

Rewriting Rebellion and Mapping Memory in South Korea: The (Re)presentation of the 1980 Kwangju Uprising Through Mangwol- dong Cemetery

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1. Introduction

Climbing onto a local bus in downtown Kwangju City, the capital of South Cholia province, South Korea¹ (see Map on p. 3 for the location of South Cholia province), I ask the driver to let me off at Mangwol-dong, the Kwangju Uprising cemetery. As I sit down I notice an old man, one of only two other passengers, who nods in my direction and fleetingly smiles before turning back towards the window to watch as the urban sprawl of Kwangju turns slowly into the rural brown of South Cholla province in late November. After 20 minutes or so, towering in the distance appears a huge concrete memorial and, as we crawl further along the newly surfaced road, a large car park converging on a new but traditionally designed gate with the impressively embossed inscription ‘Democracy Gate’ [*Minchuui Mun*].

As we near what appears to be the stop for the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery [*Sae Mangwol-dong Myochi*], I look expectantly at the driver in his rear- vision mirror. Suddenly the old man calls from behind me to the driver in thick regional dialect not to let me off here. As I turn back and give him a questioning glance he is already chiding the driver for not thinking to take me two stops further up the road, where the entrance to the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery [*Ku Mangwol-dong Myochi*] is to be found. The driver, with growing irritation, shouts back that I (as someone not from the region) would find little of interest in the old cemetery, which, after all, doesn’t even contain the bodies of the victims anymore and is embarrassingly dilapidated. The old man retorts that everybody should see the “real”, that is original, cemetery. He looks towards me again with a nod that is, I suppose, intended to reassure me that I am being taken to the correct cemetery. In the end the bus driver concedes and I am taken about two kilometres further down the road where the old man taps my shoulder and says “here, here”, and, pointing towards the entrance to the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery prompts, “You go this way first, okay?”.

This unexpectedly heated exchange between the old man and the bus driver would not have occurred if I had been visiting the cemetery five years ago. Up until 1994 there was only one Mangwol-dong Cemetery - what is now known as the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery. Since the completion of a New Mangwol- dong Cemetery in 1997 as part of a process of state-sponsored memorialisation of the Kwangju Uprising, the old cemetery, known officially as the ‘May 18 Movement Cemetery’, has become increasingly obscured and dwarfed by the elaborate concrete testaments

to the Uprising in the grounds of the new cemetery, officially titled the '5. 18 Memorial Cemetery'. What is more, the exchange I witnessed on the bus was not an uncommon phenomenon, but rather one instance in a seemingly endless stream of discrepant views and diverging meanings of the Kwangju Uprising and its memorialisation through sites of memory like the two Mangwol-dong cemeteries.

Thus, although 19 years have passed since the Kwangju Uprising of 18 May 1980,² the event remains a deeply contested one in the modern history of South Korea.³ Since the mid-1990s, a new element in the ongoing contestation over the Uprising has emerged as people within Kwangju and South Cholla begin to articulate discrepant readings of the event's meaning and significance. This increasing divergence in interpretations of the event emerging from both within and outside the province has been triggered in part by the changing political climate within South Korea. This climate has fostered increasingly open debate on public issues, and dissent (at least in some spaces) is no longer as severely condemned as it was under the authoritarian regimes of the past three decades.⁴

Nonetheless, the increasing complexity in Cholla peoples' views about the Uprising may perhaps be more accurately explained as a response to the state-sponsored memorialisation of the event, which is indeed itself a reflection of the growing democratisation of the country, as the government of Kim Young Sam (1993-1997) attempted to align itself with, rather than distance itself from, democratic and populist impulses in civil society.

This process of state-sponsored memorialisation and the officially designated memorial sites, or sites of memory, that are the tangible products of this shifting government identity have generated intense and passionate debate amongst citizens of Kwangju and South Cholla province. Consequently, the memorialisation process has been marred by divisions and conflicts over the meaning of the event and the way it is to be remembered. Seen another way, the Kwangju Uprising cemetery, Mangwol-dong, along with other sites that figured in the Kwangju Uprising, have recently become inserted into this 'politics of memory', generating enormous debate about the event within the region, of which the exchange between the old man and the bus driver is but one instance in an emerging narrative of the post-Uprising politics of memory.

This divergence in the meaning of the Uprising has come to be concretised in the textual markers of the (two) Mangwol-dong cemetery(ies) and is galvanised into three loosely cogent interpretations: the state-sanctioned (official), outside (non-Cholla) versions; the popular (unofficial), endogenous (Cholla) interpretations put forward by social movements and civil groups; and the meaning attached to the event by the victims and victims' families. The interpretations of the Uprising put forward by social movements and civil groups in Kwangju and South Cholla are proving the most contentious, as these groups assert claims for representational space in the new cemetery that is, at present, effectively denied them. The memorialisation of Mangwol-dong Cemetery has thus both triggered this contention and provided the main arena through which these different meanings are debated.

This paper looks at the process by which the Kwangju Uprising has become reinterpreted and contested in the late 1990s through a number of memorial sites. Mangwol-dong cemetery(ies), where the victims of the Uprising are buried, is the focus of the discussion since it is the only site where the memorialisation process has been completed and, not incidentally, the site which triggers the most impassioned debate amongst citizens in the region. Sites of memory, or memorial sites, including cemeteries, monuments, memorials, and other places for the public consumption of

history and memory, have recently been recognised as intensely political subjects, since “... the very substance (of a memorial) is a political construction of what is remembered - different for many groups in society”.⁵ Sites of memory, in short, convey political messages - consciously or subconsciously, intended or unintended - which, as Ritcher remarks, have been only very rarely studied. Focusing on Auschwitz, Charlesworth encounters such instances of conflict and contestation through his exploration of the ways Auschwitz figures as a site of commemoration of Nazi terror. Specifically, Charlesworth discusses the memorialisation of the Holocaust as a product of the needs of state power and religious forces. As he explains, this “... very act of memorialisation, of capturing memory so that we do not forget, can by its exclusivity push aside the claims of others for their own collective rights and identities”.⁶

Drawing on Nora,⁷ my argument throughout this paper rests on the conviction that memory and sites of memory, or symbolic spaces, are profoundly political. Further, this politics emerges largely from questions about who controls the representation and historical reading of events through sites of memory, or, in short, who authors these profoundly symbolic geographical texts. More broadly, the paper offers a productive engagement with the emerging interface between geography and postcolonialism, most comprehensively put forward by Jacobs,⁸ in which she acknowledges the need to transcend the metaphorical use of spatialised language in postcolonialism and “return it to ‘real’ geographies”.⁹ This paper then attends to the ‘real’ geographies of struggles over spaces of identity and sites of memory.

I start by providing a brief background to the Kwangju Uprising in the broader context of South Korea’s postcolonial politics. Indeed, whilst the Kwangju Uprising is the subject of layer upon layer of interpretation, there are nonetheless certain indisputable occurrences that led to and defined the event. The discussion of uprising memorialisation through the Mangwol-dong cemeteries continues by briefly considering the various, competing interpretations of these events that marked the Uprising. I then discuss the creation of the Kwangju Uprising memorialisation industry under the aegis of the democratically elected Kim Young Sam government (1993-1997). This is followed by a brief outline of the main contours of South Korea’s *minjung* movement, which helps us to understand why the social movement and civil society groups in the region feel so uneasy about the construction of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery. Finally, I explore the ways the two Mangwol-dong cemeteries figure as important sites through which these competing interpretations of the Uprising are brought to the fore, drawing on some of the textual markers in the cemeteries to illustrate the ways in which the South Korean state has managed to inscribe itself onto the terrain of the cemetery and thus insert itself into Kwangju Uprising historicisation. In the process, the Mangwol-dong Cemetery and other sanctified memorial sites, like the Uprising itself have become contested spaces.

2. The Kwangju Uprising and Democracy Denied

The Kwangju Democratic Uprising took place between 18 and 27 May 1980 (and is often referred to in Korean by the date on which it began, 5. 18, or *o-il- pal*). Whilst the meaning of the Uprising has become contested by various groups, the circumstances that led to the Uprising, which arose out of South Korea’s postcolonial political history, and the ‘events’ that marked the Uprising, are becoming clearer.¹⁰

The Uprising occurred at an important juncture in Korea's postcolonial political history. This juncture was marked by the sudden break from authoritarian rule that resulted from President Park Chung Hee's assassination on 26 October 1979. Park's death was the catalyst for a nationwide civil movement for the restoration of democracy in Korea. However, rather than bringing about democracy, the civil movement instead met with heightened repression, culminating in the imposition of martial law on 17 May 1980.

