# KOREA IN THE 1960s AND BEYOND

# FROM WORKCAMPER TO MISSIONARY: A VIEW OF KOREA FROM 1965 TO 1987[*]

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From a very early age, probably from about six years, I had a fascination with East Asia, which meant, of course, China. However, in the Cold War era of the 1950s and 1960s it was very difficult to find any accurate information about contemporary China, and impossible as an American citizen to travel there. Nonetheless, I read voraciously about China and East Asia in general, about its history and its culture. As an undergraduate at Rutgers University, I studied anthropology because of my interest in non-Western cultures. In the summer of 1965, before my final year as an undergraduate, I was offered the chance to go on a one-month workcamp project in the Tohoku region of northern Japan, sponsored by the American Friends (Quaker) Service Committee. It wasn't China, but I leapt at the chance to experience something of East Asia. Then, the AFSC said, 'Oh, and we are going to send you to Korea in August on a workcamp project there after the workcamp in Japan finishes'. Well, I didn't know anything about Korea, but it seemed a good opportunity to experience even more of East Asia. It is casual experiences such as these which can have long-term effects on our interests, indeed on the course of one's life. And so it was for me. As fascinated as I was by what I had seen, what I had done, and what I had experienced in Japan, it was Korea which grabbed my interest.

## Korea: First Impressions

If Japan in 1965 was the image of a dynamic, modern nation with deep traditional cultural roots, the impression of Korea in the same year was of an economically backward nation struggling to survive. In Japan, we had been whisked along from place to place on the *Shinkansen*, the world's first high-speed train. In Korea our trip

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by express train from Pusan to Seoul at the end of our workcamp took eight hours, a journey which now takes two and a half hours. That journey to Seoul has been for me like a time capsule of sights which marks the beginning stage of the rapid economic and industrial development which was to take place immediately afterwards. From the window of our train I could see *Kukto* [National Highway] 1. Of course, there was no motorway then – but the road was not paved either. And, there were no bridges over rivers in many cases. On the highway, there were no cars – only jeeps and lorries. Black jeeps were private vehicles, and white jeeps were government vehicles. Looking out from the window, one could see hills and mountains everywhere – but they were naked because there were no trees. Finally, the great train slowed, and began to snake its way into Seoul Station – and then a gang of beggar boys boarded the train to beg from the passengers before they alighted.

Who could guess that within ten years this impoverished nation would have the beginnings of an extensive motorway network, the beginnings of what would become one of the world's three major steel manufacturers, and see the establishment of major conglomerates which would come to dominate the world's markets? Who indeed, looking at the ubiquitous poverty of the mid-1960s, could predict that South Korea was a nation starting its dash to become a prosperous, very modern nation? No one, I am sure. There was no real precedent for such rapid development.

Yet, the roots of that rapid development were already there to see in 1965. First of all, we workcampers – who were mostly Koreans and Japanese – knew that only a month ago there had been major student demonstrations against the ROK/Japan Normalisation Treaty which had been signed in July. This treaty opened up Korean access to Japanese capital investment. And yet it was resented by many. One of the purposes of the workcamp was to have Korean and Japanese students living and working side by side – reflecting Quaker interests in peace and international understanding. The fishing village where we worked, Kwangam-ni (now scooped up into the great industrial city of Ch'angwŏn), was the site of an ROK Government experiment to develop oyster culture farming to provide an income for coastal villages. Two things struck me about the villagers and village life. The first was the great work ethic – people worked very hard. The other was their ability to enjoy life. After we workcampers had our 'goodbye' ceremony on a hill behind the village, we returned to the village to find that the central area around the pier had been cleared of boats and a huge tent had been erected by the villagers. Inside were floor-level tables groaning with food and drink. We ate, and we sang, and we danced until the wee hours of the morning – and the Vice-Governor of the province was there!

There is another element in the people's makeup – nationalism. On the 15th of August, we workcampers all walked over to the township school to celebrate Liberation Day – the day of Japan's defeat, the re-establishment of Korean independence. The feelings on that day were palpable. Government planning, nationalism, determination, and an ability to find ways to enjoy oneself, these are some of the qualities which enabled the Republic of Korea to leap forward from abject poverty into the ranks of the world's leading nations.

