuhr 1953a) which he sent one month later (Niebuhr 1953b).

Chi continued to correspond with Niebuhr, often expressing his dismay with the situation in Korea, and conveying his thoughts about religion, human history, and freedom. Chi's comments were at times met with Niebuhr's critique. On 7 December 1953, for example, in response to one of Chi's letters, Niebuhr suggested that Chi's ideas reflected a fatalist attitude:

On your first question, whether every human act is not a creation of God, I am afraid your formulation is a very dangerous one, which eliminates human freedom and the very idea of human history, which is a vast drama under the providence of God but in which individual acts are not predetermined...(Niebuhr 1953c)

This ongoing correspondence with Niebuhr left a deep impression on Chi. Chi read all of Niebuhr's books, and later translated what he considered Niebuhr's most important work *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (1979) into Korean (Interview with Chi 2015a). Chi often wrote lengthy letters to Niebuhr, describing the situation in South Korea, and indicating his interest to study in the United States. On 19 May 1954, Chi formally sought Niebuhr's agreement to accept him as a student:

I will deeply appreciate it if you can do something for me and also let me know what I should do. It is my hope that I can be admitted in 1955 or

1956 if the seminary permits. Meanwhile I will continue my studies here in [order] to be better qualified. But I trust the seminary will give special consideration [for] my case, offering admission as soon as possible so that I can request my discharge and give all my effort to study... Before the war, I made a good record in college but now I am in doubt whether it will be as good as before, since I must divide my effort within the Army. I think the sooner I am [admitted] the better it will be. May God bless you and your seminary (Chi 1954).

This correspondence later proved to be a significant influence in shaping Chi's thought towards the United States and Japan, as will be discussed below. Chi also used Niebuhr's teachings as a basis for his own classes when he became a lecturer in the early 1960s, and in his own writings, particularly in his critique of the Park regime (Interview with Chi 2015a). Importantly, while becoming a reality somewhat later than his anticipated 1955 or 1956 commencement, his ongoing communication with Niebuhr provided Chi with an opportunity to study in New York City for approximately one year between 1967 and 1968, as discussed below (Chi 2005, 65–68).

Despite important encounters such as that with the U.S. Military councillor and Reinhold Niebuhr, Chi's overall experience in the military, and his exposure to a significant amount of corruption and immoral acts, including the torture and assassination of alleged communists by high-ranking officers, left him with a deep mistrust of the military. This mistrust influenced his position vis-à-vis the military when it took control of the country in a coup d'état in 1961, and inevitably led Chi to become a vocal critic of the military regime.

2.5 The April 19 Uprising and Chi's Shift Towards Activism

Following the Korean War, Chi returned to Seoul National University, where he finally completed an undergraduate degree in religious philosophy. Chi went on to complete a master's degree in religious philosophy in 1958 and commenced a doctorate in the same field.¹⁴ During his graduate studies, Chi worked at several universities, including Seoul National University, as a part-time lecturer. He later commenced a professorship at Duksung Women's University in 1960 teaching philosophy.

Chi's commencement at Duksung Women's University coincided with further civil unrest. On 28 February 1960, high school students in Taegu, a major city south of Seoul, staged a demonstration against government corruption and economic chaos in the lead-up to the general elections which were scheduled for 15 March of that year (C. R. Kim 2009, 72). Despite such protests against government corruption, Syngman Rhee, who had been South Korea's President since 1948, largely thanks to the support of the U.S., was seen as complicit in the rigging of the Vice-Presidential elections to ensure that Lee Ki Bung would be elected over Chang Myŏn, a member of the opposition party. This sparked further student protests around the country (J. K. Oh 1999, 40–41).

Further fuelling these protests, in early April the body of Kim Chu-yŏl, was found in the ocean near Masan. Kim had been killed when fragments hit him from a teargas bomb, and police had allegedly thrown his body into the sea. What was intended to be a nonviolent protest of Kim's death at Korea University in Seoul by

¹⁴ Chi completed all course requirements but did not submit his doctoral dissertation (Itō, T. and Tashiro 1995).

college students and intellectuals, culminated in a march on the presidential residence. The numbers swelled as the march was joined by a broad cross-section of society. However, the protest was brutally quashed by government troops who killed approximately 186 protestors and injured more than 6,000 during six weeks of protests across the nation (Ogle 2008, 71). These protests came to be known as the 'April 19, 1960 Student Uprising' (hereafter referred to as the 4.19 uprising) and lasted a total of 58 days (Pak T'ae-sun and Kim 1991; Ogle 2008, 71-72).

Within a matter of days, the conflict escalated and spread across the country. The turmoil only subsided when the students' demands were met. These demands included calls for President Syngman Rhee and the General Assembly to resign and government supporters within universities and colleges to be removed (Ogle 2008, 71). Syngman Rhee resigned as President on 26 April 1960 (C. R. Kim 2009, 72).

Seeing students and academics fight to overthrow a corrupt government changed the way Chi thought about his life. Until this time, he had been content with a stable and secure life, teaching and studying. His change in thinking came quite suddenly. He recalls that even the night before the 4.19 uprising, he did not oppose the Rhee regime. At the time he defected from the communist North, he had made a conscious decision to embrace South Korea and thus not question the Rhee regime. The brutal suppression of the 4.19 uprising, which had injured and killed so many, forced Chi to reconsider his position (Chi 2005, 79-80).

Despite the pivotal role played by students and the participation of a broad cross-section of the community, it was still the politicians who retained control of the government. The opposition party won the majority of seats in the General Assembly and Chang Myŏn, who lost the rigged Vice-Presidential election that

triggered 4.19, was elected as Prime Minister and Yun Po Sun as President (Brazinsky 2007, 108).

Although democratically elected, the Yun and Chang Government barely survived one turbulent year (Han Yong-sup 2011, 35). In response to what was seen as a hopeless situation with no democratic way forward, the armed forces launched a bloodless coup, that became popularly known as the '5.16 coup', seizing power under Park Chung Hee in May 1961 (Koo 1999, 57; Kim and Vogel 2013, 50–53).

The Military Revolutionary Committee which was formed under Park Chung Hee to govern the country made the following declaration to justify their actions:

We believe that the fate of the nation and the people cannot be entrusted to the corrupt and incompetent (Chang Myŏn) regime and its politicians. We believe that the time has come to give direction to our nation, which has gone dangerously astray (Han Yong-sup 2011, 51).

Chi's experience in the military, where he witnessed corruption and other immoral behaviour by officers, coupled with his changed political perspective following the 4.19 uprising in 1960 profoundly impacted his interpretation of political power. He turned towards journalism at this time as he believed this would be how he could best challenge political repression. He published his first article 'The Protestant's 4.19' in the June 1960 issue of the magazine *Saebiyŏk*, criticising the protestant church for its parasitic relationship with the Rhee regime (Chi 2005, 78–80). This period marked the start of Chi becoming more directly involved in South Korea's pro-democracy movement. It also marked the beginning of an ongoing inner struggle as to whether he should focus his life on journalism or academia.

2.6 The Park Regime and *Sasanggye* (The World of Thought)

Park Chung Hee came to power in 1961. Historian, Namhee Lee (2009b, 41), characterises the period of rule under Park as a convergence of ‘the state’s brutal suppression of human and civil rights, people’s vehement and persistent demands for democracy, and the rapid economic development of the time’. Ham Se-ung (1942-), a Catholic priest and long-time activist in the Korean people’s struggles for human rights and democracy, described South Korea under the Park regime as ‘a fearful time of darkness and violence when Park’s every word was absolute law’ (Ham 2008). While there are various interpretations of this period, both negative and positive, the often-harsh suppression of freedom of speech meant that development of a viable opposition to the regime was almost impossible.

Under the Park regime, intellectuals were just one of the many sectors of society that struggled to express any real criticism of the government. This is mainly due to the fact that few publishers were willing to expose their businesses to risk becoming associated with Park’s opposition. Newspapers were also under considerable pressure to refrain from criticism of the government. Government pressure came in various forms and included the threat of tax audits and the coercion of companies to advertise elsewhere, undermining important income streams for the publishers.

The magazine *Sasanggye* (The World of Thought) was recognised as one of few publications that were willing to act as a forum for intellectuals critical of the regime. *Sasanggye* was initiated and published by Chang Chun-ha who was known as an independence fighter while Korea was under Japanese rule, and later as a pro-democracy activist. Chang served in the Japanese military during Japanese

occupation but later escaped from occupied Korea and moved to Chongqing, China. In China, Chang joined the Korean Provisional Government, a government in exile that was formed in 1919 for the liberation of the Korean Peninsula from Japanese annexation. Following the end of the Second World War, Chang returned to Korea and became the secretary of Kim Gu, reunification activist, who had attempted to negotiate with both Kim Il Sung and Syngman Rhee for the reunification of Korea after 1945 (Kim Chong-ch'öl 2012, 32–72).

Sasanggye was first published as a monthly magazine in the southern Pusan in April 1953, at a time when Pusan had become the temporary southern capital during the Korean War. The U.S. Embassy in Korea provided significant support in the magazine's initial years. Not only providing paper for the printing of the first few issues, but also purchasing as many as 5,000 of the first print, and distributing it freely to government offices and educational institutions (Kim Sam-ung 2009, 314–315).

The support by the U.S. Embassy helped the development of this magazine, and the magazine quickly grew to be one of the most popular publications in Korea, particularly at the time of the 4.19 uprising. Following the uprising, the *Sasanggye* magazine came to be recognised as a publication whose mission was to educate the people of Korea about the value of freedom and civil rights. The *Sasanggye* magazine helped to connect intellectuals with the broader university community (Kim Sam-ung and Yu 1993, 69). At that time, academics would rush to the *Sasanggye* offices after their university lectures to debate political issues such as the normalisation of diplomatic ties between Korea and Japan. So popular was this magazine that it outsold the daily newspapers, exceeding one hundred thousand

copies per issue around the time of the 4.19 uprising (Kim Sam-ung 2009, 9) and according to Chi, large advertisements on sides of trains read 'have you read this month's *Sasanggye* yet?' (Chi 2005, 97).

Articles published in *Sasanggye* actively criticised the Park regime and the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. The Treaty, that was signed in June 1965, was an attempt to normalise relations between South Korea and Japan. Many in Korea saw the Treaty as an attempt to liquidate Japan's actions during its occupation and absolve Japan from any further responsibility. The content of the Treaty angered the population and resulted in political turmoil and violent protests across South Korea. A broad cross-section of the Korean community, including students, intellectuals, farmers, labourers and religious groups joined the fight against the Treaty and protests occurred both inside and outside of universities. *Sasanggye* was at the centre of the peoples' fight (Chi 2005, 97).

After Chi's shift towards journalism, he began writing regularly for a number of magazines, including *Sasanggye* and the *Chosun Ilbo* (Korea Daily), a nationwide newspaper. Chi's articles tended to voice his strong opposition against the normalisation negotiations between Japan and Korea and the Park regime. Chi's first *Sasanggye* article was entitled *5.16 ūn 4.19 chŏngsin ūi kyesŭng anida* (5.16 did not inherit the spirit of 4.19) and was published in the April 1964 issue of the magazine. As its title suggests, this article argues that the military coup that was led by Park in May 1961 was not carried out in the same spirit that had underpinned the 4.19 uprising of 1960 (Chi 1964, 36; Chi 2005, 91).

Chi's contributions to the *Chosun Ilbo* were the result of Chi's old friend Sŏnu Hwi, who had grown up in the same town as Chi and had become an author and

chief editor of the *Chosun Ilbo*, urging him to write for the newspaper. Sönu was widely considered a genius in his hometown, and Chi openly aspired to be like him. Chi considered Sönu a very close friend from his childhood and throughout his adult life, with both friends studying at Seoul National University. While at university, Sönu studied journalism, eventually serving in the military as an officer. During his time in the military, Sönu was able to develop a broad network of military officers and personnel. In addition, as Sönu's sister worked for Park as his secretary, Sönu was also able to develop a good relationship with Park, which later proved crucial in Chi obtaining travel documents needed to travel to the United States. Despite this strong relationship with Park, however, it was Sönu who encouraged Chi to write about the Park regime in the *Chosun Ilbo* (Interview with Chi 2015a).

At that time the *Chosun Ilbo* was pressured by the Park regime to write articles supportive of the regime and its policies. Despite such pressures, Chi's column entitled *Kadue kkürönaen kös ün nuguin'ga* (Who pulled the students out onto the streets?) was published alongside a pro-Park article on the first page of the newspaper. The column was a response to the government propaganda to blame universities and schools for their role in the violence of the early 1960s. Sönu was summoned to the government to explain why such an article had been published (Chi 2005, 92–93).

Chi's inability to decide whether to follow a career in journalism or academia was abruptly resolved for him in July 1964. As a result of his public opposition to the regime through his *Chosun Ilbo* articles, Chi was removed from all of his teaching positions at Duksung Women's Middle and High School, and Seoul University. It

was at this time that an offer came from *Sasanggye*, which he accepted. He subsequently commenced working as a chief opinion writer for *Sasanggye* where he engaged fully in his critique of the Treaty and the Park regime (Chi 2005, 96).

In his autobiography, Chi recalled looking out the window from his *Sasanggye* desk on Chongro street in central Seoul and seeing Kwanghwamun and Chongro streets clouded with tear gas and filled with young students shouting political slogans while trying to avoid being clubbed by the police (Chi 2005, 247). He became enthusiastic as he looked down from his office at the ongoing protests. He felt sure that Korea would become a democracy through this process, as he considered the movement to be not only against the Treaty but also a voice against the political power of the time.

2.7 Chi's First Visit to Japan

The Treaty had become a fait accompli, and on 18 December 1965, the South Korean and Japanese Governments signed the deal. Diplomatic normalisation between Korea and Japan was realised and to mark this, the Japanese right-wing magazine *Jiyū* (Freedom) invited *Sasanggye* to participate in a tour of Japan and a meeting with Japanese intellectuals. Chang Chun-ha accepted the proposal and sent three staff, including Chi and Kim Chun-yŏp, *Sasanggye*'s vice-president and later president of Korea University (1982-1985).

Given Chang's past opposition to the Japanese control of the Korean peninsula and the Treaty negotiations between the two countries, his acceptance of the

invitation by the right wing *Jiyū*¹⁵ magazine, which advocated much of what Chang opposed, came as a surprise to many, including Chi. However, Chang justified his decision to Chi by saying, ‘we have been fighting against the Treaty, but now it is a fait accompli, from now we have to know Japan. I only know about Japan during the war. I want you to study Japan very carefully because from now we have to live in the Korea and Japan Treaty era’ (Chi 2005, 103–104).

Chi left for Japan with his two colleagues in December 1965, despite attempts by the South Korean government to block his departure by delaying the issuing of his passport. In seeking permission for this visit to Japan, the government required Chi to write about the tour in detail, justifying every place visited and every person he intended to meet. It was not until just before his scheduled departure that he knew with any certainty that he would actually be able to depart for Japan. In his autobiography, Chi writes:

At three thirty, when Northwest Airlines took off from Kimpo Airport into a clear sky, we all sighed with relief. We finally received our passports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at twelve thirty. We thought that our scheduled departure at 3:30 would be impossible (Chi 2005, 104).

In April 1945, the last year of Japanese colonial rule, Chi worked alongside Japanese teachers and believed that he knew them. The experience left him with a negative impression of Japanese people, which he still held on his first visit to Japan in December 1965. However, soon after he arrived in Japan, he was surprised by the similarities between Korean and Japanese people, writing that the Japanese were not

¹⁵ The *Jiyū* magazine was initially created by members of the Japan branch of the World Congress for Cultural Freedom. The international body was closely aligned with *Sasanggye*.

only geographically close to Korea, they were also close to the Koreans both ethnically and culturally (Chi 2005, 105). From this point, Chi considered it crucial that a distinction be made between politics and people.

After his ten-day visit to Japan, Chi published an article in the February 1966 issue of *Sasanggye* entitled 'Japan Tour'. This was followed by a longer article in the September 1966 issue entitled 'Japan Tour - the Sequel'. These articles focused on his activities and impressions while in Japan, including his visits to Tokyo, Kyoto and Nara (as cited in Chi 2005, 105). In Chi's 1966 Japanese language publication *Nagare ni kōshite – Aru Kankokujin Kurisutokyōsha no Shōgen* (Against the Flow – One Korean Christian's Testimony), he also wrote of such impressions of his visit to Japan:

When I travelled to Tokyo from Osaka, from the window of the Shinkansen (bullet train), I saw beautiful mountains and rivers, neat gardens and industrial infrastructure even in small cities. Over the past twenty years, the Korean people have fought for territorial integrity and struggled for a higher wage. Looking at the developed nation of Japan with envy, I thought of Korea's recent history (Chi 1966, 2).

Chi remarked that he had never dreamed of making such a trip in his lifetime but that in retrospect, the trip cemented his lasting relationship with Japan (Chi 2005, 104). Through this trip, Chi became deeply impressed by the freedom within Japanese society. He met many of the key Japanese intellectuals who would continue to play an important role in his life, including Morioka Iwao, President of Shinkyō Publisher, who later helped Chi get established in Japan when he moved there. On Morioka's suggestion, Chi published his first Japanese article *Kankoku Kyōkai no 80-nen no Ayumi* (An 80-year History of the Korean Church) and published *Nagare ni*

kōshite, which was his first book in Japanese. Chi also met Ogawa Keiji, Professor of Tokyo Women's University, who helped Chi find work during his stay in Japan between 1972 and 1993 (Chi 2005, 105–107).

The articles Chi published in *Sasanggye* on his return from Japan were later translated into Japanese and manipulated by the *Jiyū* magazine in a way that made it appear as if Chi and his *Sasanggye* colleagues supported the Treaty, when in fact they strongly opposed it. The manipulated article was entitled *Ikokukara Tomono Kuni e* (From a foreign country to a friend's country) was published in the December 1966 issue of *Jiyū* under Chi's name, translated by Chŏn Jun, a Korean resident in Japan (Interview with Chi 2015a). Prior to the *Jiyū* article, Chi had already published his thoughts on Korea-Japan relations in Japanese in *Nagare ni kōshite*, which differed significantly to the arguments made in the translated article. Rather than supporting the Treaty, Chi argued that it was crucial that Korean and Japanese intellectuals cooperate to 'build an alternative road together' (Chi 1966, 238). It was clear that *Jiyū's* misuse of Chi's name was strategic, and Chi sent a letter of protest to the magazine, accusing them of misrepresentation. However, *Jiyū* never responded (Chi 2008a, 413).

After returning to South Korea, Chi observed *Sasanggye's* gradual decline under the pressure of the military regime, which also impacted on his financial stability. Chi started to think seriously about pursuing study in the U.S. or Japan. At that time, however, South Korea's economic situation and Chi's own financial responsibilities meant that studying abroad was unlikely (Chi 2005, 107–109, 123).

Nevertheless, despite Chi having lost his teaching position at Duksung Women's University due to government pressure, the university president, Song

Küm-sŏn continued her support for Chi. Song encouraged Chi to travel to the U.S. and agreed to take care of Chi's family while he was away. While this offer by Song provided hope for Chi to fulfil his ambitions to study in the U.S., Chi still needed to find a scholarship to cover his living expenses while abroad (Chi 2005, 108).

Chi accepted Song's offer, and in late 1966 wrote to Reinhold Niebuhr, seeking his support to study at Union Theological Seminary in New York. A response came soon after, with Niebuhr suggesting that Chi applies for one of the Union Theological Seminary Missionary Scholarships. Correspondence continued between the two, with Niebuhr, coordinating the application process for Chi.

Chi received a letter dated 13 May 1967 congratulating him on winning a Missionary Scholarship for the 1967-1968 academic year (beginning in the autumn of 1967). This letter, however, had been written by Niebuhr's secretary, as Niebuhr was on leave from work recovering from a heart attack at that time. The letter also indicated that Chi would not be able to meet with Niebuhr until the second semester due to other commitments (Beers and Niebuhr 1967).¹⁶ From his first letter to Niebuhr in 1953, it had taken approximately 15 years for Chi to realise his dream of studying in the U.S. Nevertheless, with financial problems now solved, Chi was eager to go.

However, Chi's problems were not only financial. Obtaining a passport to travel to the U.S., also proved to be a challenge. Upon applying for a passport, the KCIA investigated his activities to confirm whether they could be deemed 'anti-government'. His activities were scrutinised by the KCIA daily for approximately one

¹⁶ During his year in the U.S., Chi never met with Niebuhr as a result of other commitments and health concerns. Nevertheless, he continued to correspond with Niebuhr and attributes much of his own religious and philosophical thought to Niebuhr's influence (Interview with Chi 2015a).

week. On the final day of the investigation, a KCIA officer entered his office accusing Chi of participating in anti-government activities as a result of his book *Nagare ni kōshite*. Fortunately for Chi, Sōnu was able to use his connections within the military and government to enable Chi to obtain his passport. In September 1967, Chi was finally able to leave South Korea to study in the U.S. for one year (Chi 2005, 109–111).

Leaving his mother, wife and three sons behind in Seoul, Chi arrived at the Union Theological Seminary in September 1967. Chi had high hopes for his stay in the United States, a country he thought to be a leader of the world (Chi 2005, 113–114). However, over time, Chi's views on the U.S. changed, which he openly expressed. In an August 1968 Texan newspaper, for example, during a speech to a Woman's Guild in Seguin, Texas, Chi was reported to have 'enchanted' the ladies of the guild with his 'vivid description of Korean culture' and his 'interesting appraisal of the customs and cultures he has found in the real America'. During his conversation, he expressed his disappointment with the United States, attributing his appraisal to 'recent and current developments within the confines of the United States' (*The Seguin Gazette* 1968, 12).