To appreciate the ramifications of the denial of democracy at this historic point in South Korea's modern history, one must delve further back into the postcolonial political landscape of the country, beginning with the point of inception of the Park Chung Hee military dictatorship. On 16 May 1961, a military coup in which Park Chung Hee played a central role took place. The military junta that led the coup imposed Emergency Martial Law throughout Korea, forced the resignation of the previous Chang Myon civilian government, and seized legislative, judicial and executive powers. This began a 19-year period in which Park Chung Hee ruled Korea in what has been variously characterised as a bureaucratic-authoritarian, relatively autonomous or repressive-developmental state.

Whilst the title ascribed to the South Korean state is useful for characterising the economic prowess of the Park Chung Hee military government, the blatantly undemocratic nature of the regime was its other, less celebrated feature. In fact, the Park administration also acted to prohibit public gatherings and demonstrations, dissolved the National Assembly (as well as the regional assemblies), banned all social and political organisations that were not state sponsored, directly controlled and censored the media, and brought existing politicians under surveillance, which included a restriction of their political activities.¹¹ All these measures acted to reinforce the political power of the Park regime through simultaneously denying the mobilisation and expression of organised political opposition.

These mechanisms for containing and repressing all political opposition continued to be invoked by Park throughout his term as President. Park continually revised the nation's Constitution to allow himself to run in four consecutive Presidential elections. In 1971, he revised the Constitution to allow himself to run for a third Presidential term and, in 1972, he again revised the Constitution to hold Presidential elections in a special assembly that he himself controlled. Coupled with these legislative amendments were numerous extra-legal (repressive) mechanisms to contain popular/public dissent. As Lee notes, "Park side-stepped the legislative process and ruled through military 'Emergency Measures' that made everyone subject to arbitrary arrest, torture, and imprisonment on suspicion of subversive activity".¹² These emergency measures were invariably justified in terms of national security concerns, particularly the supposed threat of North Korea.

In 1974, at the height of the authoritarian period, Park began targeting specific 'subversive' groups that, he claimed, were a threat to national security. He singled out for dissolution the National League for Democratic Youth and Students (NLDYS) [*Chonguk minchu ch'onnyon haksaeeng chongyonmaeng – minch'ong hangnyon* for short]. The NLDYS became an easy target because its democratic orientation embraced principles of social justice and egalitarianism. The People's Revolutionary Party (NRP) was also targeted by the Park government, and accused of supporting the NLDYS in an effort to overthrow the Korean government. Members of the People's Revolutionary Party were arrested, tortured and even executed.

In late 1979, after the declaration of the Yushin regime, the government tightened its grip on democratic protests throughout the nation. It began by declaring martial

law in Masan and Pusan, where students, labourers and citizens were engaged in intense democratic protests. On 26 October 1979, amidst this dissent against authoritarianism, President Park Chung Hee was assassinated by his chief of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), Kim Chae-gyu. His death only acted to intensify the popular protests for democracy, to which calls for the revision of the constitution and direct presidential elections (rather than elections by the Yushin agency, the National Conference for Unification [*T'ongil chuch'e kungmin hoeui*] instituted by Park) were now added. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister, Choe Kyu-ha, chose to reject these popular demands and instead was elected President by the Yuchin agency. He promised to pursue constitutional reform later. Immediately following this election, on 12 December 1979, General Chun Doo-hwan, head of the Army Security Command [*Kukkun poan saryong kwan*], instigated a military coup and seized control of the government.

The political situation in Korea became intolerable to the general public and acted as a further catalyst to civilian protests. In the first five months of 1980, and particularly the months of March, April and May, democratic protests spread from university campuses to the general public. Protesters demanded the immediate resignation of de-facto President Chun Doo-hwan and Prime Minister Sin Hyon-hwak for obstructing constitutional reform. To these demands were added more general calls for the end of martial law and restoration of democracy and freedom of speech and association. These events culminated in an intense period of repression-resistance that was a precursor to the Uprising. According to Lee,

On the evening of 17 May 1980, armed forces from the Army Capital Garrison [*Sugyong Sa*] and military police [*Sugyongsa byongdan*] were stationed outside the Central Government Headquarters building [*Chungangch'ong*] where an extraordinary meeting was in session to approve a decision by Chun Doo-hwan and commanders of the army, navy, and air force to extend martial law nation-wide. At 1.45 am on May 18, soldiers from Regiment 101 of the 33rd Corps of the Capital Army Corps [*Sudo kunsayeha 33 sadan 101 yondae*] advanced on the National Assembly building with armoured tanks. Forty-five minutes later, Army Headquarters dispatched 25,000 martial law troops to the National Assembly and onto college campuses around the nation.¹³

Chun Doo-hwan assumed overall command of martial law troops and mobilised national military forces, under the leadership of the Army Security Command [*Poansa*], on the pretext of a need for “national defence”. The city of Kwangju was subject to particularly severe and violent repression by the military after martial law was imposed. The denial of democracy and the heightening authoritarianism that accompanied the coming to power of Chun Doo Hwan to replace Park prompted nationwide protests, which, because of Cholla's historical legacy of dissent and radicalism, were most intense in that region.¹⁴

In Kwangju, about 200 students demonstrated at the gates of Chonnam University demanding the rescinding of martial law and the order to close campuses. The 33rd battalion of the Seventh Air Transport Brigade arrested 43 of them. On 18 May martial law troops reinforced by ‘Black Beret’ paratroopers surrounded student demonstrators who were demanding an end to Chun's imposition of martial law, and began indiscriminately to bayonet them, killing several dozen. The 63rd battalion of the Eleventh Brigade of the Korean Special Forces opened fire near Kwangju High

School on 19 May, injuring a high school student, and it was through this incident that the general public in Kwangju joined the students in protesting against the brutality demonstrated by the Korean Special Forces.

Thus, the Uprising began on 18 May and ended on 27 May when, after over a week of intense fighting in which citizens took control of Kwangju, military forces finally re-took the city.¹⁵

As with numerous other aspects of the Uprising, there is some dispute over the actual number of victims the Uprising claimed. Officially, according to the Korean government, 190 people were killed in the Uprising. However, unofficially, upwards of 2000 people were reported as dead. This figure is derived from Kwangju's monthly death statistics, which totalled 2600 for the month of May 1980, which is 2300 deaths more than the monthly average at the time.¹⁶ The May 18 History Compilation Committee, based in Kwangju, also contests the official numbers. "The victims of the martial law force's brutality amounted to 3,421 all told: 154 killed, 47 missing, 2,711 wounded, and 509 placed under arrest. Actually, the number of people illegally taken into custody during the search period was more than 3000 alone, and nobody knows how many people were mercilessly arrested while they were demonstrating against martial law".¹⁷ This dispute over the number of victims the Uprising claimed is but one of the numerous arenas through which the Uprising continues to be contested. Immediately after the Uprising, however, 137 victims were taken in handcarts and garbage trucks to be buried in the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery by friends and family.¹⁸

Several different accounts of the Uprising have appeared since the event, authored by numerous agencies with different interests. These can be divided broadly into two competing versions: the official (outside Kwangju/ Cholla, sanctioned), and the unofficial (within Kwangju/ Cholla, unsanctioned). Immediately after the Kwangju Uprising the Korean government labelled the event as "the Kwangju affair" "a riot" or "a rebellion backed by some seditious power scheming to overthrow the government".¹⁹ The severe repression of the Uprising was justified under the official interpretation of the event as a "communist backed plot". Thus, by invoking broader national security imperatives, the government conferred upon itself a degree of legitimacy in its decision to repress the Uprising severely. Indeed, there are many Koreans who, even today, consider that the measures the state took to repress the Kwangju Uprising were completely justified since, at that time, the threat of invasion from North Korea was supposedly palpable.

