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Civil Society under Authoritarian Rule:
Bansanghoe *and Extraordinary Everyday-ness in Korean Neighborhoods**

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Abstract

Despite a plethora of studies on the authoritarian regime, scholars have paid less attention to how an authoritarian regime not only maintains but also legitimizes its power. Contra both political economists emphasizing the regime's economic performance and social constructionists focusing on the "economy of power," this study illuminates a constitutive dimension of the authoritarian rule in which citizens are morally reformed, civil society is fundamentally reconstituted, and nation is newly imagined by investigating South Korea's Yushin regime (1972–1979) under Park Chung-hee's leadership. By examining how bansanghoe*, a monthly neighborhood meeting, buttressed the Yushin regime, this study analyzes and problematizes a complex process in which the extraordinary came to define the ordinariness, further blurring the line between the two. This paper concludes by exploring the possibility of the democratic transformation of* bansanghoe*, from its authoritarian legacy into a Tocquevillian grassroots organization in postdemocratic Korea.*

Keywords: authoritarianism, *bansanghoe*, civil society, extraordinariness, Korean democracy, neighborhood

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Introduction

In the mid-1970s, the South Korean state embarked on a series of public campaigns in order to discipline citizens' (especially the urbanites') everyday behavior by enforcing a strict set of street rules, such as obeying traffic signals, forming lines in subway ticket offices, keeping to the left on sidewalks, etc. The state's obsession with the self-imposed mission of *civilizing society* found its expression in varied, largely oppressive, modes. For instance, police officers were patrolling virtually every alley of metropolitan Seoul to make sure that they were all clean and safe. Law enforcers randomly stopped people on the street and measured their hair (if they were men) or the length of their skirts (if women) to maintain so-called decent public order. Even popular songs containing socially "unhealthy" lyrics or politically sensitive messages were banned and every music album in its production was legally required to include at least one "healthy song" which the government had approved.

Evidently, the Yushin era (1972–1979) was an extraordinary time. Rural areas were thoroughly renovated through the much acclaimed Saemaul Movement, a collective labor mobilization to modernize Korean farmlands by denouncing the old Korean habits of the heart. Almost every week, if not every day, streets in major cities were filled with state-sponsored rallies against communism, corruption, and social decadence. While the state managed to prolong miraculous economic development throughout the period, any form of ordinary politics, not to mention democratic politics, was systematically discouraged, or even violently repressed. During the seven-year Yushin era, the extraordinary came to define the ordinariness, further blurring the line between the two.

This study aims to investigate a lesser-known dimension of the Yushin era—namely, the "constitutive power" (Foucault 1995) of the authoritarian regime through mundane operations of the state to penetrate into society at a time of fundamental socio-economic change.[1] Unlike most existing

1. Though in *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault's main interest is in the "constitutive power" of the modern liberal state in producing docile subjects fundamentally embedded in the

studies on Korean authoritarianism during the Yushin regime, which highlight either the regime's repressive nature or its remarkable economic success, this paper's primary concern is with the everyday-ness of state-society interactions during an extraordinary time, the mundane social mechanism —programs and strategies for moral suasion—by which the authoritarian state could and did sustain itself. While being unapologetically oppressive to any overt social and political opposition, the Korean authoritarian regime simultaneously launched a series of moral suasion projects by refurbishing and expanding a state-organized grassroots apparatus, a monthly neighborhood meeting named *bansanghoe*. Underlying this seemingly innocuous and perhaps even social-capital enhancing association was the state's strong intent to create a new national moral community through which it could not only monopolize moral discourse, but more fundamentally, maintain a tight grip on a rapidly industrializing Korean society and its citizens. In short, *bansanghoe* was one of the most sophisticated and subtle mechanisms through which the authoritarian regime could both shape and micro-manage Korean citizen-subjects.

Existing literature on the authoritarian regime has long been dominated by three key themes: its various origins (Collier 1979), its democratization (Przeworski 1991) or survival in a semi-democratic form (Levitsky and Way 2010). However, very few studies have examined thoroughly how the authoritarian regime actually sustained its control over society.[2] Further works on the Korean Yushin regime focus exclusively on aspects of the developmental state—the government's harsh suppression of society, labor and democratic movements, and the state's active role in mobilizing an export-oriented economy (Kim and Vogel 2011). Nevertheless, as Meredith Woo-Cumings appropriately notes, "the power of the developmental state grows both out of the barrel of the gun and its ability to convince the

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self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating legal, social, and political discourse of freedom by the subtle use of disciplinary power, our focus in this paper is rather on the similar constitutive power exercised by the authoritarian state in producing quasi-self-governing neighborhood communities, which socially buttress a regime that is politically oppressive.

2. One notable exception is Lisa Wedeen's analysis of contemporary Syria in terms of "the politics of as if" (Wedeen 1999).

population of its political, economic, and moral mandate" (Woo-Cumings 1999, 20). In other words, a well-functioning developmental state not only involves the centralized mobilization of politico-economic resources but also invests significant time and effort in managing the discursive realm of the society. For instance, as Hagen Koo puts it, the Yushin state relentlessly "defined the identity of factory workers as soldiers involved in an economic war against foreign competitors, willing to sacrifice themselves for the glory of the nation" (2001, 12). Echoing these revisionist studies on the authoritarian regime and drawing on the Foucauldian insight of constitutive power that highlights the regime's ability to produce quasi-autonomous but in reality fundamentally docile citizen-subjects, we attempt to explicate the Yushin regime's efforts to create a morally disciplined society.