## 1967 – A Brief Return

In the summer of this year, while I was a post-graduate student in anthropology at Columbia University, I participated in a Fulbright Commission study programme on Chinese culture and society based on Taiwan. On the return trip home, I took the opportunity to return to Korea and to visit some friends from two years before. This visit gave me a chance to look around Seoul more carefully and to pay my first visit to Kyŏngju. Within the elapsed two years, Korea had begun to change visibly. Taiwan seemed to be more prosperous, but Korea had clearly begun to move. Everywhere one looked along the main East-West road Chongno in central Seoul there was construction. Five- and six-storey buildings were going up, covered in bamboo scaffolding, and finished off with exterior tiles. There were cars on the road, although the ubiquitous black and white jeeps were still very much in evidence. A new tram system had just been put in, using modern equipment which I had seen plying the streets of Kyōto in Japan a few weeks before. Beggars were still visible but so were many people going about their work. The trains to Kyŏngju were shabby by Japanese standards, but frequent and well used. People travelled and went to enjoy the sights of places such as the ancient capital of Silla. In 1967 Korea was not a wealthy country, but the economic state of the nation had begun to improve in many different and subtle ways.

## 1971–1987 – Neither Workcamper nor Visitor

By 1968, I had changed my programme of studies and pursued a course of theological training, and in 1970 was ordained as a deacon in the United Methodist Church (USA). In the following year, I applied and was accepted to be an educational missionary to work with the Korean Methodist Church (KMC). For the next five years, before my first furlough, I studied Korean language at Yonsei University for two years, followed by an appointment to teach anthropology at Kyŏngbuk National University in Taegu. In the early 1970s, traditional Korean patterns of life had not yet changed significantly. Korean home life was still predominantly floor sitting with the main room of a house serving multiple purposes as a dining room, lounge, and as a 'bed' room for senior members of the family. Being a bachelor in those days, I had the great opportunity of spending my two years of language training living in the home of a family who attended one of the two principal Methodist churches in central Seoul, Chonggyo Methodist Church. I effectively became a member of the family, and the sons became my brothers, strong ties which remain to this day. I had a small room to myself which contained a floor-height desk, my *ibul* (duvet) and *yo* (mattress), and a 'largish' bookcase. I cherished these things and relished the opportunity to be part of Korean life in this way.

It was from this family (rather than Yonsei!) that I not only learned how to speak Korean but also learned the intricacies of the Korean social system. The hierarchies within the family and the way in which people negotiated them were plain to see. The father may have sat at the pinnacle, but it was a lonely position because it was the mother who made the decisions, and to whom all the children, male and female, deferred or sought advice. Between the siblings, age was the key discriminating factor. Older siblings had more authority and could advise or cajole the younger ones. I was in a peculiar position because although I was in the family, I wasn't of it: I was foreign, and I was a minister. I was regarded by the children as a *hyŏng* (elder brother) but because I was foreign and a minister I was exempt to a certain degree from the requirements of the system. But I still had to learn how to appropriately negotiate my way through this subtle system of human relations.

In the 1970s, there were very few foreigners of any sort in Korea, principally three categories – US military, US Peace Corps volunteers, and missionaries, also primarily Americans. Of these groups, the latter two actually lived in Korean society, and only the missionaries lived in Korea for a significant part of their working lives. In a culture where a person becomes a part of a web of social relations from his or her birth, long-term residents like missionaries don't have any 'social space' in the way that a born-Korean would. One way in which Koreans gave foreigners like missionaries 'social space' was to create a Korean name for them. The then minister at Chonggyo Methodist Church did this for me within my first year in Korea, a name by which I am usually known to Koreans today.

Names like mine were carefully created so that they wouldn't seem odd, and, like an 'authentic' Korean name, would carry a significant meaning, one which the creator hoped the recipient would live up to. The Revd. Pak Yongik gave me the name 'Kim Chŏnghyŏn' [金正玄]. I was given the surname Kim because I was living with members of the Kimhae Kim clan, but also because the character 'kim' or 'kŭm' means 'gold'. Mr Pak referenced this to the passage in verse 10 of the 23rd chapter of the Book of Job which reads, 'when he [God] has tested me, I shall be as purest gold' (New International Version). The remaining two characters represent a harmonisation of Confucian and Christian thought. 'Chŏng' stands for 'righteousness', a key value in both Confucianism and Christianity. 'Hyŏn' is a deeper, more philosophical character. Although it literally means 'black', it refers to the black void of the sky at night, and thence to 'Heaven' in its deepest philosophical and theological sense.

Thus, my personal name means 'Heaven's righteousness', in one way a burden but in another, a reminder of one's purpose in life.