For almost 20 years following the Uprising, the voices of Kwangju/ South Cholla citizens remained silent in discussions about the event. This is largely because versions of the event emerging from within the region were unsanctioned, departing enormously from those put forward by the various governments of the day. In addition, poems, narratives and biographies of the event to emerge from within Cholla region were not considered legitimate sources of information, and many were declared contraband. With the transition to a democratic polity in the early 1990s, however, Kwangju/South Cholla citizens were able, to some extent, to recover their voices in the narration of the Uprising. Indeed, the volume of material published on the Uprising in the post-1988 period is enormous.²⁰ This reclamation has helped to extend understandings of the Uprising - not only in the definition of the event itself, but also in what constitutes legitimate and acceptable sources of information.

Despite the multiplicity of experiences and fragmented narratives of Kwangju/South Cholla citizens about the Uprising, which are impossible to recount adequately here, it is fair to say that in the past a broad consensus existed amongst the

people of the city and region as to the meaning and significance of the Uprising. In essence, Kwangju/South Cholla people came to share the view that the Uprising was the cornerstone and founding event leading to the realisation of democracy in Korea. The May 18 History Compilation Committee encapsulates this position.²¹

The Kwangju Uprising should not be considered the painful, frustrated chapter of an age, but should be placed in the modern history of this country as the starting point of democratisation. The Kwangju Democratic Uprising should go down in national history and national consciousness as an inspiring stand for human freedom and dignity.

With the inception of the Kim Young Sam government in 1993, there thus appeared a growing degree of convergence between state and endogenous meanings and interpretations of the Uprising as the major event that sparked the transition to democracy in Korea. Thus, whilst the official and unofficial versions existed at almost opposite ends of the spectrum in the immediate post-Uprising period, more recently, with the installation of civilian governments in the 1990s, these two different interpretations have moved more closely into line. In short, the passage of time has produced a degree of alignment in historic interpretations and a level of consensus about the Uprising that did not previously exist. This consensus has in large part derived from the re-interpretation of events by the Korean government (official versions) which fell increasingly more into line with the understanding of the Uprising held by the citizens of Kwangju/ South Cholla themselves. The May 18 History Compilation Committee confirmed this increasing level of satisfaction with the government's position on the Uprising with the following statement:²²

In 1993 on May 13, with the start of the civilian government, President Kim Young Sam made clear his position on the Kwangju Democratic Uprising in his speech, '... the bloodshed of Kwangju in May 1980 has become the cornerstone of the country's democracy. Its victims dedicated their lives to democracy ... this government stands today in line with the Kwangju Democratisation Movement'. In this announcement, he did justice to the Kwangju Democratic Uprising.

In seeking to rectify the wrongs committed against the people of Kwangju/ South Cholla, Kim Young Sam's administration thus also gained a certain degree of approval of the people of the region. It appeared that the rightful role of the Uprising in South Korea's postcolonial political history was finally being recognised through official government sanction.²³

3. The 'Memorial Industry' and the Making of 5.18 Memorial Sites

The Seventh Republic of Kim Young Sam instituted three symbolic gestures, which together constitute the Korean government's official apology to the citizens of Kwangju/South Cholla for the Uprising, and the rectification of the Uprising's meaning and significance as a national movement heralding the realisation of democracy in Korea. These three gestures include the designation of a National Commemoration Day on 18 May (including a Memorial Ceremony) beginning in 1997, the establishment of a Kwangju Uprising Special Law (which specifically

allowed for the exoneration of some Kwangju Uprising leaders), and the (re)construction of a number of important sites that figured in the Uprising as memorials. Together, these three gestures comprise what many people in Kwangju/South Cholla are calling the "*ginyom saop*", or "memorial industry". In addition, the 5.18 Foundation [*5.18 Kinyom Jaedan*] was formed in 1994 and many of the May Movement organisations that had been struggling to realise compensation claims and achieve official recognition and apology for the Uprising merged together in 1998 to join the Foundation.

The plans for memorialisation of the Kwangju Uprising, including the building of the new Mangwol-dong Cemetery, were laid out in two documents, one pertaining to Kwangju (1995), and one to South Cholla province (1996), including the towns/counties of Naju, Hamp'yong, Ch'angsong, Muan, Yongam, Kangjin, Haenam and Mokp'o.²⁴ The documents were published by the Regional Development Institute of Chonnam National University [*Chiyok Gaepal Yonguso*], and were titled *5.18 Ginyom Saop Chonghap Kyehuik* [*The Memorialisation of the Kwangju Uprising*]. The three major sites selected for memorialisation are Mangwol-dong Cemetery, which became designated as a National Cemetery in 1994;²⁵ Toch`ung (the Provincial Hall, or South Cholla Provincial Capital Building) which was the site of the last stand of the Kwangju Citizens Army on May 27, before the city was forcibly retaken by the Korean Army; and Sangmudae, the Martial Law Branch Quarters for North and South Cholla provinces. The guardhouse at Sangmudae was used for the detention, beating and torture of those citizens arrested during the course of the Uprising, while the Courtroom served as a venue for military trials of members of the Kwangju Citizens Army.²⁶ In the buildings attached to Sangmudae, including the Military Police Base, arrestees were tortured whilst being questioned. Toch`ung was the "central symbolic location" of the Uprising and the site of what became the "briefing room" of the citizens' resistance leadership and headquarters of the civilian army.

Unlike the other two sites, Mangwol-dong has, through its relocation, already been reconstructed within the new context of official reinterpretation of the Uprising.²⁷ To this end the project of relocating Mangwol-dong began in 1994, and was completed in 1997. This involved exhuming the bodies of the victims, and the construction of a new cemetery in which the bodies were reburied. Thus, in 1994 the graves of the victims of the Uprising, numbering 137 altogether, were shifted from the original site of their burial in the original, that is Old, Mangwol-dong Cemetery, to a new location, 'New' Mangwol-dong Cemetery, just down the road some 2 kilometres away.

In addition to the grave sites themselves, New Mangwol-dong Cemetery contains several memorials that together work towards the reconstitution of the Uprising through collective representations in the cemetery. The memorials contained there work to establish an overarching theme of democracy-memory-history, including Democracy Gate [*Minjuui Moon*], Democracy Square [*Minjuui KwangJang*], Remembrance Gate [*Ch'unyom Moon*], Memorial Square [*Ch'ambae KwangJang*], The May 18 Democratisation Movement Memorial Tower [*5.18 Minjung HangJaeng Chumotapl*], the Cemetery, Photographic Memorial House [*Yboyong Bong Anso*], History Gate [*Yoksau Moon*], History Place [*Yoksa Konggan*], The Seven Bas-Relief Sculptures Site [*Puchopik 7 kaemadang*], Memorial Pavilion [*Soongmoroo*] and the Garden for Democracy [*Minju Ttongsan*]. In addition, there are numerous other 18 May historical sites, which have been laid out in the official Kwangju city government's guide to the important sites of the Uprising.²⁸

The decision to relocate Mangwol-dong Cemetery was thus not one taken by the residents of Kwangju, or more specifically, by the families of the victims of the Kwangju Uprising themselves, even though some memorial groups in Kwangju/South Cholla were consulted in the process.²⁹ Rather, the relocation of Mangwol-dong was the outcome of President Kim Young Sam's desire to "heal the wounds of the Uprising" and the cleavage that it drove between the people of the southwestern Cholla region and the rest of Korea. The act of relocation was thus linked to the Kim Young Sam administration's more general political objective of overcoming regionalism in Korea, which Kim himself identified as one of the most divisive and destructive socio-political factors retarding the development of the nation. Hence, the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery is at once the embodiment of the Korean government's official apology for the suffering it caused the people of Kwangju, an appeal to the people of Cholla to place national unity before regional separatism and, perhaps most importantly, an attempt by the Kim administration to align itself with populist/democratic impulses in the country.

The government's attempts to be identified with a broad-based democratic alliance in Korea is blatantly articulated in several of the textual markers of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery itself. In the Photo Exhibition Hall, for example, a government-authored narrative of the Uprising appears written on seven large boards (in both Korean and English). These appear at various points as one wanders through the Hall perusing the photographs of riot police and paratroopers beating citizens, makeshift coffins draped with Korean flags containing the corpses of protesters, and screaming children and horrifically disfigured bodies.³⁰ The first board one encounters headed, 'Failed Dream of Democratisation', thus reads,

The massacre was a brutal, premeditated military crackdown, the climax of a coup by forces of the so-called new military power ... On May 17... intense discussions at the Martial Law Enforcement Headquarters took place. It was decided to extend the emergency martial law over the entire country. As the Martial Law Decree No. 10 was put into effect, the National Assembly was dismissed, political actions were prohibited, dissident politicians were brought into custody, and universities were closed. Units of paratroopers were dispatched to large cities and major universities all over the country. In this way, in the Spring of 1980, the young shoots of democratisation were trampled.