It was clear that the 'recent and current developments' included, first of all, the shocking news of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on 4 April 1968, which led to riots across the country. The second development was the assassination of Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy just two months after this event, on 5 June 1968. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, in particular, had a significant impact on Chi and was the catalyst for an article he published in the *Chosun Ilbo* entitled *Miguk hūgin undong kwa kyohoe* (The American black movement and the

Church) (Chi 1968a, 5; as cited in Chi 2005, 114). In this article, he described the long history of violence and discrimination towards black Americans. Chi highlighted the racial violence against the black Americans by white Americans and detailed the important role the church played as an alternative forum for the blacks to express themselves as a group and develop leadership abilities. Under the charismatic leadership of Martin Luther King, a policy of nonviolence was generally followed. However, following King's assassination, Chi expressed concern as to whether the church would maintain this approach, or resort to riots and violence. Chi published three more articles relating to King and several articles relating to American college student protests that occurred throughout 1968.¹⁷

After spending approximately one year in the United States, studying mainly in New York, Chi travelled to a number of countries as suggested by and supported by Song Kŭm-sŏn. Chi travelled to several countries in Europe, and also visited Israel and Southeast Asia (Thailand, Indonesia and Taiwan). His last stop before returning home was Tokyo to see his long-time friend, Sŏnu, who had commenced studies at Tokyo University. Chi spent approximately one month with Sŏnu, who introduced Chi to Yasue Ryōsuke, who at that time was working for Governor Inobe Ryōkichi as a special secretary. This first meeting was set up by Sŏnu in response to the article published in the *Jiyū* magazine under Chi's name. Yasue, after reading the article was reportedly deeply disappointed with Chi, and it was Sŏnu's intention to set the record straight. Chi explained to Yasue about the misuse of his articles and his letter of protest to the magazine's publishers.

¹⁷ These articles included *Memp'isŭ ūi pigŭk ūl ch'aja* (Visiting the Memphis Tragedy) (part 1 and 2) on 23 and 27 June 1968 (Chi 1968b; Chi 1968c).

This first meeting with Yasue ended on a positive note and was to change both Chi and Yasue's lives as it became the catalyst to their roles in the transnational advocacy network which was to be established approximately four years later. While staying in Tokyo, Chi also met many intellectuals, who influenced him to start thinking more about East Asia and its fate (Chi 2005, 121). Chi returned to his home in South Korea on 18 December 1968 to spend Christmas with his family.

2.8 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has provided historical background to Chi's life within the context of Japan's colonial rule, its subsequent collapse, and the ensuing struggle for political control of the Korean Peninsula. The chapter has identified several important experiences in Chi's early years that formed the foundation for his thinking and activities later in life, including 1) his education under Japanese colonial rule; 2) witnessing the use of education as a propaganda tool by the ruling elite; 3) the repression of intellectual freedom by the ruling elite; and 4) meeting certain individuals throughout his younger life that led him to move to South Korea and later travel to the U.S. and Japan. The next chapter will discuss Chi's relocation to Japan in 1972 and consider how the above experiences influenced his activities over the next approximately 16 years.

Chapter 3

The Catalyst for a Japan-based Transnational Advocacy Network and the Letters Project

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided historical background to the situation in Korea and its changing relationship with Japan and discussed how this history shaped Chi Myŏng-gwan's thought and subsequent activities. This chapter discusses the catalyst and creation of the Letters Project and its role as a conveyor of information about the plight of activists in South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s to the world via Japan. This chapter explores how South Korean domestic actors sought to engage international connections to try and bring external pressure on the repressive Park regime. The chapter then considers how the popular Japanese monthly column entitled 'Letters from South Korea', which ran for 16 years in the influential Japanese magazine '*Sekai*', helped to establish and maintain connections between South Korea and the rest of the world. Finally, this chapter also identifies and explores the diverse roles, abilities and preconditions that were required for this transnational advocacy network to successfully form and function.

To provide some contextual background to the circumstances under which the Letters Project formed, this chapter will explore the state-civil society link in South Korea through the lens of the boomerang model. Keck and Sikkink (1998, 12–13) argue that 'when a government violates or refuses to recognise rights, individuals often have no recourse within domestic political or judicial arenas' and thus 'may seek international connections to express their concerns'. As described in this

chapter, the repression in South Korea under the Park regime was severe. However, while this repression failed to stamp out the pro-democracy movement, the fracturing of the linkages between the state and civil society, as predicted by the boomerang model, triggered the support of international networks and the Letters Project. This chapter will first explore how the fracturing of the state-civil society link acted as a catalyst for the formation of the Letters Project. Second, this chapter will examine the elements that enabled the project to function as an important part of a broader international network that provided the pro-democracy movement in South Korea with ‘access, leverage, information (and often money) that they could not expect to have on their own’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 12–13).

3.2 The Park Regime and the Fracturing of the State-Civil Society

Link

On Chi’s return from his year in the United States, in December 1968, it became clear to him that the political turmoil in South Korea had only worsened under the Park regime. *Sasanggye*, perhaps the last means for criticising government policy had been financially destroyed through targeted taxation investigations and the coercion of advertisers to desert the publisher by the government. It was around the time of Chi’s return that Park Chung Hee was nearing the end of his second term as President (1967-1971). To make it possible for him to continue as President for a third term, the Constitution was amended in the middle of the night in what has been referred to as a ‘sneaky parliamentary maneuver’ (Baker 2007, 92).

On 27 April 1971, Park won the presidential election by a narrow margin against the popular leader of the opposition, Kim Dae Jung. However, the election

was far from fair, plagued by fraud and voter intimidation (N. Lee 2009a, 34). After losing the election, Kim Dae Jung released a statement entitled 'After the April 27 Presidential Election', in which he claimed that the presidential election had been fraudulent and should not be tolerated, accusing the Park regime of rigging more than six million votes. Kim Dae Jung claimed that the extent of the rigging was such that his own vote was deemed invalid by the electoral committee (Kim Dae Jung 2010, 426).

Soon after the commencement of Park's third term, he instituted a policy for increasing the mandatory military training for university students. Much of this training was carried out on university campuses and was thus seen by many as infringing upon the principle of educational freedom from government control. Thus, sparked by the dishonest way in which Park clung to power, and exacerbated by this sudden increase in the number of weekly hours of compulsory military training for university students (*kyoryŏn*), Park's third term (1971-1972) was met with student protests.

The student protests were met by a Garrison Decree on October 15, 1971. The military was deployed to every university campus where major demonstrations took place in an attempt to deter students from gathering. The military established semi-permanent quarters near the universities so that soldiers could directly confront students in what were often violent conflicts. Despite the decree, students continued to take to the streets in large numbers (Chang 2015, 33).

The Garrison Decree led to the arrest of nearly 2,000 students in 1971. Political unrest continued despite the 1971 Garrison Decree and one year later, on October 17, 1972, Park proclaimed martial law, dissolved the National Assembly, arrested many

dissident and opposing political leaders and closed universities across the country. *Yusin* and the associated crackdown on student and labour movements, as well as the dismantling of other public fora, such as *Sasanggye* (Chang 2015, 168), with which the civil society could criticise and engage with the state, meant that the link between South Korea's state and civil society was now fractured.

This fracture between the state and civil society manifested itself in many ways. For Chi, it meant that he agonised continuously about his choices—whether to ‘rush into reality and join the fight for democracy’, or ‘close his eyes and escape to an intellectual life’. As it turned out, he was never able to fully commit to either of these pathways, lamenting later in life that it was due to his inability to make this choice that resulted in him being unable to leave his mark in either domain (Chi 2005, 120).

Chi's agonising over which path to take may not have been a unique dilemma, as intellectuals have long been regarded as instrumental in large-scale social movements. Gramsci (1971, 148–161) and Eyerman and Jamison (1991, 95) argue that intellectuals play an essential role in historical and contemporary movements by contributing to the formation of a collective identity to making the movement what it is. It also may be the case that Chi had little ability to choose between joining the fight or academic pursuits, as Eyerman and Jamison further argue that individual intellectuals who take part in movements are transformed into leaders, whether they actually are leaders or not, and they are expected to play the role of ideologist or strategic planner of movement activities (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, 97).

The risk for Chi was genuine, as history shows numerous cases where intellectuals in South Korea were repressed, imprisoned, and in some cases killed.¹⁸ Indeed, Chi's friend Chang Chun-ha, who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison by court-martial in 1974 and died under suspicious circumstances in 1975, was one of 'hundreds of intellectuals, students, and religious and military figures condemned by the military tribunals' (Cohen and Baker 1991, 178). Chi could easily have become one of those hundreds of condemned intellectuals in South Korea, and indeed, in a 2008 article, he expressed strong feelings of guilt for the way he was able to avoid the imprisonment and torture experienced by many the Park regime.

While for more than 20 years, I sat idle in a shabby six-tatami mat room, many of my comrades and young people suffered torture in cold prisons. Their tortured and injured bodies must make it impossible for them to sleep on a cold winter's night, and so there was no way I could sleep in comfort (2008b, 246).

During the harsh repression under the Park regime, Chi's feelings of guilt towards those suffering in South Korea coexisted uncomfortably with his deep concern for his personal safety and his strong desire to pursue an academic career. Indeed, following his return from the U.S., Chi confided in his close friend, Sönu Hwi, about his fears that if he allowed himself to be captured by the regime, he would more than likely not survive long (Chi 2005, 123–124). It was an internal struggle that would continue to confront Chi throughout his life.

¹⁸ One famous example is the imprisonment of Sö Söng and his brother Sö Chun-sik, Japanese-Koreans who studied at Seoul National University, who were arrested by the KCIA as spies and served 19 years and 17 years in prison respectively (Sö 2001).

During his short stay in Japan in 1968, Chi was impressed by the culture of intellectual freedom that was firmly entrenched in Japanese society. Enticed by what he saw in Japan, Chi started searching for a way in which he could go there to study (Chi, Sumiya, and Yamada 1993, 9).

Chi desired to study religion and philosophy as well as the history of political thought of Japan at the University of Tokyo. He also hoped to study the Japanese intellectual, Maruyama Masao¹⁹ after reading his book *Nihon no shisō* (Japanese thought)²⁰. Inspired by Maruyama's book, Chi had a strong desire to write about the lives of Korean intellectuals who struggled in a turbulent political environment under a Japanese colonial government. He drew parallels between such individuals and the struggle of Japanese intellectuals in the years following the 1896 Meiji Restoration (Chi 2004a, 6).

In 1972, the same year that Park declared martial law, Chi had the opportunity to return to Japan to pursue his studies, arriving there in October 1972. Given the financial constraints, the president of Duksung Women's University again agreed to financially support Chi's family for one year while Chi studied in Japan. Once in Japan, Chi had little financial support and managed to scrape by through publishing articles in Japanese Christian magazines. Sumiya Mikio and Saito Makoto, both professors of Tokyo University, whom Chi had met on his previous visit to Japan,

¹⁹ Chi was later introduced to Maruyama Masuo by Yasue at the Iwanami offices. As Maruyama had already retired, he introduced Chi to Tokyo University Professor, Ishida Takeshi, History of Japanese Political Thought specialist. Chi attended Ishida's seminars on a regular basis. He met Maruyama on three subsequent occasions (Interview with Chi 2015a).

²⁰ Maruyama Masao. 1961. *Nihon no Shisō*. Iwanami Shoten.

supported Chi's study plans. They supported his entrance into Tokyo University and helped him to obtain a visa for Japan.

Further, given Chi's financial situation²¹, they later helped Chi find work, introducing him to Rikkyō University and Tokyo Women's University, where he taught Korean history and language. Sumiya and Saito also assisted Chi in resolving issues related to his work permit, which almost saw him deported (Chi, Sumiya, and Yamada 1993, 9). Sumiya, in particular, was a long-term supporter of Chi, providing ongoing assistance to him throughout his almost 20-year stay in Japan, including helping Chi to secure a permanent position at Tokyo Women's University in 1980 (Chi 2005, 127–128).

In this way, the fracturing of the state-civil society link under the Park regime triggered both an escalation in pro-democracy activism and an outflow of individuals like Chi, searching for safety and intellectual freedom. However, like many intellectuals, Chi was unable to escape from the movement entirely, and was transformed into a leader-of-sorts. In this way, Chi was drawn back into the South Korean pro-democracy movement, despite his relocation to Japan. The next section will examine the convergence of Chi with likeminded external individuals and groups who possessed an essential set of capacities and pre-existing networks, both within South Korea and abroad.

²¹ Chi initially funded his studies at Tokyo University with money he had managed to save from his one year of study in the United States. As it was not possible to bring this money back to South Korea, he left this money with a friend in Tokyo during his one month stay at the end of 1968.

3.3 The Convergence of Chi Myŏng-gwan, Yasue Ryōsuke and Oh Chae-sik

Chi commenced his studies at the University of Tokyo soon after arriving in Japan, immediately becoming deeply interested in one of Japan's most influential intellectuals, Nakae Chōmin, who studied Jean-Jacques Rousseau while in France during the 1870s. Chi felt a strong affinity with Nakae and his experiences following his return to Japan and his frustrations returning to what was essentially an absolutist regime under the Meiji Government (1868-1912) (Chi 2005, 123-124). Chi intended to trace how intellectuals such as Nakae had overcome the stifling intellectual environment of the Meiji Government in the hope of applying this to Korean intellectuals.

It was at this time that Chi thought one year in Japan would not be nearly enough time for his studies and writing. He thus began considering the possibility of extending his stay. Two events that took place at this time were to influence Chi's plans significantly: His second encounter with Yasue Ryōsuke in November 1972; and a visit by his Seoul National University junior and close friend, Oh Chae-sik.

Chi and Yasue's second encounter (the first being on the way back from Chi's year in the U.S. in 1968, as mentioned in the previous chapter) happened on a bus not far from the University of Tokyo. Both individuals moved within a similar network of people, and lived and worked within less than a three-kilometre radius of each other, and yet it took almost 12 months after Chi's arrival before their paths were to cross. On this occasion, Yasue invited Chi to his Iwanami office, and Chi visited about three days later. At the time of their meeting, Yasue was relatively new to his position as editor-in-chief of the influential *Sekai* magazine, having only been

promoted to that position in July 1972. During their first discussion, according to Chi, they mostly talked about the political situation in Korea.

Yasue proved to be knowledgeable about Korea and had visited North Korea on three separate occasions to interview the North Korean Premier, Kim Il Sung. Yasue was also demonstrably sympathetic to Korea and the Korean Japanese. In 1968, before his commencement at Iwanami, for example, Yasue actively lobbied the Governor of Tokyo to formally recognise *Chosŏn Daehakkyo* (Korea University), a university established in April 1956 by the *Chae Ilbon Chosŏnin Ch'ongryŏnhaphoe* (General Association of Korean Residents in Japan). In addition, Yasue demonstrated a keen interest in the pro-democracy movement in South Korea and had interviewed Kim Dae Jung twice. In a 1995 discussion between Yasue and Chi that was later published, Yasue explained that his ongoing interest in, and support of North and South Korea and the Koreans in Japan was driven by his desire for Japan to acknowledge its historical responsibility in the division of the two Koreas and for the peninsula to achieve genuine reconciliation (Chi 2005, 218).

The *Sekai* magazine was launched immediately after the Second World War, in December 1945, by the owner of the *Iwanami Shoten* publishing company, Iwanami Shigeo. Iwanami expressed regret that his company had been unable to 'prevent public opinion from being pushed in the wrong direction prior to the War'. Iwanami believed that the Second World War was 'a war that Japan had to lose' and expressed a strong desire to correct Japan's history. He committed to finding some way to directly influence the post-war public opinion through the launching of an intellectual or popular magazine (Ōe and Yasue 1984, 2–3). *Sekai* was launched

based on this commitment, and it became a popular magazine among students and intellectuals (Chi 2005, 217).

From the late 1960s, the core focus of the magazine *Sekai* related to issues of peace, problems associated with Japan's democracy, and reconciliation and cooperation with Asian people. The Vietnam War became a central topic of discussion. During the 1972 conversation between Chi and Yasue, it became clear that the recently promoted editor-in-chief was keen to broaden the magazines focus to other regional issues. Yasue expressed to Chi his concern about Korea sending its military to Vietnam and suggested that Chi write about Korea's role in the Vietnam War for *Sekai*. Chi agreed to Yasue's proposal and subsequently published *Betonamu no sensō to Kankoku* (Vietnam's war and Korea) in the March 1973 issue of *Sekai*, under the pseudonym Kim Sun-il. In this article, Chi criticised the Park regime, accusing the Korean military of being corrupt, and that the United States supported this corruption. In hindsight, Chi considered that Yasue might have requested him to write this article to test his Japanese writing skills (Chi 2005, 131–132).

Approximately two months after writing the article on the role of Korea in the Vietnam War, Yasue published an interview with Chi (again using the pseudonym Kim Sun-il). The article was entitled *Gunsei kara fashizumu e — Paku seiken 12-nen no kiseki o kataru* (From Military Rule to Fascism – Tracing the 12-years of the Park Chung Hee Regime) and was published in the May 1973 issue of *Sekai*. For this interview, Yasue requested that Chi discuss the Korean military regime, as he felt it necessary to provide the readers with a background of the situation in Korea. In the same issue of *Sekai*, Chi wrote his first Letter under the pseudonym, 'T.K.'

Yasue was to become one of the most crucial players for the Letters Project and was also a significant influence on Chi's private and public life. In his autobiography, Chi wrote that he could not discuss his stay in Japan nor his participation in Korea's democratisation without discussing Yasue. Chi credited Yasue as having fought in solidarity with the Korean pro-democracy movement for more than 20 years. While Yasue never tampered with the content of the Letters from South Korea, Chi believed that it was no exaggeration to consider the Project, in a spiritual sense, a collaborative effort between him and Yasue (Chi 2005, 130).

Chi's visit from Oh Chae-sik

Around the time he met Yasue, he also met with his old friend and Seoul National University junior, Oh Chae-sik. This encounter also proved to be an important catalyst for the creation of the Letters Project. Oh Chae-sik, born in Cheju Province in 1933 and graduated from Seoul National University's Department of Religious Studies in 1957, dedicated much of his life to Korea's ecumenical movement, the pro-democracy movement, and the reunification movement. From 1960 to 1964, Oh was the Secretary of the Korean Students Christian Council (KSCC) and later became the Secretary of the Asia Christian Council, the Secretary of the International Division of the Urban Rural Mission (URM). He also supported the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) and the labour movement in Tokyo (1971-1981) (Oh Chae-sik 2012).²²

²² Oh Chae-sik continued to be active both in the lead up to, and following South Korea's democratic transition. From 1982 to 1988 Oh was director of both the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) Missionary Training Institute, and the Unification Research Institute. From 1994 to 1996, Oh was a founding representative of Chamyöyöndae (People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy) and the Korea Christian Academy. From 1997 to 2002, Oh was Chair of World Vision,

Oh was keenly interested in the political situation in South Korea. In November 1970, Korean activist Chŏn Tae-il, a tailor by trade, committed suicide by burning himself to death at the age of 22 in protest of the poor working conditions in South Korean factories. The incident had a significant impact on Korean society as it was the catalyst for the formation of the labour movement in Korea (Choi 1990, 103).

Oh had only recently moved to Tokyo from Singapore, in January 1971, as a part of the relocation of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) headquarters. After his arrival in Tokyo, Oh believed that Japan would be an ideal base for collecting, preserving and disseminating information on the pro-democracy movement in South Korea. One of the main reasons for this belief was that all long-haul international flights to and from South Korea transited through Tokyo's Haneda Airport at that time (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 151–169). This meant Tokyo would be a perfect place to gather information from missionaries and journalists travelling to and from South Korea.

Aware that Chi had also recently moved to Japan, Oh decided to share his ideas with him. When meeting with Chi at his lodgings in Tokyo,²³ Oh urged him not to ignore the suffering of the pro-democracy activists fighting under the Park regime's martial law decree. This was not the first time that Oh had urged Chi to become involved in social activism. During the early 1960s, when both Oh and Chi were still in South Korea, Oh described Chi's Christian beliefs and practices as

Korea, during which time he travelled to North Korea on numerous occasions to provide assistance, which included the building of five noodle factories. Oh was also the first director of the Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea from 1998 to 1999

²³ Tomizaka Seminar House, Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo

‘Pietist’ and continually urged him to play a more active role in bringing about social change (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 194–195). Influenced by Oh’s urging, Chi became more engaged in social activism through his social commentary in publications such as *Sasanggye*.

Oh suggested to Chi that people in Tokyo would support Korea’s pro-democracy movement and would provide an avenue to convey the struggle of the movement to the world. Given the Park regime’s strategy of linking the democracy movement to the Communist North, Oh proposed to mobilise Christian organisations in Japan and Korea due to their global linkages, making them a difficult target for the regime. Oh convinced Chi that Tokyo would be the ideal location for the exchange of information with people from around the world travelling to and from Korea, and Chi supported his proposal (Chi 2005, 161).