We illuminate this productive or constitutive dimension of authoritarian rule by examining how *bansanghoe* buttressed the Yushin regime by infusing the sense of a morally-elevated and civilized nation into everyday life in Korean society. Though this paper is largely socio-historical and narrative-based, it concludes by exploring the possibility of the democratic transformation of *bansanghoe*, from its authoritarian legacy into a Tocquevillian grassroots organization in post-democratic Korea.

The Social Vicissitudes of *Bansanghoe*

On March 15, 1976, during the heyday of the Yushin period, Korea's Ministry of Home Affairs published a tiny booklet titled *Bansanghoe unyeong ganghwa jichim* (*BUGJ*: Guidelines on How to Strengthen the Operation of the *Bansanghoe*),[3] which continued to be used without much modification in subsequent regimes until the Kim Young-sam government (1993–

3. The *BUGJ* is reprinted by Ministry of Home Affairs (1978, 152–160). The main contents of this booklet include: (a) the establishment of *bansanghoe* day (the first day of each month), in which all *ban* members gather at the home of the head of the *ban*, or *banjang;* (b) instructions on how to encourage resident participation; (c) the method of compensating the *banjang*, monetarily or otherwise; (d) various tasks for government officials attending the *bansanghoe*; and (e) the average number of households per *ban*.

1998) fundamentally reformed the existing *bansanghoe* system in the mid-1990s. *Bansanghoe* was a monthly meeting of a *ban* (a unit consisting of 20–30 households) under the guidance of a *dong* or *myeon* office, the lowest administrative unit in the Korean state-bureaucratic structure. The meeting usually lasted for an hour or so and was held in a *ban* member's home on the evening of the *bansanghoe* day.

Arguably, the origin of *bansangboe* can be traced back to the Japanese colonial period. In 1917, the colonial government established the *ban* as a village-level administrative unit for effective control of the colonial subjects. During the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II, the seminal *ban* system underwent a radical transformation into a political-economic resource with a new name, "patriotic ban" (*aegukban* 愛國班), to support Japan at war (Heo 1985). As in the case of *hoko* in Taiwan (Tsái 1990) or *chokai* in Japan (Hastings 1995), the purpose of the *aegukban* was to commandeer maximum human and natural resources from the people.

After Korean liberation in 1945, the Syngman Rhee government maintained the *ban* system while changing its name to *gungminban* 國民班 (national citizen *ban*). From 1953 on, the government actively organized the entire population into *ban* units in the course of restructuring the society, which had remained chaotic after the Korean War (1950–1953). In its formative stage, however, the *ban* functioned simply as an administrative sub-unit without engaging in any self-organized or self-fulfilling activities, thus without much influence on people's daily lives. Even worse, the *gungminban* program was soon doomed by the National Assembly Budget Settlement Committee's rejection of the Home Affairs Ministry's new budget application for its operation, forcing it to illegally use money allocated for the use of local governments.[4] By the middle of 1957, the *gungminban* program had become almost obsolete, remaining only in name.[5]

This failed attempt of the then "fragmented, underdeveloped, and

4. "Gungminban unyeongbi sakgam" (Cutback the Operational Expenses of the *Gungminban*), *Chosun Ilbo*, December 31, 1957.

5. "Dangukseon hoseonggwa rago: algoboni hoerampan-e dojangman-ui chamseokja" [Authorities Declare a Strong Showing: As It Turns Out Attendees only Sign In (and Leave)], *Chosun Ilbo*, May 11, 1959.

powerless" Korean authoritarian state (Moon and Rhyu 1999), however, paved the way for the *bansanghoe* system during the Yushin period two decades later, which would turn out to be much more politically effective and socially resilient.[6] After two minor, largely unsuccessful, attempts in 1961 and 1969, the *bansanghoe* program became fully enforced in 1976 by Park Chung-hee's now firmly established authoritarian regime, which had been cemented over the 15 years since the Military Coup of 1961. As noted, in March 1976, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced the basic structure and operational principles of the *bansanghoe* system by publishing *BUGJ*. After a short period of preparation, on May 1, the government launched a mass propaganda campaign for the first *bansanghoe* day. This time, the Yushin regime that had dismantled the parliamentary system and developed strict state censorship encountered virtually no political opposition or social criticism from either the mass media or the opposition parties. The first nation-wide *bansanghoe* gathering on May 31 proceeded smoothly as planned under the banner of "greeting and dialogue among neighbors."[7]

From June to August, every details about the first *bansanghoe* day, including the total number of suggestions, some exemplary cases, media interviews, as well as some minor problems incurred, were reported by and propagated through the state-controlled mass media. By late 1976, the *bansanghoe* system had become firmly established in every nook and corner of Korean society, causing the mass propaganda to wane. From that time, the only noticeable governmental action regarding *bansanghoe* was the massive pressure for high officials and social celebrities to actively participate in the monthly *bansanghoe* meetings. While the original *BUGJ*

6. Contra Choi Jang-jip (1981), we find that the Korean state in the First Republic (1948–1960) was *underdeveloped* as it was "seized" by political society. In fact, the failure of the reinforcement of the *gungminban* system in 1957, about which this paper cannot elaborate due to word constraints, vindicates the idea that the state did not possess enough power to execute independent and consistent administrative projects.
7. The governmental instructions for the first *bansanghoe* day included policies such as banning long hair for men, civil defense education, new resident registration cards, and the new land registration law (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978, 195).