The description of the Uprising as "a massacre" and "brutal", and the recognition of Chun Doo Hwan's accession to power in Korea as "a coup" all represent a startling departure from previous official narratives of the Uprising. Similarly, the second board, 'Operation: "Brilliant Leave"', describes the killing of citizens as "murder", and alludes to the fallacy of the old name given to the uprising as "the Kwangju Incident", as well as refuting the official claim by previous governments that the suppression of the Uprising was "necessary for political and economic stability":

The entire series of murders by the Martial Law forces was called the 'Kwangju Incident' for 18 years. Politicians and military men denounced the May 18 Democratic Uprising and claimed its suppression was necessary for political and economic stability.

Finally, on the fifth board labelled, 'Kwangju - A Community Breaks the Bonds of Death, appears an excerpt from a speech made during the third pro-democracy Pan-

National rally held on 25 May 1980, just before the tragic end to the Uprising. This also signifies an important change in the government's view of whose testimony and interpretation of events are considered as legitimate sources of information, as well as condoning the citizen's resistance in the face of harsh police and military aggression:

“Why did we have to arm ourselves? The answer was very simple. We couldn't stand the cruel brutality. That was why we armed ourselves. Alas! That was an unspeakable tragedy that nobody expected to happen. Our brothers and sisters were stabbed with bayonets. They were run over and killed. Even the breasts of our younger sisters were cut out. We couldn't stand the brutality any more. We armed ourselves to protect our city and our family. Who were the rioters, the Special Forces, or the civilian army acting in self-defence? The civilian army will protect our security, at any cost. And if the negotiation progresses favourably, the citizens army is willing to disarm immediately.”

The scripting of narratives like these in the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery is one means by which the government of Kim Young Sam attempted to situate itself firmly within the trope of democratic politics, promote itself as the first truly democratic government in the hard-fought struggle for political liberalisation in Korea, and simultaneously distance itself from the authoritarian regimes of the previous three decades. The Kwangju Uprising was invoked extensively by the Kim government in this regard.

Thus, the insertion of state resources into the process of Kwangju Uprising memorialisation signified a change in the official (government) stance towards the event. Under previous Republics, the Uprising had been defined as a rebellion and a communist-inspired insurgency; memorial activities and popular commemoration of the event were illegal; and literature, photographs and other unofficial documentation of the event were contraband. Under the Kim government, however, the Uprising was re-named the Kwangju Democratic Uprising, (some) commemorative activities became officially condoned, and public access to and consumption of unofficial historical sources of the Uprising grew as the threat of arrest and reprimand waned. Although on the one hand these gestures proved conducive to healing the wounds of the Uprising in the eyes of some people in South Cholla, on the other hand they went some way towards both undermining and subverting the significance of the Uprising in ongoing democratic/populist struggles in Korea.

In this sense the official memorialisation of the Uprising unleashed a profound paradox in which the very act of official recognition failed to accommodate these populist claims. This emerging tension can only be understood through an appreciation of populist conceptions (and purposes) of historical memory in Korea. We turn now briefly to examine this populist historiography.

4. Populist Historiography and the Meaning of Kwangju Uprising

In the post-colonial period in South Korea, a cultural and political movement has emerged which is referred to in Korean language simply as the *minjung undong*, or populist movement, embracing various actors - both individuals and organisations - including in South Cholla, for example, social movement groups such as the Kwangju Future Society, Kwangju Citizens Solidarity and YMCA.³¹ Elsewhere I have suggested that *minjung* dissent is enacted through certain quotidian practices that

engage with Korean history and popular culture.³² I wish here to outline briefly the main contours of *minjung* engagements with history, which helps illuminate the reasons why social movements and civil society groups in South Cholla, such as the ones mentioned above, are so strongly incensed by the construction of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery.

From the Tonghak [Eastern Learning] Rebellion of 1894, a peasant-led popular uprising, down to the Kwangju Uprising, the history of the Korean nation has been marked by violent confrontations between the state and forces representing a repressed and marginalised public. A large element in the practices of *minjung* dissent is thus devoted to the refashioning of these narratives of historical struggle in a way that posits the *minjung* as the central agent of historical change and progress. Official historical narratives on liberation, partition and economic modernity are subject to radical revision in which *minjung* forces appear as the central agents in history. Moreover, historical episodes of dissent and populist protest are assigned a currency in later struggles such that dissident figures contain and express this connectedness to (and through) history, so legitimising their central role in present struggles.

Much of this refashioning of history has been galvanised as a literary project resulting in a distinct genre of literature known as *minjung munhak* [populist literature]. In *minjung* literature, the Tonghak Movement and Rebellion in particular appear as major locators of *minjung* dissent. The Tonghak Rebellion was initiated by relations of domination, class division, and subsequent exploitation and inequality that became entrenched in Korean society in the late nineteenth century.³³ In this literary politics, *minjung* narratives and commentaries posit populist forces as playing a central role in shaping Korea's historical trajectory. This analogous and genealogical relation to the past enables the *minjung* to create what Abelmann (1995) describes as "lineages of dissent", or what Jager calls "redemptive histories"(1996).³⁴ Thus, "engaging in a literary politics that creates alternative imaginings of the past confers a sense of agency to the *minjung* that legitimises and motivates protest in the present moment of (post)coloniality. Historic protests, personages, deeds *and sites* figure as central tropes that animate and motivate *minjung* dissent".³⁵

The Kwangju Uprising, like the Tonghak Rebellion, is one of the central events invoked in this *minjung* historiography, and the old Mangwol-dong Cemetery is (was?) one of the central sites where *minjung* narratives have become manifest geographically. The literary engagement with the Uprising has been prolific.³⁶ In poetic endeavours by *minjung* writers, Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery, Toch'ung and Kumnam-ro are mentioned as important sites of popular struggle. Two of Choi Ha Lim's poems devoted to the Kwangju Uprising, 'The Sixth Republic' and 'Today, We Too', include specific references to Mangwol-dong Cemetery. In 'Today, We Too', Mangwol-dong is located at the very of South Cholla, referred to in the poems as the "light province".³⁷

We were the hope and we were the scream
We were warriors and we were apostles
We were blood and we were corpses
We were a light province and a light province's Mangwol-dong and
We were a platanus and the bricks of Kumnam-ro, where the leave of the platanus
flourish/grow

When darkness visits after sunset, over a barricade one, two
gather

Bloody red, red lips lips kiss, joy
of kisses

The dream of the people who couldn't help dying revives
We were a large ground and a chorus Kwangju.

In short, in the eyes of some of the radical civil movement groups and non-governmental organisations in Kwangju and South Cholla, the Uprising is to be defined within the trope of the *ongoing* struggle for democracy, social justice and human rights in Korea. At a broader level these groups wish to represent Kwangju as the centre for democracy in the Asia-Pacific region and one of the central sites/cities for democratic struggle in the world.³⁸ The currency of the Kwangju Uprising is realised through the ongoing May Movement [*0-wol Undong*], which has continued each year since the 1980 Uprising.³⁹ As one commentator heavily involved in the May Movement in Kwangju suggests, “... the May Movement is the engine for democratic change of the political regimes in Korea and has been influential for the human rights movement in other Asian nations ... The significance of Kwangju grows more, not less, every day’.⁴⁰ Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery is thus promoted as the central symbolic location for democratic struggle in Korea.