During this meeting at Chi’s residence, Oh also proposed that they work together to draft a declaration to criticise the Park regime and to draw the attention of the world to the plight of the pro-democracy movement in Korea. Chi and Oh were joined by Kim Yong-bok (1938 -), who was in Tokyo to study for six months after receiving his PhD from Princeton University. Kim met Oh while in Tokyo and was quickly recruited by Oh as a member of the Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA)²⁴ and a project leader for an Urban Rural Mission (URM) research project on the role of transnational corporations in Asia (Küster 2010).

In January 1973, the three men met at Oh’s place of residence in Shibuya, Tokyo, to draft the declaration. Kim developed the basic structure of the document

²⁴ An organisation that was formed in 1973 by the Christian Conference of Asia to collect, analyse and share information for action groups in Asia (‘Documentation for Action Groups in Asia’ 2016).

in English and Chi and Oh provided comments and completed the final draft after several meetings. Kim Yong-bok's American wife proofread the final English draft and Chi then translated the document into Korean and Japanese. The result was the *1973-yŏn Han'guk kidokcha sŏnŏn* (1973 Theological Declaration of Korean Christians [formal English title]).

Oh set out to secure sponsors and distribution channels. According to Oh, however, in the early stages, the declaration did not gain much attention. Oh and Chi subsequently sent the declaration to the authoritative Christian magazine, *Christianity and Crisis* in the U.S., where Niebuhr had worked as the editor for 25 years. According to Oh (2012, 170–176), while it was common practice for such declarations to be published with a list of signatures of those supporting its cause, the harsh repression of the regime and the ongoing surveillance by the KCIA resulted in this declaration being published without such a list, due to the danger it would have placed on individuals. After the declaration appeared in *Christianity and Crisis*, it quickly spread to other publications around the world, attracting international attention.

The declaration was also sent to the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) for them to present publicly within South Korea (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 170–176). Due to the domestic turmoil, however, the NCCCK was unwilling to take the risk of presenting the declaration. Chi proposed that the three of them send money to the NCCCK to cover the costs associated with copying and distributing the declaration to the Korean public. They raised one thousand U.S. dollars and convinced the Council to present the declaration in Korea. Eventually, the declaration was presented publicly in South Korea on 20 May 1973 under the slightly

amended title *1973-yŏn Han'guk kŭrisŭdoin ūi sŏnŏn*, (Oh Chae-sik 2013). While presented publicly in South Korea, given the harsh repression of the regime, the declaration was not widely circulated (Pak Hyŏng-gyu 2012, 261–263)

Convergence of ideas and division of roles

The similarities and potential synergies between the idea proposed by Yasue and that of Oh motivated Chi to introduce the two. On their first meeting, the three immediately began discussing the South Korean situation, especially the issue of journalism and the lack of freedom of speech in South Korea. The tight control and censorship that the Park regime imposed on all publications in South Korea was troubling and did not exempt foreign journalists. Yasue told Oh and Chi that even the Japanese correspondents based in South Korea were only able to convey heavily censored news to the outside world. As a way of overcoming this problem of censorship, Yasue proposed that Chi write about the South Korean situation for the *Sekai* magazine. Chi proposed that Oh and his network would be an ideal source of information for such articles. The Letters Project began to quickly take shape (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 199–200).

The proposal involved Chi writing regular articles for the *Sekai* magazine about the South Korean political situation, and given the danger that this would put Chi in from KCIA agents in Japan, he would adopt a pen name. The Letters would be written based on a wide range of information sources including statements by universities and underground organisations, reports from foreign journalists, memoirs of political prisoners, interviews, poems, pamphlets, statements, letters and rumour.

The Letters required materials that somehow had to be smuggled to Japan from South Korea. To collect these materials, the project relied on many people, but mainly missionaries from countries including Japan, the United States, Germany and Canada. Some missionaries utilised their work in South Korea to gather information. Others were sent there by the project specifically to gather information. According to Chi, on average, two people were sent each month, and a total of around 360 people assisted with this project. Chi described the network of individuals and groups that participated in the project as symbolising historic cooperation between Japan and South Korea of the likes that had never been seen before (Chi 2005, 162–163).

The convergence of Yasue's and Oh's proposals had significant implications for Chi. It firstly meant that Chi was able to support the South Korean democracy movement while in Tokyo. It also meant that he would be able to extend his stay in Japan. Oh was able to use his network to keep Chi in Tokyo for the project. He organised funding through the World Council of Churches (WCC), thanks to pastor Pak Sang-jŭng, who was at the time working in the WCC general affairs department. In addition, Pastor Kim Kwan-sŏk who was in the general affairs department of the NCCCK wrote a letter of recommendation in support of the funding request. In this way, Oh, through the WCC was able to pay Chi's living expenses. Combined with the classes Chi was teaching at Tokyo Women's University, Chi's connections with Oh and the Japanese Christian network provided him with financial stability and residential status, meaning that Chi was finally able to invite his family to Tokyo (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 197–198).

Initially, the Letters articles were published only when there was an important issue about which to write. The first issue was in May 1973, which was a special edition focusing mainly on South Korea-related matters such as the Korea-Japan Treaty, and economic cooperation between South Korea and Japan. While initially receiving little attention, the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung on 8 August 1973 triggered a significant jump in the interest in South Korea.

The Japanese public immediately wanted to know more about Kim Dae Jung, why he was kidnapped, and what was happening in South Korea. This sudden rise in interest coincided with the September 1973 issue of the *Sekai* magazine, which published a discussion between Yasue Ryōsuke and Kim Dae Jung on 'South Korea on the road to democracy'. The September issue went on sale on the very day of the kidnapping. According to Wada, many Japanese people ran to magazine stands to get a copy of the magazine, and they were very 'impressed to hear the voice' of Kim Dae Jung, who wished for the realisation of democracy in South Korea, even at the expense of his own life (Wada 2007, 35–36). The heightened interest in South Korea led to the public revisiting past *Sekai* articles and became the catalyst for the popularity of the Letters columns, which following this event, were published every month.

3.4 The Roles of Chi, Oh and Yasue in Sustaining the Letters Project

Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping, which will be described in greater detail in Chapter 4, drew global attention to the situation in South Korea and the Letters Project. The project was resource intensive, requiring the efforts of many individuals for it to function. However, it was the convergence of the unique capacities of the three

individuals that enabled the project to continue to operate for approximately 16 years, ending with the 1987 June Struggles, which heralded the nation's transition to democracy. This section explores in greater detail the capacities of Oh, Chi and Yasue that enabled them to sustain the Letters Project.

Connecting and Collecting: Oh Chae-sik and the missionary network

Oh Chae-sik proved to be a master at connecting individuals, and he used his broad network of Christian missionaries to collect information from South Korea. In the 1970s, having no electronic means, such as computers and email, with which to transfer materials from South Korea, all materials had to be carried as hard-copies. Confidential materials were particularly difficult to carry, requiring individuals to risk carrying them secretly. Oh, with the assistance of the NCKK organised people (generally NCKK staff members) to assist missionaries who were sent by Oh from Japan. The NCKK side of the project was managed by Kim Kwan-sŏk²⁵ and Pak Hyŏng-gyu²⁶. It was often these two individuals with whom the missionaries from Japan met to collect materials relating to the movement. When in South Korea, the missionaries also attempted to meet people and groups other than those affiliated with the church, and they met with student activists as often as they could.

Given the risk in carrying materials due to censorship and as telephone tapping was a common practice by the KCIA, U.S. military post and diplomatic couriers were used from time to time (Chi 2008a, 411). Given the dangers associated with carrying materials out of South Korea, the project depended heavily on oral

²⁵ Kim, Kwan-sŏk often visited Japan and was involved networking with Japanese Churches.

²⁶ Pak, Hyŏng-gyu was at the forefront of the democracy fight, as a result he was imprisoned five times.

information. Families of prisoners of conscience were also considered good sources of information, and they used various methods to deliver materials successfully, including smuggling materials in matchboxes or dolls, or putting them inside cigarette cartons, rolled with tobacco. When missionaries felt exposed at the airport, they abandoned the materials, disposing of them in the rubbish bin before going through immigration. Sometimes Japanese Christian Ministers residing in both Japan and America were arrested at the airport and detained for one to two days (Chi 2008a, 411).

At the start of the project, Paul Schneiss, WCC missionary residing in Japan at the time became actively involved with Oh's Christian network. He often travelled between South Korea and Japan, carrying materials back and forth. Initially, Schneiss handed materials directly to Chi but later, realising that the KCIA was watching him, sent materials to Chi indirectly, often via Oh Chae-sik, to avoid implicating the former. Suspecting his involvement in the Letters Project, South Korean officials later issued an order forbidding Schneiss's entry into South Korea. Schneiss's wife, Keiko Schneiss, managed to avoid such scrutiny by the KCIA and continued smuggling information from South Korea to Japan. Many other missionaries also played a significant role in this project, including the American missionary Paris Harvey and academic David Satterwhite (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 205–214; Pak Hyöng-gyu 2012, 336).

Compiling: Chi and his articles

It was Chi's role to write articles based on the information that was smuggled into Japan through Oh's network. The lengths to which Yasue and Chi went to avoid

being discovered by the KCIA were remarkable. For instance, Yasue would always use public telephones to call Chi to avoid wiretapping. When Chi received the materials, to reduce the likelihood of being caught in the act, he would read everything and then write throughout the night, often finishing at dawn. After Chi wrote the articles the materials Chi used would be sent to Oh Chae-sik.²⁷ Oh Chae-sik and Schneiss would retain copies of the materials (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 201–203; Chi 2008a, 424–425; Pak Hyöng-gyu 2012, 336–337).

The completed articles would make their way to Yasue or Iwanami staff members who were trusted by Yasue. The articles would be rewritten by hand to foil attempts by the KCIA to trace articles back to Chi. Yasue would also proofread Chi's work, at times modifying his writing style as a further strategy for protecting Chi's identity. All of the original versions of Chi's articles would then be burnt in Yasue's backyard at night to destroy any evidence that would link the articles to Chi. Correspondence between Yasue and Chi was also burnt at Yasue's request. Chi only kept a few of Yasue's letters as personal keepsakes (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 201–203; Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67; Pak Hyöng-gyu 2012, 336–337).

Over the 16 years of the Letters Project, Chi wrote articles using three different pseudonyms – Kim Sön-il, Yi Dae-sön, and T.K. Sei. None of the names had any particular meaning, and were chosen to throw the KCIA off the scent. Chi used these names according to the tone and theoretical position of each article. For example, according to Chi, Kim Sön-il was the most liberal of these three personae. The most famous and most used pseudonym was T.K. Sei. T.K. was known as a

²⁷ Oh Chae-sik kept the materials at Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA), Tokyo. In 2006 the materials were donated to National Institute of Korean History in South Korea.

critic, often attacking the South Korean military regime (Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67; Chi 2005, 136–137).

In addition to secretly writing the Letters articles, Chi would, on occasion, write articles for Christian magazines such as *Fukuin to Sekai* (Gospel and the World) under his own name. Chi wrote about a range of topics including the Emperor system in Japan and South Korea's pro-democracy movement in such publications. According to Chi, the purpose of these articles was twofold: Firstly, to steer KCIA agents away from his association with the Letters Project, and secondly, it was his hope that these articles would appeal to Japanese churches and encourage them to provide financial and other assistance to the cause of Korean churches (Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67).

The efforts to conceal Chi's identity were elaborate and varied. While *Sekai* paid its authors royalties according to the number of issues sold, the level of secrecy involved with the project meant that Chi could not receive any formal payment from Iwanami Shoten. To ensure that Chi was compensated for his work, Yasue drew from a secret discretionary fund provided to editors of Iwanami Shoten (Interview with Chi 2015a). At times, Chi also engaged with the South Korean Embassy and formed a relationship with a number of individuals, going out on occasion to drink with them. He did this while maintaining secrecy over his activities on behalf of the Letters Project, with the intention of obtaining intelligence on related activities of the KCIA (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 213–214; Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67). While maintaining secrecy enabled Chi to continue writing the Letters articles, it also drew criticism by individuals such as Chŏng Kyŏng-mo, critic and Chief editor of *Minjok*

*Shibo*²⁸ who had relocated from South Korea to Japan in 1970. This criticism continued even after Chi publicly announced that he was indeed the author in 2003.

Many speculated about the identity of the writer of the Letters. Han Sang-il, Professor of Kukmin University, Seoul, in his book, *Ilbon chisigin kwa Han'guk* (Japanese intellectuals and South Korea), wrote that Letters was a magazine series that *Sekai* made up and T.K. was a fictional character with whom they ruthlessly bashed South Korea for 16 years in the name of democracy (Han Sang-il 2000, 364). Han, a proponent of the Park regime due to its economic success, also argued that the depiction of South Korea in the Letters as gloomy and unhappy was inaccurate. He argued that during that time, South Korea was in the middle of dazzling economic growth and South Korea's irrationality and contradiction were merely part of its transition. These factors, he argued, did not reflect the whole of South Korean society (Han Sang-il 2000, 366). In his book, Han quoted a statement made by Yasue: 'If there were no political prisoners in South Korea or if there was no possibility of others becoming political prisoners, I could disclose T.K.'s identity.' Based on this quote, Han argued that Yasue either did not know T.K.'s real identity, or had a particular reason for not disclosing him. He concluded that T.K. was not a real person, and was created by Japanese.

Conveying: Yasue and *Sekai*

Yasue was undoubtedly a vital driver of the Letters Project. Yasue drove the *Sekai* agenda from the time he became editor-in-chief in 1972. As little was known about South Korea at the time, Yasue also went to great lengths to educate the Japanese

²⁸ *Hanmint'ong* newsletter

readers about South Korea in a general sense. For example, Yasue suggested that Sumiya Mikio write about the South Korean economy. Sumiya subsequently published *Kankoku no Keizai* (South Korean Economy). The book was published in Japanese and Korean and was read by many South Korean underground activists (Hori 2011, 57). Sumiya stated in the postscripts of his book, 'I would be delighted if this book could be of some help to the people in Japan who are interested in South Korea and those South Korean people who are fighting day and night for their nation's destiny' (Sumiya 1976, 198).

Yasue also went to great efforts to ensure that the Letters had the greatest impact, often publishing other articles relating to South Korea's economy or Japan-South Korea relations in *Sekai*. Despite being offered numerous opportunities for promotion, Yasue stayed on as editor-in-chief until the Letters Project had concluded in 1988. The reach of *Sekai* was significant, and it was further buoyed by the Letters Project and its focus on South Korea, which helped it sell in record numbers between 1973 and 1988.

The reach of the Letters extended beyond the borders of Japan. Articles depicting significant events in South Korea were translated into English by American missionary David Swain who resided in Japan for over two decades. Many of these translations were compiled and published in the United States as an abridged book in 1976 (Chi 2008a, 425). In the English translation, entitled *Letters from South Korea by T.K.*, Kinhide Mushakoji, Professor of Sophia University in Tokyo, wrote the foreword, in which he provided an overview of the project:

As the letters point out, world opinion can play a considerable role in reducing the involvements of different foreign countries, whether U.S.

military support, Japanese economic cooperation, or technological assistance and economic investments of European private interests. We hope that the readers of this book will feel themselves obliged to arouse would conscience and motivate people in different countries to forge solidarity with the friends of the author of the letters (T. K 1976, xiii).

Based on the global reach of the *Sekai* magazine, it was widely recognised as an important source of information for journalists from overseas publications such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Christian Science Monitor. The censorship imposed by the South Korean government meant that foreign journalists who covered South Korea would find discrepancies between what they were told during their visits to South Korea and what was written in the Letters. These journalists would often seek to meet with Yasue before entering South Korea to obtain the latest information and the contact details of pro-democracy activists. Yasue would immediately refer these journalists to Oh, who would arrange meetings with key activists on the journalists' behalf.

As it was crucial for Chi to keep his role in the Letters Project secret, it was Yasue and Oh who liaised with foreign journalists on the project's behalf (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 209). While Chi's links to the Letters Project were concealed, he continued to lead a double life, teaching full time at Tokyo Women's University, writing for Christian journals, and meeting regularly with foreign journalists that he had met while working for *Sasanggye* during the 1960s. He would often refer these journalists to Oh, who would arrange meetings for these individuals also (Interview with Chi 2015a). Through such arrangements, Yasue and Oh would engage with external actors as representatives of the Letters Project, while enabling Chi to maintain an active public profile away from the project.

The three men saw the engagement of international Christian organisations and foreign journalists as paramount to the Letters Project. They believed that for their project to be effective, they would have to convey information to the U.S. and other western countries, and thus saw journalists and international Christian organisations as important conduits. Chi believed that the linkages that were established between journalists from around the world and international Christian organisations during the Letters Project represented a new kind of transnational advocacy network (Interview with Chi 2015a).

Chi, Yasue and Oh were highly strategic in their engagement with the U.S. Seeing that it would be crucial to influence the opinion of both the U.S. general public and the Congress, they also worked closely with U.S.-based churches. In addition to individuals such as Paris Harvey and David Satterwhite (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 205–214; Pak Hyöng-gyu 2012, 336), Pastor Yi Süng-man, became the project's primary conduit for the Presbyterian church in the U.S., and Pastor Son Myöng-ryöl became the project's Methodist church contact (Interview with Chi 2015a).

Interest for the information collected by the Letters Project also extended beyond Japan and the U.S., with articles often finding their way into North and South Korea. According to Oh, North Korea bought three hundred copies of *Sekai* every month. The *Sekai* magazine could not, however, be imported into South Korea through official channels. Nevertheless, despite efforts to disrupt the Letters Project and prevent its entry into South Korea, the magazine was smuggled into the country and was read by students and intellectuals. It was said that some Koreans learnt Japanese specifically so that they could read *Sekai* (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 201–202). Through the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), the Park regime attempted

to discover who the author of the Letters Project was but was never able to, thanks to the great lengths actors within the project went to protect the identity of Chi.

Information from *Sekai* also found its way into South Korea through indirect routes. To assess the extent to which *Sekai* was used as a trusted source on the South Korean political situation during the 1970s, Chi compared the content of two prominent newspapers with the Letters. The two newspapers he compared were the *Asahi Newspaper* in Japan and the *Tonga Ilbo* in South Korea. During the 1970s, these newspapers formally shared articles. Chi's findings were startling and demonstrated the considerable reach into South Korea that the Letters had. The *Asahi Newspaper* trusted the information provided in the Letters and readily relied on it for their articles. Chi was able to demonstrate that the *Tonga Ilbo* regularly used information on South Korea provided in the *Asahi Newspaper*, without knowing that the information came from the banned *Sekai* magazine. These findings were published in a book by Chi entitled *Han'guk ŭro but'ŏ ŭi T'ongshin* (The Letters from South Korea) in 2008.

While it is challenging to identify examples of Letters being used as a source of information for publications within South Korea, the reliance on rumour at times meant that incorrect information was also published in the articles. Such circumstances provide opportunities to trace the transfer of information (albeit inaccurate) from Japan back to South Korea, thus demonstrating clear links between the Letters Project and South Korean publications. One example of such information transfer occurred following the May 1980 Kwangju uprising. According to Chi, he had received information that Kim Dae Jung confessed that he was a communist while being tortured in prison. This information was subsequently

published by the *Asahi Newspaper*, which in turn drew the attention of South Korean authorities. The Asahi Seoul bureau was closed soon thereafter, and the staff deported (Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67). While this example demonstrates a failure of the network to convey accurate information, and resulted in negative consequences for *Asahi Newspaper*, it nevertheless provides evidence that the Letters Project was able to reach a readership in South Korea through indirect means.

To use this example to critique the approach adopted by the actors of the Letters Project, the sources that were used for Letters Articles were at times questionable. Indeed, during an interview with Chi, he claimed that he had to use information despite knowing that it was inaccurate. He argued that the priority was to convey information, whatever its source, and that there was often no way of triangulating that information to confirm its accuracy (Interview with Chi 2015a). But was it worth the risk? The above example shows how inaccurate information that was conveyed by the Letters Project, as a trusted source, undermined a major Japanese newspaper company's ability to operate within South Korea, and possibly damaged the relationship with its South Korean counterpart, *Tonga Ilbo*, as well as the reputation of *Sekai* and the Letters Project.

3.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the repression of the pro-democracy movement in South Korea led the domestic actors to seek alternative routes to voice their opposition to the Park regime. The Letters Project acted as one of these alternative routes and consequently, during the 1970s and 1980s, Tokyo was a centre of a very

active transnational advocacy network. The Project had significant reach around the world and even within the heavily censored South Korea. The Project helped to shed light on the situation in South Korea. This, in turn, inspired many, both from overseas and within Japan, to donate money, which was sent to South Korea via Tokyo to help those who were arrested or imprisoned, their families, and people who lost their jobs because of their pro-democracy activism (Chi 2008a, 427).

The goals of the Letters Project were closely aligned with the importance of transnational linkages as described by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 12–13), insofar as it endeavoured to provide the pro-democracy movement with resources that they were unable to harness by themselves. According to Chi, the goals of the Letters Project were threefold. Firstly, the Letters Project aimed to spread information on South Korea's situation of that time from Tokyo to the World, with the ultimate goal of mobilising the world to pressure the Park regime towards democratic reform. Secondly, it was hoped that the Letters would garner international interest in the South Korean pro-democracy movement and assist in raising much-needed funds for the movement. And thirdly, Chi and his group intended to use the Letters as a tool of validation for the South Korean activists, by providing information and encouragement from the outside world. Thus, as proposed by the boomerang model, through the Letters Project, the international actors attempted to 'amplify the demands of domestic groups', and 'echo back these demands to the domestic arena' where the government was deaf to groups whose claims indeed resonated elsewhere (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 13).

