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Contemporary Korean/American Evangelical Missions:
Politics of Space, Gender, and Difference

by

Ju Hui Judy Han

B.A. (University of California, Berkeley) 1995

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Geography

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael J. Watts, Chair

Professor Gillian Hart

Professor Elaine H. Kim

Professor John Lie

Fall 2009

Contemporary Korean/American Evangelical Missions:
Politics of Space, Gender, and Difference
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by Ju Hui Judy Han

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Notes on Transliteration and Translation

I follow the McCune-Reischauer system of transliteration for most Korean personal and place names throughout this dissertation. Exceptions are in cases where non-standard transliterations are already in circulation, e.g. well-known figures like Park Chung Hee or Syngman Rhee. In cases where someone writing or speaking in Korean provided a transliteration, I respectfully used their transliteration, however unorthodox it may be. Throughout the dissertation, I use the Korean language conventions and list the family name first, followed by the given name. All names used in ethnographic case studies are pseudonyms. All Korean-English translations are my own, in all cases of primary research data and secondary sources.

Abstract

Contemporary Korean/American Evangelical Missions:
Politics of Space, Gender, and Difference

By

Ju Hui Judy Han

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Michael J. Watts, Chair

This dissertation concerns the politics of space, gender, and difference with a focus on contemporary Korean evangelical Christian missions. Through a multi-sited, global ethnography of several missionary projects, I examine how overseas mission destinations are imagined, how transnational missionary networks are mobilized, and how missions actually operate on the ground. I discuss how contemporary Korean and Korean American missionary movements operate simultaneously as ambitious world-making projects and concretely localized practices, producing and reproducing multiply rendered world imaginaries by engaging in both universalistic and culturally specific sets of commitments and strategies. Rather than narrowly define proselytizing missions in terms of a religious mandate for domination and conversion, this study suggests that missions in fact seek to corroborate faithfulness in larger matters of modernity, progress, and achievement.

I argue that the history of military and geopolitical alliance between South Korea and the US has had a profound effect on Korean evangelical Christianity, and that a sense of indebtedness to American generosity heavily influences the content and form of contemporary Korean missions. A sense of Korean affinity to US hegemony is manifest in their use of racialized geographical imaginaries through which Korean missionaries articulate their place in the world. The phenomenal growth of world missions can be traced to multi-scalar strategies for church growth and expansion, and spatial logics of evangelical propagation that connect the body politic of local congregations with the geopolitics of world missions. The underground missionary networks aiding North Koreans in China employ custodial power and offer capitalist deliverance, rendering as inextricable capitalism, democracy, and Christianity. Affective encounters through short-term missions to developing nations like Uganda and Tanzania reinforce in visceral and emotional terms the link between Christian salvation and capitalist development, and empower a developmentalist understanding of the world. As such, I conclude by suggesting that contemporary evangelical missions are deeply intertwined with the secular projects of international development aid and humanitarian relief. Insofar as missions rely on a wholesale faith in capitalist development, geographical imaginations that valorize the inherent virtues of the compassionate donor, the heroic aid provider, and the devoted volunteer, evangelical missionaries perpetuate the power-laden systems of inequality that in turn rationalize a need for overseas missions, religious or humanitarian.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In July 2007, a group of twenty-three South Korean short-term missionaries in Afghanistan was captured by the Taliban and held captive for nearly six weeks. The dimly lit video footage of the frightened young hostages—seven men, sixteen women, most of them in their twenties and thirties—sent shockwaves across Korea, and news outlets worldwide took an immediate interest in the “Korean missionaries under fire,” as *Time Magazine* put it.¹ The stated goals of the nine-day mission trip seemed innocuous enough: to bring supplies and a helping hand to ill-equipped schools, medical clinics, and orphanages in a war-torn country. But the Christian group’s proselytizing objective in the ongoing context of US-led war in Muslim-majority Afghanistan made their mission highly precarious and their intent problematic. The missionaries were described in the media as “Asia’s apostles”—zealous and “out of their minds for God.”²

The public ordeal ended with the release of all hostages except the two who were killed, and left lasting political reverberations. The South Korean government negotiated for the release of the hostages by reaffirming its pledge to withdraw its 200 noncombat troops stationed in Afghanistan since 2002 and agreed to ban all further evangelical activities by Korean Christians in Afghanistan, demonstrating a striking convergence of state, military, and religious interests.³ The missionaries earned scant sympathy at home. All faith-based and non-governmental groups who had worked in Afghanistan for many years without incident were ordered for evacuation, infuriating many in the international relief and humanitarian communities. Critics denounced the missionaries for their imprudence and political naiveté, and theologians characterized the hostage event as a symptom of “the danger of the new popularity of short-term missions” (Robert 2009, 132). Still others condemned the broader Christian missionary enterprise of proselytizing on the coat tails of imperial war and colonial occupation. While the overall criticisms tended to focus on the collusion between evangelical Christianity and US imperialism, and missionary disregard for local context, many perplexed observers also raised the question: What in the world were Korean missionaries doing in Afghanistan?

The incident illuminates a set of questions that animate this dissertation project. Who are these faithful missionaries—variously characterized as devoted church volunteers, intrepid humanitarian aid workers, and foolhardy zealots⁴—and what propels them to embrace the risks and dangers of foreign missions? To what extent do Korean missionaries operate as unwitting proxies of the American empire, highlighting deep linkages between humanitarian efforts, religious imperatives, geopolitical mandates and neoliberal capitalism? What kinds of global transformations do missionaries seek to achieve through world evangelization, and how does the pursuit of world

¹ Jennifer Veale, “Korean Missionaries under Fire,” *Time Magazine*, July 27, 2007.

² Suki Kim, “Asia’s Apostles,” *The Washington Post*, July 25, 2007; Lorna Dueck, “Out of Their Minds for God,” *Globe and Mail*, August 4, 2007. Despite the title, Dueck’s column is supportive of the missionary enterprise: “In essence, they want to move from being a bunch of blessed Koreans into being a blessing.”

³ In addition to the publicized terms of agreement, the Korean government was rumored to have paid the Taliban as much as US\$950,000 (approximately US\$50,000 per hostage) in ransom. Mission theologian Dana Roberts states as a fact that “the Korean government paid \$4 million in ransom,” but these claims are speculative. See Dana Lee Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 73. Also see Richard Lloyd Parry, “Captives Return Amid Ransom Claim,” *Times Online*, September 3, 2007; Jae Hoon Shim, “God’s Work for the Taleban,” *Khaleej Times Online*, September 7, 2007. The Korean troops evacuated in 2007, but as of October 2009, redeployment plans are under negotiation.

⁴ See John Chan, “South Korean Hostage Crisis in Afghnistan Ends,” *World Socialist Web Site*, September 12, 2007; Kevin Kim, “S Koreans Rethink Missionary Work,” *BBC News*, August 29, 2007; Sarah Pulliam, “In the Aftermath of a Kidnapping: The South Korean Missionary Movement Seeks to Mature without Losing Its Zeal,” *Christianity Today*, 2007.

evangelism by a specific group of Christian missionaries both challenge and fortify the everyday relations of domination and subordination that underpin the expansion of global hegemony?

This dissertation suggests that these questions can be addressed by considering the larger context of Korean-led evangelical missions. The intricate imbrications of Christianity and capitalist development in Korea, articulated and inflected through geopolitical connections between Korea and the US in the post-Korean War and Cold War periods, are crucial to the explosive growth of Korean-led world missions which take place in tandem with the supposedly secular projects of development aid and humanitarian relief. The connection between Christianity and developmentalist ethos—a rapport accepted by many Koreans as common sense—can only be understood concretely in terms of everyday evangelical practices and mission encounters. Rather than confining the discussion of proselytizing missions in terms of a religious mandate for conversion, I suggest that missions in fact seek to corroborate faithfulness in broader matters of modernity, progress, and achievement.