Names and their meaning are very important in Korean life. They create social space, social ties, enabling one to travel through the web of social relations and to be part of it. Bestowing names is one of the highest honours one can have, and as such is usually the role of the grandfather. Twice, I have been asked by friends who call me *hyŏng* to name their children. When I see these grown children today, we have a special bond. When I first went to the city of Taegu to work, an elder in the church I attended was the head of nursing at Tongsan Hospital, one of the principal hospitals in the city. She was a formidable personage in many ways, but because she was also a Kimhae Kim and because the 'chŏng' character in her name – which was also the same 'chŏng' in my name – was the marker for her generation (called *tollim-cha*), we had a special bond. I was not simply a young missionary needing looking after, I was in terms of fictive kinship a distant cousin or younger brother. She helped me get settled into life in Taegu, creating social space which would never have been there otherwise. At the beginning of each semester, a few students would come up after the first class and ask me which Kim clan I belonged to. The Kimhae Kims were always pleased, and the members of the other Kim clans disappointed. Everyone knew it was a fictive relationship, but it was a serious matter nonetheless.

Just how different the situation was with Japan, I learned some years later, in the mid-1980s, when I was teaching at the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul. A visiting Methodist missionary colleague from Japan came to my office door and was astounded to see my Korean name emblazoned on it. 'Why', he asked, 'do you use a name like that when everyone can speak and read English?' He went on to say that no missionary in Japan had a Japanese-style name. He felt that I was being patronising to my Korean colleagues. I had to explain to him that although every member of staff of the seminary had a Ph.D. from a North American or European university, I was known by my Korean name because it gave me social space in a country where I would not have social space. Latterly, I wondered if what he was saying meant that in Japan people were less willing or able to accommodate long-term foreign residents into their society than Koreans did.

Deference or recognising the proper degree or type of relationship between individual people is a prominent feature of Korean life, and these distinctions are indicated in the use of language. People would be addressed by their title or role to which would be added a marker for respect, *nim*. Thus, I would be addressed by students as *sŏnsaeng-nim* [respected teacher] or by church members as *moksa-nim* [respected pastor]. These forms of address varied according to context. In my early years in Taegu, I both taught at Kyŏngbuk National University and advised the local branch of the Student Christian Movement. One of my students was also a member of the SCM and in class always addressed me as *sŏnsaeng-nim* and outside of class as *moksa-nim* indicating that his relationship to me at that point was different. Modifying your indication of role relationship could become quite complicated. The brother of a friend of mine (who called me *hyŏng*, 'elder brother') was together with me and this friend. In conversation, the young man at one point said *hyŏng-nim!*, and his elder brother responded. The younger man then said, 'No, not you *hyŏng*, *hyŏng-nim*', gesturing towards me. In other words, because his relationship to me was mediated through his own elder brother, and because I was the eldest of the three people, he had to indicate that there was a difference in social status. This was a point which even his own brother hadn't spotted.

Behaviour was another way in which respect was shown. Bowing was one way that the young had of showing respect, but there were other ways. In the 1970s, young men were not to be seen smoking in front of their elders or people older than them. One day, on my way to class, I had gotten off the bus by the main gate of Kyŏngbuk National. From the main gate, the road slopes a long way down hill providing a clear view for a considerable distance. As I entered the campus, I saw two of my students who were walking up the hill and at a distance of several hundred feet away from me. I saw them. They saw me. They were smoking! Instantly, they both bowed deeply and simultaneously and forcefully threw away their cigarettes! I had never seen such spontaneous and instantaneous choreography before. But, it was important that they did not offend against etiquette even at a considerable distance when it might be supposed that I couldn't actually see if they were smoking.

The house in which 'my family' in Seoul lived was located across the street from the west gate of the Kyŏngbok Palace, the central royal residence. Although not an old building, it had all the features of a traditional home which I came to love. When I completed language studies and went to work in Taegu, I convinced the Methodist Mission that they should purchase a Korean-style house for me. This was located within a 15 minutes' walk of the centre of the city. The house was a typical four-room *ondol* [heated] floor house with a small garden. The heating system burned *yŏnt'an* [coal briquettes] which had the potential to cause death by carbon monoxide poisoning if there was a crack in the floor. The floors themselves were concrete slabs covered first by door paper and then overlaid with heavy waxed paper which was varnished. The heat from the flues gave a warm yellowish orange colour to the floors. I loved to write to my parents that I had repapered the floors! During the 'Oil Shock' years of the mid-1970s, missionary colleagues' homes (being cavernous Western-style buildings) were cold, but not so cold as the home of a Japanese friend in Kyōto which only had a *tatami* mat floor with a space heater – turned off at night! The *ondol* system must rank as one of the most sensible and efficient systems for heating a home.