The Letters Project is a clear example of a transnational advocacy network and closely aligns with political scientist, Ann Florini's conceptualisation of

transnational mobilisation. Florini (2000, 198) proposes that transnational mobilisation can help to protect the physical safety of domestic activists by 1) conveying information of the domestic circumstances to the rest of the world; 2) lobbying foreign governments and international organisations; 3) providing financial resources and training to domestic actors; and 4) confronting the norm-violating government while remaining beyond its reach. Similarly, political scientist, Sidney Tarrow (2005, 187–200) suggests that non-local collective action can provide 1) brokerage between ‘two or more previously unconnected social actors by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites’; 2) the mobilisation of domestic actors, without which international activism would be unable to effect change; and 3) certification, defined as ‘the validation of actors, their performances and their claims by authorities’. Thus—while noting the core role played by domestic actors—this chapter supports the argument that the overseas network of intellectuals, Christian groups and other sympathisers that underpinned the Letters Project played a vital role in the South Korean pro-democracy movement that was consistent with the objectives of transnational networks, as outlined by Florini and Tarrow.

While many individuals and groups were cooperating to make the Letters Project possible,²⁹ this chapter has identified Chi, Oh and Yasue as the key players in

²⁹ It is important to note, that there were many other people involved in making the Letters Project the success it was. For example, during the 1970s, Oh and Chi had to renew their visa every six months. Doi Takako, member of the Japanese Diet and later becoming leader of the Japan Socialist Party, assisted in obtaining their visas. Sönu, editor in chief of *Chosun Ilbo*, also protected the identity of Chi. He knew that Chi was the author of Letters and his close relationship with Park Chung Hee meant that he certainly had the means to publicise Chi’s activities. Sönu would on occasion drink with Park and knew that Park was personally angered by the Letters. Nevertheless, Sönu did not reveal the identity of Chi, suggesting to Park that T.K. was not one individual, rather the articles were written by many (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 203–204).

this transnational network and detailed the specialised roles these individuals were required to perform. It argues that in addition to the precondition of a broken link between the state and civil society as proposed by the boomerang model, there are many more preconditions for such a transnational advocacy network to form, function and be sustained over time. While one case is insufficient to make generalisations, the Letters Project suggests that cause – in this case, the blockage by the Park regime, of domestic actors – did indeed trigger the creation of international connections. In addition, however, the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project was fortunate to see a convergence of key players - the like-minded individuals of Chi, Oh and Yasue – who had the appropriate skills and capacities to manage and drive the flow of information throughout the broader transnational advocacy network and beyond. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the network also benefitted from a series of notable events that acted as catalysts, drawing and sustaining the interests of domestic and international actors into alignment. The most salient of these was the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung.

In addition to the above factors, which may be an extension of the triggering mechanisms for the establishment of a transnational advocacy network, it was apparent that Chi, Oh and Yasue were able to tap into a socio-political environment in Japan which enabled the Project's activities to flourish, mostly unimpeded. Yet, as subsequent chapters will argue, the response of the Japanese government diverges somewhat from that expected within the classic boomerang model, insofar as it neither repressed nor facilitated the activities of the transnational advocacy network.

The strategies adopted by Chi, Oh and Yasue, suggest that even early on, they saw the Japanese government as being reluctant to apply pressure on the South Korean regime, and thus designed their project to operate as a 'hub' that would relay information to countries more likely to play an active role in pushing for democratic change. This role played by Japan, and groups within Japan can be seen as an extension to the classic boomerang model. It is a case in which the transnational advocacy network, that was based in a second state (Japan), rather than focusing on lobbying its own government, actively lobbied the government of a third state (the U.S.) to apply pressure on the first (South Korea). This extended boomerang model will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 6.

The next chapter will examine how the occurrence of notable events mentioned above shaped how the Letters Project and the broader transnational advocacy network operated, and consider the impact the project had on the overall pro-democracy movement.

Chapter 4

The Letters Project's Response to, and Influence on the South Korean Pro-Democracy Movement

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the catalysts for the creation of the transnational advocacy network that was responsible for the Letters Project. The chapter found that the first of these was a significant blockage of links between the government and civil society of South Korea that impeded the efforts by the domestic pro-democracy movement to achieve its goals. One solution was for activists to seek additional routes to pressure the Park regime towards democratic change. The chapter then highlighted the resources the network possessed, showing that it comprised individuals with unique capacities that enabled it to connect international and domestic actors, as well as collect and compile information from pro-democracy actors within South Korea, and convey this information to a wide audience.

To explore the role of the Letters Project in the broader pro-democracy movement, this chapter examines four salient events surrounding the South Korean pro-democracy movement that involved Japan as a nation: 1) the Kim Dae Jung kidnapping incident; 2) the *Minch'ŏnghangnyŏn* Incident; 3) the assassination of South Korea's First Lady, Yuk Young Soo; and 4) the *Tonga Ilbo* advertisement incident. By examining how the Letters Project covered each of these events, this chapter shows how this coverage helped to trigger activities of support in Japan for the South Korean pro-democracy movement. To this end, this chapter firstly

explores the influence of specific events in South Korea and Japan on the Letters Project and its underpinning transnational advocacy network. Secondly, this chapter considers the impact the Letters Project had on Japanese society. Thirdly, this chapter searches for evidence of the Letters Project directly or indirectly influencing the behaviour of the Park regime. And finally, this chapter considers whether the Letters project had any unexpected impacts on how nations beyond South Korea and Japan perceived the struggles within South Korea.

4.2 The Kim Dae Jung Kidnapping Incident

Kim Dae Jung, who was finally elected as President of South Korea in 1998, had long been one of the Park regime's staunchest political opponents and was a central figure of South Korea's pro-democracy movement. During the 1970s and 1980s, Kim Dae Jung spent several years in prison and under house arrest for his role in the movement. Perhaps one of the most sensational chapters of Kim Dae Jung's history was his 8 August 1973 kidnapping in Tokyo.

Kim Dae Jung had travelled to Japan in self-imposed political exile following his public criticism of President Park's 17 October 1972 declaration of martial law and the adoption of the *Yusin* Constitution soon thereafter. Kim Dae Jung was kidnapped at around 1 p.m. at the Hotel Grand Palace in Kudanshita. The kidnapping occurred immediately after a meeting at the same hotel with Yang Il-dong, a leader of the Korean Congress for Democracy and Unification (*Hanmint'ong*), an association established by Korean residents in Japan to realise democratisation and unification on the Korean peninsula (Wada 2007, 36). The meeting between Yang Il-dong and Kim Dae Jung related to Kim's future role as

chair of the *Hanmint'ong*, which was to hold its inaugural meeting on 15 August 1973 (Wada 2007, 36).

The kidnapping is said to have been carried out by six unidentified KCIA agents, who were allegedly directed to assassinate Kim Dae Jung immediately. The agents were, however, caught in the act by a member of the South Korean National Assembly, Kim Kyōng-in, who had planned to meet with Kim Dae Jung later that day, foiling this assassination attempt. The agents subsequently took Kim Dae Jung down to the hotel's carpark, from where he was transported to Osaka. The agents are said to have then fled from Osaka by boat towards South Korea (Itō, N. 2013, 126).

Kim's kidnappers allegedly made a second attempt to assassinate him while fleeing to South Korea by boat. The agents had tied weights to Kim's feet and were about to throw him overboard but were spotted by the Japanese self-defence force³⁰, foiling the second assassination attempt also. With both assassination attempts foiled, on the evening of 13 August 1973, five days after his kidnapping, Kim turned up badly beaten at the front of his home in Seoul (Itō, N. 2013, 119–120).

During the investigation at the scene of Kim Dae Jung's abduction, police found fingerprints of the Secretary of the South Korean Embassy, Kim Dong-un. It soon became clear that this brazen act had been carried out with the support of the South Korean government. It was found, however, that Kim Dong-un had already fled the country. The kidnapping drew the attention of the Japanese public, and there was an outcry for the Japanese government to act. Japan correspondent for the

³⁰ Other accounts refer to a U.S. military helicopter foiling the kidnapping (see Kim 2010, 503–552 for example).

New York Times, Richard Halloran (1973a; 1973b) reported the kidnapping as having embarrassed and angered the Japanese government who considered South Korea's actions a blatant violation of Japan's sovereignty.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of South Korean government involvement in the kidnapping, there were groups within the Japanese government challenging this evidence. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) far-right policy group *Seirankai*, for example, actively spread rumours that Kim Dae Jung had, in fact, staged the entire kidnapping himself. *Seirankai*³¹ was formed in July 1973 by Ishihara Shintarō, a politician and strong supporter of the Park regime, who was famous for his right-wing views. At that time, Utsunomiya Tokuma, perhaps one of the most leftist members of the LDP at that time, who supported Kim Dae Jung and the South Korean pro-democracy movement, refuted the rumours when he heard them. Utsunomiya challenged Ishihara, arguing that *jisaku jiensetsu* (self-made, self-performed) accusations by *Seirankai* had indeed been fabricated to disrupt the investigation of the kidnapping (Itō, N. 2013, 22–23).

Kim was a vocal critic of the regime's *Yusin* Constitution, which had resulted in University closures and censorship of newspapers and other forms of communications. In the ten months following *Yusin*, the regime had actively enforced extreme penalties including the death penalty and life imprisonment. Before the kidnapping, however, almost none of these activities by the Park regime were known to the Japanese public. The interest in South Korea prior to Kim Dae

³¹ Ishihara Shintaro established *Seirankai* to oppose moves by the Prime Minister at the time, Tanaka Kakuei, to normalise relations with China.

Jung's kidnapping was low. Thus, while the Letters Project had already commenced, and Letters articles had appeared in *Sekai* twice before the kidnapping—in the May and July 1973 issues—they did not receive much attention.³² Wada (2013, 164–165) attributes this low level of interest in South Korea within Japanese society at the time to the nation's attention on the issue of peace in Vietnam and points out that the majority of Japanese had little idea who Kim Dae Jung was.

The incident triggered a significant amount of interest in Kim Dae Jung and the situation in South Korea, and by sheer coincidence, the September issue of *Sekai* went on sale the same day as the kidnapping. The third Letters from South Korea article was just one of the articles relating to South Korea in this issue. Also in the September issue of the magazine was an interview between Yasue Ryōsuke and Kim Dae Jung entitled *Kankoku no Minshuka eno Michi* (The Road to South Korean democratisation). It was primarily this interview that triggered a sudden surge in demand for *Sekai* by people wishing to know more about Kim Dae Jung, with magazine stands quickly selling out of the September issue. This coincidence between the kidnapping happening on the same day the *Sekai* magazine went on sale, containing an interview with the individual who was kidnapped, in turn, brought the existence of the unknown writer of the Letters from South Korea articles, T.K., to the awareness of many Japanese.

³² In the May 1973 issue of *Sekai*, the first 'Letters from South Korea' article can be said to have been largely overlooked by the Japanese, as it had little impact on sales of the magazine. The Letters article in the July 1973 issue expressed concern about the safety of Kim Dae Jung and argued that Korean citizens were once again being subject to the appalling and blatant unfettered power of the Park regime (*Sekai* June 1973, 19). Generally speaking, however, the second Letters article also failed to capture the attention of the Japanese public. Similarly, two months before the kidnapping, a speech by Kim entitled 'Dictatorship and our Struggle - Records of a former oppositional Presidential candidate of Korea' was published by Kōwadō, June 1973 but it too gained little attention.

The Kim Dae Jung incident thus had a significant impact on the Letters Project. Initially, the Letters articles were not intended as monthly publications. However, the attention that the kidnapping drew to the situation of the pro-democracy activists in South Korea resulted in the Letters being published monthly (Wada 2007, 36). *Sekai* also increased its coverage of South Korea, providing a broad range of information on the situation on the peninsula, and an ongoing commentary on the Kim Dae Jung kidnapping incident (which continued until the March 1976 issue). Indeed, it was not unusual for the magazine to dedicate up to one-third of its pages to the plight of the South Korean pro-democracy movement. In this way, both *Sekai* and the Letters articles played a significant role in raising the awareness of the Japanese population, with the magazine regularly referred to as a 'bible' for people who wished to learn more about the situation in South Korea (Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67).

Following the kidnapping, *Sekai* sold in unprecedented numbers, and the Kim Dae Jung incident was undoubtedly the catalyst for the Letters Project to become the success it was. However, it was the Letters Project that was central to sustaining the level of awareness among the Japanese population regarding conditions in South Korea throughout the sixteen years it was published. How *Sekai* and the Letters Project influenced the Japanese population in the aftermath of the Kidnapping will be considered in the next section.

Domestic Impact in Japan

How was the Japanese public impacted by the Kim Dae Jung kidnapping, and what role did *Sekai* and the Letters Project play in shaping subsequent activities in Japan

associated with the South Korean pro-democracy movement? Japan's experience with student movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in fragmentation of the movement into smaller groups across a broad spectrum of ideologies. At the extreme, groups such as the *Rengō Sekigun* (the Red Army) resorted to violence and acts of terrorism, including torture, murder, and hijacking of aircraft. Oguma (2009, 2:673) argues that it was such acts that resulted in the general population tending to distance themselves from social movements in Japan. Despite this unpopularity of social movements, much of Japan's adult population had experienced or witnessed some kind of social movement as a result of opposition to the U.S.-Japan Treaty between 1959 and 1960, and the protests associated with opposition to the Vietnam War, which commenced in 1965 (Avenell 2010, 3). This meant that despite a general reluctance to mobilise, there was a pre-existing capacity within Japanese society to do so, should an appropriate trigger be present.

As yet another coincidence, on the evening of the day of the kidnapping, representatives from one of the groups that had been actively engaged in protests against the Vietnam War—the Citizen's League for Peace in Vietnam (*Beheiren*)—had gathered to discuss a fundraising campaign for children affected by the Vietnam War. The Secretary-General of the *Beheiren*, Yuichi Yoshikawa, spoke to attendees about the news of the kidnapping. At that time, like many of the Japanese citizenry, few in the organisation knew who Kim Dae Jung was. However, upon reading Kim's interview in the *Sekai* magazine, they were inspired to learn more about the situation in South Korea. The group quickly mobilised in support of Kim Dae Jung (Wada 2013, 165–166).

The members of the *Beheiren* including Oda Makoto (activist) and Tsurumi Shunsuke (critic, thinker, political activist) immediately formed a core group around which 78 intellectuals gathered. Other members included Aochi Shin (Journalist, critic), Ōe Kenzaburō (novelist, activist, recipient of Nobel prize for literature in 1994), and Wada Haruki. On 23 August 1973, this group issued a statement via a press conference at the Grand Palace Hotel, where Kim Dae Jung had been kidnapped.

The statement accused the Park regime's kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung as being a direct challenge to the freedom of humanity. The group of 78 intellectuals demanded that the Japanese police examine thoroughly how the abduction unfolded in order to prevent such things happening to foreign nationals in Japan in the future (Aochi and Wada 1977, 62). The group also demanded that the Japanese government prevent any further KCIA activities in Japan and that the South Korean government ensure the safety of Kim and his family. The final demand made by this group was towards both the South Korean and Japanese governments—that Kim be granted his wish of returning to Japan. The group subsequently vowed to promote a wave of demonstrations and rallies to alert the international community to the kidnapping incident (Aochi and Wada 1977, 62–63; Chi 2004a, 199).

Rallies were held in November and December 1973 to demand Kim Dae Jung's return to Japan and culminated in demonstrations being held on 15 and 26 December (Aochi and Wada 1977, 62–63; Wada 2007, 37). However, as groups were only beginning to get themselves organised, the number of participants in the demonstrations was unremarkable with only 150 people joining the 15 December demonstration, and only seven people participating on 26 December. While small,

these rallies were the start of the Liaison Council for Japanese- South Korean Solidarity (*Nikkanren*).

The kidnapping also triggered a response by Christian groups in Japan. In February 1974, for example, the Emergency Christian Conference on Korean Problems was organised by General Secretary Masaaki Nakajima of Japan's United Church of Christ (UCC) and General Secretary Tsutomu Shōji of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ). These organisations later worked together with *Nikkanren* in support of the South Korean pro-democracy movement and were strongly connected with Oh Chae-sik (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 231–236).

Nikkanren was formally established on 18 April 1974, with Aochi as the Chairman and Wada as general secretary. In *Nikkanren's* inaugural statement, the group announced their obligation as being 'to relieve oppression on the South Korean people by changing Japan' which they argued was 'necessary for Japan to be reborn'. The group also announced that it would 'hereby establish the Liaison Council for Japanese-South Korean Solidarity as an organised and sustained undertaking to correct Japan's politics toward Korea and promote solidarity with the South Korean pro-democracy movement.'

Although the catalyst for establishing *Nikkanren* was the kidnapping of Kim Dae Jung, its activities were much broader, encompassing the full spectrum of issues that existed between South Korea and Japan. The breadth of the issues covered by *Nikkanren* can be seen by the list of demands that were set out in their inaugural statement:

- That the Japanese government ceased supporting the fascist Park regime

- That the Japanese government strive to realise Kim Dae Jung being unconditionally allowed to revisit Japan.
- That Japanese businesses cease their economic invasion of South Korea.
That Japanese businesses cease exporting pollution and low-wage exploitation.
- That Japanese tourists and tourist companies cease the shameful *Kisaeng Kankō* (Sex Tours) and group prostitution tours.
- That ethnic discrimination towards South Korean-Japanese is eliminated.
- That the press is not intimidated, so that they may, with courage, continue their coverage of South Korea.

The statement concluded with the words 'We hereby support the life and death struggle of the South Korean people' (Aochi and Wada 1977, 122–123). *Nikkanren* worked closely with South Korean activists to resolve these issues. For instance, *Nikkanren* supported cooperation between Japanese and South Korean Christian groups and Ewha Womans University students to distribute booklets and pamphlets to Japanese tourists at Haneda Airport and Kimpo Airport in an attempt to put a stop to sex tours (Aochi and Wada 1977, 93–98).

Subsequent Events that Sustained Interest in Japan

The Kim Dae Jung kidnapping was one of several events associated with the South Korean pro-democracy movement that captured the attention of the Japanese public. Approximately eight months after the kidnapping, a major communist crackdown was conducted by the KCIA on the National Democratic Youth Students

Alliance (*Minch'ŏnghangnyŏn-Chŏn'guk minju ch'ŏngnyŏn haksaeŋ ch'ongyŏnmaeng*) hereafter referred to as the 'NDYSA'. The KCIA drew a direct link between the NDYSA and communist groups in Japan, thereby attracting a renewed interest in the South Korean situation by the Japanese public. How did this crackdown influence the letters project and Japan in general?

On 25 April 1974, the KCIA announced that they would be conducting an investigation of NDYSA. The KCIA accused the organisation of being an enemy of the Park regime and that it was affiliated with the South Korean-based People's Revolutionary Party (*Inminhyŏngmyŏngdang* [*Inhyŏkdang*]) and the Japan-based General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chae Ilbon Chosŏnin Ch'ongryŏnhaphoe* [*Kor.*] *Zai Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai* [*Jpn.*]), hereafter referred to as 'Ch'ongryŏn'. The Park regime alleged that the Japan-based *Ch'ongryŏn*, which was made up of Korean residents in Japan who supported North Korea, many of whom also happened to be members of the Japan Communist Party, wished to bring down the Park regime. The Park regime was also said to have commenced publicly linking the communist militant group, the Japanese Red Army with the actions of South Korean students and their attempts to overthrow the Park regime (*Sekai* May 1974, 163-200). A reported total of between 1,000 and 2,000 people were subsequently investigated, and of these, 203 people were arrested, including Yun Po Sun (former South Korean President), Pak Hyŏng-gyu (Christian activist) and Kim Chi-ha (poet) (Yi Sang-rok 2007, 71; Kim and Vogel 2013, 391-392).

Of those arrested, eight were sentenced to death, and nine sentenced to life in prison. Among those arrested and charged were also two Japanese: Tachigawa Masaki, a journalist who was arrested while covering a story on NDYSA, and

Hayakawa Yoshimiharu, a Seoul National University graduate student, who was serving as the journalist's interpreter. Both were charged with inciting civil war and sentenced to 20 years in prison (Aochi and Wada 1977, 129–130).

The Park regime's accusations against Japan's involvement in the unrest in South Korea and the arrest of Tachigawa and Hayakawa helped to keep the situation in South Korea in the limelight in Japan through its regular coverage in *Sekai* and other magazines.³³ In response to such actions by the regime, on 8 May 1974, *Nikkanren* released a statement which criticised Park regime's Presidential Emergency Decree No. 4 that authorised the arrest of those who supported the NDYSA and the oppression of the student movement. *Nikkanren* considered the Park regime's actions to be a conspiracy to link the student movement to the growing anti-Japanese and anti-Communist sentiment within South Korea, to intimidate Japanese reporters who had resided in Seoul, and to attempt to split the solidarity movement in Japan from the pro-democracy forces in South Korea. Further, the statement demanded that Tachigawa and Hayakawa be released. *Nikkanren* accused the Japanese government of being heavily responsible for the arrest of Tachigawa and Hayakawa, arguing that it was the government's abandoning of the unresolved Kim Dae Jung incident, and recommencing their assistance to the South Korean government, which ultimately triggered such actions (Aochi and Wada 1977, 129–130).