The extraordinary hostage crisis in Afghanistan calls attention to the ubiquitous presence of Korean missionaries in many parts of the world today. It was certainly unprecedented in terms of the scale of the hostage-taking and the amount of international attention generated, but the case was in fact far from exceptional. There are tens of thousands of South Koreans and Korean Americans who collaborate in similar short-term expeditions throughout the year, and many operate clandestinely and often illegally in regions deemed hostile or dangerous for proselytizing, encountering violence and conflict, deportations and even criminal prosecution. For instance in another widely publicized case in 2004, Kim Sun-il, a young Korean missionary with a keen interest in “Islam missions” was beheaded on video by insurgents after South Korea refused to withdraw current and planned deployment of troops to Iraq.⁵ In August 2006, approximately 1,600 Korean Christians were deported en masse from Afghanistan after it was alleged that they arrived in Kabul to attend what was essentially an evangelical event to convert Muslims to Christianity, concealed as a cultural festival.⁶ As recently as in June 2009, a 34-year-old Korean woman missionary was among seven other foreigners abducted and killed in Yemen.⁷ Presently, South Korean and Korean American evangelical Christians are the primary actors behind North Korea human rights advocacy, and are routinely imprisoned and deported from China for aiding undocumented illegal migrants from North Korea and proselytizing in outlawed, underground churches.⁸

I list these incidents advisedly. Despite these examples of perilous missions, I am disinclined to overplay instances of endangered missionaries or exaggerate degrees of Christian persecution (see Castelli 2007). The majority of missionaries worldwide in fact work without incident or media fanfare, and violent outcomes are actually few and far between. Short-term mission programs thrive in South Korea and the United States as an enormously popular strategy for churches to attract members and better their reputation as oriented towards charity and service. Even a superficial glance at Korean/American churches reveal a plethora of mission programs offered—ranging from trips to “exotic” destinations like Afghanistan and Turkey to “less adventurous” destinations like Guam and Taiwan. Mission fields are also often domestic. Church groups visit Native American reservations in the Southwest and First Nations reserves in the Pacific Northwest, and they reach out to local prison inmates. For many evangelicals, participating in a short-term mission trip has become a common rite

⁵ Ha-yun Jung, “Caught in America’s War,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2004. The insurgent group was later identified as Jama’at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, a group associated with the Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

⁶ Annie I. Bang, “Afghanistan Deports Koreans,” *The Korea Herald*, August 3, 2006; Chris Hawke, “Afghanistan Deports Christian Koreans for Allegedly Violating Islamic Culture and Customs,” *Associated Press Newswires*, 2006.

⁷ Hyo-won Lee, “South Korean Women Confirmed Killed in Yemen,” *The Korea Times*, June 15, 2009.

⁸ Sunny Lee, “A ‘God-Given’ President-Elect,” *Asia Times Online*, February 1, 2008.

of passage, available to anyone interested in sacrificing a little time and personal resources. In other words, the mostly mundane operation of foreign missions and the utterly ordinary composition of mission participants must be an important part of any story about the global reach of contemporary Christianity. After all, it was precisely the ordinariness and everydayness of the missionaries taken hostage in Afghanistan that made the extraordinary crisis all the more compelling and newsworthy.

Spatial Approach to World Missions

This dissertation is an effort to understand Korean-led global missions through a critical geographical lens. To examine how contemporary Korean-led missions complicate prevailing colonial and racialized geographies associated with European and American-dominated legacy of mission encounters, I investigate how mission destinations are imagined, how transnational missionary networks are mobilized, and how missionaries conduct themselves on the ground. Combining discursive analysis and ethnographic research, geographical imaginations and political theologies are put in constant tension with actual mission practices to produce a multi-dimensional spatial analysis of world evangelism promulgated by South Korean evangelicals.

My theoretical approach can be outlined as follows. First, I pay particular attention to critical geographical theories of relationality and connectivity. Doreen Massey has offered provocative ways to think about geo-historical layers and uneven “power geometries” of time-space that produce the elusive “arrangements-in-relation-to-each-other” and “throwntogetherness” of the world (Massey 2005). Massey insists on recognizing distinct and sedimented relations *and* the combinational co-operations of those sedimented relations (Massey 1995). In the case of Korean-led world missions, the variegated layers and forces of anti-Communism and pro-Americanism, policies of rapid industrialization and export-oriented developmentalism, and new aspirations for cosmopolitan mobility together produce asymmetrical terrains for proselytizing missions that intend to persuade the world of Korea’s progress and transformation. Considerations of asymmetrical power relations also raise important questions about the ways in which the spatial imperative of world evangelization entails negotiations of proximity and distance, and adjudicates the terms of “dis/connection,” to use Elspeth Probyn’s term (Probyn 2003). In this study, I pursue the connective elements—the hyphens—of the “arrangements-in-relation-to-each-other” and examine how they are actively produced and maintained against hierarchies and inequalities.

Secondly, I build on notions of interrelationality to approach world evangelization as a world-making project. I understand this to mean that world-space is “constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey 2005, 9), and that this is an ongoing project with countless actors and competing interests. It has been argued that the way we live in space affect our “corporeal alignments, comportment, and orientations” (Grosz 1995, 108). According to Nigel Thrift (1996), space is a site of “becoming” that has to be constantly performed in and through everyday practices. As such, I approach the project of world evangelization as producing a progressional and imminent world-space, employing spatial strategies that foster connection and integration, alignment and orientation. These practices transcend the opposition between “mental” and “material” spaces (see Soja 1996). For instance, Korean evangelicals actively grapple with emotional registers and symbolic coordinates of mission geographies while embedding themselves in mundane, material practices of evangelism. The project of world evangelization incorporates simultaneously imaginary, discursive, and embodied processes that seek to make the world corporeal and inhabitable in their design. It not only employs far-reaching worldviews and produces disciplinary regimes of truth, but also stages localized and intimate engagements with the world’s inhabitants. Therein lies the significance of affective dimensions in mission encounters where ideas and practices sometimes clash, and sometimes corroborate each other. This dissertation

takes seriously the relations between people and places across scales, constructed through geographical imaginations *and* embodied practices and subjectivities.

This leads to my third theoretical approach. Building on notions of interrelationality and social production of space, I draw from poststructuralist and feminist-inflected geographies concerned with politicized bodies and emplaced subjectivities (Keith and Pile 1993, Pile and Thrift 1995, Nast and Pile 1998, Probyn 2003). My aim is to provide “more accountable, embodied ways of seeing and understanding the intersection of power and space” (Hyndman 2007, 36). But rather than privilege the body or the locality as somehow more authentically material or intrinsically “grounded,” I take seriously theories of performative subject formation and phenomenological orientations to suggest that missions constitute performative spaces (Butler 1990, 1997, Ahmed 2000, 2006, Gregson and Rose 2000). They are “reiterative and citational practices” (Butler 1990) which produce and promulgate missionary discourse and knowledge, while also enabling and disciplining missionary subjects. Put simply, missionaries do not just stage missions: missions produce missionaries. Missions are the social (re)productive grounds of far-reaching global subjectivities.

Power Geometries of Proselytizing Missions

The term “missionary” is caricatured as representing a white Anglo-Saxon man in a pith helmet, preaching to unwilling “natives” in a steamy jungle. Yet over the 2,000 years of Christianity, the “missionary” is likely to have been a Korean couple working among university students in China, or an Indian medical doctor gaining the knowledge needed to negotiate the larger forces of political decay, or to resist colonialism. (Robert 2009, 1)

There is a rich legacy of Western missionary figures in historical and popular imagination.⁹ Typically portrayed as spiritual giants, hardy explorers, heroic doctors, or intrepid travelers, well-known missionaries like David Livingstone (1813-1873) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) have gained fame as the very embodiment of adventure and Western benevolence, and remain to this day celebrated figures in evangelical discourse. It is also by now a common contention that missionaries played a key role within the workings of colonial domination. Christian missionaries for many represent the very personification of cultural imperialism broadly defined (Dunch 2002). Proselytizing missions have equipped colonial projects with an enabling moral pretext, carried out colonial agendas as de facto agents of empire, and pacified the colonized populations with teachings that stressed submission and acquiescence (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986, 1991, 1997, McClintock 1995, Stoler 2002, 2006). In the nineteenth century Korean context, Western proselytizing missions brought “universal winds of civilization” and Western Enlightenment ideals (Schmid 2002), and appealed to elite Korean nationalists who embraced the new idioms of empowerment based on reason, liberty and equality.