The centrepiece of the house was the great beam in the ceiling of the wooden floor room [*maru*] where people would sit out on a summer's evening and chat. This beam, called *taedŭlpo*, was the beauty point of the house and contained precise information about the year, month, day and hour when it had been raised, and was given in the traditional lunar calendar system. The house faced south and from the *maru* of my house one had a splendid view of Ap'-san ['the mountain in front'] – properly called Taedŏk-san – which dominated the city's vistas. The shape of the house was like an 'L' or the Korean letter ㄱ with one *ondol* room and the kitchen on one leg, and the main room, *maru*, and a two further *ondol* rooms on the longer leg. This style of house was the standard size and shape of middle-class Korean housing in the Taegu region and was being built at least until the mid-1970s. Sadly, most of these houses have now been torn down to make way for enormous tower blocks of flats.

Before the ubiquity of high quality flats, homes did not have rooms for bathing. You bathed by going to a *mogyok-t'ang*, which is similar to the Japanese *furo*, but more complicated. Whereas the *furo* provides individual space with ranks of taps and shower heads to wash thoroughly and a hot plunge pool in which to soak, the Korean *mogyok-t'ang* has the same spaces for washing, but is also provided (usually) with three pools of water – cold, tepid, and hot – and a sauna. Sometimes a fourth very hot pool (*yŏl-t'ang*) is provided. I used to go at 6 a.m. to the neighbourhood bathhouse in Seoul and got to know the *undong-hanŭn harabŏji* ['exercising grandfathers'], older men who got up at the crack of dawn to go hill-walking and then took a bath afterwards. From this experience, I learned that the *mogyok-t'ang* was not simply a place to bathe, but that it was also a place for socialising. When I settled in Taegu, I found that early on a Sunday morning the elders of my church would be in my 'local' and therefore I could discuss any necessary church business soaking in the hot pool! In the 1970s, Taegu claimed to have the largest *mogyok-t'ang* in Korea, the *Tŏksan-t'ang*. This bathhouse had a cold pool so large that you could swim in it, a sauna using steam forced through the leaves of the medicinal herb mugwort, and a large hot pool with a revolving Saturn-shaped spout continuously spewing out hot water. On my way home from a tiring day's teaching, I would stop off there – what a wonderful way to restore the soul! As an institution, the *mogyok-t'ang* still exists, but is now known by more 'up-market' names such as a sauna or a health club because virtually every home now has its own bathroom. The *mogyok-t'ang* has become more of a leisure destination, but nonetheless the same function of socialising remains.

The *tabang* [literally 'tea room'] was another place for socialising, a place for meeting up with people for a chat or to debate business. Seeing someone on the street, one would 'pop in' for a cup, or use the shop as an agreed meeting venue. Although they were called 'tea rooms', *tabang* mostly served (not very good) coffee or different kinds of Korean herbal teas, but not Indian leaf tea. It seems difficult to believe in the current day when Korea has the most extensive network of mobile telephony in the world that in the early 1970s possession of a land line telephone was not common. Partly this was a matter of expense, and partly a matter of the lack of a sufficient number of connections. Because ordering a telephone through the Ministry of Telecommunications could literally take ages, a thriving market in re-sold telephone lines existed. You went into a shop and purchased a telephone line (and separately a telephone), which had been sold on to the shop. This was not a particularly cheap option, but it did provide a means of more quickly acquiring a telephone. For many small businesses – especially small shops and businesses in the local markets – possession of a telephone was not possible because of the expense. However, since all *tabang* did have to have a telephone to receive take-out orders, they became the place where small businessmen would spend the day receiving calls and entertaining clients. Anyone who went to a *tabang* would not be startled to hear the manageress call out *Kim sajang-nim!* [Proprietor Kim!] to bring an entrepreneur to the telephone.

A unique feature, I believe, of Korean culture during the 1950s to 1980s was the *ŭmak kamsang-sil* [‘music listening room’]. This was a specialised kind of *tabang* where you went to listen to music. You came in, ordered a drink, and if you wanted to do so, requested a piece of music. You sat down, enjoyed your drink and heard classical music which either you had selected, or someone else had. The most famous, and I believe the first, of the *ŭmak kamsang-sil* was the *Renaissance* on Chongno street in Seoul. The story of its origin is that the owner, who had a very large collection of 78 r.p.m. records of Western classical music, found himself in impoverished circumstances after the Korean War and decided to use listening to his records as a means for earning an income. By the time I arrived in Korea as a missionary in the 1970s, there were several of these *kamsang-sil* in Seoul and as well as elsewhere in the country. When I went to Taegu to live, I quickly sought out the most famous *kamsang-sil* there, the *Heimat* [German: ‘hometown’]. The recent rapid development of other means of obtaining and listening to music has meant the death knell for this aspect of Korean culture, and I don’t believe that any of these ‘music listening rooms’ now exist.

