

Abstract for “The Making of a Minjung Movement in Masan: Urban-Industrial Community Formation and Working-Class Cultural Production under Developmental Authoritarianism”:

In mid-October 1979, two major port cities on Korea’s southeastern coast bore witness to the Busan-Masan Uprising (Bu-Ma Uprising), a series of popular demonstrations and riots that triggered the terminal political crisis of what protestors referred to as the “dictatorship” of President Park Chung-Hee (1961-1979). In the preceding years, Masan, its Free Export Zone (MAFEZ), and neighboring Ch'angwŏn Industrial Park (CIP), had attracted thousands of young workers who formed the driving force behind Masan’s uprising. Yet, throughout the 1970s they had remained seemingly quiescent.

This paper argues that Masan’s uprising was more than a spontaneous eruption of working-class resentments. Rather, the political consciousness displayed in workers’ opposition to authoritarianism formed through their everyday experiences, knowledge of local democratic histories, and among a community of conscientious cultural activists. Moreover, beyond accelerating the collapse of the Park Administration, the uprising helped produce the minjung movement locally. Compiling a grassroots archive, I trace the formation of Masan’s minjung movement within working-class literature clubs, drama troops, and the underground magazine *Masan munhwa*. In so doing, it reveals how popular movements could emerge even far from the hotbed of democracy and labor activism in Seoul.

My biography:

Before beginning my PhD program, I spent seven years living, working, and completing a master’s program in Korean studies at Yonsei’s Graduate School of International Studies. I have long held an interest in labor and working-class history, and my experiences in Korea have led me to consider more deeply the relevance of colonial, postcolonial, and Cold War circumstances to this history. Currently (Spring 2022) in my third year at UW-Madison, I am preparing to research my PhD Thesis, which will explore Korean working-class history through its long-term but underexplored connection to Japanese imperial and Cold War industrialism.

Schedule:

Arriving Friday, 10/21 and Departing Sunday, 10/23.

Mode of Transportation:

Car