included guidelines only for local government officials, the new guide published in 1977 highlighted the crucial importance of attendance by social and economic leaders, ultimately hoping for more active and voluntary participation from ordinary citizens. In March 1979, President Park even ordered that all cabinet members attend the *bansanghoe* meetings of their own *ban*.[8]

How then was the *bansanghoe* system organized and how did it operate?[9] First, what was central to the *bansanghoe* system was the creation and meticulous observance of the "*bansanghoe* day" in which all households were to participate. Though the idea of having a monthly meeting of a small group of residents was nothing new for most Koreans, few *ban* were as well-organized with standard meeting components as the ones created in 1976. What was truly novel about the new *bansanghoe* system was the state's ambition to uniformly control all *ban* across the country by centrally synchronizing the schedule of the monthly *ban* meetings. Of course, the actual dates for a *bansanghoe* meeting changed occasionally for various reasons but the general principle that the *bansanghoe* take place on the same date designated by the government would last for the next two decades.

Second, and as noted, the *bansanghoe* system under the Yushin regime differentiated itself from its precedent during the Second Republic by requiring government officials to attend monthly *bansanghoe* meetings. What is worth noting here is that the role of officials was not limited to monitoring the participation rate or leading a discussion session; rather, officials were to make the *bansanghoe* meetings resemble a miniature par-

8. See "1977 bansanghoe unyeong jichim," in Ministry of Home Affairs (1978) and "Bansanghoe-e jangchagwan chamseok: Park daetongnyeong gak bucheo-e chinseo" (All Ministers and Deputy-Ministers Should Attend the *Bansanghoe:* President Park Writes to Each Ministry), *Chosun Ilbo*, March 14, 1979. The government encouraged the participation of social celebrities as well by appointing them as honorary *bangjang*.

9. The following description of the *bansanghoe* system and its operation is based on *Bansanghoe unyeong ganghwa jichim* (March 15, 1976), *Bansanghoe unyeong ganghwa bowan jichim* (May 14, 1976), *Bansanghoe unyeong jichim* (January 11, 1977), and *Bansanghoe unyeong jichim* (1978), all of which can be found in the Ministry of Home Affairs (1978).

liament in which (local) policies were suggested and processed.

Third, the discussion agenda was distributed centrally by various levels of government agencies. About ten days before the scheduled *bansanghoe*, the Ministry of Home Affairs set several discussion topics based on suggestions from other ministries and government units and distributed them to provincial and municipal offices. Then, within three days, each provincial or municipal office was allowed to add to them one region-specific agenda item and distribute them again to city and county offices, which were then supposed to finalize the discussion topics by adding one area-specific agenda item. In this top-down agenda-setting process, the region- or area-specific agenda was to be either congruent with or at least supplementary to the agenda proposed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, making the *bansanghoe* homogeneous nationwide not only in form but also in content.

Finally, residents were encouraged to make suggestions on general administrative policies in the *bansanghoe* session. A *dong* or *myeon* office, then, collected and categorized those suggestions, and depending on their nature, they either dealt with them immediately or sent them to higher offices. In either case, it was the responsibility of the official attending to the *bansanghoe* to collect and respond to the suggestions made by residents.

After the collapse of the Yushin regime in 1979 and a subsequent military coup, a group of military generals established another authoritarian government that lasted seven years. During the Fifth Republic (1980–1987), the *bansanghoe* system was maintained without any notable changes. Evidently, however, the new leadership was tempted to take advantage of the legacy of the previous regime, but in new ways. For instance, the regime tried to improve the image of the new president, Chun Doo-hwan, who seized power by fiat, by highlighting his exemplary attendance at *bansanghoe*. Indeed, Chun was the first and the only incumbent president who attended monthly *bansanghoe* meetings.[10]

10. "Chun Doo-hwan daetongnyeong iut-gwa ibyeol-ui bansanghoe" (President Chun Doo-hwan Had a Farewell *Bansanghoe* with His Own Neighbors), *Chosun Ilbo*, August 29, 1980.

Even the radical political change following the June Uprising for democratization in 1987 did not have much impact on the *bansanghoe* operation, though governmental control certainly loosened up to some extent. Most notably, mass media was emboldened to abstain from reporting the government propaganda regarding *bansanghoe*. During the 1992 presidential election, Kim Young-sam, the prominent presidential candidate from the opposition party, promised to abolish the *bansanghoe* system if elected.[11] Indeed, the new, now democratic, government modified the existing *bansanghoe* system by revamping the agenda-setting process into a more decentralized and less authoritarian one and also by prohibiting *bansanghoe* during the election campaign period. Despite many reforms from 1993 to 1994, however, the basic structure of *bansanghoe* remained nearly intact.[12]

Only in 1995, when the municipal self-government system was fully restored, did the *bansanghoe* system undergo a fundamental change as the legality of its establishment and operation was to be adjudicated by the ordinances and regulations of each municipal government.[13] As all heads of local government, now democratically elected, possessed much more political autonomy than their predecessors appointed by the central government, the survival of *bansanghoe* depended entirely on public opinion and the discretion of mayors and governors.