In the absence of ‘supermarkets’, in the 1970s and even into the 1980s, local neighbourhood markets were everywhere selling local produce and manufactured products. From our neighbourhood market in Seoul, I learned that even if a bottle of shampoo had a ‘fixed price’ stamped on it, one could haggle for the price! Our local market in the Samdŏk-tong area of Taegu had the [usual] range of butchers, greengrocers, fruiterers, and small appliance shops, but it also had shops that made products such as sesame oil. The smell of sesame seeds being pressed to make oil was one of the highlights of the day as I walked to work in the morning. There were specialised markets as well, where certain kinds of goods could be found, like the Fresh Fruit Market, and the Kyo-dong Market in Taegu which specialised in electrical goods. In Taegu, the greatest market was the Sŏmun (West Gate) Market which although a massive general market was known as *the* place to buy cloth. This was because Taegu was at that time the centre of the Korean cloth industry. I used to go there to purchase cloth for a suit and then go to one of the tailors inside the market who would make a superbly fitting suit for me. Once when I was interviewed on television I remember the two tailors told me that they nervously watched to see if the suit would look alright! In the 1970s, people tired of having to continuously polish their brass rice and soup bowls and chopsticks and switched to using aluminium products instead. In the Sŏmun Market, there was a stall which would buy brass goods by weight and ship them on to factories in Seoul to be turned into brass lampstands. I conducted a kind of salvage operation by purchasing a set of brass rice bowls with covers, soup bowls, condiment jars with covers, a *sinsollo* brazier (a brazier for a stew) and various hairpins and other ornaments. Korean brass is of an especially high quality; when these vessels are struck on the lip they produce a beautiful ring. I also discovered that some companies produced rice and soup bowls of brass which were heavily plated with stainless steel to prevent staining or discolouration. They too produced a beautiful ring.

These features of normal social and cultural life were framed by the political events revolving around us. The earliest recollection of political activity I remember is coming out of language class at Yonsei to be confronted by soldiers moving onto campus to impose order after a student demonstration against the imposition of martial law. This must have been in late 1971. It was quite a shock. The President then proposed a referendum on a new constitution, the Yusin ('Revitalising Reforms') Constitution, which would allow President Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi) to remain in office permanently. Our house received a brochure explaining why the constitutional revision was necessary and had a series of cartoons which illustrated the different points being made. Two in particular stick in my mind. One showed a long road up a hill slope at the top of which were American, British, German, and Japanese open cars with bags of money hanging from the back. In the mid-slope was a sleek Korean car, also with a bag of money, with the driver leaning over the windscreen saying, 'We're going to catch up!' The other cartoon showed a view of the curvature of the globe with the Korean peninsula looming unusually large in the centre, laden with factories, shipyards and petrochemical plants. On either side of the fringe of the globe were groups of people who were clearly neither Korean nor Western asking a man in the Korean peninsula, 'Could you lend us some money?' With a smile he is leaning over with a bag of money saying, 'Of course!' These two cartoons in particular sum up a general attitude amongst the populace which provides a psychological explanation for South Korea's rapid development – the urge to recapture Korea's perceived place on the world stage as a developed, prosperous nation. Economic development was a nationalist goal, not just a goal for personal self-betterment.

On 4 July 1972, everyone was told that the President would make a very important announcement and that we should be sure to watch the televisions or listen on the radio. I remember being startled when President Park said that his representative had met with Kim Ilsung of North Korea, and that they would begin discussions about eventual unification of the two states. This was an electric statement. Direct contact between north and south; possible unification; peace. The date is also significant: American Independence Day. South Korea (and North Korea) was indicating that it would pursue its own policy. This stance has to be seen in the context of President Nixon's visit to China, and the shock waves which that visit sent to the leaders of both Korean states. One fruit of the 4 July Declaration was the first series of North and South Korean Red Cross talks about bringing together families divided by the Korean War and national division. It was exciting to see vehicles from 'our side' cross over the DMZ to head north to P'yŏngyang. Even more exciting was to stand at the end of our alley way and watch the cavalcade of cars carrying the North Korean delegation past the Kyŏngbok Palace walls and into the Capitol building in its grounds. There was an open car in the front with the chief delegate. It was like seeing someone from Mars. The North had seemed like another planet and now people from 'there' were 'here'. That first evening there was a banquet held to welcome the delegation. The first thing which the delegates did before being seated was to find out who had been at what middle school with whom. A very Korean way of sorting out the important social relationships, and proof to me that whatever else had changed, certain basic features of Korean culture up north hadn't.