At the present moment, even the diehard evangelicals begrudgingly admit that the “romance of missions”—adventure, danger, exotic locale—has all but faded away amidst pleas for pluralism and tolerance. As Huber and Lutkehaus (1999) point out, “when it comes to humanitarian causes pursued abroad, missionary circles are generally *not* from whence today’s heroes of human rights, environmentalism, development, or public health emerge” (5, my emphasis). Accepting criticisms of missionary legacies of the past, evangelicals vow to make changes for missions to be less

⁹ For a critically nuanced discussion of representations of missionaries in popular culture, see Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

paternalistic and more equitable. Expressions like “heathen regions” have been replaced by “unreached people groups” and “civilizing missions” are now understood as “cross-cultural” endeavors. Vocabularies of humanitarian volunteerism and internationalism, rather than imperialism and colonial conquest, figure prominently in contemporary missionary discourse. Mission training curriculum borrow from cultural anthropology for “in-depth knowledge of cultural differences” which in turn promises “cross-cultural understanding.”¹⁰ The leading subjects of missions are also said to be changing. One popular pledge among contemporary mission theologians is that in addition to the tried-and-true cross-cultural missions, proselytizing missions must be led by “cultural neighbors” who are ideally suited for evangelizing the “unreached.” Such is the landscape of what has been dubbed “postcolonial missions,” with an emphasis on South-to-South flows and a focus on humanitarian aid and cultural exchange as the preferred mode of mission encounter. Is it possible to re-invent proselytizing missions when global disparities and power asymmetries persist? Though meaningfully different, the new forms are not a radical departure from the old forms. The “new” evangelical ethics of alterity is still coordinated through purpose-driven encounters with modernity’s strangers who are in need of rescue and love. Missions by definition constitute a deliberate and intentional flow which privileges the capacity of the powerful—whether as a generous donor or a heroic rescuer.

A brief discussion of the politics of evangelism is necessary here. I suggest, at the risk of oversimplifying, that *evangelicals are compelled by a duty to evangelize* in one way or another. This does not mean that all evangelicals are called to serve as missionaries, but rather that all self-identified evangelicals are compelled by a religious imperative to “share the Good News” in some form, regardless of objective context or setting—whether to family members and co-workers or to complete strangers at a shopping mall. For those involved in ecumenically oriented mission, a preferred theology of mission is understood in terms of “*missio Dei*”—a singular mission defined as participating in the ongoing work of God in the world, to achieve the will of God in a human context. In ecumenical mission theology, non-believers are seen as *partners* in God’s mission, not *objects* of mission.¹¹ Rather than focus on conversionist rescue of non-believers or stress church growth and expansion as evidence of God’s providence, liberal ecumenical mission theology emphasizes discovering and exposing social injustice and political violence in the world, and bearing witness to healing and reconciling activities. Rather than benefit from unequal power relations and exploit the geographies of uneven power geometries, liberal ecumenical missions envision their purpose as precisely an effort to change systems of oppression and structures of injustice.

In the postwar context of postcolonial liberation, theologically liberal and ecumenically oriented missionaries, especially in Latin America, were informed by a critical economics perspective articulated with theological and historical critique (Dussel and Mendieta 2003). Ecumenical missionaries throughout the world sided with the poor and the powerless in supporting anti-imperialist and pro-democracy struggles in many parts of the world even as other adherents espoused a wholesale faith in capitalist modernity through its “prosperity gospel” and colluded with American military interests (Rowland 2007, Brouwer, et al. 1996, Diamond 1999).

¹⁰ The work of anthropologist-theologian Paul G. Hiebert have been particularly influential in this regard, and three of his books have been translated into Korean. Hiebert was a well-known theologian who taught mission and anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Kansas State University, and Fuller Theological Seminary. Paul G. Hiebert, *Sōnkyowa Munhwa Illyuhak [Anthropological Insights for Missionaries]*, trans. Dong-hwa Kim (Seoul: Joy Mission Publishers, 1996); ———, *Sōnkyo Hyōnjangūi Munhwa Ihae [Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues]*, trans. Yong-dong Kim (Seoul: Joy Mission Publishers, 1997); ———, *Insinronjōk Jōnhwanūi Sōnkyohakjōk Ūūi* (Seoul: Korea Research Institute for Missions, 2006).

¹¹ The “Holy Spirit is the invisible third party who stands between me and the other, making us mutually aware.” John V. Taylor, *The Go-between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Such ecumenical approach was known as the “*minjung* theology” in Korea.¹² The Korean word “*minjung*” refers to “common people” or the masses, as articulated by social movements during the 1970s and 1980s. Minjung movements thus involved restoring the historical subjectivity of “those who are oppressed in the sociopolitical system but who are capable of rising up against it” (N. Lee 2007, 5). Minjung theologian Hwang Hong Eyoul expresses a similar perspective when he discusses the function of ecumenical mission. Since “intercultural encounters nearly always involve an unequal distribution of power,” he writes, salvation must be understood as “the relational healing process, and perspectival alteration between the wronged and the wrongdoer” (H. E. Hwang 2003, 91). Embodied in such liberal ecumenical mission theology is a clear and deliberate emphasis on the socio-politically powerless, the wronged and the oppressed.

These liberal ecumenical mission theologies and practices do not feature prominently in this dissertation. They are mentioned primarily for contextual and comparative purposes (especially in Chapter 3), but by and large, this dissertation concerns conservative evangelicals who envision a markedly different kind of engagement with power. A theologian once told me in half-jest that ecumenical liberation theology chose The People, but the people chose fundamentalist, evangelical, and Pentecostal Christianity.¹³ It is theologically conservative evangelicals, not liberal ecumenicals, who presently lead the way in overseas missions promoting faith-based humanitarianism and volunteerism, signaling what has been described as the rise of “a new evangelical internationalism” (McAlister 2006). No doubt that in many cases, evangelical and ecumenical approaches resemble each other. Humanitarianism and internationalism are now the dominant *modus operandi* for all worldly engagement, not a distinguishing feature of an exclusive camp of liberals and progressives. But one meaningful way that conservative evangelical missionaries stand apart from the liberal ecumenical missionaries is in the way they invoke the project of “world evangelization,” a term many consider outdated for its problematic allusion to imperialistic and progressive territorial extension.¹⁴ Conservative evangelicals discussed in this dissertation are those who perceive their role as carrying out an aggressive mission mandate to reach all corners of the world, often with a socially conservative moral agenda. They tend to emphasize institutional growth (“church planting”) and individual and collective-scale conversions (“harvest”) above concerns for social justice or equality.

I make every effort not to generalize conservative evangelical missionaries as a monolithic entity. Protestant Christianity is culturally and theologically diverse, and no one group is guided by a single, coherent and unchanging agenda. Some evangelicals, conservative or liberal, would no doubt disavow many of the theologies and practices discussed in this dissertation. At the risk of oversimplifying complex theological differences into a dichotomous ecumenical-evangelical or liberal-conservative binary, I nonetheless insist that the two approaches diverge significantly on the

¹² Minjung theology is often defined as “a theology by the people, for the people, and of the people.” Nicolas Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2002). Scholarship on minjung politics and minjung theology are voluminous including Kwang-sun David Suh, *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981); Jang Jip Choi, “Political Cleavages in South Korea,” in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, ed. Hagen Koo (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Paul Y. Chang, “Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hours: The Socio-Political Origins of Minjung Protestant Movements,” in *Christianity in Korea*, ed. Robert Buswell and Timothy S. Lee (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006); Namhee Lee, *The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹³ This is an unattributed saying from an unknown source, circulating in liberal circles that bemoan the decline of liberation theology.