Apart from Old Mangwol-dong's literary construction as a symbolic place for democratic struggle, the cemetery also acts as site for activist politics. On 18 May every year, for example, as part of the commemorative activities for the Uprising, people march to the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery and have, until recently, met with a hostile reception from military police who surrounded the cemetery. Until 1988 when (some) commemoration activities were allowed and the memorialisation process achieved ‘semi-legal’ status, “... commemoration ceremonies ... were in and of themselves, a struggle as well’.⁴¹

Hence visitors to the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery were and are mainly people involved in the pro-democracy, human rights and social justice movements, both in Korea and internationally. The ‘Campaign for the Memorial Cairn to the Spirit of the Kwangju Uprising’, constructed near the entrance of the Old Mangwol-dong by the Kwangju Citizens Solidarity, is one means by which an activist inscription of the Uprising is invoked through place. The sign in front of the Memorial Cairn (emphasis added) thus reads:

When May comes with the bitter cry of cuckoos, countless pilgrims visit Mangwol-dong, an emblem of democracy. These people visit the graveyard to console and honour the holy spirits that passed away during the May 18 1980 cry for freedom, democracy, and peace. *To placate the spirits of the innocent victims and to perpetuate the spirit of the movement, we build small towers by piling up the stones that pilgrims bring to Mangwol-dong from all over the country.*

Offering a stone, we pray for the souls of the departed who sacrificed themselves for democracy in our country. Adding a stone to a tower, we pray for the day when true democracy will end the victims' cycle of severe demonstrations and tear gas. Piling hundreds and thousands of stones together, we assure that we will never overlook any machinations that would make the holy deaths of the martyrs fruitless ...

The currency of the Uprising contained in the spirit of the May Movement is also expressed in a second metal sign visible at the entrance of the Old Mangwol-dong, introducing the cemetery. Part of this sign reads,

The spirit of the May 18th Democratic Movement dwells in this cemetery; the spirits of those who died make it sacred. Those who survived, and who now enjoy the benefits of democracy, can come to pray and pay their respects to those who sacrificed.

Thus, the role of the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery is clearly expressed as a place where the spirit of the movement is to be felt, experienced and renewed. The Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery, in sum, is much more than a place for memory and mourning; it is also a place for social activism and democratic struggle.

The completion of New Mangwol-dong Cemetery thus prompted intensely critical and passionately scathing remarks, especially when viewed in comparison to the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery. According to Choi Hyup of Chonnam National University in Kwangju, the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery “has no meaning for us.”⁴² These sentiments were echoed by Park Jae-Man, a social activist working for the Kwangju Citizens Solidarity, who, contrasting his feelings when visiting the old and new Mangwol-dong cemeteries, made the comment that, “I feel nothing when I’m in the new cemetery”, but “here [in Old Mangwol-dong] I can reflect on the meaning of the Uprising and it gives me hope for our future. I feel sad, but mostly I feel like I belong to this place”.⁴³ Bell refers to this sense of being in and creating meaning from a place as “the language of ghosts”, which gives us “a way to speak generally about the specificity and meaning of a place”.⁴⁴ Thus, for Bell, “... the ghosts of place are always presences and as such appear to us as spirits of temporal transcendence, of connection between the past and the future”.⁴⁵ “ This connection is at the core of *minjung* practices of resistance and helps keep places alive in the face of their resignation to historical memory by statist forces.

5. Mangwol-dong Cemetery(ies) and the Politics of Memorial Sites

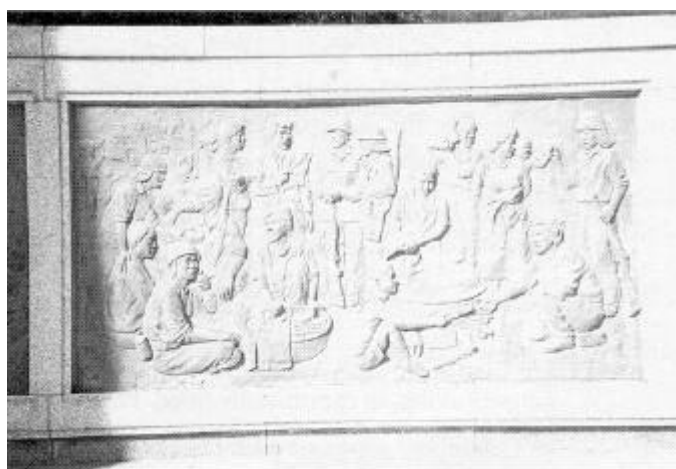
In the winter of 1993, a few months after the official memorialisation plans for the Uprising were publicly announced, a new, radical NGO, calling itself Kwangju Citizens’ Solidarity (KCS), was formed. Whilst this NGO currently focuses its activities on human rights issues in Asia [*tonga minjujuui*]⁴⁶ it was originally set up by 13 citizens’ groups in Kwangju/South Cholla as a focal point for opposition to the establishment of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery.

According to one researcher from KCS, when the government made the memorialisation plans there was a lack of public input into the process and no space for public discussion was created. The undemocratic nature of the process prompted the organisations that originally formed KCS to meet and develop an alternative plan for the memorialisation of the Uprising.⁴⁷ In the lengthy discussions regarding the memorialisation process that took place amongst these organisations in early 1994, they agreed that the most important goal of memorialisation should be to preserve the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery as the symbol of democratic struggle in Korea. Subsequently they opposed the construction of New Mangwol-dong and its hegemonic rendering of the Uprising as primarily an event to be firmly placed in Korea’s postcolonial history in official nationalist-statist discourse.

How has the rendering of the Uprising in the two Mangwol-dong cemeteries through memorial sites and signs engendered such intense conflicts and debates over the activism versus historicism of the Uprising? Which specific memorials embody (and exclude) these specific meanings about the Uprising? Which sites are open to particular scrutiny, and why? The answers to these questions, in the first instance, can be drawn from the politics of *minjung* dissent which, as we have seen above, invokes historical continuity of populist struggles, personages and places as a means of igniting current dissident political practices and democratic/human rights struggles in Korea. In short, the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery effectively emasculates activist *minjung* historiography, promoting instead a reading of the Uprising, which firmly contains the event in the shackles of government-sanctioned Korean national history.

The textual marker contained in the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery that most blatantly historicises the Uprising is an outdoor sculpture park depicting ‘A History of Struggle in Bas-Relief’. This history of struggle is represented through seven bas-relief sculptures, each representing a particular ‘patriotic’ or ‘democratic’ struggle in Korea’s history. The sculptures are represented in chronological order, beginning with what is referred to as the ‘Patriotic Citizens Militia during the Japanese invasion of 1592, and ending with the Kwangju Uprising. Other struggles represented in park include, in chronological order, the Tonghak Farmers Uprising in 1894, the March 1 Independence Movement in 1919, the Kwangju Students’ Independence Movement and the April 19 Revolution (see Photograph 1). Each of these struggles were nationalist or populist and, often, anti-government. For this reason these struggles have become central to Korea’s *minjung* movement. In the *Official Guide to 5.18 Memorial Sites*, the historicisation of these struggles is confirmed in the statement that all of them, “... manifest the significance of the Kwangju Uprising *in our history*”.⁴⁸

There is also a marked contrast in the grave sites in the two cemeteries. In Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery the grave sites are replete with marks of identity of the victims, placed by friends, relatives and comrades in the Uprising. Small placards, containing epitaphs written by the family and friends, are situated next to each grave devoted to the memory of the person buried there (see Photograph 2). A small glass box containing markers of identity (a packet of cigarettes, drawings, photographs, school books and so on) sits on the other side of the grave.



Photograph 1. Bas-relief of the April 19 Revolution



Photograph 2. Personal mementoes at Old Mangwol-dong

One may wander between the graves with a growing sense of each victim's role in the Uprising (often the placard contains details about how the person died), and fragments of their personal identity expressed through objects carefully chosen and placed in the glass box by friends and relatives. In the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery, the graves, which contrast starkly with the old ones, are a typical example of what Werbner describes as "the postcolonial [post World War Two] form of the modern memorial complex".⁴⁹ It is worth quoting Werbner's description of this complex,⁵⁰ which he uses to locate Zimbabwe's 'Heroes Acre' Cemetery, since it so closely resembles the government's approach to the construction of the memorial landscape of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery:

The state no longer tolerated that unsacralised oblivion for the dead, which left common soldiers anonymous ... and, worse still, beyond the pale of the commemorated nation. Instead, their names, their dates of birth and death, their bodies and last resting places all became the object of elaborate state remembrance, equally for all, on an unprecedented scale. This standardised practice, so distinctively the modern democracy of death, appeared most strikingly in the making for the first time of mass ... cemeteries with row after row of uniform graves on standardised plots for individuals.