From this point, the *bansanghoe* system only waned. Above all, the nationally-imposed *bansanghoe* day became meaningless, if not completely abolished. In 1998, both the ruling party and the Ministry of Home Affairs agreed to rescind monetary compensation for *bangjang*.[14] Some cities and

11. "Samdang daeseon gongyak mideodo doena?" (Can We Trust the Three Parties' Presidential Election Pledges?), *Kukmin Daily*, November 10, 1992.
12. Nevertheless, the change gave the lower-level administrations freedom to choose the discussion topics for *bansanghoe*. See "Bansanghoe jumin jayul unyeong jeonhwan: Jeongbu sichaek hongbo wiju talpi" (Turnover *Bansanghoe* to Resident Autonomy Management: Beyond the Government-Centered Promotion), *Segye Times*, July 31, 1993; "Tonghap seon-geobeop juyo naeyong" (Main Contents of the Integrated Election Law), *Segye Times*, March 5, 1994.
13. The local self-government system had been suspended since the military coup of 1961.
14. The ruling party initially suggested a complete abolition of the headships for *tong*, *ri*, and *ban*, taking issue with the excessive budget for them (₩184 billion: approximately

provinces even gave up control of the *ban* and let the residents decide whether they would maintain the *bansanghoe* system.[15] As of 2010, the shape and operation of the *bansanghoe* is fully diversified and decentralized and many *ban* are still in the process of change. Though the traditional type of *bansanghoe*, a physical gathering of *ban* members, is disappearing in many cities, some neighborhoods have invented and implemented new systems voluntarily, including cable TV or Internet *bansanghoe*.[16] In spite of the radical changes, however, most local self-governance bodies and the Ministry of Home Affairs still maintain the ordinances and regulations over the *bansanghoe* system, while having removed most of the compulsory elements.

What Was *Bansanghoe*?

Since *bansanghoe* has hardly been an independent topic of research, the nature of *bansanghoe* itself remains obscure. One way to understand it is as the reproduction of the *aegukban* imposed by the Japanese colonial government as a wartime mobilization system.[17] This understanding can

US$140 million). After a three-month-long deal between the ruling party and the Ministry of Home Affairs, which insisted on the retention of the existing system, however, it was agreed that those positions would be preserved under the condition that the existing (monetary) compensation for the *bangjang* be eliminated. See "Tong, ri, banjangje pyeji nollan" (Controversy over the Abolishment of the *Tongjang*, *Ijang*, and *Bangjang* Systems), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, September 23, 1998; "Tongjang ijang ilhoeman yeonim ganeung" (Tenure of the *Tongjang* and the *Ijang* Can Only Be Extended for One More Term), *Seoul Shinmun*, December 11, 1998.

15. "Bansanghoe jayulhwa saebaram: Myeongching deung dokja gyeoljeong" (Autonomy Wave of *Bansanghoe*: Independent Decisions on Its Names and Others), *Hankook Ilbo*, January 12, 1996.
16. "Maeul hompeiji tonghae iut sachon jeong nanwoyo" (By Using Town's Homepage, Let Us Share Affective Feelings), *Dong-A Ilbo*, October 28, 1998.
17. During the Yushin period, there were few direct challenges to the *bansanghoe* system. However, in a congressional session held in 1977, one opposition legislator asked the Minister of Family the following question, revealing the close connection between *bansanghoe* and *aegukban*: "Why are we using the term *bansanghoe*, which reminds us

be easily disqualified, however, once we look at how *bansanghoe* actually operated from 1976. There are no records to indicate that *bansanghoe* was used overtly for mass mobilizations, for instance, for government-organized public protests against North Korea or rallies in support of the Yushin regime. Also, there is no clear evidence of the regime's unconstitutional exploitation of the *bansanghoe* for resources or money mobilization. Quite the contrary, fees were collected on a limited basis and only for "good" reasons, such as helping people struck by natural disasters. Even on such occasions the donation amount for each person was not set by governmental authorities. Therefore, the view of *bansanghoe* as a mobilization system to buttress the authoritarian regime is not convincing (Jeon 2005). Therefore, for a better understanding of the nature of *bansanghoe*, a much closer look at the complexity of its administrative, political, and symbolic operations is necessary.

From a purely legal perspective, *ban* is a supplementary administrative district or unit under the lowest local administrations *dong* and *myeon*, and its official purpose is "to facilitate the operation of administrative polities on grassroots level and to assist the local authorities."[18] This stated purpose of establishing the *bansanghoe* system made many observers see it purely in terms of public administration, their awareness of its occasional political side-effects notwithstanding. No doubt, *ban* is of immense administrative convenience in terms of mail delivery (given that *tong* and *ban* delineate a much smaller area than the postal code area) or speedy and accurate distribution of resources or collection of fees. But *bansanghoe*, the nationally synchronized and centrally managed monthly meeting of *ban*, has much

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Koreans of the *hanchokai*, the Japanese pronunciation of *bansanghoe*, when our people are still allergic to that term because of our past sufferings associated with it?" Without taking issue with the *bansanghoe* system itself, the legislator did connect it with painful experiences under the Japanese colonial rule. See Secretariat of the National Assembly, *Gukhoe bonhoeui hoeuirok* (Minutes of the Assembly Plenary Session), 13th sess., no. 98, October 11, 1977; "Bansanghoe ireum bakkwora" (Change the Name of *Bansanghoe*), *Chosun Ilbo*, October 12, 1977.

18. Ministry of Home Affairs, *Tongban seolchi jorye: si-wa gun* (Ordinance of the *Tong-Ban* Establishment in City and County) (1978), quoted from G. Kim (1978).

deeper implications than mere administrative convenience.