¹⁴ In many modern missiological contexts, the term “mission” came to replace “evangelization” which was seen to have more aggressive and elitist connotation. This semantic discussion becomes more complicated in the Korean language. *Sŏnkyo* nearly always implies foreign mission. Another word, *chŏndo*, refers more to the conversion-oriented evangelism effort on an individual scale. A person engaged in *sŏnkyo* is thus called *sŏnkyo-sa* or missionary, while a person engaged in *chŏndo* is called *chŏndo-sa* or evangelist, a title with social status lower than missionary.

fundamental questions of how missions should engage with the asymmetrical power geometries of the world. I again underscore the point that the spatial imperative to evangelize is a fundamentally constitutive feature of evangelical Christianity. Evangelical imperative produces subjectivities and fosters connectivities. This is encapsulated in the classic definition offered by *Christianity Today*, a flagship publication for evangelicals: an evangelical Christian is a person who “has had a born again conversion, accepts Jesus as his or her personal Savior, believes that the Scriptures are the authority for all doctrine and *feels an urgent duty to spread the faith*” (1978).¹⁵

The prominence of Korean-led world missions presents ample opportunity to investigate precisely how this “urgent duty to spread the faith” is constructed, instilled, and operationalized in concrete and particular terms. Missions for the most part involve ordinary people neither heroic in their faith nor unwavering in their sense of duty. The question remains, how is it that countless numbers of ordinary South Korean and Korean American missionaries empty their savings and volunteer their time to embark on bold, transnational religious projects in some of the most unexpected places in the world? What sense of urgency and duty animates and sustains them?

Korean Christianity and Korean-led world missions

The missionary movement from the West is only an episode in African, Asian and Pacific Christian history—a vital episode, but for many churches an episode long closed. Missionary enterprise continues, but its Western, and especially its original European, component is crumbling. The great missionary nation is now Korea; in every continent there are Korean missionaries by the hundreds, in coming years we can expect hundreds more, preaching from Tashkent to Timbuktu, and reaching where Westerners have long been unable to tread. (A. Walls 2002, 45, quoted in S. Kim, 2005)

When I was young, Korea’s GDP at the time was the same as Congo, and I could never imagine Korea as an industrialized country. It is a miracle... When we were hopeless, the Western missionaries came and they introduced us to the hope in Jesus Christ. So we have a very holy obligation to share this hope in Jesus Christ with those people who are still in their misery.

- Pastor Ha Yongjo, Onnuri Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Seoul¹⁶

The phenomenal growth of Korean Christianity is lauded in evangelical literature as nothing short of an incredible miracle, and serves as a religious counterpart to Korea’s fantastic economic growth referred to as the “miracle on the Han River.” A common image associated with the vitality of Korean Christianity is the ubiquitous spectacle of red neon crosses that dominate cityscapes throughout Korea.¹⁷ Scorching the nighttime sky every night, countless red neon crosses atop churches are said to astonish visitors and inspire believers. Whereas the numerousness of the crosses attest to the widespread presence of Christianity in Korea, the scale of congregations have also been impressive. Out that ten of the eleven largest mega-congregations in the world are located in the city

¹⁵ My emphasis. According to Christian Smith (1998), “Evangelicalism today is composed of Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Independents, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Restorationists, Congregationalists, Holiness Christians, and Episcopalians” (13). Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁶ *Evangelical Movement Spreads Throughout South Korea* 2008. [Website], February 28 2007 [accessed February 3, 2008]. Available from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/jan-june07/southkorea_02-28.html.

¹⁷ See for instance, Taru Taylor, “Red neon cross lights up Koreans,” *Asia Times*, July 31, 2008.

of Seoul, including the largest Pentecostal congregation, the largest Presbyterian congregation, the largest Methodist congregation, and the second-largest Baptist congregation (Johnstone, et al. 2001). Whereas the term “megachurch” generally refers to a congregation with an average weekly attendance of 2,000 or more persons, several megachurches in Korea claim membership in the hundreds of thousands. Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, reputedly the world’s largest church with nearly 800,000 members and 136,600 cell leaders, and counts 250,000 in worship attendance every Sunday.

The strength of Korean Christianity is typically illustrated by emphasizing both these exceptionally large and phenomenally successful Protestant megachurches and the much more numerous and pervasive presence of small to medium sized churches throughout the country. Statistically speaking, however, Korea is not predominantly Christian. According to the 2005 Korean Census, nearly half of the population (46.5%) reported no religious affiliation, and 29.3% self-identified themselves as Christian, barely outnumbering 22.8% identified as Buddhist.¹⁸ Of the Christian groups, Protestants accounted for 18.3% of the population and Catholics 10.9%. With only about a quarter of South Korea’s population self-identifying as Protestant or Catholic, the notion that South Korea is a Christian nation is at best a contested claim.

Nevertheless, conservative Korean evangelicals tend to insist on a connection between the institutional vitality of Korean Christianity and Korea’s national strength and wealth. Typically measuring Korea’s prosperity and economic development in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and gross national product (GNP), they associate progress with a sense of national advancement in the capitalist world order, and express their “urgent duty to spread the faith” as a religious project enabled by economic capacity. Often touted is the claim that Korea is now the world’s twelfth largest economy and a member of the prestigious OECD *and* the world’s second largest sender of missionaries.¹⁹

The implicit gesture behind the praise for Korea’s transformation—from a “mission-receiving” country to a major “mission-sending” country—is a nod of approval for South Korea’s “miraculous” economic growth and advancement in the capitalist world order (see Steve Moon 2003).²⁰ As of the year 2006, the Korean World Missions Association (KWMA) estimated that nearly 20,000 overseas missionaries were sent officially by denominations and mission agencies, and

¹⁸ Religious adherence data from the Korean Census, 2005.

¹⁹ The claim that Korea sends the second-largest number of missionaries worldwide, second only to the United States, has been repeated in the media and by scholars as though it is a verifiable fact. It is not. Precise numbers of overseas missionaries at any given time are impossible to calculate, whether for cross-national comparisons or in one domestic national context. The “second best” figure first appeared in the English-language media in the evangelical almanac, *Operation World* (2001), a publication that relies on dubious self-reporting by local informants and anonymous contributors. The statistic is given credence and popularized in part by Steve Moon, “The Recent Korean Missionary Movement: A Record of Growth, and More Growth Needed,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, no. 1 (2003). Moon is the Executive Director of Korea Research Institute for Missions (KRIM), an intermediary mission agency that produces an annual survey. The KRIM survey in 2000 reports that there were 8,103 Korean missionaries at work outside of Korea at the end of 2000—including *only long-term missionaries sent by mission agencies*, not self-funded or independent missionaries dispatched by a church congregation, and counting only those committed to over two years of missionary service. In 2006, based on latest KRIM statistics and updated edition of *Operation World*, Moon demoted Korea as the third-place mission-sender with 12,874 missionaries, outranked by India which reportedly sends 41,064 missionaries. See Steve Sang-Cheol Moon, *World Mission Status and Remaining Tasks Report* (Seoul: Korea Research Institute for Missions, 2006). Despite these changes and ongoing discussion, Korea’s so-called status as the second-place sender of world missions continues to circulate widely and problematically, often without any attributed source or statistical explanation. On the other hand, no one seems to dispute that the United States is number one. Korea’s “second best” claim thus ensures both affinity and deference to the first-place US.