In New Mangwol-dong Cemetery, this "modern democracy of death" through standardised grave sites for the victims of the Uprising, exhumed and removed from Old Mangwol-dong, in the officially titled 'Project for the Consecration of the May 18 Cemetery', serves to preserve and nationalise the individual victims but, at the same time, erases the etches of identity that marked the old grave sites.



Photograph 3. Regularity of Graves at New Mangwol- dong.

There are no glass boxes, no memorial placards or epitaphs (see Photograph 3), and the photographs of the victims are displayed together at some distance from the actual graves in an eerily silent and darkly lit ‘Photographic Memorial House’ (see Photograph 4) that one can gaze at from behind a rope.

The preservation of the memory of the victims through the grave sites in New Mangwol-dong Cemetery thus differs markedly from that in the old cemetery. The lack of input by families and friends into the (re)construction of the graves echoes through the uniform sites scripted by the (indifferent) postcolonial state. Further compounding the namelessness of the victims buried in the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery are two statues depicting male members of the Kwangju citizens army⁵¹ brandishing weapons and flags (see Photograph 5). These statues grace either side of the towering concrete structure that has been labelled the Memorial Tower for the May 18 Uprising. The figures depicted on the two statues do not represent actual citizens involved in the Uprising and, like the graves themselves, do not bear the inscription of local memory.

Finally, the inscription of the wider landscape in the old and new cemeteries also differs markedly. In the old cemetery, banners placed by NGOs and social movement groups in Korea are tied to trees bearing slogans pledging solidarity with the May Movement and the May Spirit (see Photograph 6). No such banners can be seen in New Mangwol-dong, where the wider landscape of the cemetery is dotted with elaborately overarching monuments and statues which we might refer to as the ‘concretisation’ of the Uprising or, to borrow Charlesworth’s phrase, the Uprising has been “cast in stone”.⁵² The Memorial Tower for the May 18 Uprising, for example,

is located at the centre of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery, and leads to the apex where the grave sites themselves are situated (see Photograph 7). The two supporting pillars in the shape of embracing hands are supposed to represent “the desire that the May 18 spirit may proliferate and gather us all together as one throughout the world”. The egg-shaped cluster in the middle of the tower thus depicts a cluster of (nameless) people “symbolising the renewal of life”.

Questions about who the New Mangwol-dong is actually for also form an important point of contention in the memorialisation process. Apart from the May Movement groups who chose to join the 5.18 Foundation in 1998, there is a general feeling of dissatisfaction amongst people in Kwangju and South Cholla



Photograph 4. ‘Photographic Memorial House’ at New Mangwol-dong

as to the way the Uprising has been memorialised through Mangwol-dong Cemetery. This feeling is bolstered by the perception that the New Mangwol-dong has not been constructed for the citizens of the city/province.

Certainly it is difficult to argue against this view since the vast majority of visitors to the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery are people from *outside* South Cholla, many of them international visitors, and the vast majority tourists. For them the new cemetery represents a means by which to learn about a previously unrecognised event in Korean history and/or to participate in a heritage tourism experience. The new cemetery and the promotional discourses, which surround it certainly entertain this purpose: a souvenir shop strategically located immediately outside the main entrance to the New Mangwol-dong, and several vending machines situated next to the shop, firmly root the new cemetery in commodified landscapes of the late twentieth century heritage industry.⁵³



Photograph 5. Representation (male) of Kwangju Citizens Army



Photograph 6. Banners and Slogans in Old Mangwol-dong



Photograph 7. Memorial Tower, New Mangwol-dong

Whilst a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the new cemetery can be easily detected in Kwangju and the surrounding counties of South Cholla, for some other groups in the region the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery holds a vastly different meaning. The official Kwangju Uprising memorial groups, including the Bereaved Families Association [*Yoochokkye*], the Injured Persons Association [*Pusangcha*] and the Comrades Association [*Kusokchahui*], hold a much less celebratory view of the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery. These groups tend to view the central task in the memorialisation of the Uprising as the representation and celebration of the heroic deeds of those citizens who gave their lives in the struggle. In short, it is their view that the central role of the victims and comrades should be given precedence in memorialisation efforts.

Their opinion of the Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery is thus easy to gauge: the old cemetery does not do justice to the memory of the victims, since it remains obscured by increasingly dilapidated, albeit still carefully tended, grave sites, a site hidden from the main road which bypasses it, thus rendering it obscured to all but those who already know it is there, and few indicators of a visible state presence by way of memorial signs and monuments which, according to these groups, would act to acknowledge and so legitimise the legacy of the struggle and the victims' role in making the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to realise democracy in South Korea. The New Mangwol-dong Cemetery, highly visible from at least a kilometre down the road, replete with a barrage of elaborate memorial structures and immaculately kept graves situated at its apex, apparently redresses this lack of formal recognition and acts to instil a sense of pride and dignity to these memorial groups.

In sum, the construction of the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery has generated intense disapproval amongst some of the pro-democracy and civil movement groups

in Kwangju and South Cholla, as well as a large proportion of the general public in the region. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, the profound currency which these groups ascribe to the Uprising is undermined through an officially sanctioned process of Kwangju Uprising historicisation through memorialisation in the new cemetery. The textual markers (memorials) there render the Uprising an episode in the Korean history of democratic and nationalist struggles, such that the history of democratic struggle is represented as firmly embedded in the past. Second, the new cemetery removes the responsibility for the authorship of Kwangju Uprising memorial sites from local people and firmly locates it within the heritage and memorial apparatus of the Korean state. In appropriating Kwangju Uprising memorial sites, the Kim government effectively staged a strategic coup in the nation's struggle for political liberalisation by presenting itself as the guardian of democracy.⁵⁴ In the early twenty-first century, however, as Korea finds itself embroiled in an economic and financial crisis which is challenging the degree to which democracy *is* firmly consolidated in the country, one has to question, as no doubt those still struggling under the banners of social justice, democracy and human rights in Korea do, whether the marking of the Uprising as an historical event through its memorialisation is fitting.

6. Conclusion

Although the Kwangju Uprising took place over 20 years ago in May 1980, the event provokes as much heated debate now as it did then. The state-sponsored memorialisation of the Uprising through a number of memorial sites has recently become a particularly sensitive focal point for this debate and has created new cleavages and perspectives.

The ongoing reinterpretation and contestation of the Uprising through Mangwol-dong Cemetery(ies) was the subject of discussion in this paper, and in particular the implications of state-sponsored memorialisation processes for local inscriptions of the event. In much recent writing on postcolonial spaces, the constitution of power relations of domination-subordination through discursive and textual representations is proving a subject of much import. The important questions are who authors the geographical texts that make sacred/memorial places and why that is so central to the process of memorialisation of sites in Kwangju at present. The appropriation of Mangwol-dong Cemetery as a memorial site by the Korean state in the mid-1990s has recently drawn the cemetery into the domain of official, sanctioned versions of the Uprising. In this process a narrative of the Uprising, which sees the event as central in forging the nation's hard-fought struggle for democracy is rapidly becoming canonised. This official reinterpretation of the event has provided the opportunity for citizens' groups in Kwangju to reclaim the Uprising and debate its meaning. Since the memorial plans were announced in 1994, the more radical of the pro-democratic civil movement groups based in Kwangju have repeatedly articulated the view that the Uprising is a central event in democratic struggle in Korea, and that it should continue to inform the quotidian practices of *minjung* dissent. The Old Mangwol-dong Cemetery enabled this ongoing connection between history, memory and resistance/dissent to be realised.

However, whilst Old Mangwol-dong acted as a site in which this role could be easily fulfilled - through visits to the cemetery by local democratic movement figures, its figurative location in *minjung* literature and pilgrimages to the cemetery by a wider community of social activists - the new cemetery appears to have been established for an entirely different purpose and audience. Hence, the insertion of state resources into

Kwangju Uprising memorialisation has created rather than resolved conflicts over the meaning and significance of the event through its effective muting of the voice of Korea's *minjung* movement. For others, particularly the relatives of the victims of the Uprising, the new cemetery is seen as a means by which to restore the memory of the victims and do justice to their deaths, so that amongst some people in Kwangju and South Cholla, at least, the state's memorialisation efforts have met with approval.