This mood of goodwill did not last long in the end. By 1973, the Red Cross talks to discuss the issue of reunions of families separated by the national division had become moribund. There was a north Korean-sponsored assassination attempt on the life of President Park on the Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 1974 which resulted in the death of his wife, Madame Yuk. Photographs taken at that moment showed her resolute composure while everyone else on the stage was scattering. Her state funeral showed the depth of personal emotion which people felt. She was genuinely popular whereas the President was respected by the general populace for the development of the nation, and disliked by the intellectuals for his authoritarian rule. When the President was assassinated in 1979, his state funeral demonstrated this difference. People were respectfully watching the cortege, but there was none of the emotion expressed for Madame Yuk. Park was not a charismatic leader and was never popular the way she had been.

The principal reminders of the continued state of confrontation with the North were the monthly air raid drills and the nightly curfew. The former was conducted nationally on the fifteenth day of each month. Everyone was expected to take shelter in a building, or if you were travelling through the countryside, beneath a bridge or in another shelter. I can remember in the early 70s one elaborate drill conducted at the central Kwanghwa-mun intersection in Seoul with the droning sound of aircraft accompanied by the sound of anti-aircraft fire emanating from the local police box, red smoke simulating dropped bombs, and motorcycle policemen with sirens screaming around the central road network. This was followed by a tannoy voice at the end saying, ‘Seoul is free! Seoul is free!’ In spite of all these elaborate attempts to make the event seem real, the sheer frequency and regularity of the event made people become rather blasé about the drills. In the 1980s, my wife and I used to say that the 15th of any month would be the best day for the North to invade because no one would believe it. However, that changed dramatically in 1983. I was downtown, at the Kwanghwa-mun intersection, when the sirens went off. It was not the 15th and a voice on the tannoy shouted, ‘This is not a drill! This is not a drill!’ The fear on the faces of the pedestrians was a memory I will never forget. On that day, a North Korean air force pilot was defecting to the south – bringing with him the latest MIG fighter, triggering the national air raid sirens as the ROK Air Force scrambled to meet him.

The nightly curfew was the other reminder of the tense relations between the two Korean states. Instituted by the American Military Government in 1945, it was finally abolished in January of 1982. Operating between midnight and 4 a.m., it meant that night life business closed at 11 p.m. to be sure to give people time to get home. My first encounter with the curfew was in 1967 when I stepped out into a main road from the alleyway where a friend’s house was situated and was surprised by the eerie emptiness of this great street. Friends used to joke that the curfew was the President’s way of ensuring that everyone got a good night’s sleep for the next day’s work. In the late 1970s, I had visited a friend in Pusan and got the last train north to Taegu. Unfortunately, this train was considerably delayed leaving Pusan and didn’t get to Tong Taegu Station until well after midnight. The mad scramble in the station was amazing to see. As you went out the door, someone would stamp the back of your hand with red ink to show that you were authorised to be out. Trying to get a cab home was also nearly impossible, until one policeman got a cab to get me home.

Throughout the 1970s, there was increasing unrest about the authoritarian nature of the Government. Student demonstrations were becoming more usual, not only in Seoul but in most major cities as well. Demonstrations in Taegu in those days were not the violent confrontations which they subsequently became, nor did the police have the more sophisticated equipment which was the hallmark of their armoury in the 1980s. When the first demonstration was held at Kyŏngbuk National University, I was struck by how different it seemed from those in the capital. A long line of students, linked two abreast, were singing and chugging towards the back gate of the university where the riot police were arrayed. This consisted of two rows of small cannon-like canisters to shoot-off teargas, behind each of which stood a riot policeman – looking an ordinary policeman, legs akimbo and arms crossed behind his back. Behind them was an open-sided lorry like a small troop transporter. In front of this array stood the *ch’onggyŏng*, the commandant of the provincial police, with cap full of braid, and holding a swagger stick. He went up and met the line of students, leaning into the head of the line. The whole line chugged in a stationary position while he leaned forward and said that they could stay on campus and demonstrate but if they went out of the campus, he would have to apply force to stop them. After a bit of negotiation they turned around and chugged off into the main part of the campus. He then turned back to his 'men' and saw me. We had met a few days earlier at the church where his wife attended. He immediately took off his cap and we both bowed deeply asking how we were. Instantly, the visage of every one of the assembled grim-faced policemen switched to broad smiles!