²⁰ Rob Moll, “Missions Incredible,” *Christianity Today*, March, 2006.

some 5,000 unofficial missionaries were dispatched directly by congregations.²¹ The Korean Research Institute for Missions (KRIM) has produced more modest statistics, putting the number of Korean Protestant missionaries at 14,905 in 2006, but their survey does not include those sent directly by congregations.²²

Optimistic mission advocates contend that the emergent Korean missionary movement will soon eclipse centuries of Western-dominated Protestant missions, alter the global landscape of Christianity, and herald a new era of South-to-South missionary flows (Jenkins 2002). Triumphant predictions regarding Korean-led global missions rest firmly on perceptions of South Korea as a chosen or blessed nation that progressed from poverty to prosperity as a combined result of Christianization and capitalist development, and they disregard evidence to the contrary.²³ As the following quote by a missionary puts it clearly, missions showcase Korea's achievements and elevate Korea's status in the world:

Besides missionary work, we also intend to show how much South Korea has grown and that we are now able to share with other people in need around the world. [...] As the Peace Corps movement of US President John F. Kennedy did with American youths, our program will help expand South Korean youths' international perspectives. It will eventually expand South Koreans' influence and status abroad. (Korean missionary in Seoul, 2007)²⁴

The intention illustrates precisely what mission theologian Sangkeun Kim called the "triumphalism of Pax Koreana" (2005). Beseeching Korean missions *not* to follow the footsteps of their Western missionary predecessors, Kim quotes Samuel Escobar, a leading Latin American theologian:

It seems to me that churches that look successful, because they give the people in North America the kind of domesticated Christianity they are asking for, become the

²¹ In light of the prominence of GDP-based statistics in public discourse in Korea, it is worth noting that the notion an "era of almost 20,000" resembles another oft-invoked milestone during the Roh administration, that South Korea has now reached "the era of USD \$20,000 GDP."

²² Many criticize the practice of non-denominational congregations sending their own missionaries without coordination with mission agencies or networks. Their reasons include lack of proper theological and language training, lack of supervision and accountability on the mission field, and redundant effort and potential hostility and competition among the multiple missionaries sent to the same locality. In 2008, the largest number of Korean missionaries worked in Asia (47.3%), especially in China, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and India.

²³ There are plenty of socio-economic indices that would lower Korea's stature and cast doubt on Korea's so-called progress. For example in 2006, Korea ranked the highest in suicide rate among OECD member nations, which analysts attribute to pervasive and untreated mental illness, intense demands for labor productivity, deficient social welfare and affordable healthcare for the poor, and lack of safety net for the poorest of the poor. "S. Korea has top suicide rate among OECD countries: report," *The Hankyoreh*, September 18, 2006. Furthermore, 2009 OECD statistics found that 45.1% of Korea's elderly subsist below the poverty line, over three times the OECD average of 13.3%. Korea ranked in the bottom in a recently released OECD "Happiness Index," coming in at twenty-seventh out of thirty in the category of "social fairness" which gauges economic disparity and social inequality. Kim Hyun-cheol, "Korea ranks low in OECD happiness index," *The Korea Times*, October 23, 2009.

²⁴ Lee Chan-min, an official at International Youth Fellowship which sends 770 students annually on yearlong aid missions to more than 70 countries. Quoted in "Anger Is Tempering Sympathy for South Korean Hostages," *The New York Times*, August 3, 2007.

supporters of the most traditional forms of global mission, the ones that prolong the old colonial system. (Escobar 1999, 25, quoted in S. Kim 2005)²⁵

Feminist and postcolonial studies contribute important insights into understanding how missions resuscitate the oppressive relations of “old colonial systems.” However, the dominant literature on missions tend to be historical studies, almost invariably with a focus on European and American missionaries as the primary actors who encounter difference abroad. Considering the dramatic reconfigurations of global Christianity and the significance of South-South flows, a closer look at the Korean-led world missions will yield a deeper understanding of the interlocking dimensions of religion, nation, race, and gender in a changing global context.

Rather than marginalizing Korean-led missions as less global in their intent or reach—somehow more localized and particularistic in comparison to the truly universal claims of Western missions—I focus on how Korean missionaries make a case for the universality of development while paradoxically insisting on the particularity of Korea’s achievement.²⁶ As reflected by influential theologian Andrew Walls’ excerpt earlier, Korea is now considered a “great missionary nation.” In contrast to their Western historical counterparts, Korean missionaries assert themselves as geopolitical and racial intermediaries—explicitly non-Western yet having “taken off” from the lower rungs of the developing world, confidently asserting their own notion of ethno-racial-national superiority.

In fact, combining the claims of colonial neutrality and capacity for empathy, Korean missionaries consider themselves to be ideally suited for evangelizing in the postcolonial and developing world precisely because of Korea’s own experience of having suffered from—and more importantly, having overcome—a history marked with brutalities of colonialism and devastations of war, combined with ruthless political repression and pervasive poverty. This ideological practice of *Korean exceptionalism* derives from American exceptionalism and the imperial doctrines of manifest destiny, yet there is a historical and geographical particularity of its emergence in the Korean context. The paradoxical convergence of Korean exceptionalism and the universalizing teleology of market and Christian triumphalism, co-operating alongside global US hegemony, points to the imbrications of multiple globalities—a term used by Grewal and Kaplan in part to critique the conceptual duality of the global and local (Grewal and Kaplan 1994).

Missions, mobilities, and travel

Multiple dimensions of global flows make possible the production of multiple globalizations or “multiple worlds” (Appadurai 1996). But multiplicity does not equal flat or smooth space—world-making projects are enabled or constrained by power-laden structures of privilege and conditions of inequality. The continuing importance of logics of power and systems of domination must therefore be included in any consideration of the variegated processes associated with globalization.

²⁵ Though mostly a constructive criticism of Korean-led global missions, Kim’s article also makes some peculiar arguments about “the real crisis of missionary-sending Korea,” such as: “The phenomenally low fertility rate of Korean women will impact not only church growth but also Korea’s missionary future” (70). Sangkeun Kim, “Sheer Numbers Do Not Tell the Entire Story: The Challenges of the Korean Missionary Movement from an Ecumenical Perspective,” *The Ecumenical Review* 57, no. 4 (2005).

²⁶ There is a tendency among liberal Western Christians to dismiss Korean-led global missions—and Korean Christianity in general—as an unauthentic purveyor of (real) Christianity, an unseemly spectacle of misguided zeal and religious freakery. See Dueck, “Out of Their Minds for God.” Such portrayal contains the condescending suggestion that Third World churches are underdeveloped and unreconstructed, and full of excesses—too intolerant, too charismatic, too extravagant, and even too devoted.

An often overlooked aspect of missionary mobility is the privilege afforded to certain travelers with certain passports. After all, missionaries too need passports and visas for international travel. American missionaries take great advantage of visa waiver programs throughout the world, a convenience that is not to be underestimated in matters of transnational mobility. This is relevant especially for short-term missionaries—mission tourists—who typically obtain tourist visas or temporary visitor permits, not religious or employment visas for their time abroad.

In a similar vein, one cannot overstate the significance of Korea's travel liberalization policy in 1989 and its impact on the growth of Korean-led global missions.²⁷ Travel restrictions during the authoritarian era were both a repressive policy of surveillance and control, and an economic policy to restrict outflows and keep consumption within Korea to stimulate the domestic market. Until the 1980s, passports themselves were regarded as privilege exclusive to the elite classes, and off limits to pro-democracy activists or other dissidents. In fact, prior to 1983, only three categories of people were allowed passports: "commerce passports" for those conducting export-related businesses, "government passports" for foreign service or government employees traveling abroad, and "study abroad passports" for students.

Short-term missions would have been unimaginable before the eighties. Korea's outbound travel market was confined to labor export to the Middle East and the US until 1983, when ordinary citizens over the age of 50 were permitted to travel abroad for leisure for the first time. Passports for tourism purposes were first issued in 1983, and only to those over the age of 50 with a bank balance of at least KRW 2,000,000 (approximately US\$2,600 in 1983). The age restriction was lowered to 45 years of age in 1987 and 40 years in January 1988, and then again to 30 years of age in July the same year. All age and income restrictions were lifted on January 1, 1989, making overseas travel possible for "ordinary" Korean nationals for the first time in 44 years.²⁸ After the prohibitive travel restrictions were lifted in 1989, outbound travel from Korea increased by 67% from 1988 to 1.2 million departures annually.²⁹ Double-digit growth was recorded throughout the 1990s, and though the numbers dipped during the financial crisis in 1997 and 1998, outbound travel again grew by 41.6% in 1999. By 2007, almost 13 million have departed from Korea, up from 12 million in 2006 and 10 million in 2005.