Mangwol-dong thus represents not only an arena in which this conflict is being played out but also signifies an intensification and extension of the conflict itself. Hence, sites of memory can come to act not only as spaces for representation and reinscription of political events, such as uprisings, rebellions and anti-colonial/liberation movements, but also as sites of contention in and of themselves. The cemeteries of Mangwol-dong have thus produced dissonant and increasingly polarised positions that I would describe as mourning versus martyrs and historicism versus activism. As other symbolic locations of the Kwangju Uprising are slowly being rendered as national heritage sites, it is likely that these real spaces of postcolonial conflict will only intensify.

¹ Hereafter Korea, unless otherwise contrasted with the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea.

² Throughout this paper I have chosen to use the name '5.18 Kwangju Democratic Uprising', which is the official title given to the event by the May 18 History Compilation Committee of Kwangju City, and will simply use '5.18', 'Kwangju Uprising' or 'Uprising' for short.

³ The Uprising continues to be the subject of interpretation variously by Korean historians, (various) Korean governments, the poetic and literary endeavours of prominent populist [*minjung*] figures, the narrations contained in the unofficial histories, and eye-witness accounts and memoirs emerging from those citizens of the province who directly participated in or witnessed the Uprising itself. Even the naming of the Uprising triggers heated debate. Offhand I can think of at least five names attached to the Uprising: 5.18 (or *o-il-pal*, signifying the date on which the Uprising began), the Kwan & Massacre, the Kwan & Democratic Movement, the Kwan & Affair and the Kwangju Incident - each containing a distinct meaning and, often, one which avowedly contests or subverts another.

⁴ Political liberalisation has, according to some measures, increased in the 1990s. See Doh C. Shin (1999) *Mass Politics and Culture in Democratising Korea*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Nonetheless, certain elements of authoritarianism persist in this new political environment, such as arbitrary arrests of labour and other dissident leaders. This situation has worsened considerably with the deterioration of national economic competitiveness in Korea in early 1998.

⁵ Linda Ritcher (1999) 'The politics of heritage tourism, in Douglas C. Pearce and Richard W Butler (eds), *Contemporary Issues in Tourism Development*, London: Routledge, p. 109.

⁶ Andrew Charlesworth (1994) 'Contesting places of memory: the case of Auschwitz, *Society and Space*, 12, p. 272. See also Michael Dear. (1997) 'Identity, authenticity and memory in place-time', in Steve Pile and Michael Keith (eds) *Geographies of Resistance*, London: Routledge, pp. 230-32, for a discussion of conflicts over memorialisation of Nazi Germany.

⁷ P. Nora (1989) 'Between memory and history: les lieux de memoire', *Representations*, Spring, pp. 7-25.

⁸ Jane Jacobs (1996) *Edge of Empire.. Postcolonialism and the City*, London: Routledge, p. X.

⁹ Toni Morrisods "Sites of memory 'and Homi Bhabha's "third space" are well-known examples of this metaphorical use of space. See Homi Bhabha (1990) 'The third space: interview with Homi Bhabha, in J. Rutherford (ed.) *Identity.. Community, Culture, Difference*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp. 207-21. See Lisa Law (1997) 'Dancing on the bar: sex, money and the uneasy politics of third space', in Pile and Keith (eds), op. cit., pp. 107-23, for a critical overview of the concept of third space.

¹⁰ This clarification of the history of the Uprising is in large part due to the establishment of the 'truth committee to investigate the Uprising and clarify its history, itself linked to the compensation for families/victims.

¹¹ Ann Lee (1997) 'The Kwangju Uprising and poetry by Chong-hui, a writer of South Cholla', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 29, p. 4.

¹² Op. cit., p. 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Sallie Yea (1999a) *Maps of Resistance and Geographies of Dissent in Cholla Region, South Korea*, Asian Studies Institute Working Paper No. 7, Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, for further discussion of this dissident image and its historical formation in Cholla.

¹⁵ Donald M. Clark (ed.) (1988) *The Kwangju Uprising.. Shadows over the Regime in South Korea*, Boulder: Westview Special Series on East Asia, pp. 12-13. This volume provides a comprehensive chronology of the Uprising.

¹⁶ Lee, 1997, op. cit

¹⁷ The May 18 History Compilation Committee (no date) *The May 18 Kwangju Democratic Uprising*, Kwangju, p. 61.

¹⁸ In addition to the 137 graves for victims of the Uprising, another 30 graves have been added for those who died in post-Uprising democratic movements in Korea. All 167 graves were moved to the New Mangwol-dong and since 1997 an additional 113 have been added, bringing the total number of graves to 250. Participants in the Uprising who survived will eventually be buried in the new cemetery along with other dissident figures deemed to have struggled in later movements inspired by the spirit of the Uprising after the May 18 incident" (*A Guide to May 18 Historical Sites*).

¹⁹ The May 18 History Compilation Committee, no date, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁰ The sources of information on the Kwangju Uprising can be broadly divided into three: unofficial histories and biographies; official recorded histories from within KwangjuCholla; and official histories from the central government. Examples of each of these three sources follow. Hwangju Suk-yong, *Over Death, Over the Darkness of the Age* [*Ch`uk Eul Nom O Sitae ui Tlum UI Nomo*] Uae-Ui Lee is real author/ South Cholla Youth Association - Chonchongryun, published first in 1985, but copies immediately seized by the government, legally published in 1987, but achieved status as an underground bestseller before this; Jae-Ui Lee was a junior in college in May 1980 and personally witnessed many of the events recounted in the book - he had friends who died in the Uprising; today, Lee is a journalist with the *Kwangnam Ilbo*. The book is a complete reconstruction of the Uprising (intricate detail, incl. maps etc.) and includes narratives and anecdotes by those involved. Other such accounts include Im CWul U (1998) *Pom Nal* [Spring Day]; Comrades Association of the

May 18 Kwangju Democratic Uprising (1990) *Pusan-Masan eso, Kwangiu kachi* [from Pusan-Masan to Kwangju]. Official histories from Kwangju include: The May 18 History Compilation Committee of Kwangju City (1994) *The May*

²¹ May 18 History Compilation Committee, 1994, op. cit., pp. 66 and 67.

²² Op. cit., p. 63.

²³ The KYS government's symbolic gesture of 'reconciliation' through the relocation of Mangwol-dong was accompanied by others as well. Most notably was the bringing to trial of former Presidents Rho Tae Woo and Chun Doo Hwan for their respective roles in the suppression of the Kwangju Uprising, amongst other charges. Convicted, the two political figures were nonetheless released soon thereafter. The feeling within Kwangju was that this gesture was hollow for two reasons: it came too late since both men had already lost any political influence and power they once held in Korean politics and the military; and the arrest, trial and conviction were linked not so much with retribution for the uprising, but rather to KYS's assertion of power within the Blue House (Parliamentary House).

²⁴ Mokp'o was particularly prominent during the protests, since it is Kim Dae jung's hometown, and thus citizens were particularly vocal in protesting Kids arrest immediately prior to the Uprising in 1980.

²⁵ Monuments, cemeteries and memorial events have recently come to be recognised and discussed as sites for the construction of national identity and places in which a popular national imaginary can be forged. Johnson, for example, discusses the role which public monuments play in collective, popular participation in the politics and public life of towns, cities and states (see Nuala Johnson [1995] 'Cast in stone: monuments, geography and nationalid, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13, pp. 51-66).

²⁶ The Guardhouse of Sangmudae was a brick building that was suitable to detain only about 30 prisoners. During the Kwangju Uprising, however, it held over 150 arrestees at a time. These people were forced to share meals sufficient for only 30 people.

²⁷ Toch`ung and Sanginudae are still in the process of (re)construction as memorial sites, and Sangmudae in particular is undergoing dramatic physical transformation as the old courtroom and guardhouse are being demolished and a new 5.18 theme park, called the May 18 Memorial Park and Theme Park, which is currently under construction, established in its place. According to the plans for memorialisation of this site, "The theme park will recreate the situation from those dark days and the Memorial Park will carry on and uplift the spirit of the May 18 Democratic Movement" (*Guide to Historical Sites of the 5.18 Kwangiu Uprising*). Toch' ung, while undergoing little in the way of physical transformation, is being renamed Memorial Hall and the City Square renamed the May 18 Memorial Square. Both the Square and Provincial Capital Building are to be designated as National Heritage Sites.