Political events framed my departure in 1976 to do a post-graduate programme of research at Edinburgh, when American soldiers were killed at the DMZ attempting to trim trees, and my return in 1979 when President Park was assassinated. I had not yet moved into my home in Samdŏk-tong and was staying with the chaplain of Keimyung University where I was now to work. Mrs. Ch'oi burst out of the kitchen in a state of shock exclaiming that the President had been killed. The funeral was stately and proper, but without significant emotion. And things began to change. I remember one activist student saying, 'I like what I read in the papers now'. The interim government under the Acting President Choi Kyuha was moving to make orderly changes, when on the 12th December 1979 a faction of the military took control. This event, subsequent demonstrations, the Kwangju uprising in May 1980, and the subsequent removal of the Acting President and the 'approval' of a new constitution brought the leader of the military coup, Chun Doo Hwan to power as President. This final period of my stay in Korea during the Chun years was a contrast to the Park years. Chun was more ruthless and had more sophisticated means of imposing 'stability' on society. He was also not respected, even grudgingly, in the way in which Park had been. In addition to the way in which he and his group had overturned the natural course of development, there was deep resentment about the Chun family, on both his and his wife's sides, for the extensive corruption. Chun was seen to be running a kleptocracy on a grand scale. For all the criticism of Park's authoritarian rule, no one then or later has accused him of being corrupt – a marked contrast to Ferdinand Marcos and other dictatorial leaders in Asia and Africa.

Chun's use of the media led to many sarcastic remarks, one of which was the phrase '*ttaengjŏn*'. '*Ttaeng*' is the sound a bell makes in Korean, and '*jŏn*' is short for Chun Doo Hwan. When the TV news broadcast came on, a bell would sound indicating the new hour, and the newsreader instantly would begin on cue 'Chun Doo Hwan, President of Korea, today …', hence '*ttaengjŏn*'! No one, in other words, had any regard for what was to follow.

However, by the 1980s, many things in Korean society had begun to change. Most noticeable to me was the Korean attitude towards traditional culture and traditional objects. After finishing language training in 1973, I bought some traditional or traditional-style furniture to take with me, including a *samch'ŭng-jang* (three-tiered clothes chest), a *pandaji* chest, an antique Korean desk, and a modern Korean-style desk which I had commissioned to be made along with a six-panel embroidered screen which I had also commissioned using Korean folk art to illustrate Christian theology. When I had first moved into my house in Samdŏk-tong in Taegu in 1974, a neighbour, who was also a member of the church I attended, saw some of the traditional Korean furniture which I had and asked me why I had those old things. He was astounded that a 'sophisticated' young man like me would be interested in them. When I moved back into the house in 1979 after returning from Edinburgh, the same neighbour came around to welcome me back and, in an astonished manner, asked where I had gotten those beautiful pieces of Korean furniture. I knew then that during the late 1970s, people's attitudes toward their culture must have changed, reflecting both greater prosperity and a greater confidence in their own traditions.

At the same time as this change was taking place, other dramatic and non-traditional changes in lifestyle were occurring. Until the 1980s, the personal motor car was something only for the wealthy. By the mid- or late 1980s, the motor car was used by people of all classes. Whereas before, in the 1970s and early 1980s, academic institutions would run a fleet of coaches or mini-buses to pick up staff to take them to work, by the late 1980s, it was assumed that they would have their cars. More significant was the change from a floor-sitting culture to a culture where people sat on chairs and slept on beds – even if the dwelling was heated by an *ondol* system. Beds might be covered with *yo*s and *ibul*s, but they were *beds* and above the floor. Even with these changes, people would still use the floor, especially if there was a large gathering. When we had the home group from our church gather in our house, you could easily get 20 people into a room which would be hard to fill with half that number with chairs. The biggest change, however, was the change from living in homes with gardens surrounded by high walls to living in blocs of flats. When I went to Korea in the early 1970s, only poor people lived in the equivalent of Council flats, the *sibŏm* apartments. People with any money lived in a house. There was a 'modernistic' style of house which had developed in the late 1970s, brick, multi-storey and with large gardens. By the late 1980s, the reverse was true. Only poor people lived in houses, the well-to-do lived in blocs of towering flats. Before you had neighbourhoods with little alleys and daily face-to-face contact with people. With the development of living in flats, the whole concept of a neighbourhood disappeared. The assumption that a home is a flat happened rapidly, and it is strange that this attitude did not happen in Japan which has similar constraints on space.