The statistical patterns of outbound travel parallel trends of overseas Korean missions, which experienced similarly dramatic increase in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Numerically speaking, short-term mission trips constitute a tiny fraction of all outbound travel from Korea. Nevertheless, "mission/religious travel" did account for the fourth most common reason for outbound travel in 2007.³⁰ The rapid growth of short-term mission trips in the 1990s can thus be seen as part of a broader travel policy change and an overall increase in outbound travel from Korea.³¹

²⁷ Japan lifted its travel restrictions in 1970.

²⁸ Under Japanese colonial rule, Koreans were able to travel "freely" between Japan, Taiwan and Manchuria as Japanese imperial subjects traveling within the territory of the empire. Even after travel liberalization in 1989, foreign travel was regarded by the state with suspicion, and members of the Korean intelligence agency were known to secretly follow and monitor those traveling especially to Communist countries like China.

²⁹ These statistics are from Korea National Tourism Organization, 2006.

³⁰ Survey conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization in 2007. Many short-term missionaries I met, especially those in their twenties, admitted that they were attracted to short-term missions primarily because they saw them as an opportunity for international travel.

³¹ Whereas many short-term mission participants sign up to gain international travel experience, promoters of short-term mission trips are motivated by other reasons as well. A South Korean mission analyst told me that short-term missions are not only invaluable for education and training purposes, but also extremely important for building church morale and setting fundraising goals—congregants are more likely to contribute towards specific projects like construction or a mission project. Especially in the highly competitive marketplace of Protestant churches in Korea, short-term missions have become an important member recruitment and institution building strategy. Anonymous interview in Seoul, 2006.

A variety of secular interests enable religious missions. In the case of Korean-led global missions, these include the increasing international mobility of Korean travelers and students, the increasing mobility of Korean capital in seeking and securing new markets, and the increasing circulation of Korean cultural products such as film and music. Another noteworthy factor to consider is that nearly 60% of all Koreans who travel overseas choose package tours or some form of group traveling experience.³² The convenience of an all-inclusive package—with a pre-arranged itinerary, responsible local guides and interpreters, and the company of other Korean speakers—is coupled with the appeal of lower cost of package tours. Short-term missions certainly resemble package tours. In addition to the convenience of traveling with other Korean speakers, there is usually an itinerary prepared in advance, and local coordinators and interpreters who take care of day-to-day logistics. Just as importantly, there is someone to arrange meals, and to make sure that Korean food is provided. This is not a minor point. In a recent survey conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization, a great majority of Koreans travelers listed the lack of Korean food as the number one inconvenience of traveling overseas. Paradoxically, they also rated “encountering cultural difference” as a major motivating factor for traveling overseas. Like package tours, short-term missions provide a mobility structure that allows participants to do things out of the ordinary but with reassurances for convenience, security and comfort. Missionary mobility, in other words, is marked by an ongoing interplay between familiarity and strangeness, ordinary and extraordinary, individuation and standardization.³³

Ideology and Religion

It has become de rigeur for leftists and liberal Christians alike to link “evangelicals” with an ambiguously defined cast of fundamentalists, conservative Christians, neoconservatives, and Republicans, lumped together under the moniker of the “Christian Right.” This tendency can be found in academic scholarship as well as popular discourse.³⁴ The popular list of villains typically includes leaders like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, and culminates in the reviled figure of George W. Bush who was not only elected to office with the backing of evangelical voters but also promoted a conservative Christian moral agenda in a range of devastating domestic and foreign policies (see E. Kaplan 2004). In Korea as well, influential conservative pastors of well-known megachurches often bear the brunt of criticism from liberals and progressives who decry the institution of conservative Korean Christianity—*posu kidokkyo*—as a monolithic and coherent political entity.

Joel Robbins points to an “anthropological aversion to Christianity” (Robbins 2004, 29), echoing Susan Harding’s earlier suggestion that Christian fundamentalists constitute a particularly “repugnant cultural other” (Harding 1991). Harding had observed that not all others are equal, and that unlike anthropology’s *other* others whose difference is deemed worthy of nuanced study, evangelical Christians appear to pose a particularly difficult—if not plainly distasteful—subject for

³² *Jeju Ilbo*, October 12, 2005.

³³ A short anecdote from my research in Tanzania may illustrate this point well. I was surprised to see how much the missionaries brought from Korea, including an inordinate amount of supplies to prepare Korean meals on a regular basis. There were boxes and boxes of staples like instant noodles, hot pepper pastes and roasted seaweeds, as well as multiple bags of Korean rice and even some kimchi. These provisions would not last long among the hundred and fifty participants, but it was hoped that at least twice a week, they would be treated to a reasonably ordinary Korean meal. As expected, women would be solely responsible for food preparation and cleanup.

³⁴ Sara Diamond’s extensively-researched and in many ways groundbreaking studies of the Right, for instance, tends to gloss over internal theological and ideological differences and overstate the coherence of this formation Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: The Gillford Press, 1995); ———, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Boston: South End Press, 1999)..

academic inquiry. The tendency is widespread—evangelicals are commonly portrayed as simple-minded and intolerant bigots who blindly follow their leaders, reject unassailable liberal democratic principles such as freedom and tolerance, deny incontrovertible scientific truths such as theories of evolution, and oppose basic human rights such as abortion rights and gay rights. Faith-based activism led by evangelicals are problematized as implementing prejudiced viewpoints and ideological blueprints at the expense of more “true” and far-sighted concerns for social justice.

There has been considerable interest in the interplay between conservative political theology and contemporary politics. Political theorist Wendy Brown (2006) unpacks neoconservatism as a “contingent convergence of interests,” and exposes this political formation as being “born out of a literally unholy alliance, one that is only unevenly and opportunistically religious” (696). Religious historian Elizabeth Castelli (2007) shifts the focus from an ideological convergence to, for instance, a shared reliance on accusatory claims of religious persecution as a rhetorical strategy that helps bind diverse and disparate actors. Biblical scholar Erin Runions (2007) examines the alliance between neoconservatism and far-right Christian Dominion theology as a more contingent and “unnatural” alliance than it may be presumed, pushing us to think beyond what William E. Connolly has described as the Christian Right’s “compensatory drives for special economic entitlement and comforts in this world” (Connolly 2005, 878; quoted in Runions 2007).

In addition to ideological and discursive analysis, many scholars have focused on “ordinary evangelicals” to argue that this group formation is hardly monolithic, and far more complex and ambivalent in their composition and actual practices (C. Smith 1998, 2000). In Andrea Smith’s study of Native Americans and the Christian Right (2008), for instance, “ordinary” Native American evangelicals emerge not as “dupes for white supremacy, complicit in their own oppression” (xi). Rather, they are reflective individuals who actively negotiate their vexed position, at times supporting Christian imperialism and performing whiteness but at other times also using the Bible to resist white Christian claims to a “Christian America” and supporting tribal nationalisms. The “anti-gay” evangelicals in Dawne Moon’s congregational ethnography (2004) turn out to fear divisive politics in the church more than they abhor homosexuality *per se*, and their “everyday theologies” ultimately reflect a rejection of the intense moral and social discord rather than embody an unbending ideological stance. “Everyday theologies” is a particularly useful concept for a study of missions and how the intricate imbrications between religious motivations and secular intentions play out in the most mundane details of everyday practices.

Missionary apparatuses and the Calling

Louis Althusser has argued that contrary to seeing ideology as bearing down on passive individuals—overpowering those who protest or dare to resist—it may best be understood as sets of practices in which we are always engaged. His point is that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material” (Althusser 1971, 155). These ideological apparatuses, according to Althusser, include the family, education, religion and the realm of the law. Along similar lines, I suggest that ruling ideas of world evangelization do not just seep into people’s heads or dominate the participants by force. They are reproduced and reinscribed over and over again through a variety of ideological apparatuses and everyday practices—what Judith Butler calls “citational practices” (Butler 1990, 1988) and related to what Moon describe as “everyday theologies” (Moon 2004).