Nikkanren published their statement in the *Shūkan Yomiuri* Magazine and subsequently led demonstrations in June 1974 in front of the South Korean Embassy.

³³ Such articles included *Otōto o torikaesu* (bring back my brother), by Hayakawa Kōji (the elder brother of Yoshimiharu) which was harshly critical of the way in which the Park regime created laws with which to incriminate individuals such as his brother (*Sekai* June 1975, 224–228).

Approximately 100 people gathered to demand the release of those who had been arrested under the NDYSA investigations (Wada 2013, 172). In keeping with their focus on security and the economy, both the South Korean and Japanese governments chose to pay no attention to these activities, despite the domestic and international coverage they received in the press.

Park's Presidential Emergency Decree No. 4 and the subsequent crackdown on NDYSA triggered responses in Japan from other groups also. Of the 203 individuals arrested as a result of NDYSA investigations, poet and one of the leaders of the student group Kim Chi-ha was almost immediately sentenced to death. Kim Chi-ha was already known to the Japanese public through his collection of poems such as *Ojök* (Five Bandits), *Piö* (Groundless Rumours) and *Kuri Yi Sun Sin* (Bronze Yi Sun Sin)³⁴ that had been translated and published in Japan in 1971.

Kim Chi-ha had already been arrested once in 1972 as a result of his poem *Piö*, as it criticised the Park regime. Following his arrest, Kim Chi-ha was admitted to a hospital in Masan to treat tuberculosis. Concerned for his health, a number of Japanese intellectuals including Tsurumi Shunsuke, Oda Makoto, and Ōe Kenzaburō, who had been inspired by Kim Chi-ha's work and activism travelled to South Korea to see him (Tsurumi Shunsuke, Ueno, and Oguma 2004, 337).

As Kim Chi-ha had been sentenced to death by the Park regime, he believed that nothing could be done to save his situation, but he nevertheless expressed a desire to continue fighting the regime through his legacy and famously told the Japanese intellectuals, 'Your movement cannot help me. But I will add my voice to

³⁴ A famous naval commander in the Chosŏn Dynasty.

help your movement' (Wada 2013, 173). According to Tsurumi, these words resonated with groups in Japan supporting the pro-democracy movement and were later published as a part of an article by Wada entitled, *Kim Chi-ha, Saisho no Kotoba* (Kim Chi-ha's first words) (Wada 2013, 173). *Nikkanren* subsequently established the *Kim Chi-ha ra wo Tasukeru Kai* (The Saving Kim Chi-ha and Other Related Activists Group) and issued an *Uttae* (Appeal) for his release.

Kim Chi-ha's sentencing to death triggered protests in Japan, with Korean-Japanese writers and poets, and Japanese intellectuals going on hunger strikes twice at *Sukiyabashi* Park in Tokyo. The hunger strikes captured the attention of the media, and as many as 1,500 individuals participated in the 25 July 1974 *Kim Chi-ha ra wo Korosuna* (Don't kill Kim Chi-ha and the other defendants) rally. On 8 August 1974, to mark the one-year anniversary of Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping, the International Committee of the Saving Kim Chi-ha and other related activists group departed for South Korea with a list of 17,000 signatures in support of Kim Chi-ha's release. The leader of this visit was sociologist Hidaka Rokurō, who was accompanied by the United States Nobel Laureate for Physiology or Medicine, George Wald (Wada 2013, 174).

On the afternoon of that same day, a group of Japanese politicians and intellectuals, including Aochi Shin, Oda Makoto, and Committee Chair of the Socialist Party, Narita Tomomi, Committee Chair of the Communist Party Miyamoto Kenji, and Committee Chair of the *Komeito*, Takeiri Yoshikatsu, met at the Hotel Grand Palace. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss possible strategies to influence the release of all political prisoners in South Korea and to reconsider the nature of economic support to South Korea. As a first step, on 19

September, this group led a nationwide demonstration converging at Meiji Park in Tokyo, which was attended by approximately 30,000 protestors (Wada 2013, 174).

The Role of Letters in Shaping Japanese Support

The coverage of Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping by magazines such as *Sekai* increased awareness among Japanese of the situation in South Korea. The crackdown on the NDYSA by the KCIA was thus closely followed by many in Japan. The links drawn by the KCIA between *Ch'ongryŏn* and the pro-democracy activists also drew the attention of many in Japan, which only served to make *Ch'ongryŏn* more active. Immediately following news of the investigation and arrests, *Ch'ongryŏn* began informing students in Japan about the democratic movement in South Korea and the torture of activists at the hands of the KCIA. *Sekai* also actively reported such treatment of activists, publishing a Letters article entitled 'Age of torture techniques' in the May 1974 issue of the magazine. This article openly accused the Park regime of possessing the most modern torture and terrorism techniques that would not show any external physical injury but would often result in death soon after an activist's release. The article appealed to the world to help stop the Park regime's actions, criticising the regime's attempts to sever all connections between domestic and international Christian groups (*Sekai* May 1974, 163-200).

In the June 1974 issue of *Sekai*, the Letters article described the relations between Japan and South Korea as being primarily 'financial' and 'commercial' and that in its position as a 'guest' on the Korean peninsula, the Japanese government was perhaps reluctant to upset the "host". Careful not to directly accuse the Japanese government of colluding with the South Korean government, the Letters article

continued with a critique of the Japanese government's unwillingness to take any resolute action against the Park regime. Articles expressed frustration at the inconsistent messaging by the Japanese government, and suggested that such inconsistencies would only add to the distrust of Japan by the South Korean populace:

Even if the South Korean government indulges in some deplorable conduct, the Japanese government avows its intention to avoid any cracks in South Korea-Japan relations but succeeds only in arousing bitter feelings in the South Korean people. Or, is there some hidden agenda behind Japan's forbearance? Is there something to report for instance, that high-level Japanese politicians are trying, through accomplices here, to buy up land around Pusan, Inchon and on Cheju Island? Speculations like these abound among us (T. K 1976, 179).

This article stressed that support from the world, especially from 'conscientious Japanese people' was absolutely necessary for the pro-democracy struggles. The article also argued that the Park regime was concerned about international support for the pro-democracy movement as it would encourage activists to continue their fight (*Sekai* June 1974). In this way, the KCIA investigation became a focal topic for the Letters articles, which were read by an ever-expanding readership. Further, while the Japanese government tended to be reluctant to engage with South Korea on any matter other than economic development, the arrest of Tachigawa and Hayakawa through the KCIA investigation, and KCIA's ongoing activities in Japan became a diplomatic issue between the two nations, as it directly implicated Japanese citizens and matters of sovereignty.

4.3 The Assassination of Yuk Young Soo

But just as the civil society groups in Japan and South Korea were starting to coalesce around a joint cause, and just as it seemed as if they were going to see some kind of action by the Japanese government towards the Park regime's ongoing repression of pro-democracy groups, a significant event threatened to undermine everything that had been achieved to that point. On 15 August 1974, South Korea's First Lady, Yuk Young Soo was killed in a failed assassination attempt of Park, in the middle of South Korea's National Liberation Day celebrations (Keon 1977, 199). The assassin was a South Korean-Japanese, Mun Se-gwang and it was found that the pistol that he had used had in fact been stolen from an Osaka police station and smuggled to South Korea inside a radio (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2013, 42).

The links with Japan did not end there, as it was also discovered that the Japanese government had issued Mun's passport under the Japanese name Yoshii Yukio. According to Chi, Mun Se-gwang was also heavily involved in the 'Saving Kim Dae Jung Group' and was, in fact, Deputy Secretary-General of its Osaka district chapter and had attended lectures given in Japan by Kim Dae Jung (Chi 2004a, 195). In his confessions to the South Korean authorities, Mun allegedly claimed that he was affiliated with Choch'ongryŏn—the Pro-P'yŏngyang Federation of Korean residents in Japan—and it was during his meetings with this group that he received orders for the assassination from North Korea (Chi 2004a, 195; Oberdorfer 1974; Oberdorfer and Carlin 2013, 42).

Park was described as being furious at the Japanese over the assassination, and the situation only deteriorated when a formal statement was issued by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, refusing to accept any responsibility. Park summoned the Japanese

Ambassador to South Korea, accused Japan of looking down on the South Korean population, orchestrated anti-Japanese demonstrations in Seoul, and threatened to sever diplomatic ties with Japan (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2013, 44). Anti-Japanese sentiment spread nationwide, and anything considered Japanese, whether it be cars or flags, were subject to the anger of the protestors. According to Chi, the Japanese government responded to the situation in a very passive way, with little effort made to rectify underlying problems and providing only very lukewarm support to the investigation of the incident (Chi 2004a, 59, 194–195). For the Park regime, it was the opportunity they had been looking for, a link between the anti-communist and anti-Japan sentiment in South Korea had finally been. Indeed, the convenient timing of this event raises questions about the reliability of Mun's confession, particularly in light of his friends expressing doubt that he could have planned such a complex operation alone, and pointing out that it was, in fact, 'difficult for Mun to plan anything' (Oberdorfer 1974).

The matters involving Tachigawa and Hayakawa, and the assassination of South Korea's First Lady led to ongoing anti-Japanese protests in South Korea. In an effort to repair the relationship with the Park regime, on 19 September 1974, the Vice President of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, Shiina Etsusaburō, conveyed a personal letter from Prime Minister, Tanaka Kakue. The letter expressed regret over the situation and the Japanese government's sincere intentions to prevent the recurrence of such problems. After receiving the letter, Park conceded that a strong relationship between South Korea and Japan was important for stability in Asia (Chi 2004b, 196).

The degree to which these incidents actually triggered domestic unrest and anti-Japanese sentiment must be scrutinised, however, as it had little effect on the transnational advocacy network supporting the Letters Project. Further, after the assassination of the First Lady, the anti-Japan demonstrations that allegedly spread nation-wide could only have happened with the support of the Park regime. This is because before this incident, in an attempt to suppress the activities of the NDYSA, the Emergency Decree No. 4, which banned any demonstration or gathering, had already come into force.

Evidence also suggests that the way in which these demonstrations were organised, divided up by group and school meant that participants were recruited by the Park regime (Chi 2004b, 60). Such theories of conspiracy were also raised in a September 1974 Washington Post article by Don Oberdorfer, who portrayed Mun as a poverty-stricken minority in Japan with poor planning skills. Oberdorfer also wrote of the supposed 'P'yöngyang-oriented official' in Japan, flatly denying any involvement, and suggesting that South Korea staged the entire event for propaganda purposes (Oberdorfer 1974).

Letters also addressed this issue in the September 1974 issue of *Sekai*. In the article, Chi cited the head of a certain institution's complaint:

The orders to mobilise an anti-Japanese demonstration included instructions as to the number of participants we should produce. We were even told what to write on our placards and were warned not to fail to show up because the demonstration would be photographed for the record.

Chi continued his description of the situation:

As might be expected, many demonstrations were encouraged to march on the Japanese Embassy (August 21), most probably according to a prearranged scenario indicating who should do so. Those that did were provided with full 'protection' and 'conveniences'. At the very least there is not a soul in Seoul unaware of the true character of these demonstrations. Even so, it is clear that the 'August 15 calamity' and the 'anti-Japanese demonstrations' have enabled the Park regime to regain public sentiment. It is doubtful that the Park regime was ever before so successful in manipulating the masses (*Sekai* September 1974, 56-57 [for English translation see T. K 1976, 230-231]).

Mun was subsequently hung on 20 December 1974 for attempting to assassinate the President and murdering his wife (Oberdorfer and Carlin 2013, 45). However, his affiliations and motivation remain a point of conjecture. Whether or not it was an attempt by Park to consolidate the support of the masses, it achieved this to some extent, as it galvanised a large number of individuals and groups to work together in opposition of Japan. However, what it failed to do was disrupt the activities of the transnational advocacy network to any great degree. Despite the demands by Park to the Japanese government to disband *Choch'ongryŏn*, an association that was seen by the South Korean government as being central to the support that was being provided to the pro-democracy movement via Japan, the transnational advocacy network that supported the Letters Project continued to operate, and *Sekai* continued publishing the Letters articles each month.

The Japanese government continued to be criticised by groups in Japan for their soft stance regarding South Korea. The Japanese government's position, however, remained that it was up to the domestic law of South Korea to decide on the fate of the individuals and that there was little that they could do to intervene. If

any consolation, on 15 February 1975, Park pardoned Tachigawa and Hayakawa and both were allowed to return to Japan, and it is believed that this was triggered by government to government discussions. It was reported in the *Asahi Newspaper* that the Park regime had not wished to release Tachigawa and Hayakawa, as they were concerned that they would talk about torture and their conditions while in prison. The regime nevertheless agreed to release them on the basis of improving relations between the two nations (*Asahi Shimbun* 1975, 1).

The Japanese government remained largely passive on issues relating to South Korea, and the Kim Dae Jung kidnapping had yet to be resolved. On 23 July 1975, Foreign Minister Kiichi Miyazawa visited South Korea to meet with his counterpart. During the meeting, Miyazawa received a verbal briefing from President Park Chung Hee that former Secretary of the South Korean Embassy in Japan Kim Dong-un would not be prosecuted but dismissed. Upon his return from South Korea, Miyazawa announced that the Kim Dae Jung incident had been settled. This settlement was seen as nothing more than a deal done in the back rooms and angered civil societies in South Korea and Japan (Chŏng 2013, 360).

4.4 Repression of Journalism - *Tonga Ilbo's* Blank Advertising

Protest

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Park regime had actively repressed publishers such as *Sasanggye* through a range of strategies, including tax audits and pressure on advertisers. On 29 September 1970, the regime finally succeeded in closing down *Sasanggye* by formally deregistering it as a publisher. While there was no formal reason for the company's deregistration, it is alleged that its publishing of Kim Chi

Ha's poem *Ojök* (Five Bandits), which critiqued the ruling elite for their ongoing corruption, in the May 1970 issue of *Sasanggye* was the final straw for the Park regime (Kim Chun-gi 2011). Similarly, following *Tonga Ilbo*'s refusal to publish articles that were supportive of the Park regime, the government actively pressured companies to cease advertising with them.

On 24 October 1974, the same year as the NDYSA investigation and the assassination of the First Lady, 200 journalists of *Tonga Ilbo*, one of South Korea's major newspapers, announced their 'Declaration on the Practice of Press Freedom', which would strictly refuse KCIA access to the company (*Tonga Ilbo*), and reject the regular practice by the Park regime of illegally arresting journalists. In response to this, the Park regime pressured companies who paid the newspaper company to advertise within the newspaper's pages to withdraw their advertising (Kim and Vogel 2013, 461). In protest, from 26 December, *Tonga Ilbo* decided to publish its newspapers without advertisements (Chi 1995, 98–99).

Tonga Ilbo's ongoing struggle to resist the Park regime's censorship was introduced in the November issue of *Letters*. Professor of Kyoto University, Inuma Jirō and Professor of Meiji University, Kuratsuka Taira subsequently formed a support group *Tonga Ilbo wo Shiensuru Kai* (The *Tonga Ilbo* Support Group) on 28 December. This support group commenced a campaign in Japan that encouraged Japanese to subscribe to the *Tonga Ilbo* as a way of providing financial support. At that time, South Korean newspapers were written using a mixture of *han'gŭl* (Korean Phonetic Script) and *Hanja* (Chinese characters), meaning Japanese were able to guess the meaning of the text with a high degree of accuracy. In addition, the

support group, through Nikkanren opened Korean language classes to encourage individuals to read South Korean newspapers.

From 27 January 1975, advertisements by members of the South Korean public wishing to encourage the newspaper were printed on the blank columns set aside by the newspaper for advertising. Such acts inspired the Japanese support group, which commenced fundraising activities across the whole of Japan to pay for advertising space in the *Tonga Ilbo* (Wada 2013, 175–176; Aochi and Wada 1977, 182–200). The letters described the situation in the following way:

Up to now students and religious people have been firmly yoked together in their commitment to a common struggle, and this bond encouraged the media to participate in the struggle.

The October 24 ‘Declaration on the Practice of Press Freedom’ had an instantaneous impact on the mass media all over the country, including many pro-government newspapers such as the Seoul News and most provincial dailies that are completely under government control (T. K 1976, 271).

In this way, despite the repression of journalism by the Park regime, the newspaper was able to resist the regime’s pressure and continue publishing. The civil society within South Korea, Japan and other countries responded positively to the newspaper’s courage to stand up to the regime.

4.5 The Impact of the Letters

The above section discussed the impact that several salient events had on the Letters Project and how the information provided by the Letters, in turn, helped to raise the awareness of the Japanese public regarding the situation in South Korea. But what was the impact of the Letters Project on the pro-democracy movement?

The anger expressed towards Japan by Park following his attempted assassination and the subsequent insistence that the *Choch'ongryŏn* be disbanded clearly demonstrates that Japan was an easy target for Park to use as a tool to galvanise the public in South Korea for a cause. It also demonstrates that certain organisations within Japan were suspected of assisting the pro-democracy movement to maintain their oppositional activities towards the regime. These acts alone suggest that some of the grassroots activities in Japan were attracting the attention of Park.

As discussed in Chapter 3, transnational activism can provide 1) brokerage between 'two or more previously unconnected social actors by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites'; 2) the mobilisation of domestic actors, without which international activism would be unable to effect change; and 3) certification, defined as 'the validation of actors, their performances and their claims by authorities' (Tarrow 2005, 187–200). Transnational activism may also provide a degree of protection for domestic activists by: 1) conveying information of the domestic system to the rest of the world; 2) lobbying foreign governments and international organisations; 3) providing financial resources and training to domestic actors; and 4) confronting the norm-violating government while remaining beyond its reach (Florini 2000, 198). This section will consider whether the Letters Project and its underpinning transnational advocacy network directly or indirectly performed any of these expected roles.

As demonstrated in Park's actions following the assassination attempt, activities associated with *Nikkanren* and the Letters Project did not go unnoticed in South Korea. According to Pastor Pak Hyŏng-gyu, human rights activist and one of those arrested in the Park regime's NDYSA crackdown along with Kim Chi-ha, more

than a few people in South Korea read *Sekai* and knew what happened in South Korea at that time. Pak Hyöng-gyu (2012, 334–335) argues that *Sekai* provided important pieces of news that the South Korea-based public-opinion publications were unable to report on, due to a fear of the regime. On the occasion that the *Sekai* magazine was imported through normal channels, the Park regime was said to have redacted much of what was written in red ink. There were also many people in South Korea, including the President, who wondered how information relating to the pro-democracy movement and information regarding corruption of the regime made its way to Japan, and who the author ‘T.K.’ in fact was.

It was around this time that the KCIA and the South Korean Department of Culture and Public Information made their first attempt to identify the author of the Letters articles (*Sekai* May 1974, 163–200). KCIA agents were sent to Tokyo and conducted an investigation in cooperation with the Japanese public security office. They investigated the Iwanami office and looked at what they were led to believe were the original handwritten articles. On one occasion, Chi was requested to provide a writing sample to the KCIA so that they could analyse his handwriting. However, as Yasue had hand copied all of Chi’s articles and burnt the originals, as discussed in Chapter 3, the KCIA agents were unable to identify the author (Oh Chae-sik 2012, 202–203). It can thus be argued with some confidence that to the frustration of the Park regime, the Letters Project actively confronted the violations of international norms by the government while remaining beyond its reach (at times just barely).

At the time of the KCIA investigation into NDYSA activities, the Letters Project had been operating for approximately one year and had provided monthly

updates on the situation in South Korea. The Letters articles also became key sources of information for other publications such as the *Asahi Newspaper*, which was known to share its news articles with the South Korean Newspaper *Tonga Ilbo* throughout the 1970s. Consequently, the *Tonga Ilbo* unknowingly published articles in South Korea that were based on Letters articles. The Letters Project thus also directly, albeit unbeknownst to the Park regime and indeed the South Korean-based newspapers, played a role in providing information to domestic actors, possibly assisting in their mobilisation and the validation of their activities.

As already established earlier in this chapter, the Letters articles helped to convey information on the situation in South Korea to residents of Japan. The information helped to galvanise support groups within Japan, one of these being the Saving Kim Chi-ha and Other Related Activists Group. This group petitioned President Park to release Kim Chi-ha and to also listen to the voice of the people expressed through Kim Chi-ha's work. They also petitioned the President to release those of similar mind to Kim Chi-ha. Many Japanese well-known intellectuals signed this appeal, including Ōe Kenzaburō, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Oda Makoto. Numerous *Zainichi* (Korean-Japanese) intellectuals also signed the Appeal. The Appeal was translated into English and circulated worldwide and was signed by intellectuals such as French Philosopher Jean-Paul Charles; French writer Simone de Beauvoir; American historian Howard Zinn; American scholar and political activist Noam Chomsky; Professor of Korean studies at Harvard University Edward Wagner; and American educator and professor Edwin Reischauer. The Appeal was then sent to both the Japanese and South Korean governments (Aochi and Wada 1977, 131–133). Kim Chi-ha was subsequently released from prison in 1975, only to be

rearrested one month later, on a separate matter and remained in prison until 1980 (*Jungang Ilbo*, 5 January 2013).