²⁸ Other 5.18 Historical sites include: the Provincial Hall Square, in front of Toch`ung, which has been renamed The May 18 Democracy Square (and was the site of large citizen and student rallies for national democracy in May 1980, and in the post- 1980 period); Sangmugwan Building, located in front of the Provincial Hall, where the victims of the Uprising were temporarily laid; Kumnarn Street, which was the main road in downtown Kwangju in 1980 and the scene of the bloodiest and most intense fighting between Martial Law Forces and the Kwangju citizens' army (on 21 May 1980 [also referred to as "Bloody Wednesday"], the Martial Law Forces fired on thousands of citizens who gathered in the Street, killing at least 50 people and injuring over 500 more); the Former Kwangju MBC Building, which was set on fire by Kwangju citizens during the Uprising for reporting

distorted news about the struggle; the Former Kwangju YMCA Building, where important leaflets were printed denouncing the "brutality of the cruel suppression by Martial Law Forces at the beginning of the struggle" (the Former YMCA was located at the very beginning of Kuninam Street); the Main Gate of Chonnam National University, Kwangju, where the first dash between Martial Law Forces and students took place at 10 am on 18 May 1980; Kwangju Railway Station, which was also a major site of military brutality and civilian resistance on 20 May, during which at least 10 citizens died; Junam. Village, where the military fired on a bus-load of 18 citizens and students on 23 May, killing 15 of the passengers; and Kwangju Prison, where arrested citizens were detained and where it is suspected that many victims were temporarily buried. These sites have been marked in the official *Guide to May 18 Historical Sites*. Represented on a map which is marked as a 'course', one can choose to follow either of two marked trails which pass the memorial sites, both of which conclude at the New Mangwol-dong Cemetery. See Kwangju City Government (no date) *A Guide to May 18 Historical Sites*, Kwangju.

²⁹ Those citizens' groups consulted were the ones that joined the 5.18 Foundation in 1997, see below for details of this merger

³⁰ The 'sub-tides' on the seven boards are: 'The Failed Dream of Democratisation', 'Operation "Brilliant Leave-', 'The Worst of Deception', 'A Planned Massacre of Unarmed Students and Workers', 'Kwangju - A Community Breaks the Bonds of Death 'A Day Always to Remember' and 'Bloody Lamentation Wandering Around May 18 Cemetery'.

³¹ See Kenneth M. Wells (ed.) (1995) *South Korea@ Minjung Movement.. The Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, Manoa: University of Hawai'i Press, for a discussion of the dimensions of *minjung* dissent.

³² Sallie Yea (1999b) 'The culture and politics of resistance in South Korea', *Futures*, 31 (2), pp. 221-34.

³³ See KB Lee et al (1990) *Korea Old and New: A History*, Seoul: Ilchokak Publishers, for details of the Tonghak and other historical protests. See Nancy Abelmann (1996) *Echoes of the Past, Epics of Dissent.. A South Korean Social Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 20-38, for a fuller discussion of the discursive practices of the *minjung* on Tonghak historiography.

³⁴ Abelmann, op. cit.; Sheila Jager (1996) 'A vision for the future: or, family history in contemporary South Korea', *Positions*, 4 (1), pp. 31-58.

³⁵ Yea, 1999b, op. cit., p. 229, emphasis added.

³⁶ See, for example, Hwang Suk-Young (1985) *Over Death, Over the Darkness of the Age*, Seoul: Tosuchi'ulp'an (in Korean). In this commentary on the Uprising, for example, Hwang has managed to capture the genealogy of the participants in the Uprising when he writes:

After October 26, the strong hope for democratisation in the country reached a far greater level in Kwangju than in the other regions; and one can point to several reasons for this. First, from the Tonghak farmed rebellions through the Righteous Armies (of the nineteenth century) through the Kwangju Student Rebellion (of 1929) and other events, there had come into existence a family-like tradition of outstanding pride and self-awareness regarding the democratisation movement. Among the proponents of democracy who were then out of power, there were many who had taken leading roles in the Kwangju Student Movement. Members of the younger generation, through the recollections of their families or grandfathers or great grandfathers who had been members of the Tonghak, or Righteous Armies, carried in

their blood the living vestiges of modern history. Thus in a single family might be found the personification of a full hundred years of modern Korean history.

³⁷ Choi Ha Lim (1991) 'Today, We Too', *Into an Open Abyss*, Seoul (in Korean).

³⁸ According to the *Guide to Historical Sites of the Kwangju Uprising*, for example, Kwangju has long been known as a city of patriotism and justice. Whenever the nation has been in peril, Kwangju's people have courageously risen and taken the lead in defending our national sovereignty. Due to our people's commitment to end injustice, the tradition of patriotism and justice has continued to the present. The May 18 Kwangju Uprising, which happened in 1980, is based on this historical tradition of spirited resistance against injustice. The people of Kwangju city now play a leading role in bringing democracy to our daily lives and take pride in having contributed greatly to protect and develop Korean democracy. Kwangju's citizens are making every effort to throw off the shadow of isolation, underdevelopment, and depression in order to make a future full of prosperity and hope under the new motto: 'Vanguard of Democracy. Vibrant New City' (*A Guide to the May 18 Historical Sites*, Kwangju City Government, no date). Hence, embedded in 5.18 memorialisation efforts is the desire to overcome the marginal position of the Cholla region within the Korean nation state. Cholla has long been positioned as a region that is comparatively backward, dissident, radical and isolated. In the 1990s, grassroots, academic and local government organisations are all actively participating in the remapping of the symbolic geography of Cholla. This remapping has involved a subversion of the dominant radical imaginary that defines the region. This imaginary is reforged through an alignment with international democratic, human rights and social justice precepts.

This reimagining of Cholla through the lense of democratic politics has come to be expressed in a number of intertwining efforts. In particular, the grassroots democratic movement in Cholla is making a concerted appeal to international, especially Asian, non-governmental organisations. To this end various events and conferences have taken place in Kwangju, including the signing of the Asian Human Rights Charter in 1994. Through these various events Kwangju is locating itself as one of the major democratic sites/cities of the world. In 1996 a book was published in Kwangju titled, 'Kwangju as a place for international democracy [*5.18 Kwangju Kinyom Sappeul Uihanj*].

³⁹ According to Keun-Sik Jung (no date) 'On the historical significance of the May Movemene, unpublished paper, p. 4, the five principles of the May Movement are: the inquiry into the truth, the punishment of the guilty, the exoneration of honour, the compensation of the victims and the memorial activities to inherit the spirit of the Kwangju Uprising.

⁴⁰ Op. cit., P. 1.

⁴¹ Op. cit., p. 6.

⁴² Personal communication with Jung Keun-Sik, June 1998.

⁴³ Personal communication with Park Jae-Man, November 1998.

⁴⁴ M.M. Bell (1997) 'The ghosts of place', *Theory and Society*, 26, p. 815

⁴⁵ Op. cit., p. 816.

⁴⁶ The stated objectives of the KCS are four-fold: promotion of democracy in Korea, protection of human rights and environment, promotion of regional development, and solidarity among international and domestic NGOs.

⁴⁷ Personal communication with Park Jae-Man, November 1998.

⁴⁸ No date, emphasis added.

⁴⁹ Richard Werbner (1998b) 'Smoke from the barrel of a gun: Postwars of the dead, memory and reinscription in Zimbabwe', in Richard Werbner (ed.), *Memo7 and the Postcolony.. African Anthropology and the Oitique of Power*, London: Zed Books, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Op. cit., p. 71.

⁵¹ Of the 21 individuals included in the two statues, only one is a woman

⁵² Charlesworth, 1994, op. cit.

⁵³ To compound the location of the Uprising in heritage tourism, the official Kwangju City guide to May 18 historical sites includes four pages of information at the back of the booklet on hotels, bus and train timetables, and suggested tours, including a South Cholla "cultural tour" and a Kwangju "city tour", thus further inserting the Uprisings memorialisation into a heritage tourism arena. Interestingly, such a promotional exercise acts to orient the Uprisings memorialisation to those from outside the region, thus connecting the event to other nationalised places in South Korea.

⁵⁴ Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Kwangju Uprising memorial sites projects this notion of the state's guardianship of democracy. Contained in the *Guide to May 18 Historical Sites*, for example, is the following claim that, "This place will stand as a stern historical reminder that we must never allow injustice and tyranny to flourish on the land again".