In the well-known scenario of Althusser’s theory of interpellation—that subjects are constituted or interpellated by ideology—a man on the street is hailed by a policeman. When this person responds to the policeman’s “hey, you!” he is rendered as a subject before the law. Critical scholars have rightly pointed out the uneven power geometries at work in this scenario, since the policeman is not just another person but an agent of the state, as well as the gendered and racialized

potential for such encounter. As Probyn puts it, this moment of interpellation and subject formation is “not a given but rather a process and a production,” in which sites and spaces play a constitutive role (Probyn 2003, 294).

In a slightly different scenario, consider the ways that missionaries are “hailed” by God. The complex theological and theoretical nature of a religious calling cannot be discussed at length here, but suffice it to say that this process of religious interpellation begins with one subjecting herself or himself to the higher authority of God, similar to the policeman scenario. This act of subjection constitutes an evangelical missionary subjectivity—one who was called, one who then responded and obeyed, and one who shall thus be rewarded with salvation. A young Korean missionary I interviewed described her missionary calling as follows.

My pastor told me that God told *him* that my calling is to become a missionary in Indonesia.³⁵

In this fascinating portrayal, communication with God resembles a game of “telephone”—with God’s message conveyed first to the clergy and then to the aspiring missionary. She had no pre-existing interest in Indonesia as a mission destination, nor was she confident in her commitment to become a missionary. But when her pastor revealed that he himself had conferred with God and proceeded to confirm *her* missionary calling, that is when she accepted her calling as a missionary—to Indonesia of all places. Because she trusted her pastor’s authority in communicating with God on her behalf, she trusted the process of this mediated interpellation. I have met missionaries who discussed a more direct calling—either a voice heard during prayer or a sudden image that appeared with meaningfulness—but there were other missionaries who recalled their calling in similarly mediated and ambivalent terms.

It is significant that the clergy—an institutional representative of the church—is the one who mediated this subject-formation. In light of the often bifurcated approach to dominant ideologies and everyday practices (or theologies), I suggest that this intervening figure of the pastor is the missing conduit that facilitates a transfer of ruling ideologies from one to another. His pastoral authority is ordained by the church and recognized by the laity, yet like the great majority of ordained pastors who lead modest-sized congregations, this pastor is also an approachable and accessible figure, simultaneously an astute teacher, a trusted confidant, and a self-assured leader. And I say “he” advisedly, since the overwhelming majority of ordained pastors in Korea—over 96% among Methodists, for instance—are male, while the congregations are predominantly and increasingly female.³⁶ The pastor no doubt has obligations and self-interests of his own, whether it is to encourage his congregation to actively participate in mission programs or to contribute financially. What I glimpse in this narrative of missionary interpellation is how the institutional interests of evangelical

³⁵ Anonymous interview, Korean missionary, Seoul, 2006. My emphasis.

³⁶ According to the Korean Methodist Church’s research source book on gender equity (2006), female pastors composed only 5.37% out of a total of 9,144 pastors who belong to KMC, which ordained female pastors for the first time in 1955. Currently the largest Protestant denomination in Korea is the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in Korea, which began to ordain women only in 1995. Ordination is just one aspect of leadership—even after being ordained, women face systemic discrimination in religious employment, and are rarely hired to lead a congregation. There continues to be significant cultural and theological opposition. The Bible verse typically used against women’s leadership is from 1 Timothy 2:11-15 which reads: “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” *New International Version*.

churches and missionary agencies—the ideological apparatuses of religion—facilitate the process of missionary subjection and subject formation.

It should come as no surprise that I scrutinize the work of institutional actors in world evangelization. After all, countless numbers of mission boards, Bible translators, Christian publishers, and cultural performers all participate, in groups and as a group, in the project of world evangelization. Nonetheless, given the overwhelming tendency of Korean evangelical churches to be hierarchical and patriarchal in structure and leader-centered and top-down in orientation, it would be impossible to overstate the role of institutional leaders—and institutionalized settings that legitimate the authority of leaders—in producing, propagating, and validating certain theologies and mission strategies as irrefutable truth claims.

Research Design

In order to understand the subjective, lived experiences of Korean-led world missions in the widest sense, I tried to employ qualitative research methods that are comparably expansive in scope and scale. It was not without a sense of competitive rivalry. From the start, it was the audacious breadth of the missionaries' far-reaching transnational movement that piqued my interest. It seemed appropriate to examine such ambitious world-making project through a little globe-trotting myself. I thus designed this project as a study of *world* evangelization—a project of religious globalization—in and across a range of local sites, always with an eye towards the global.

On one hand, this project may be characterized as an ethnography of the global, or global ethnography, which focuses on “globalization as the recomposition of time and space—displacement, compression, distancing, and even dissolution” (Burawoy 2000, 4). Global ethnographers study changing world conditions to “interrogate a variety of intersecting place-making projects as they are manifested in a particular spatial location” (Gille and Ó Riain 2002, 278). They are required to understand the “locally, socially, and culturally specific ways in which people understand the place of their locality in the global scheme of things, and the actions they take to shape that place” (285). In departure from much of the currently existing global ethnographies, however, the “global scheme of things” pursued in this project is not the “historic and contemporary world system of capitalist political economy”—*out there*, so to speak (Marcus 1995, 95-96). Rather, the metaphoric and material world space produced by the universalizing project of world evangelization is a constitutive part of “the local.” I am in fact contending with a distinct world-making project that co-operates with and modulates to other global forces and flows. I view this project as an examination of the connections between multiple localities *and* multiple globalities.

In several ways, this project follows the tradition of multi-sited ethnography—defined by George Marcus as method that “moves out of from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus 1995, 96). I am indeed examining the circulation of evangelical meanings, objects, and identities across a range of temporal and spatial locations. I am intrigued by the intentions, aspirations, and power relations that account for how mission destinations, missionaries, and mission trips are continually reproduced and represented across time.

Marcus further argues that this mode of research “defines for itself an object of study that *cannot* be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation” (96, emphasis added). The implication seems to be that some objects of study necessitate multi-sited research, whereas others are more suitable for single-sited research. I am uncertain about this. In hindsight, I could have designed the research to focus more intensively on a single site—a particular mission field, for instance—or select the multiple sites in such a way that there is a clearer link among them. Following Marcus's categories of “chains, paths, threads,

conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations,” for instance, I could have followed the people of a particular congregation or mission agency or another single object or subject across temporal and spatial boundaries. Instead, what I did decide to do in this dissertation is to follow multiple groups of interconnected and interrelated actors involved in a singular global project.

Cases “worlds apart”

... in multi-sited ethnography, comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study whose contours, sites, and relationships are not known beforehand, but are themselves a contribution of making an account that has different, complexly connected real-world sites of investigation. The object of study is ultimately mobile and multiply situated, so any ethnography of such an object will have a comparative dimension that is integral to it, in the form of juxtaposition of phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been kept) “*worlds apart*.” Comparison reenters the very act of ethnographic specification by a research design or juxtaposition in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them. (Marcus 1995, 102)

I initially set out to examine the political geography of ethnic churches as powerful institutions that significantly shape the lives and experiences of immigrants in the United States. My firsthand “frontline” experience in progressive community organizing in California—and growing up in a conservative Christian family—shaped my understanding of Korean/American immigrant churches as socio-cultural and religio-political institutions with historical and theological ties to both South Korean and American Protestantism. I thus set out to examine immigrant churches as powerful incubators of political agendas and economic interests, assessed from a critical and even “oppositional” vantage point (see J. H. J. Han 2010).