I have not yet said anything about the Christian church for which I was working, first teaching general subjects such as anthropology and mentoring Christian student groups in Taegu and then teaching world religions and scriptures to theological students at the Theological Seminary in Seoul. The Christian Church (Protestant and Catholic) at the beginning of the 1960s represented six per cent of the national population. By the end of the 1980s, it was more than 20 per cent, and now accounts for just under 30 per cent of the national population. This rapid growth paralleled the dramatic economic growth and general social changes, and to a certain extent is closely linked to these other developments. Although Korean Christianity has a significant rural presence, it is largely an urban phenomenon in current times. In three decades, Korea changed from a rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial society, drawing a labour force out of face-to-face life in villages to essentially faceless urban settings. The community of the churches with a plethora of activities beyond worship provided a new face-to-face community for uprooted people. More than that it provided an ethic for living in a new world, a world characterised by equality of the sexes and concern for others.

In the early 1970s, very traditional forms of social behaviour were manifest in even the most sophisticated congregations. At Chonggyo Methodist Church in Seoul, which had a congregation of highly educated people who had travelled or lived abroad, one could see a middle-aged couple come in on a Sunday morning and then separate at the entrance, the man going to the men's side of the church and the woman to the women's side. This was a residue of a custom from more than sixty years before when congregations had to be divided because the Confucian tradition was that male and female could not sit together after the age of seven. Not only was there a men's and a women's side there, the sides of the church were arranged so that the older (more respected) people sat at the front and the younger people sat towards the back. As one looked from the front of the church to the back, you could make out a clear series of age ranks. People made this social separation quite naturally, because it was respectful.

The importance of the display of proper etiquette was also manifest in the conduct of the service itself. At Chonggyo Church, an elder would be responsible for leading the congregation in prayer. He or she would ascend to the lectern, remove their glasses and begin to pray. The first time I saw an elder removing their glasses, I thought it odd, until I subsequently realised that everyone of the elders did this when they prayed. In late traditional society, it was considered rude for a young person to wear glasses in the presence of a parent or an elder as the wearing of glasses was a sign of age. Removing one's glasses showed respect. Thus, as God was the Father of all, and as a sign of respect to Him, elders removed their glasses before initiating prayer. This custom, however, is no longer practised, not even at Chonggyo Methodist Church.

Korean Protestants, in particular, have brought to their worship an extraordinary enthusiasm as attendance at any service where hymns are sung vigorously and simultaneous out-loud prayers (*tongsŏng kido*) sound like a clap of thunder. Although the majority of hymns sung and the form of liturgy used follow closely Western patterns, Korean Protestants have contributed something unique to world Christianity in the *ch'udo yebae* service, a memorial service for the dead. In a nation steeped in the Confucian values of filial piety and the prescribed performance of memorial rituals for the ancestors, indigenous values would clash with Christian values against the practice of idolatry, the worship of gods other than God Himself. Filial piety and monotheism, an irresolvable conflict? *Ch'udo yebae* is a Korean-origin ritual which is both Christian and Confucian in that it focuses on God while allowing the believer to give thanks for the life of the deceased and to fulfil feelings of filial piety. This accommodation to Korean culture and deeply felt values was a significant factor in the rapid and wide-spread acceptance of Christian belief.

The growing confidence of South Korean society was evident in several incidents. When there was massive flooding in Seoul and other parts of the country, North Korea offered food aid, which was accepted without any apparent hesitation. Likewise, when a North Korean delegation came to the south and a friend of ours, Prof. Yi Yŏngdŏk, who was Vice-Chair of the South Korean Red Cross, was asked how they would show the North Koreans around, he answered that the North Koreans would see things just as they were with no attempt being made to make things better than they were. Ten years before, no one would have spoken like that.

What eventually brought the regime down was the general popular revulsion at the continued military dominance of the Government. A young student died as a result of torture in January of 1987 leading not just to student demonstrations, but general demonstrations, grandmothers shaking umbrellas at the massed lines of riot police. It was if the people were staying 'Go away; you're making us look like a banana republic'. I think that it was this general pride in Korea's accomplishments in a very short period of time, its reclamation of its place on the world's stage that made the general population angry at the continued presence of the generals. The generals backed down. Nationalism, I think even more than the desire for a better life, has been the driving force behind South Korea's leap into the ranks of the world's leading countries.

Without planning it, my time of encounter and living in South Korea from 1965 to 1987 was a period of the most extraordinary and extraordinarily rapid economic, social, cultural and political change. Daily change was happening before one's eyes, even if one wasn't aware of it at the time. It was a privilege to have lived in and have taken part in a country which was recapturing its rightful place on the world stage. During the 1970s, I used to say to myself looking at all the difficulties, 'I'm sure in twenty years I'll say that this was an interesting time – but not now!!' It was interesting – and a privilege to have had a front row seat.