Actors responsible for the Letters Project also directly contributed to broader appeals and protests. On 5 May 1974, for example, a full-page advertisement was printed in the *New York Times* by a group of Japanese Christians and Intellectuals entitled ‘Appeal for American Christians’. This appeal intended to let the world know about the plight of the South Korean pro-democracy movement under the oppressive Park regime and to seek further support. In the centre of this full-page advertisement was a pen sketch of a crucifix that symbolised the suffering of the Korean people. To the right of this image was the 1973 Theological Declaration of Korean Christians, rebranded under the title ‘Manifesto of Korean Christians by Christian Ministers in the Republic of Korea’. To the left of the image was the ‘Appeal to American Christians’ which expressed the deep concern of Japanese Christians towards the circumstances in South Korea at that time. This full-page advertisement is said to have helped significantly elevate awareness in the U.S. of the situation in South Korea (Pak Hyöng-gyu 2012, 246–251).

In February 1975, following the immense amount of pressure from both within South Korea and from overseas, the Park regime released all individuals affiliated with NDYSA with the exception of a few deemed by the regime as being communist advocates such as leaders of the *Inhyöktang* (the People’s Revolutionary Party) (Sö 2007, 137). The Letters Project and its actors thus played a central role in a broader movement that successfully conveyed information of the situation in South Korea to the rest of the world. Specifically, those responsible for the Project lobbied foreign governments, international organisations, and well known western figures—thus

helping to broker relations between previously unconnected social actors. The activities carried out in Japan also forged a groundswell of support from Christian groups, intellectuals and students, who provided financial support to the families of those arrested following the NDYSA crackdown.

These examples demonstrate that over the first several years of the Letters Project, it functioned as an important resource within a broader transnational advocacy network, helping this network to fulfil many of the roles outlined by Tarrow and Florini. It is important to note here that the transnational advocacy network relied heavily on the frontline domestic actors in South Korea, who acted as ‘domestic nodes’ (Florini 2000, 217–218), without which international activism alone would be ineffective in bringing about change.

The chapter also identifies a number of unexpected impacts beyond what is described by Keck and Sikkink, Tarrow and Florini. Firstly, it finds that the expected impact of the Letters Project and associated civil society groups on the Japanese government was minimal, arguing that political context was a key factor in this outcome. As described in Chapter 3, the Japanese government at the time had economic and political reasons for maintaining both the stability of the Park regime and the status quo concerning their bilateral relationship with South Korea.

The Japanese government did its best to remain largely passive despite the repeated occurrence of significant events that directly involved Japan. However, while each event was met with passivity by the government, the activities of the Japan-based transnational network were not suppressed. This allowed information collected from South Korea to be transferred to other countries that were more willing to apply pressure on the South Korean government. As a result, the Letters

Project became an important international ‘information hub’ providing journalists from around the world access to important information on the situation in South Korea and convey it to their respective home countries. Indeed, the project functioned largely as originally planned by Chi, Oh and Yasue on their first meeting.

Also, as mentioned previously, Letters were also made accessible to the outside world through English translations by American missionary, David Swain (Chi and Okamoto 2003, 49–67). Kinhide Mushakoji, Professor at Sophia University, Tokyo, wrote the foreword for Swain’s translation of selected Letters articles, which provided an overview of the project:

As the letters point out, world opinion can play a considerable role in reducing the involvements of different foreign countries, whether U.S. military support, Japanese economic cooperation, or technological assistance and economic investments of European private interests. We hope that the readers of this book will feel themselves obliged to arouse world conscience and motivate people in different countries to forge solidarity with the friends of the author of the letters (T. K 1976, xiii).

To measure the impact of a transnational advocacy network presents a real challenge for numerous reasons. Firstly, such organisations typically act behind the scenes, and as was the case in the Letters Project, with key actors remaining anonymous for many years. Secondly, remaining beyond the reach of a regime means staying in relative safety compared with the domestic activists who are directly challenging the regime, and finding themselves arrested, tortured and even killed. In the eyes of those who put their life on the line, rather than ‘validating’ the actions of the activists, there is a real possibility that individuals within the transnational advocacy networks could be seen as cowardly.

Indeed, Chi faced criticism from individuals such as Chŏng Kyŏng-mo, both as an anonymous writer for the Letters Project and later in life when he publicly announced that he was, in fact, the author of the Letters articles. Chŏng, was dismissive of Chi's actions, allegedly writing in the *Hankyoreh* newspaper, 'Chi Myŏng-gwan? What did he do? Drink alcohol with his embassy friends? What are you saying he did? All he did was translate materials that were sent to Japan, right?'. Oh immediately protested to the newspaper, arguing that Chŏng's comments were incorrect (Oh 2012, 213–214).

When asked about Chŏng's comments during fieldwork for this thesis, Chi noted that he and Chŏng had only met on one occasion at a Korean bookstore in Tokyo, and thus they did not know each other personally. He conceded that he shared a drink with embassy officials from time to time, however, he argued that he did so to obtain information from South Korea, and to avoid suspicion. Chi stressed that it was crucial that he not affiliate himself with anyone who could jeopardise the project, and he therefore purposely avoided Chŏng due to his close affiliations with North Korea, and his engagement with North-South reconciliation. Reflecting further on the question about Chŏng's negative comments towards him, Chi suggested that there may have been a degree of jealousy due to Chi's close relationship with Yasue, despite Chŏng's longer association (Interview with Chi 2015a).

4.6 Discussion and Conclusion

Through an exploration of four salient events that drew the attention of the Japanese public to South Korea, this chapter has examined: 1) the impact of the

events within South Korea on the Letters Project; 2) the impact of the Letters Project on the Japanese government and civil society; and 3) the influence of the Letters Project on the South Korean government and civil society. According to Chi, the goal of Letters was to spread information on South Korea's situation at the time from Tokyo to the world, with the ultimate goal of mobilising the world to pressure the Park regime towards democratic reform. Secondly, Chi and his group intended to use Letters as a tool of encouragement for South Korean activists, by conveying to them information about the support they were receiving from abroad. This included news about their resistance to the military regime from the foreign press and information on overseas groups lobbying their own governments to pressure the South Korean regime. Thirdly, it was hoped that the Letters would garner international interest in the South Korean pro-democracy movement and assist in raising much-needed funds for the movement.

This chapter has provided evidence that shows the Letters Project and the individuals involved were indeed integral components of the broader support networks that were established in Japan. Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping triggered the popularity of *Sekai* and the Letters, which in turn performed the important purpose of disseminating information about South Korea to Japan and the rest of the world. The chapter has argued that while the Kim Dae Jung incident was the catalyst for the popularity of these articles, the ongoing occurrence of events that embroiled Japan or Japanese helped to maintain interest in the articles and the plight of South Korea. As a result, letters continued to sell in record numbers, and support for the pro-democracy movement continued, and indeed escalated over time by groups such as *Nikkanren* and *Sukuu-kai* (saving groups).

The Letters unquestionably raised awareness of the South Korean political situation among the Japanese society. Yasue and Chi hoped that the Letters would encourage the Japanese society to pressure the Japanese government to, in turn, pressure the Park regime towards a democratic transition. However, the Japanese government was reluctant to become involved in matters that might upset the economic relationship between the two nations. Nevertheless, Japanese individuals and organisations were active participants in the campaign by 'foreign pressures' to secure the release of Kim Dae Jung and Kim Chi-ha, along with 'hundreds of intellectuals, students, and religious and military figures condemned by the military tribunals' (Cohen and Baker 1991, 178). The global reach of the letters project was significant, with reporters visiting Yasue's office en route to South Korea to either compare and confirm the information they had obtained in the field, or to seek guidance regarding suitable contacts while visiting South Korea. Major newspapers around the world also used information provided in the *Sekai* articles as sources for their own articles.

Issues of the magazine were smuggled into South Korea and read widely by activists and *Sekai* was consequently blacklisted by the Park regime. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the Letters Project was part of a broader cause of frustration for the Park regime, prompting KCIA investigations into T.K.'s identity. Further, the articles included in the Letters Project also made their way back to South Korea, at times inadvertently, through a news-share agreement between the *Asahi Newspaper* and *Tonga Ilbo* thus providing pro-democracy activists with a pathway for validation of their activities. The information and financial help also assisted in sustaining the pro-democracy movement.

Thus, while the role of the Letters Project must not be overstated, as it played a secondary role in South Korea's transition to a democracy when compared with domestic actors, evidence shows that it did indeed reach a broad audience and helped to raise awareness among many. The next chapter will discuss Chi Myŏng-gwan's activities to maintain the transnational advocacy network following the democratisation of South Korea.

Chapter 5

The Transformation of the Transnational Advocacy Network

Following the End of the Letters Project

5.1 Introduction

Although I worked with the intention of victory, I now feel like I am laying wounded from battle on top of a hill looking down at the disastrous war that still rages on [...] I feel as though a heavy burden has finally been lifted. I wish all of you good fortune. Sincere thanks to you all for your many years of support (*Sekai* March 1988).

So read the closing paragraphs of the final issue of the Letters from South Korea in the March 1988 *Sekai* magazine, just months after South Korea's return to a directly elected President.

On 16 December 1987, Roh Tae Woo was elected President. However, for the pro-democracy movement, the outcome of these elections was not as hoped, as the new President was a former army general who had played a key role in the 1979 military coup that put Chun Doo Hwan into power (Stentzel 2006, 489). The loss by the opposition, which came as a shock to many, has been attributed to the insistence of two opposition leaders—Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam—to both run for election even if it meant dividing the opposition vote. These actions led to many uncommitted voters supporting a government they did not really like (Haberman 1987a). Despite the unpopular outcome of the election, claims of fraud by the opposition (Haberman 1987b), and activists retrospectively arguing that the 1997 election of Kim Dae Jung was the 'real' return to democracy (Levine 2016, 32), this first formal democratic election since 1971 continues to be broadly considered the

point of South Korea's transition to an electoral democracy (Diamond and Kim 2000, 2) and a 'hard-fought achievement' of the nation's pro-democracy movement (Levine 2016, 31–32).

Regardless of how the 1987 election has since been interpreted, it was certainly the trigger for the end of the Letters Project, and the final Letters column appeared in the March 1988 issue of the *Sekai* magazine, just over three months after Roh Tae Woo took office. Following the conclusion of the Letters Project, both Chi and Yasue shifted focus to other activities. Chi continued to teach at Tokyo Women's University and focus more intensely on the development and promotion of his intellectual magazine *Modern Praxis*. Similarly, Yasue finally accepted a longstanding offer for promotion, that he had refused to take during the Letters Project, to ensure its continued protection. Soon after the end of the Letters Project, Yasue was thus promoted from Chief Editor of the *Sekai* magazine to Executive Director of Iwanami Shoten, and later became Company President (Interview with Chi 2015a).

Following the conclusion of the Letters Project, what became of the transnational advocacy network that supported its operation? Borrowing from the literature on the life-cycle of social movements, this chapter examines what happened to this network once its central purpose had largely ceased to exist. Miller (1999, 304–307) proposes the following four factors that contribute to the decline of social movements: 1) success, 2) co-optation, 3) repression, and 4) failure. Given that transnational advocacy networks comprise 'actors working internationally on an issue who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information' (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1–2), and are regularly seen as

playing a supporting role in domestic social movements (Florini 2000, 217–218), close parallels can be drawn with social movements. Based on this premise, it is assumed here that the above four factors that contribute to the decline of social movements, may also similarly impact transnational advocacy networks. Indeed, as described above, ‘success’ through the achievement of a democratically elected leader in South Korea brought with it the end of the Letters Project. But did it also trigger the end of the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the project?

By examining the historical context in the immediate lead-up to 1987, the changes that South Korea underwent following the election of Roh, and the activities of those once involved in the Letters Project in the years after 1987, this chapter traces the attempts by the transnational advocacy network stakeholders to initiate transformation.

Drawing from the Letters articles, this chapter presents a brief historical background of the events that led to democratic transition in 1987, commencing with an account of the assassination of Park Chung Hee in 1979. The chapter then explores the decision to end the Letters Project within the context of a less than perfect outcome to the 1987 elections. Finally, the chapter will examine the various activities by Chi and his colleagues to maintain the network.

5.2 The Assassination of Park Chung Hee and Democratic Transition

On 26 October 1979, following 18 years of relatively harsh rule, albeit with significant economic growth (Kim and Vogel 2013, 591–602), Park Chung Hee was shot dead by the director of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA),

Kim Chae-gyu, at the *Kungjŏngdong* annex of the KCIA building next to *Ch'ŏngwadae* (the Blue House)(Kim and Vogel 2013, 196–197). After the initial shock of Park's assassination, it was soon met with great relief that the reign of an 'increasingly oppressive tyrant' had ended (Stentzel 2006, 488). Namhee Lee characterises Park's death as 'the end to an era bearing the name of *Yusin* and all of its absurdities and political terror' and suggests that if the *Yusin* period was the 'Frozen Republic', the new era was the 'Spring of Seoul'(N. Lee 2009a, 44, 177), a phrase similar to that used in the title of the Letters article in the March 1980 issue of *Sekai. Sō* (2007, 148) suggests that Kim Chae-gyu had 'shot *Yusin*'s heart'.

Chi, like many interested in the political situation in South Korea, closely followed the domestic reaction to Park's death. In his book *Kankoku minshuka eno michi* (The Road to South Korea's Democratisation), Chi described the assassination event in the following way:

On October 26, in the middle of a banquet, KCIA Director Kim Chae-gyu assassinated Park, who knew the situation more clearly than most and saw a need to change the current political situation. Ironically, Park fell to the bullets fired by one of his most trusted officers. The curtain finally fell on Park Chung Hee's military dictatorship that commenced with the 16 May 1961 military coup and continued for 18 years. It seemed as if spring had come to Seoul (Chi 1995, 112).

Following Park's death, the Prime Minister at the time, Choi Kyu Hah, was elected President by the *T'ongil chuch'e kungmin hoeŭi* (The National Council for Unification), on 6 December 1979. Despite the anticipation of change following Park Chung Hee's death, martial law was declared when security commander Chun Doo Hwan led a military coup on 12 December, just six days after Choi's election.

Due to the heavy censorship of media, the public was unsure of whether there had been a coup or not (Shin 2003, xiv). Indeed, while Chun had gained control of the government, the formal leadership did not change immediately. Choi remained President until his resignation on 16 August 1980, after which Chun assumed the role on 27 August 1980, with almost 100 percent of the National Council for Unification supporting his presidential bid (Sö 2007, 175).

Following the death of Park, it was expected that there would be some democratic reform. Approximately 30,000 university students gathered in Kwangju, South Chölla Province, on 16 May 1980, in the hope that Chun would commence discussions on reform. This day was important to many as it signified the 19th anniversary of the 5.16 Military coup, in which Park came to power. A crowd gathered in front of the Chölla Provincial government building to demand the government follow through with its promises of democratisation. The hopes for democratic reform were soon dashed, with Chun extending martial law throughout the nation on 17 May 1980 (Tharp 1981).³⁵ Chun also ordered the arrest of Kim Dae Jung and other activists for suspicion of inciting riots. It was an outcome characterised by Chi as signifying the end to Seoul's short spring (Chi 1995, 112–114).

In response to Chun's declaration, students began an organised demonstration on 18 May (Sö 2007, 166–167). Initially, the demonstration was relatively peaceful. The students demanded that Chun and his martial law troops stand down. These were similar to the demands that were made across the country (Shin 2003, xv). The

³⁵ This was an extension of the martial law declared throughout all South Korean provinces with the exception of Cheju Island on 26 October 1929, following the assassination of Park Chung Hee (Tharp 1981).

events which followed were described in a Letters issue entitled *Kōshu kinkyū repōto* (The Kwangju emergency report) in the following way:

If we combine the information from my reporter-friends in Seoul and the information that is flowing between the citizens of South Korea, the situation in Kwangju is as follows. The number of students who participated in the demonstration on Monday the 19th was only slightly more than 200. Against this number, the army mobilised assets including helicopters and launched pepper-fog into the crowd, and thus the students had no choice but to gather into a single group. There, the army charged them with bayonets. This happened when the students were overwhelmed by the army and attempted to disband. Everyone who was in that group was killed... The soldiers stabbed almost indiscriminately with their bayonets. Shouting 'It doesn't matter if we wipe out everyone in Chōlla Province', the soldiers even stabbed children. A taxi driver had his door opened and was stabbed. Other drivers who saw this happen rammed their taxis into the soldiers. Following this action, the military withdrew, and citizens seized their weapons. This is how a collision between the military and citizens began (*Sekai* June 1980, 216-220).

The account in Letters only told part of the story. The new military regime, under the de facto leader Chun, sent a team of special operations paratroopers into Kwangju with the aim of quickly suppressing the protests. The paratroopers were brutal in their efforts to break up the protests using police clubs and bayonets on demonstrators and innocent bystanders alike (Shin 2003, xv). There were also accounts of the troops publicly embarrassing demonstrators by forcing them to disrobe and parade naked in the streets (Sō 2007, 172-173). The protest escalated following these actions. Armed with weapons seized from the retreating military, the protestors were joined by citizens of Kwangju, who were infuriated by the 'brutal

and indiscriminate killing and maiming of demonstrators and innocent bystanders' (N. Lee 2009a, 45). What started as a student protest, had escalated into a citywide, popular rebellion that raged for ten days.

After the Kwangju Uprising, the new military regime began to oppress the media and censor publications that reported on, or spread rumours related to the Uprising. Consequently, many journalists were arrested, and on 31 July 1980, 172 Magazines, including *Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yŏng* (Creation and Criticism) were shut down by the regime. A total of 298 journalists were expelled from media outlets across the country (Sŏ 2007, 174–175).

The heavily censored media in South Korea were thus only permitted to cover this protest from the perspective of the government, a fact which frustrated Chi. In the May 1980 issue of *Letters*, Chi expressed this frustration over the control of the media by the regime.

Since the army moved in during the middle of the night on the 17th, Seoul has been thrown into absolute darkness. This is not the army. It is just a turbulent stampede. Foreign reporters are saying the same thing. And yet the army is calling the actions of the good citizens of Kwangju a stampede. Now in Seoul, it is a situation in which around forty thousand military personnel have marched in. Newspapers have not covered this event at all. Even if reporters write such articles they would not be published, and so they don't write them, and break their calligraphy brushes. It is for this reason that the newspapers made by the government executive are nothing but a public notice board of this out of control government. These newspapers are only permitted to write about the citizen uprising of Kwangju in terms of it being the work of 'stampedes', and 'Northern spies' (*Sekai* May 1980).

Letters reported the situation in Kwangju over several issues,³⁶ detailing how the military had killed many protesters. The Letters articles also expressed concern over Kim Dae Jung's safety, as he had been arrested on account of having allegedly incited violence on 17 May, soon after the uprising and immediately before the extension of martial law to the entire nation. Worried about Kim's arrest and possible torture, Letters articles appealed for international pressure on the Chun regime, demanding that an international team be sent to South Korea to investigate (*Sekai* May 1980).

Given the tight control of the media, particularly during the harsh crackdowns like that seen in 1980, access to accurate information was an ongoing challenge for the transnational advocacy network. Chi openly acknowledged the limitations of the Letters articles, as they often relied on a patchwork of questionable sources, which at times included rumours and underground pamphlets, and was at times nothing more than an educated guess of the actual situation (Special lecture by Chi 2015b). Indeed, the above excerpt from the May 1980 issue of *Sekai*, is one such example in which the reliance on foreign correspondents and the testimonies of citizens as sources of information was acknowledged within the article itself.

The inaccuracy of the information was not limited to the Letters, and discrepancies in information on salient events, such as the Kwangju Uprising, continue to this day. One example of such a discrepancy is the number of deaths recorded during Kwangju Uprising. According to the National Archives of Korea,

³⁶ Chi wrote about the Kwangju Uprising on a number of occasions. For example, the first, published in the July issue *Hanrangun no Shihai* (Control by an out of control military) *Kurayami no kiroku* (a record of darkness) in the August 1980 issue and *Chinmoku no toshi no naka de* (inside the silent metropolis) in the September issue

the event resulted in the deaths of 162 citizens, 23 soldiers, and four police officers and a further 4,782 injured. Other accounts, however, suggest a far greater number of casualties. Perhaps considered the most authoritative account of the events is that compiled by the 5.18 *Kinyŏm Chaedan* (May 8 Memorial Foundation). This foundation, which is run by a group of former participants of the Uprising, continues to dispute the credibility of the number provided in official sources. The foundation argues that more accurate figures can be ascertained through an examination of the total number of applications for compensation and government recognition: deaths - 240 (recognised 154), missing persons - 409 (recognised 70) and injured - 2,052 (recognised 1,628). The foundation also claims that many of the dead were buried secretly and their whereabouts are still unknown.³⁷

5.3 The Road to the Direct Presidential Elections

After the Kwangju Uprising, details of the event began to filter through student organisations. In December 1980, students of Seoul National University held a demonstration, declaring an ideological struggle against imperialism and fascism, which influenced subsequent student movements throughout the 1980s (Sŏ 2007, 177). The students focused on constitutional reform to enable the direct election of the country's President.

The Chun regime made continuous attempts to stop this pro-democracy activism, which escalated at times and on 14 January 1987 resulted in Seoul National University student, Pak Chong-ch'ŏl, being killed as a result of police water-torture.

³⁷ Source: The May 18 Memorial Foundation website: 518mf.org/main.php (Accessed 3 May 2016). Note that even the number of 'recognised' differs between the National Archives and the Memorial Foundation website.

The government attempted to cover up Pak's death, reporting that he died as a result of shock. However, following a forensic autopsy, it was found that he had indeed died as a result of torture and the police officers responsible were arrested. As soon as the truth about this incident became public, a nationwide rally took place, which has popularly become known as the 'June Struggle'.