First of all, *bansanghoe* as a single social association was too small to perform any significant sociopolitical function autonomously. In 1978, the average number of households of each *ban* was 26.8, a figure that had remained constant over several decades (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978, 203). Arithmetically, the maximum number of utilizable manpower per each *ban* was at most 30–40 persons; and with this number, a *ban* could only manage minor tasks such as raising small funds for charities or scholarships, street cleaning, tree planting, recycling, or some minor environmental protection activities as shown in the long lists of exemplary cases in the government documents (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978; Daegu City 1978)—activities to promote "social capital." Obviously, the size of a *ban* hampered its capacity greatly even as a useful administrative sub-unit, but quite ironically, the Yushin regime deliberately kept it small. The governmental guidebooks repeatedly emphasized that the maximum number of the households per *ban* should not exceed 30. Furthermore, each *ban*, mutually isolated, was not organically linked to any upper-level coordinating units.[19]

The nature of the *ban* and *bansanghoe* can be better understood in comparison with similar neighborhood associations in other countries. *Jumin weiyuanhui* 居民委員會, the contemporary Chinese residents committee, usually consists of 100 to 700 households, in some cases over 1,000 households, and similarly, *chonaikai* 町內會, a Japanese neighborhood association, usually contains 100 to 300 households.[20] With their larger relative sizes, both *jumin weiyuanhui* and *chonaikai* usually play more significant administrative roles than the Korean *ban*. More importantly, they are self-governing entities. For example, in urban Chinese cities, enforcement of government policies such as birth control, mainte-

19. In Japan, each *chonaikai* is vertically and horizontally connected to city level *chonaikai* confederations (S. Lee 2001).

20. Moreover, the Japanese *chonaikai* system has well-established horizontal and vertical networks, which are connected to hundreds of other *chonaikai* in a large city (Read 2000; S. Lee 2001).

nance of household registration, and social welfare, heavily rely on the *jumin weiyuanhui* system. In Japan, a *chonaikai* can construct various public facilities, hold village festivals, and support various social associations such as senior citizens' clubs.

Seen in this way, *bansanghoe* was not merely an administrative apparatus. More properly, it was a grassroots-level political monitoring and ideological indoctrination system. The political atmosphere of the mid-1970s makes this interpretation relevant. With the Yushin Constitution and the series of "emergency measures" (*gin-geup jochi*), President Park Chung-hee attained a power unmatched by any social and political opposition. In this political milieu, *bansanghoe* functioned as an extended neighborhood monitoring system. Presumably but arguably, the Yushin elites were familiar with this sort of a mass monitoring system as they witnessed the Japanese experiment in Manchukuo and it is highly likely that they were strongly persuaded by the system's remarkable power of social control by virtue of moral suasion and social symbolism.[21]

Indeed, one of the defining features of the method the Japanese employed in suppressing guerrilla activities in Manchukuo was to organize ordinary people into small units and indoctrinate them in political ideology and social norms. More specifically, the Japanese built tens of thousands of collective hamlets and social organizations and enforced registration by all residents. Also, they planted thousands of anti-communist cells among the general masses and carried out countless campaigns encouraging morality, education, industrious life-styles, and the so-called "spirit of the founding of the state." From the perspective of the Manchurians who had suffered under a feudal bureaucracy, the administrative

21. A group of scholars who has investigated the Korean elites' (including Park Chung-hee) personal experiences in Manchukuo (Yi 2002; Sin 2002; Kang and Hyeon 2012) argue that some of the Yushin elites seemed to be aware of the superb political utility of the social monitoring and ideological indoctrination of the general populace in maintaining sociopolitical stability, far more effective than overt political suppression and physical violence. That said, we admit that strong empirical evidence for the connection between the Yushin elites' Manchurian experiences and their social policies during the Yushin era has yet to be built.

system created by the Japanese was seen to be much more efficient and less corrupt.[22] In short, the Japanese counterinsurgency in Manchuria was successful partly because of a well-planned mass control, more so than their direct military operations against guerilla forces.

Similarly, the Yushin regime took pains to make it known that *bansanghoe* was in essence a voluntary neighborhood association, even risking the detriment to efficiency. For instance, in the second month of the *bansanghoe* operation, the government strictly banned the attendance roll list for *bansanghoe* when it found out that some officials were using them in order to increase attendance rates.[23] Instead of coercive measures, as the guidebooks on *bansanghoe* operation show, the government struggled to increase the participation rate through various sorts of incentives—for example, taking *bansanghoe* attendance for fulfilling obligatory civil defense training hours. Not only that, by distributing useful information during *bansanghoe*, such as real estate price indices for tax calculation and neighborhood construction plans, the government made every effort to boost the positive image of *bansanghoe*. The guidebooks even encouraged collective recreational activities such as *baduk* (Korean checkers) or tennis as part of *bansanghoe* activities with the intent of making it seem more enjoyable.[24] Put differently, the Yushin regime very deliberately, and remarkably well, made *bansanghoe* appear to be non-ideological and non-political.

Why then did the Yushin regime not opt for easier and more efficient measures to attain the same intended political outcomes, such as effective social control and political monitoring, given the favorable political and social atmosphere obtained by the Yushin Constitution?

22. For in-depth research on Japanese population control strategies and ideological works in Manchukuo, see C. Lee (1967); S. J. Han (1999); Duara (2003); and Mitter (2000).
23. "Bansanghoe chulseokbu bichi geumjitorok naemubu jisi" (Ministry of Home Affairs Forbidding the *Bansanghoe* Attendance Book), *Chosun Ilbo*, June 23, 1976.
24. While the guides published in the first year were focused on effective propaganda for *bansanghoe*, a considerable number of pages in 1977 and 1978 *Unyeong jichim* were devoted to the issue of how to promote resident voluntarism.

The Constitutive Power of the Yushin Regime

Admittedly, the Yushin regime substituted administration for politics, by dismantling the representation function of the National Assembly and erratically elevating bureaucratic leadership in the economy and over society (Lie 1998, 51). The regime's focused interest in economic productivity and social harmony made it suppresses the expression of different social interests, not only legal-politically but also morally (Choi 1997). Yet however arbitrary and authoritarian it actually was, the Yushin regime seems to have wanted to be seen as a responsive government to the demands and desires of ordinary citizens. For Yushin leaders, it appears *bansanghoe* offered an alternative representation-mechanism to the troublesome parliamentary system, which in their view could far more efficiently legitimize the regime by directly reaching the people.[25]

In this respect, one particular role the governmental officials were to play in the *bansanghoe* is worth noting—they were supposed to run the *bansanghoe* as if it were a miniature local congress. Various sources vindicate this observation. For instance, titles of most news articles on the first *bansanghoe* covered how many (policy) suggestions were made by the residents.[26] Around the first anniversary of the *bansanghoe* system, newspapers and governmental documents extensively reported various statistics regarding suggestions and settlements across nearly 260,000 *bansanghoe* units.[27]

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25. This is not to make a historical claim that *bansanghoe* actually functioned as a semi-formal representation mechanism. Rather, our point, which is evaluative, is that there is a meaningful connection between the regime's active dismantling of the parliamentary system at a formal institutional level and its enthusiastic investment in *bansanghoe* in (nondemocratic) civil society, and this connection *reveals* the quasi-representational role of the *bansanghoe* system during the Yushin regime.
26. *Chosun Ilbo*, for one, reported the first *bansanghoe* under the headline: "9,487 Suggestions in the First *Bansanghoe*," June 8, 1976.
27. According to various governmental sources, 422,586 suggestions were made through *bansanghoe* meetings and 68.5 percent of those suggestions were accepted. These figures appear mostly in the first part of news articles or governmental documents. See Daegu City (1978); "Bansanghoe-ui naesilhwa banghyang" (How to Make the *Bansanghoe* System Substantively Better), Editorial, *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, June 2, 1977.

Furthermore, the government documents categorized suggestions according to region, content, and results, and reported the respective percentage of each category relative to all suggestions received (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978). All in all, the government's efforts were directed at constructing an image of *bansanghoe* activities as the procedural democratic mechanism of "opinion input and policy output."

As its successful operations during the Yushin regime (and beyond) demonstrate, in most cases, the government's efforts to make *bansanghoe* a quasi-democratic political representation mechanism proved to be effective, though, albeit occasionally, these efforts backfired precisely because of the immense stress by the government on the putative voluntary nature of *bansanghoe* activities, thus exposing it occasionally to social criticisms. What then was wrong with this quasi-representation mechanism? Can we not understand *bansanghoe* as a populist-democratic mechanism sincerely sought by the otherwise authoritarian regime to connect with the citizenry, which then could have eroded the regime from within? Can we understand it as an ideologically neutral communication channel between the state and the people?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to look at the prevailing ideological discourse and sociopolitical symbolism constructed and propagated by the state. In appearance, such discourse and symbolism looked apolitical and genuinely concerned with only minor practical issues. As noted, strikingly little emphasis on loyalty to President Park or the ideological rhetoric of anti-communism is found in the public discourses on *bansanghoe*. Quite the contrary, the prevailing discourse on *bansanghoe* was filled with the discussions about community and morality, vocabularies that marked the state as a paternalistic safeguard in both public and private realms.

From the beginning, "community" was the most prominent keyword for *bansanghoe* operations. The first and second discussion agenda items distributed by the Ministry of Home Affairs were titled "greeting and making dialogues among neighbors" and "finding common matters of concern" (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978, 195) with special emphasis on "overcoming the problem of anonymity in big cities." The following state-

ment is a comment made by the mass media, which was under the direct control of government censorship, on the newly launched *bansanghoe*:

> The success of the urban Saemaul [New Village] Movement depends on the successful operation of *bansanghoe*, since it is impossible to carry on the urban Saemaul Movement without overcoming the deep anonymity among urban dwellers. But the problem of anonymity can be overcome only by operating the *bansanghoe* properly where people can gather together. . . . As a matter of fact, because of their long stability, rural societies can enjoy communal dialogues and community members can share happiness and sadness collectively. In cities, however, unnatural population density has caused a tendency among the people not to share their personal life [with their neighbors] by raising high walls around one's home.[28]

This (and related) statement(s) attests to the Yushin regime's endless efforts to promote the importance of organizing a community and overcoming anonymity in urban areas. Unlike rural areas that enjoyed relatively rich social capital and strong social cohesion based on shared moral language and practice, the reasoning went, the social bond in urban areas that were increasingly individualized and pluralistic in value had been greatly eroded, posing a serious challenge to the state in controlling the people there. For the state, *bansanghoe* should function as an artificial community which could provide the urban citizens with a moral-communitarian remedy to cure the modern illness associated with individualism and pluralism. But why the urgency by the state to build urban communities? The following address (May 24, 1976) by then Minister of Home Affairs Kim Chi-yol is highly suggestive in this regard:

> As you know very well, the population of our country is close to 35 million, and with the average household size of five members, the total number of households comes to around seven million. If one person [read: the family head, usually the father] per household attends *ban-*

28. "Bansanghoe-ui unyeong" (On Management of the *Bansanghoe* System), Editorial, *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 12, 1976.