The June Struggle was a massive rally that occurred simultaneously across many of the nation's cities from 10 to 29 June 1987. Thousands of South Koreans took to the streets demanding constitutional reform and the resignation of Chun. The rallies were made up of various groups including students, labourers, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens (Sö 2007, 191; N. Lee 2009a, 265). Police arrested 3,467 protestors across the nation, but with the Seoul Olympics just one year away, the associated focus by international media and political figures from around the world meant that the government was unable to resort to the same tactics used in 1980. To do so, would risk both South Korea's international reputation and the nation's right to hold the 24th Olympiad (Johnson 2001).

To appease the protestors, Chun agreed to hand over his leadership to Roh Tae Woo. On taking charge, Roh Tae Woo, in his historical 6.29 *Sŏnŏn* (6.29 declaration), on 29 June 1987, conceded to the demands of the protestors. The declaration included agreeing to a revision of the Constitution to provide for the direct popular election of the president, amnesty for political prisoners including Kim Dae Jung and liberalisation of various laws to protect citizens' rights and liberties (N. Lee 2009a, 265).

The historic election was held on 16 December 1987 with Roh Tae Woo challenged by two opposition leaders - Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, who

were unable to agree as to who would run as presidential candidate for the opposition party. Consequently, Roh was elected with 36 percent of the vote, and the 'two Kims', received 27 percent and 28 percent respectively. Ironically, had the two Kims joined forces, they would have received 55 percent of the vote and easily formed a majority government. The two Kims conceded defeat and Roh formed a minority government which was periodically subject to challenges over its legitimacy (Han Song-ju 1988, 57).

Many pro-democracy activists were shocked by this outcome. Chi was critical of both opposition leaders, arguing that the split between the two Kims represented their desire to put themselves before the good of the nation (Chi 2005, 194). In the final edition of the Letters, which was published in the March 1988 edition of *Sekai* and was entitled, *17-Nen no saigetsu ga nagarete* (The passing of 17 years), Chi lamented:

Those who fight see dreams of glorious victory, but the history of reality reminds us that it does not necessarily coincide with such dreams. Many friends who have been fighting the battle for the democratisation of South Korea share the feeling of resignation that this kind of victory is now far off, while at the same time prepare themselves for a new battle with a purer heart (*Sekai* March 1988).

5.4 The Last Letter from South Korea

Clearly unhappy with the way in which the two Kims prioritised their own legacy over the good of the nation, Chi's final Letter was a statement of resignation to the outcome of the election. In this final article, he started by citing Professor Yun Yong, Professor of Journalism and Broadcasting at Korea University, Seoul, relating to the 16 December 1987 presidential election. Yun argued that this election was invalid as

a result of a switching of ballot boxes and tampering with individual ballots in order to ensure Roh Tae Woo became President.³⁸ Yun accused the government of ordering *Paekgoldan* (plainclothes police officers) to kill individuals who had evidence of electoral fraud. Yun also described an event in which dozens of citizens, including students, in an attempt to protect the suspicious removal of ballot boxes from the Kuro ward office in Seoul, were confronted by military police, and attacked with tear gas, batons and metal pipes. In this alleged event, many were said to have been forced to jump from the rooftop of the ward office and either died or were badly injured; others were said to have been killed during the tear gas attack.

Yun was arrested for spreading rumours, but he maintained that the media had remained silent on this incident and criticised them for cooperating with the authorities. Influenced by Yun's distrust of the media, despite the so-called democratisation of South Korea, Chi decided not to trust the media and relied on the direct reports from witnesses of events. In his final article, Chi appeared far from convinced that South Korea had finally democratised. Nevertheless, he expressed his deep appreciation for those who supported the project, and hope for ongoing democratic reform (*Sekai* March 1988):

Owakare no Kotoba (A few parting words)

This [project] has continued since November 1972, and so a very long time has passed indeed. Although I worked with the intention of victory, I now feel like I am laying wounded from the battle on top of a hill looking down at a disastrous battle that still rages on.

I am not sure whether it is because we have already decided to cease the Letters, but I feel that I have run out of breath, and struggle to continue writing for this [last] issue. The fight continues, but I beg your

³⁸ Similar accusations were made in the New York Times on 18 December 1987.

forgiveness for my decision to now put down my pen. I feel that I should not continue to write about the testimony of this era any further. I think the decision to leave is an important one.

Sincere thanks for your support over these many years. This election seems to have the support of the nation. Nevertheless, I feel we have missed an important chance amidst the games played by the political parties. But perhaps the national support for South Korea's military regime will now gradually diminish...

Chi further reflected on the impact of the Letters Project:

When you write about the battle of democracy during the battle itself, one must always consider the actual outcome and effects of what is written... Political commentary and action are not about aiming for the absolute truth by observing a balanced reality; rather they take place within the fickle public opinion that is driven by emotion and personal interest. If you look at Letters from the standpoint of truth, you may be inclined to say that many words were concealed or suppressed. Or you may perhaps say some were exaggerated.

In closing, Chi wrote:

Sincere thanks to Iwanami Shoten and the editorial department of *Sekai*. I question whether this kind of solidarity between Japan and South Korea has ever existed in the past. To the many readers and friends, thank you for your support [...] And to those who knew about the people involved in the Letters Project but continued to protect such secrets, I am grateful. I am especially grateful to those who protected this secret in the land of South Korea while enduring torture. Thanks to the support of everyone to this day, we have been able to survive miraculously. There was perhaps some content that may not have received your approval, but I ask for your forgiveness and that you choose to blame it on the tough political situation. I feel as though a heavy burden has finally been lifted. I wish you all good fortune. Sincere thanks for your many years of support.

5.5 The Post Democratised South Korea

Following the election of Roh Tae Woo, many did not expect much to change, given Roh's ties to the previous government and the failure of the opposition to present a united alternative. This sentiment was also reflected in the final Letters article, as quoted in the opening of this chapter, which suggested that a disastrous war still raged on in South Korea (*Sekai* March 1988). However, as argued by historian, Sō Chung-sōk, the June Struggle not only culminated in the democratisation of the political leadership, it also promoted the development of a democratised society (Sō 2007, 205).

What this achievement meant was that the various social and labour movements were able to formally organise into unions and associations. In addition, there was a relaxation on the prohibition of cultural items such as songs and books, and on 15 May 1988, a nationwide newspaper *Han'gyōre sinmun* (a newspaper of which citizens were shareholders) was established. Moreover, while frequently challenged by strong opposition parties and militant civil society groups, Roh had managed to form a stable government (Kim Sun-hyōk 1997, 1137). Under Roh, the government focused on a popular (albeit costly in terms of the balance of payments) policy of greater equity in the distribution of the benefits from the nation's economic growth (Hō et al. 2008, 13) .

To reflect on Keck and Sikkink's trigger of the boomerang model, the refusal to recognise the rights of individuals and groups under previous regimes, which in turn triggered the establishment of international networks changed radically under Roh. Ongoing repression soon gave way to a space within which South Korean activists could now form into a viable opposition. Consequently, the South Korean

pro-democracy movement, largely successful in its struggles, was now faced with a significantly changed political environment.

The South Korean pro-democracy movement demonstrated that it had both the need and ability to change in order to survive, with many refocussing their energies towards politics and establishing formal member-based organisations. The reunification of South and North Korea, also became a major focal point towards which many within the movement shifted. However, now that the movement's goals had been largely achieved and the domestic triggers and incentives for the establishment of international networks no longer existed, what was to become of the Letters Project? Did the Letters Project and the transnational advocacy network that drove it for approximately 16 years cease to exist, or like many groups within the pro-democracy movement, did it transform into something else?

Like South Korean activists, by the time Roh had become President, *Sekai's* domestic readership had already turned their attention away from South Korea's pro-democracy movement and instead focused on issues such as the reunification of the Korean peninsula. The changes in the domestic circumstances in South Korea also had a profound impact on the role the Letters Project played globally.

Democratisation brought with it a promise to abolish the Basic Press Law and restore the freedom of the press and other civil rights through Roh's 6.29 *Sŏnŏn* (6.29 declaration). This significant softening on control of the press and other increased freedoms meant that the difficulty once faced in obtaining information from South Korea declined. It was this difficulty that gave the Letters Project its comparative advantage in obtaining information, and now that it had all but disappeared, the Project's importance as a source of information had also faded.

Tokyo was no longer needed as an information hub for the South Korean movement, as foreign reporters could now go directly to the source and obtain information from individuals who no longer feared reprisal, and information was thus able to flow more freely between South Korea and the rest of the world.

It was time for the Letters Project to be disbanded, which Chi and Yasue carried out following the March 1988 issue. The two shifted focus to other activities. Chi continued to teach at Tokyo Women's University and focused on the development and promotion of his intellectual magazine 'Modern Praxis'. Yasue was promoted from Chief Editor of Iwanami Shoten to Executive Director soon after the last issue of Letters and later became Company President. Both Chi and Yasue were reluctant, however, to allow the transnational advocacy network to simply disappear.

Keck and Sikkink (1998, 206) argue that the strength and density of transnational advocacy networks are measured by numerous variables including the total number and size of organisations in the network and the regularity of their exchanges. With the end of the Letters Project, which formed the information backbone of this network, and the end of the ongoing exchanges that had occurred through the collection and smuggling of information from South Korea to Japan, the regularity of exchanges naturally decreased. Given the importance of maintaining exchanges between members of a transnational advocacy networks, what activities did Yasue and Chi promote to maintain their network following the conclusion of the Letters Project?

5.6 Maintaining the Transnational Advocacy Network

Miller (1999, 304) suggests that while it is possible for social movements to set goals, accomplish them and then subside as a result of the movement no longer being needed, it is, in fact, rare for this to occur. This is because movements generally have multiple demands and rarely achieve all of them. For a movement to survive following success (or partial success), Miller argues that they need to be able to be flexible enough to undergo transformation. This transformation may include attracting new members, readdressing gaps between the tactics and goals endorsed by the leaders and the members, and refocusing on collective goals (Miller 1999, 306–307).

For the transnational advocacy network to remain active, it is clear that it needed to undergo transformation in the absence of the Letters Project. Miller suggests that social movements tend to undergo transformations that include the attraction of new members, a readdressing of gaps between the tactics and goals endorsed by the leaders and the members, and a refocus of their energies to seek collective goals (Miller 1999, 306–307). In line with this argument, Chi actively sought to realign the network's purpose and look for new membership. Even before the end of the Letters Project, Chi had engaged with a separate but related project – the Modern Praxis (*Rekishi Hihan*) magazine. Modern Praxis was an intellectual magazine, an idea that came to him as he was writing in his personal diary about whether he would ever be able to return to South Korea. He wrote that he lived as if in exile, and contemplating the day that he could return, his thoughts turned to the lives led by many diasporic Koreans around the world in a similar situation to him. It was then that Chi decided that he would publish an intellectual magazine, that

would tie the many Korean intellectuals dotted around the world together (Chi 2005, 176–177).

The first issue of *Modern Praxis* was published in summer 1985. While Chi had considered publishing the magazine on a quarterly basis, it was first published on a bi-annual basis and in later years only annually due to a lack of funding and other issues. The final issue of *Modern Praxis* was published in 1996, bringing the total number of issues to fifteen.

The purpose of this magazine, according to Chi, was threefold: firstly, it was to be a forum for domestic South Korean intellectuals to freely express their thoughts; secondly, it was to be a tool to link domestic South Korean intellectuals with those of the world; and thirdly, it was a forum for intellectuals from around the world to gather. It was also the intention of Chi to, in some way, recreate the *Sasanggye* magazine that had been destroyed by the Park regime. To ensure a broad readership from around the world, Chi accepted and published articles in English, Japanese and Korean. There was also a strong Letters legacy in the *Modern Praxis* magazine as many of its contributors had also played a role in the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project, including Yasue Ryōsuke, Wada Haruki, and Kurazuka Taira.

In order to create a tighter network of the many Korean intellectuals living abroad, Chi intended to focus on cultural identity rather than political ideology, providing a platform for all Korean intellectuals, regardless of their political orientation. In a similar way to how Chi protected his own identity during the Letters Project, he also allowed anonymous contributions from intellectuals still residing in South Korea. Chi travelled to countries including the United States,

Canada, and West Germany during his summer holidays to hold seminars on Modern Praxis. Through such activities, Chi was able to gather an impressive group of contributors for the magazine including numerous Korean intellectuals living in the United States such as Pastors Kim Chŏng-sun and Im Sun-man, Kim Hong-jun, Yi Sŭng-man and Pastor Im Sun-man's wife and professor of Columbia University at that time Chang Hye-wŏn (Chi 2005, 182–183).

In the first issue of Praxis, contributions from Ko Ŭn (poet), Kang Man-gil (historian), Kim Sŏk-bŏm (Zainichi novelist), and Kurazuka Taira (Professor of Meiji University) were published. Chi also contributed an article for the first issue entitled *Jiyūna chisei no kakyō — rekishi hihan o dashinagara* (Bridging intellectual freedom – while publishing Modern Praxis). Subsequent issues published contributions from many influential intellectuals from around the world including Bruce Cumings and Immanuel Wallerstein. In this way, Chi attempted to maintain the transnational advocacy network associated with the Letters Project by providing the Modern Praxis magazine as an alternative forum through which exchanges could be maintained, thereby strengthening the ties within the network.

One can thus argue that the Modern Praxis magazine was a means of perpetuating the transnational advocacy network that had driven the Letters Project by: 1) expanding membership to new intellectuals from around the world; and 2) realigning the purpose of the transnational advocacy network from promoting democracy in South Korea to promoting culture and intellectual exchange between Koreans living abroad. In this sense, clear parallels between social movements and the transnational advocacy networks can be drawn.

Miller (1999, 306–307) also proposes that in order to survive their own ‘success’, social movements need to be flexible, and readdress gaps between the tactics and goals endorsed by the leaders and the members. In addition to the previously discussed realignment of purpose and expansion of the membership of the transnational advocacy network, Chi and Yasue adjusted their tactics to better meet the changed circumstances. In February 1995, approximately two years after Chi had returned to South Korea, he was visited by Yasue. The purpose of this visit was primarily to participate in a symposium which was hosted by the Korea Christian Academy and Iwanami Shoten entitled ‘The 50th Anniversary of Liberation and Defeat—seeking reconciliation and a future’. The symposium was the start of a series of reciprocal events commencing on 13 February 1995 in Seoul and hosted by the Korea Christian Academy. On 7 April 1995, a similar event was held in Tokyo and was hosted by Iwanami Shoten. These symposia were held to mark the 50th anniversary of liberation from Japanese colonial rule, and the 30th anniversary of the Treaty between Korea and Japan. The event hosted in South Korea also marked the first time Yasue visited South Korea, due largely to his KCIA blacklisting and the associated difficulty of obtaining a visa. Many South Korean and Japanese intellectuals who had actively participated in the transnational advocacy network also participated in this symposium.

Yasue made a second visit to South Korea in November 1995, to attend another symposium, this time hosted by Hallym University and the South Korean newspaper *Tonga Ilbo*. The symposium was initiated by Chi, who hoped that the event would provide a catalyst to promote the development of a network between South Korea and Japan in line with the new political context in East Asia (Chi 2005,

202). Approximately 200 intellectuals participated from South Korea and Japan including Katō Shūichi (critic and author), Morishima Michio (economist), Funabashi Yōichi (journalist), Yi Ŏ-ryōng (critic and novelist), Nam Si-wu (President of *Munhwa Ilbo* (*Munhwa Daily*; a nationwide newspaper)), Lee Hoe-song (*zainichi* (Korean-Japanese) writer), and Helen Hardacre (Harvard professor of Japanese studies). The theme chosen for this symposium was *Higashiajia no heiwa to nikkā kyōryoku taisei o saguru atarashī seiki ni mukete* (Towards a new century – an exploration of peace and Japan-South Korea cooperation in East Asia) (Chi 2005, 201). This symposium was in part to celebrate the opening of the Institute of Japanese Studies, which had also been established by Chi with the hope of promoting a better understanding of Japan in South Korea. From this symposium, some articles were published in both *Sekai* and the Hallym University publication *Hallim Ilbonhak Yōn'gu* (Hallym Japanese Studies).

These symposia were the first of many that were held between South Korea and Japan. As there was no longer any need to remain anonymous, intellectuals were in need of an open forum through which they could freely express their views on the South Korea-Japan relationship, and it was this need that the symposia were designed to fulfil. Aiming to broaden the network, Chi and the organisers made a conscious decision to include influential intellectuals from both South Korea and Japan that held diverse views across the political spectrum. According to Chi, this policy of diversity was to encourage the exchange of ideas between those Japanese intellectuals who had previously been unable to enter South Korea due to their criticism of the South Korean regime, and those Korean intellectuals who were

referred to as right-wing moderates and who had not actively criticised the South Korean government prior to the 1987 elections (Chi 2005, 202).

In this way, Yasue and Chi changed their strategy to meet the needs of individuals within the broader transnational network. Further, by opening the door to a broader cross-section of intellectuals and supporting the opening of the Japanese studies institute at Hallym University, they had created the potential for the broadening of the membership base. In this way, Yasue and Chi implemented a range of strategies, each consistent with those strategies set out by Miller to maintain the transnational advocacy network that had once been galvanised by the Letters Project. The strategies helped to transform the network from one that was politically motivated, to something that attempted to function as a ‘cultural and intellectual bridge’ between Japan and South Korea.

5.7 Chi Returns to South Korea

After the conclusion of the Letters Project in 1988, Chi decided to remain in Japan until his retirement. In 1993, Chi retired from Tokyo Women’s University and returned to South Korea almost immediately, ending his 20-year-long stay in Japan. Chi was almost 70 years old at the time, and his priority upon return was to travel around South Korea and rediscover the country he had known 20 years prior. Chi first visited the graves of Chang Chun-ha of *Sasanggye*, and Sönu Hwi of *Chosun Ilbo*. Chi also visited the Joint Cemetery of the Democratisation Movement in Kwangju City. It was his intention to apologise to those who fought for democracy and lost their life in South Korea while he remained safe in Japan (Chi 2005, 199).

After returning to South Korea in 1993, Chi was tormented by intense loneliness. He expressed this feeling in his autobiography:

My South Korean colleagues and I went our separate ways. And I now feel perplexed when faced with a Korean society that has transformed from a traditional intellectual society into a mass society. The twenty years for which I had been away from South Korea was very long, particularly from the perspective of South Korea's modern history. As I had stayed for so long in Japan, I was no longer able to imagine the future of Korea without its solidarity with the world. Even though there are partial conflicts from time to time (Chi 2005, 165).

Chi started thinking about how he could best re-establish himself in South Korea. Before Chi returned to South Korea, he had a farewell dinner with Yasue. During their conversation, Chi said to Yasue:

When I return home, I want to walk across the country, visiting mountains and rivers where I have not been able to set foot for a long time. I want to make a pilgrimage to old temples. And more than anything else, I want to search for the pre-modernised Korea. And learning from E.H. Carr, I hope to be able to write about 'What is history?' from the perspective of those who have experienced the upheaval of Korea (Chi 2005, 198).

While in Japan, Chi had written articles and books in Japanese for Japanese people, but now, finally back in South Korea, he could concentrate on Korean modern history and history for the people who sacrificed their lives for the pro-democracy movement. However, as had happened many times before in his life, Chi's destiny was to take him in another direction. In reflection, Chi commented humorously that 'because I have spent twenty years in Japan, I was probably not going to be allowed to run away that easily. While in exile in Japan, I had the suspicion that I

would probably be engaged with issues relating to the Japan-Korea relationship’ (Chi 2005, 200).

Sure enough, Hallym University’s chairperson, Yun Tŏk-sŏn, who was a famous surgeon and Chi’s middle school senior, soon after offered Chi a position at his University, to establish and develop a Japanese research institution. Chi accepted this offer after a week of consideration (Chi 2005, 199–200). Thus, despite his hope that he could forget about Japan for a while and look around at some old temples in South Korea, things did not turn out as he had planned. In 1994 Chi started his professorship at Hallym University and established the Institute of Japanese Studies.

Chi built the institute from the ground up. He had ambitious dreams to make it a leading institution of Japanese Studies in the Asian region and hoped that many scholars, including those from Japan, would come to conduct research there, making it a truly global institution. He saw it as an opportunity to improve cultural and historical understanding between South Korea and Japan, and in some way continue the legacy of the transnational advocacy network that drove the Letters Project.

Chi’s dreaming was shattered however by Yun’s passing in 1996. Yun’s death meant that Chi now faced significant budget cuts and was forced to reduce the size of the institution. Chi changed direction and combined the library and research institute into a single building. To build up the library resources, numerous Japanese intellectuals and people from the public, including Yasue Ryōsuke and others who had been active during the Letters Project, donated books. Japanese groups established the *Chi Sensei ni hon wo okuru kai* (the group for sending books to

Professor Chi). As a result of their generosity, the library's holdings grew to around 50,000 books, and numerous publications relating to Japanese Studies were produced through the institute.