> *sanghoe*, the most influential seven million people gather at the same time and with the same agenda. Though seven million comprise one-fifth of the total population, considering the influence of each participant in his own household, we can consider *bansanghoe* as the gathering of the entire population at the same time and with the same agenda (quoted from Daegu City 1978, 2).

Here tremendous emphasis is given to *bansanghoe*'s inclusive representativeness and the national synchronization of all *bansanghoe*. Since each *bansanghoe* was comprised of all residents of the same area (i.e., *ban*), without excluding anyone on the basis of gender, class, or other natural traits or social backgrounds, no single individual would exist outside of the nationally organized *bansanghoe* network. If Benedict Anderson has shown us the indirect and subtle formation of a national community with the development of print capitalism in the nineteenth century (Anderson 1983), the community embraced by the *bansanghoe* system was imagined differently as it was presently visible with thousands of other *bansanghoe* that were nationally and simultaneously coordinated.

Apart from the regime's attempt to build an alternative representation system outside formal democratic political institutions (such as the parliament), there may still be other ways to make sense of the authoritarian regime's (democratic?) communitarian emphasis of *bansanghoe*. During its early years, the Yushin regime was busy collecting cases of exemplary *bansanghoe* and used them to show how dramatically *bansanghoe* had changed communal lives. What is notable is that most of the stories appearing in government publications started with "self-confession" by local community leaders. Here are some typical examples:

> *Jung-dong 4-tong 5-ban* near the Daejeon train station consists of 27 households. Most residents work in commerce and the lodging business. Since most of them came from other provinces during the Korean War, there were lots of problems, such as prostitution and other sex-related businesses. However, with the launch of the *bansanghoe* system, *tong* and *ban* leaders made a resolution to improve the environment of the neighborhood (Ministry of Home Affairs 1978, 137–139).

> (The case of Daegu-si, Suseong-gu 1-ga, 8-tong 1-ban) Since this *ban* is located in a commercial area, residents have been selfish and cliquish without a strong sense of cooperation. However, the endless efforts by the *bangjang* to build a community have [finally] transformed the residents; communal harmony and community consciousness have developed and the regular *bansanghoe* system has now fully settled down (Daegu City 1978, 68).

Most of government collections of exemplary *bansanghoe* began with a typical story about the moral decay of urban life caused by rapid urbanization and commercialization. Anonymity in urban life was regarded as the most serious social malaise to be overcome by communal morality. Such self-criticism was then immediately followed by a detailed account of how *ban* leaders' devotion and monthly gatherings of *bansanghoe* remedied the moral decay that they had been collectively suffering. Without exception, the official stories showed how the residents were moved by moral persuasion and education through *bansanghoe* activities and eventually transformed into newly enlightened citizens. All in all, the so-called exemplary stories were focused on praising the virtue of the newly formed communities that had successfully restored the morality of the residents.[29]

Why should we pay attention to the issue of morality or moral suasion in analyzing the social discourse of *bansanghoe* during the Yushin

29. In contrast, the main goal of the rural Saemaul Movement was to dismantle traditional communal lifestyles and mentalities, which in the government's view posed a critical obstacle to what they called "revolutionary spirit," because they were keeping the people, caught up with local parochialism and traditional Confucian social hierarchy, from developing loyalty to the modern Korean state and nation (Jager 2003, 85–86). This was possible only by replacing traditional rural communities with newly renovated ones (Saemaul Villages), which, lacking any meaningful connection with history and tradition, could be wholly controlled by the state authority (Y. Kim 2009). In summary, the Yushin state wanted community building in both rural and urban areas, in which moral directives were to be monopolized by the state. For a full description of the nature and process of the rural Saemaul Movement, see Han (2004); Moore (1984); and Yu, Choi, and Oh (2001).

period? Sheldon Garon (1997) argued that moral suasion campaigns (*kyoka* 教化) became a fixture in Japanese governance during the twentieth century because, to a significant degree, they enjoyed broad support from the middle classes. Originally introduced to modernize and enlighten Japanese citizens' everyday life by means of Western knowledge on hygiene, economic management, and social welfare programs, the *kyoka* campaign was enthusiastically welcomed in the 1920s by Japanese high-ranking civil servants, who saw themselves as the modern middle-class, marking a clear distance from the early Meiji bureaucrats who had come from the low-ranking samurai class. What the Japanese case tells us is that the complex nature of a developmental state cannot be approached solely in terms of economic efficiency and bureaucratic rationality as casually understood. What seems to be more important is the role that the discourse of morality played in shaping the dominant ideology of the regime and socializing and reproducing the discursive and moral practices associated with it.

As noted, the Yushin regime created an imagined national community in its own unique fashion (more directly and visibly than Benedict Anderson would argue) through the *bansanghoe* system. Given the immense emphasis on communal morality, and also given the fact that *bansanghoe* was never a genuinely bottom-up social entity but was rather always integral to the state apparatus, we can conclude that the successful stories of *bansanghoe* only reveal the truest nature of this seemingly wonderful civic association—it functioned as a social medium in which the authoritarian state could create its image as a moral preacher and guardian. As long as the regime, authoritarian by all means, could successfully monopolize its moral authority by inventing and fostering a quasi-civil society, yet thereby preventing the rise of genuinely democratic self-governing civil associations, the regime would remain solid, enjoying some political legitimacy.