Chi continued to promote a better understanding between the two nations, writing numerous books including *Han'guk esŏ pon Ilbon* (Japan, as seen from South Korea) in 1993. Chi also became involved in political activities, in 1997 participating in the *Hanil Yŏksa Yŏn'gu Ch'okchin Kongdongwi* (Promotion of the Korea-Japan history research committee) of which Chi was co-chair representing South Korea; in 1998 he was chair of the advisory committee for the *Hanil Munhwa Kyoryu Chŏngch'aek Chamunwi* (The Korea-Japan Cultural Exchange Policy Advisory Committee); in 1999 he became co-chair representing South Korea in the *Hanil Munhwa Kyoryu Hoeŭi* (The Korea-Japan Cultural Exchange Council); in 2000 he became chair of the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and in 2003 he became the inauguration preparation committee chair for president-elect, Roh Moo Hyun.

It was Chi's goal to enhance the bilateral relations, and promote cultural exchange between the two nations. While chair of the Cultural Exchange Council, progress was indeed made in the promotion of cultural exchange between the two nations. It became possible, for example, for popular culture, such as music and film to be imported into South Korea from Japan. The council was also actively involved in the two nations co-hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2002 (Chi 2005, 210–211). In this way, often leveraging the support of the transnational network that remained after the Letters Project had concluded, Chi continued his work as a 'cultural bridge' between Japan and South Korea. It is a clear example of how a transnational

network may continue to exist through the realignment of collective goals (Miller 1999, 306–307).

While working actively as a cultural bridge between South Korea and Japan, Chi was confronted by a group headed by a professor from Ewha Womans University, who asked him to take into consideration the issue of the comfort women. Chi refused this request, stating that such issues should wait until South Korea and Japan had strengthened cultural ties. Chi feared that any attempt to address such issues too early would jeopardise efforts to improve relations between the two nations. The group reluctantly accepted Chi's response and withdrew their request (Interview with Chi 2015a). While Chi wrote in support of the Japanese government accepting responsibility for the treatment of comfort women during the Second World War (See Chi 1998 for example), he never did address the issue while in the Cultural Exchange Council. Instead, Chi chose to focus on improving mutual understanding. One must question whether avoiding this issue indeed facilitated the deepening of understanding between South Korea and Japan, or whether the mutual understanding that was achieved through the Cultural Exchange Council was merely a thin veneer that covered up unresolved issues.

5.8 Discussion and Conclusion

The central purpose of the transnational network was to convey to the world the plight of those fighting for democracy in South Korea. While social movements in both South Korea and Japan predated the network, with some similarities in their goals, they only converged following the abduction of Kim Dae Jung in 1973 as described in Chapter 3. Moreover, although those responsible for the Letters Project

had already commenced the development of a transnational advocacy network, the abduction resonated with intellectuals and social activists in Japan and became the catalyst around which the network could form. However, once that resonance was no longer there, the Letters Project concluded.

This chapter has argued that while the Letters Project ended in 1988, the transnational advocacy network that drove the project did not. The end of the Letters Project resulted in a decrease in the regularity of exchanges within the network that had occurred through the collection and smuggling of information from South Korea to Japan. Organisations and individuals involved in the network also started to gravitate away from the issue of democratisation in South Korea, shifting their focus to other goals with little mutual resonance. However, just as social movements continue to exist through flexibility, planning for new members, and by realigning their collective goals (Miller 1999, 306–307), similar tactics were adopted by Chi and Yasue to enable the network to continue to exist, albeit in a different form, for years later.

This chapter has provided evidence that suggests transnational advocacy networks can exhibit similar traits to social movements, particularly regarding their demise and strategies for their continuation. For the network that underpinned the Letters Project, the transition of South Korea to a democracy led to a need for those coordinating the network to adopt new strategies to ensure it could be maintained. These strategies included the expansion of the network's membership base, and more importantly, the realignment of the transnational advocacy network from one that promoted a democratic South Korea, to one that functioned as an intellectual

and cultural bridge between Japan and South Korea, and between South Korea and Koreans living abroad.

Chi finally announced that he was, in fact, T.K., the author of the Letters, in 2003. He subsequently published his autobiography *Kyōkaisen wo koeru tabi* (Travelling across borders) in Japanese in 2005, which was translated into Korean and published in 2006, under the title *Kyōnggye rūl nōmnūn yōhaengja: Chi Myōng-gwan chasōjōn* (Travelling across borders – an autobiography of Chi Myōng-gwan). Chi continued writing in Korean and Japanese about the Letters Project and the activities of the transnational network during the 1970s and 1980s. In 2008, for example, Chi published a book entitled *Han'guk ūro put'ō ūi t'ongsin* (Letters from South Korea) that reflected on the historical incidents around the time of the Letters Project and compared how these incidents were reported in Letters, the newspapers *Tonga Ilbo* and *Asahi Shimbun*. In 2017, this publication was translated into Japanese and published under the title *Kankoku kara no tsūshin no jidai : kankoku kiki no jūgonen o nikkan no jānarizumu wa ikani tatakattaka* ('The era of Letters from South Korea': How Japanese and South Korean journalism fought the 15-year³⁹ South Korean crisis). These publications demonstrate some of the impacts the project had on journalism in South Korea and Japan.

While the activities associated with the project continue to be largely overlooked, such publications provide an important record for us to rethink the political history between South Korea and Japan during the 1970s and 1980s. As further evidence of the ongoing role of the network, and as a testimony of its

³⁹ This thesis calculates the period from 1973 to 1988 as 16 years.

resilience, in 2015, Chi returned to Japan, from his adopted home of Minnesota, where he and his wife were living at that time, and participated in numerous conferences that were all well attended, by young and old. This network, which underwent significant transformation following the end of the 16-year-long Letters Project, has now existed for close to double this period. This example suggests that there may be scope to extend the boomerang model, by drawing parallels between transnational advocacy networks and social movements, and the strategies adopted by movements to prevent their demise after their collective goals are achieved.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Introduction

While the literature on the pro-democracy movement in South Korea acknowledges the diversity of actors as an important factor in achieving a directly elected president (N. Lee 2009a, 214–215), much of this diversity is domestic in nature. Further, while acknowledgement of international actors does exist in the literature, the focus tends to be on Christian networks and is generally U.S.-centric. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, however, there is ample evidence that individuals residing in Japan were also actively involved in supporting the Korean pro-democracy movement, both financially and more importantly, through the relaying of information about the plight of South Korea to the world.

Despite several highly salient events in the 1970s and 1980s that showed how deeply embroiled Japan was in South Korea's pro-democracy activism, the support activities in Japan for South Korea's pro-democracy movement have been almost completely forgotten. This thesis has firstly endeavoured to rediscover this part of South Korea's pro-democracy history, by integrating a narrative of those individuals responsible for the Letters Project into the broader chronology of South Korea's recent history. Secondly, this thesis has considered how the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project formed and was able to function for approximately 16 years. Thirdly, this thesis has provided evidence that the Letters Project did indeed have some impact on the pro-democracy movement in South Korea. Fourthly, this thesis has explored how a transnational advocacy network may

transform following the achievement of its original goals. And finally, this thesis raises interesting observations regarding the way in which information and political pressure flowed as a result of the transnational advocacy network's activities. I will re-examine each of these points in reverse order, starting with the last point, which was a key factor in determining the overall structure of this thesis, and finishing with the first, which has important implications for a more nuanced understanding of the connected history between South Korea and Japan.

6.2 Facilitation, Tolerance and Repression

The findings of this thesis contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Keck and Sikkink's classic boomerang model. The differences in the interpretations of history that remained between South Korea and Japan led the Japanese government to avoid engaging in matters associated with grassroots activism involving South Korea. It can also be argued that the Japanese government's reluctance to act in favour of the Korean government was due to its hands being tied by Japan's own recent, occasionally violent student protests over treaties with the U.S. and the Vietnam War. It is likely that the government wished to avoid risking the reawakening of anti-government protests by angering an already sensitised public. Thus while the government of Japan did not facilitate the activities of the transnational advocacy network, it did not repress them either. This thesis has thus argued that the Japanese government's response can be characterised as one of 'toleration', which sits between the responses of 'facilitation' and 'repression' (Tilly 1978, 4-14).

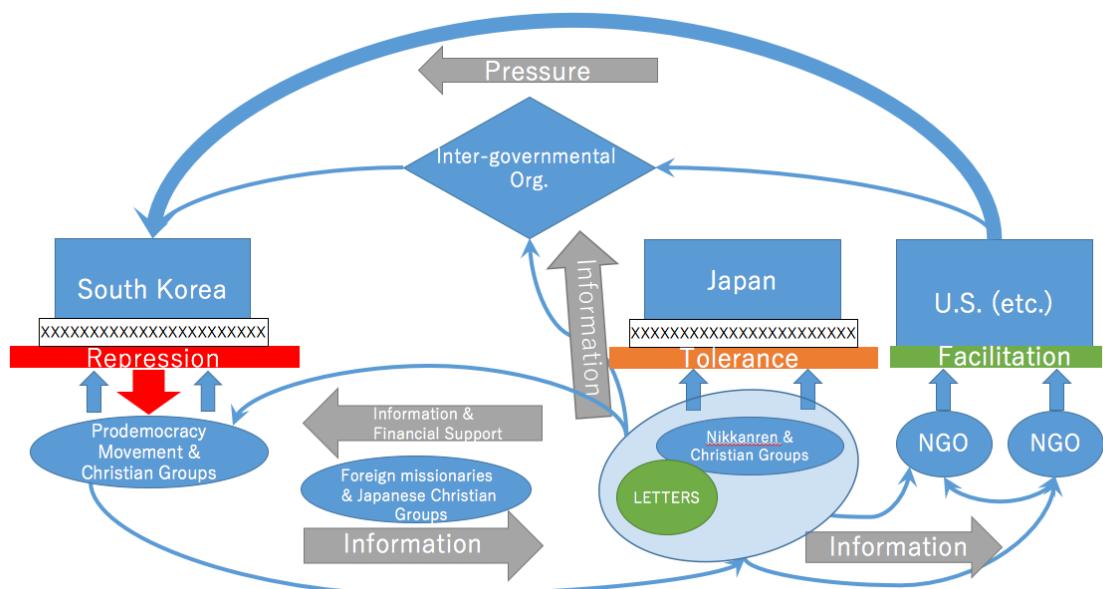
Rather than critiquing the act of toleration, this thesis suggests that such a response by the government can result in a transnational advocacy network playing a very different role to that expected in the classic boomerang model. Those involved with the Letters Project were unsuccessful in their attempts to lobby the Japanese government to pressure the South Korean government. As a result of the Japanese government's lack of responsiveness to such lobbying, the project evolved into an operation that carried out what may be called a two-stage externalisation process.⁴⁰ These two stages consisted firstly of the smuggling of information out of South Korea and its publication within Japan, and secondly the transfer of this information from Japan to other nations such as the United States via publications including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In this way, the activities of the Letters Project extended beyond pressuring the Japanese government and helped to spread information regarding the plight of South Korea's activists to other countries with governments more willing to facilitate the network's activities and apply pressure on the South Korean government. This suggests that this third type of response by the government of a nation to a transnational advocacy network—one of toleration, rather than facilitation or repression—can lead to a transnational advocacy network playing a different, yet possibly more effective role, than what it would have under a facilitating government. In the case of the Letters Project, it was that of an information hub.

⁴⁰ A process in which, if the blockage was one of 'toleration' in the external country (State B), the information flow would continue farther afield, effectively changing the role of State B from one which applies pressure through its government, to one which relays information to other countries (State C) and international organisations who in turn apply pressure to the country in which the actions are taking place (State A).

The figure below represents a modified boomerang model that depicts a two-stage externalisation process. The first stage of externalisation resulted from the repression of civil society in South Korea, which forced the civil society to seek alternative routes to pressure their government. The second stage of externalisation resulted from the tolerance of civil society by the Japanese government which, although it enabled the Letters Project to operate actively, did not result in a response by the Japanese government, thus triggering an onwards flow of information to other countries. In this way, it can be argued that Japan provided a *conducive* environment for the Letters Project to function as a central part of an information hub. While it is not possible to say whether or not this made the Letters Project more or less effective, it is certain that had it functioned under a facilitating government, its role would have been different:

Figure 6.1 The Letters Project – Modified Boomerang Model



6.3 Transformation of Transnational Advocacy Networks

To better understand the life cycle of transnational advocacy networks once the problem around which they originally galvanised (and thus their reason for existence) has largely been resolved, this thesis has drawn from literature associated with the life cycle of social movements. Miller (1999, 304–307) suggests that environmental change such as success, co-optation, repression and failure may all contribute to the decline of social movements, but that absolute demise of a movement is in fact rare. For a movement to survive the above changes, Miller argues that groups need to be able to be flexible enough to undergo transformation. This transformation may include the attracting of new members, a readdressing of gaps between the tactics and goals endorsed by the leaders and the members, and a refocus of their energies to seek collective goals (Miller 1999, 306–307).

By examining the activities of those once involved in the Letters Project in the years after its conclusion, this thesis has found that the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project also underwent significant transformation. New members were sought, and new goals were established, but most significantly the overall objective of the network shifted from being one that was political in nature—motivated by regime change in South Korea—to one that focused on forming a cultural and intellectual bridge between the two nations. This finding has important implications for understanding the life cycle of transnational advocacy networks, as it represents an example of such a network that has proven more resilient to external changes than examples described elsewhere (Rodrigues 2004, 99; Florini 2000, 255), and may provide a hint for other such networks faced with a similar situation.

6.4 The Impact of the Letters Project

It is first essential to caveat any discussion on the impact of the Letters Project by stressing that it is important to not compare the role of the transnational network with that of the pro-democracy movement. Social movements can be defined as coordinated and sustained confrontations by ordinary people against elites, authorities or opponents, in response to contention or unmet demands (Tarrow 2011, 6). Indeed, as seen in South Korea, the role of the pro-democracy movement was to directly confront repressive regimes to effect democratic change, at times resorting to strategies that involved public protest and violence. In contrast, Keck and Sikkink argue that transnational advocacy networks tend not to be powerful organisations, and thus must use information, ideas and strategies to effect change (1998, 16). The boomerang model proposes that the role of such transnational networks is one of amplifying the demands of domestic groups. This distinction in roles is indeed consistent with the views of prominent scholars of transnational advocacy networks (Florini 2000, 151; Perl 2012, 54) who stress the importance of domestic actors (domestic nodes) in bringing about change.

Thus, while the goals of the transnational advocacy network and the pro-democracy movement were one in the same, their roles were different. Rather than directly confronting the South Korean government, the role of the transnational advocacy network was to raise awareness of the outside world. By drawing attention to the plight of domestic actors, the transnational network that underpinned the Letters Project performed three important tasks. Firstly, it facilitated access to resources that would help sustain the pro-democracy movement. Secondly, it provided information that increased external scrutiny of the South Korean

government, making acts of repression increasingly difficult to cover up. And thirdly, by conveying evidence of acts of repression, the network helped to persuade external actors to pressure the South Korean government to effect change.

This thesis concurs with the consensus that there are many components and actors that lead to the eventual success of a movement and provides anecdotal evidence that the role played by the Letters Project contributed to the overall success of the pro-democracy movement, through its provision of information, money and moral support. Had it not existed, would the outcome have been different? Probably not. Alternative routes for the application of pressure on the Park regime would probably have been found elsewhere. However, history shows that the Letters Project and its associated transnational advocacy network was one of the paths that indeed functioned, at times to the frustration of the South Korean regime.

6.5 Sustaining the Letters Project

As described above, the Letters Project could not have functioned without domestic nodes in South Korea, but there were also important ingredients within the network itself that enabled it to perform its role. In addition to the above-mentioned conducive socio-political environment in Japan, which tolerated the activities of the network, this thesis proposes that the Letters Project was able to function thanks to a convergence of several factors. Firstly, the repression by the Park regime against those seeking democratic change provided a cause that resonated with many in both South Korea and Japan, triggering the creation of international connections. Secondly, the transnational advocacy network that underpinned the Letters Project

possessed a set of essential capacities to manage and drive the flow of information throughout the broader transnational network and beyond.

The third factor was a series of salient events that helped to maintain interest in the situation in South Korea. The most salient of these events was the abduction of Kim Dae Jung. This incident coincided with the publication of an issue of the *Sekai* magazine containing a series of articles on South Korea's pro-democracy movement, providing an important boost to the profile of the Letters Project. Subsequent events, including the KCIA investigation of the *Minch'ŏnghangnyŏn* (The National Democratic Youth and Student Federation), the formation of support groups for activists such as Kim Chi-ha, the assassination of Yuk Young Soo, and the very public provision of financial support by Japanese civil society to the *Tonga Ilbo* (as discussed in Chapter 4) each helped to maintain focus in Japan on South Korea and the pro-democracy movement. This ongoing focus provided the momentum required to sustain the project for approximately 16 years.

6.6 A Rediscovery of History – Implications

The connected history between South Korea and Japan tends to dwell on issues such as comfort women, maritime borders, and war legacies, which only serve to divide these two nations. The Letters Project, in contrast, is an example of grassroots cooperation between the two nations in which groups and individuals in each country worked towards a similar goal. While the activities associated with the Letters Project are well documented and were carried out in recent history, they have been largely forgotten.

This thesis takes the position that history has long been used in both Japan and South Korea as a tool for strategic political purposes, and proposes that the Letters narrative provides no strategic benefit to either government and has thus received little attention. Firstly, the cooperative nature of the Letters narrative directly contradicts the way in which Japan tends to be publicly perceived in South Korea, which draws largely on the narrative of Japan's annexation of the peninsula. Secondly, there are many politicians in South Korea who obtain much of their credibility through their student activism.⁴¹ Stories of external assistance, particularly from Japan, are of no benefit to these politicians as it would only serve to undermine their role in the pro-democracy movement. Thirdly, the Letters narrative also highlights the Japanese government's reluctance to assist the pro-democracy movement in South Korea. Thus, the integration of such a narrative into Japan's mainstream understanding of history would only serve to highlight further the Japanese government's incompetence in dealing with difficult historical issues. As a consequence, it has been easy for both the South Korean and Japanese governments to exclude this narrative from their connected history.

Progress in resolving historical problems between South Korea and Japan has been slow and non-linear. Perhaps this is because the focus has been on the problems rather than examples of successful cooperation. However, it also must be pointed out that many of the problems we see today between Japan were a result of both governments agreeing to the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in June 1965, which alienated much of the South Korean

⁴¹ For example, current President and all of his sidekicks.

population in favour of economic gain. This shows us, then, that while focusing on the problems does not necessarily lead to solutions, neither does avoiding them.

To critique the approach by Chi in his endeavours to act as a cultural and intellectual bridge between Japan and South Korea, it can be said that while he actively joined in the criticism of the Park regime for alienating the majority of the South Korean population in his actions, in effect, he followed a similar strategy. Park focused on economic and industrial development, while Chi focused on cultural and intellectual similarities between the two nations, and both were reluctant to engage with issues such as comfort women, war legacy and territorial disputes. While the repressive actions of Park cannot be compared with the pacifist actions of Chi, they shared a similar strategy for engaging with Japan – one that avoided addressing what they saw as irreconcilable differences.

It is proposed here that an ‘either-or’ approach to history should be avoided. Neither focusing only on the issues nor avoiding them entirely will resolve outstanding problems between South Korea and Japan. Integrating underexplored narratives of cooperation between the two nations, such as the Letters Project, can only help provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. It is hoped that by rediscovering narratives of cooperation between South Korea and Japan, this thesis can help to create a more robust foundation of understanding between the two nations, upon which the persisting history problems can be openly discussed and more effectively addressed.

This thesis has only touched on questions relating to the impact of transnational advocacy networks on the South Korean pro-democracy movement. There is still much work to be done on this topic. Archives overflow with letters,

pamphlets and documents that provide an important record of international grassroots cooperation in the South Korean pro-democracy movement. While the cataloguing of these materials is progressing, much remains uncatalogued. Much of the material is rapidly deteriorating due to age, and many of the individuals who were active during the 1970s and 1980s have now passed away, and those who are still alive are in their eighties and nineties. The opportunity to access much of the information of this era is thus rapidly diminishing. It is therefore crucial that further cataloguing, and close examination of this material, which may lead to the rediscovery of other important narratives of South Korea's recent history and its interaction with the region and the world, is carried out as soon as possible. Such rediscoveries may, in turn, lead to improved relations between South Korea and Japan.

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Appendix

Overview of Documents Obtained from Key Repositories.

Hallym University Archives

Hallym University has perhaps the most comprehensive collection relating to Chi and his activities in Japan, and includes his personal diaries, letters between Chi and Yasue Ryōsuke during the 1970s and 1980s, and letters between Chi, Korean Christian activists and Japanese Christian supporters during the 1970s and 80s. This rich collection of resources was largely donated by Japanese supporters of the Letters Project to Hallym University where Chi taught and researched following his return to South Korea in 1993. Chi also donated a large portion of his personal library of documents from the 1960s to the 1980s to the Institute, which includes some of the resources he used to write his Letters from South Korea articles, newspapers and letters referring to the Letters Project, and materials related to the Japanese groups who later donated books to Chi and the Institute.

National Institute of Korean History

The National Institute of Korean History possesses an important archive on human rights issues associated with the pro-democracy movement. In particular, the institute holds documents relating to the network of Christian associations active during the movement that were collected and donated by Oh Chae-sik. The collection includes photographs, personal letters, confidential documents, foreign documents and materials relating to the movement (including from Japan), and pamphlets and posters related to the movement.

Kim Dae Jung Library

The Kim Dae Jung Presidential Library holds an extensive archive of documents and information relating to Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping and his activities in the pro-democracy movement. These include diplomatic documents between Korea, Japan and US, trial records and overseas newspapers.