Conclusion

Though imposed by the authoritarian state onto society as an apparatus for controlling the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, upon closer exam-

ination the nature of *bansanghoe* turns out to be much more complex and ambiguous. It was not merely an administrative apparatus, nor could it be reduced to a political monitoring system, despite some compelling evidence that *bansanghoe* occasionally served social repression. However, our investigation shows that the dominating public and social discourse surrounding *bansanghoe* was not so much "repression" but the "enabling" or "production" of a certain kind of community and individuals with a heavy emphasis on moral regeneration. Each neighborhood was encouraged to be organized as a community that could overcome the problem of anonymity created by rapid industrialization and urbanization. By nationally synchronizing the meetings of *bansanghoe*, the state created an imagined yet clearly visible national community and developed an all-encompassing symbolic communication channel with ordinary citizens. In short, *bansanghoe* was a point of full-scale contact between the state and the entire population.

There is a plethora of studies on the overdeveloped Korean state operating on both physical and ideological coercion or on the (ir)rationality of developmentalism. These studies have presented the Yushin regime as either justifiable (given its economic success) or absolutely repressive (particularly from a democratic perspective). However, little attention has been given to the "constitutive" power of the state to organize communities and educate people, especially in the name of moral and civilizational regeneration. A close investigation of the micro-operation of state power by means of grassroots institutions such as *bansanghoe* enables us to see not only the state's institutional or political penetration into society but also the state's ideological and discursive power to construct an imagined community strictly in the service of the authoritarian regime.[30]

Still, we should ask whether this strategy was the only option for the Korean state in managing and shaping society. Why not rely on a cult (as

30. It should be noted that while Benedict Anderson understands the imagined national community as an unpredicted, unplanned and unintentional outcome of modern print-capitalism, the Korean imagined community during the Yushin period was intentionally planned and centrally engineered.

in Syria) or simple brute force?[31] Why opt for a more economically costly and seemingly less efficient strategy despite its capability to do otherwise?

Joel S. Migdal has suggested that "image" and "practices" should be keywords for studying the state (Migdal 2001, 15–20). Whereas a state's practices are comprised of various state actors' policy performances, the image of a state is constantly shaped and reshaped by the state's discursive efforts to separate itself from other non-state, or private, actors and social forces. According to Migdal, the state elevates itself by appearing as the only general representative of the commonality of the people on top of the particularities of social realms. Therefore, the image of a state is fortified by endlessly routinized but variegated practices that may at times contradict and conflict with one another. Grassroots institutions such as *bansanghoe* often offer a field where the image of the state is formed and reinforced, and related social practices are produced and reproduced, thereby shaping the everyday life of the ordinary populace. The study here provides new insight into the detailed "political processes through which the uncertain yet powerful distinction between state and society is produced" (Mitchell 1991, 78).

This does not mean that *bansanghoe* is completely useless in post-democratic Korea and so must be dismantled. Despite its authoritarian roots, it can play a completely different, namely democratic, role in Korea's increasingly democratizing civil society, as a channel for grassroots political participation. Most practically, the *bansanghoe* system, if properly transformed, seems to be able to make an important contribution to new civil movements, such as the residents' movement (*jumin undong*) or the citizen self-government movement (*simin jachi undong*). Unlike previous civil movements led by social celebrities, which focused on general public issues such as the environment or women's rights, new civil movements are based locally and concentrate on communal self-government (Center for

31. Scholars like Lisa Wedeen (1999) and Slavoj Zizek (2001) argue that with empty slogans an authoritarian regime often generates among the citizenry a cynical attitude toward the official ideology, but ironically, according to them, this strategy renders the regime durable.

Civil Self-Governance Policies 2002). Central to these new civil movements is the democratic empowerment of the citizens. They are no longer represented by someone else but represent themselves by directly participating in communal decision-making processes. What we see here is a genuinely bottom-up civic voluntarism that directly serves democratic purposes.

Though it is too early to predict whether or not *bansanghoe* will indeed transform itself to lend support to the democratic residents' movement, political scientists must join normative political theorists to turn it, the widest and largest grassroots institution in Korean society, into a democracy-enhancing social network. It certainly has great potential to create the "networks of civic engagement" that are "an essential form of social capital." As Robert Putnam puts it, "the denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit" (Putnam 1993, 173).[32]

Though *bansanghoe* is still occasionally criticized for its structural connection with the local administration, there is no insurmountable obstacle to turning it into a democratic civic network. Nor does it have to be completely severed from local administration to be qualified as a pure civic organization. According to a recent study on grassroots organizations in the Dominican Republic, in order to guarantee the most constructive results, grassroots organizations do not have to be totally independent of the state, though NGOs must. Rather, for "autonomous cooperation," grassroots organizations should keep a balanced engagement with both independent civil NGOs and state organizations (Choup 2001). Thus understood, *bansanghoe* is something to be democratically re-appropriated, rather than be seen as a relic from authoritarianism that must be demolished.

32. Also see Rueschemeyer (1988). For a critical reminder of the democratic importance of neighborhoods from a Tocquevillian perspective, see Cahoone (2002).

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