My admittedly naïve interest in revealing a sociopolitical “truth” of conservative Korean/American Christianity vanished soon after I arrived at my first research site, Korean Evangelical Church (KEC) in California.³⁷ During the six-month participant-observation and in-depth interviews conducted with church leaders and congregants, I researched: 1) political theologies that underpin the congregation’s ideological structure; 2) power-knowledges that are produced and disseminated through the church; and 3) disciplinary powers that govern the congregation. Week after week, I found myself astounded by how frequently geographical imaginaries dominated the sermons and how consistently spatial strategies structured congregational practices. I half-jokingly told friends that I was learning more geography at church than in my graduate courses. It was at KEC that I first learned about concrete projects of world evangelization such as the 10/40 Window and the “unreached people groups” (Chapter 3), and it was here that I learned about the cell church model (Chapter 4) and the idea of “kinship missions” in North Korea and China (Chapter 5). It was through the KEC research that I later learned about Korean missionaries in Africa (Chapter 6).

³⁷ KEC was selected as a “typical” church that met several important criteria. It was among the larger—but not the largest—immigrant Korean/American congregations in northern California, and preliminary research uncovered no recent controversies or ongoing scandals at the church. Korean immigrant church politics are often contentious and highly divisive, and while that would have an interesting dimension to research, my interest was to study a congregation that would show a how a “typical” church operates during a “normal” period. However, as I discuss in Chapter 4, KEC did end up undergoing a major organization restructuring process towards the end of my research period.

In 2006 I accompanied two Bay Area journalists to northeast China as their Korean-English interpreter, and we were able to visit a missionary safe house and conduct a total of eleven in-depth interviews over a period of approximately two weeks in China. Contacts were established through the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) and other informal avenues. Due to the confidential nature of the journalistic transcripts and the political sensitive nature of North Korean refugees, I have removed all identifying information from the China portion of research. Because of the highly precarious and vulnerable position of North Koreans in China, further research in this area was confined to ten individual and group interviews with missionaries and refugees safely resettled in South Korea. In and near Seoul, I attended numerous workshops, conferences, and other public meetings on the topic of North Korea and human rights, and conducted fourteen more interviews with missionaries with firsthand experiences working in clandestine, “frontier” missions to places such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

The third case study involved ethnographic research of a short-term mission trip to Tanzania and Uganda. As a participant-observer, I traveled with more than 150 short-term and long-term Korean missionaries participating in a month-long series of events designed to bring together “Korea and Africa under the wings of God.” Volunteering as an English-Korean interpreter, I also had access to closed meetings such as “breakfast prayer meetings” between a delegation of Cabinet-level Christian politicians from South Korea and members of the Ugandan National Parliament. Typical of religio-humanitarian projects that use aid and relief provision as a vehicle for proselytizing, the missionaries visited orphanages and schools, and handed out candies and supplies. The women led “Christian motherhood” workshops to the wives of local pastors, while the men taught work ethic and frugality in economic development seminar. My interest in this case study was to examine a short-term mission event in its entirety—from pre-mission orientation and anticipatory preparation to field operation and post-mission evaluation and reflection. The Africa mission also contrasted against the kinship-based mission strategy exemplified by the China/North Korea case study, and presented an opportunity to see how racialized Otherness animated mission practices. Supplementary research was conducted both in South Korea and the United States, where I attended orientation and evaluation meetings, and conducted nine follow-up interviews with former participants in the Africa mission trip.

These cases do not constitute distinctly bounded periods or separate project of fieldwork. Put together, they present a study of global connections.

Reflections on critical ethnography

Ethnography blurs lines and complicates boundaries. Participants are also observers, insiders double as outsiders, and ethnographers become immersed in the intimate lives of strangers. The paradoxical idea of conducting ethnographic research from an *oppositional* position thus draws attention to the persistence of normative presuppositions and pre-existing commitments, and reminds us that some lines may never be overcome. Therein lies the dilemma—is it possible to engage in reflexive and critical research when the subject is deemed the “enemy” from the outset? Is it ever practical or productive to approach ethnography this way?

It is by now well-known that feminist and poststructural challenges have demanded greater reflexivity and attention to power relations, and problematized notions of impartiality or scientific objectivity. “Feminists with socioeconomic power” are implored to “investigate the grounds of their strong desire for rapport and intimacy with the ‘other’ ” (C. Kaplan 1994, 139). It must be said that despite my differences with many of the conservative ideologues and practitioners, I never regarded immigrant Korean/American evangelicals as an “other” or the “enemy,” *per se*. After all, I am an immigrant Korean/American myself with evangelical family ties. To secular critics who paint evangelicals—or any religious actors—in broad, dismissive strokes as zealots or lunatics, I continue

to find myself trying to explain the complex nuances of evangelical Christianity and its politics. To those who raise their eyebrows in dismay of immigrant Korean/Americans and their “backward” religious and social conservatism, I find myself countering with questions of Western bias and racist condescension—even if I sympathized with the criticisms.

I remain haunted by questions of empathy and ethics (Blee 1993), and remain uneasy about the hyphen. Feminist scholarship has fostered a model based on a sympathetic, egalitarian research process “characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her ‘subjects’ ” (Stacey 1991, 112). Participatory research likewise heeds calls for “more relevant, morally aware and nonhierarchical practice” (Pain 2004, 652) by including previously excluded or marginalized perspectives and challenging the normative production of authoritative knowledge. The participatory turn promises good things when the researcher “gives back” through respectful and mutually beneficial collaboration. The ethics of equality and reciprocity follows the feminist tradition of oral history which promises to provide “new and accurate insights into the lives and understandings of ordinary people,” recognizing the “range and complexities of narratives garnered from people outside elites” (Blee 1993, 597). However, as Blee rightly points out, the feminist insistence that a researcher “return the research” is “based on romantic assumptions about the consequences of fortifying the political agendas of ordinary people” (Blee 1993, 606). Blee’s research subjects, many of them quite ordinary, were also former and unapologetic members of the Ku Klux Klan, and Blee did not seek to empower the Klan by “giving back.” She cautions against “the hazards of similarly empowering a political vision of racial and religious hatred” (Blee 1993, 606). Avoiding these hazards is no simple matter. Certainly, I object to empowering vitriolic institutions built upon imperialistic visions to expand their power and reach worldwide. But ethnographic research has forced me to grapple with the nuances and contradictions of evangelical intentionalities and missionaries orientations without simply opposing or rejecting them. After all, if I did not want to be dismissive, I had to engage them, even if not empathetically.

Critical ethnography requires that differences not be sublimated through empathy or similarities amplified through solidarity. Rather, it insists that the ethnographer stand in productive tension, moving in spaces both familiar and strange, negotiating the constant fluctuations of distance and proximity. It is not only in moments of empathetic proximity that profound knowledge is produced, and it is certainly not only in moments of apathetic distance that accuracy in knowledge can be guaranteed. It is precisely the tension in-between that has the potential to generate most revealing insights about the complex social worlds that we all inhabit. I hope that this dissertation somehow reflects the range of tensions and tribulations I experienced as a critical researcher.

Overview of Chapters Ahead

I have laid out in this introduction several theoretical questions and conceptual frameworks. The major threads—asymmetrical power geometries of relationality, connectivity as both imagined and lived, and subjectivities produced through relational and connective strategies—are woven throughout the following chapters.

Part I consists of two chapters that provide a more macro-level lens to understand the ideological practices of world evangelization. In Chapter 2, I draw from historical research, interviews and ethnographies conducted at missionary gatherings and theological conferences in South Korea and the US, in presenting the multiple trajectories that converge in a *political theology of US-Korea alliance and affinity*. I argue that the emergence of Korean-led world missions emerges from the political-ideological configuration of conservative Protestantism in South Korea which is bookended by two fundamental ideological signposts: pro-Americanism and anti-Communism. I trace this genealogy through a discussion of historical and theological legacy of American

missionaries in Korea, US-Korea geopolitical and military alliance forged through the Korean War and the Cold War, and the creative articulation of US hegemony within the global aspirations of Korean-led world missions. The focus here is on how Korean evangelicals cultivate notions of affinity as real, imagined and felt connections between two allied nations. I understand this affinity as a constitutive orientation that positions Korea and the US on the same side of mission cartography bifurcated into mutually exclusive categories of “mission-sending” and “mission-receiving” nations. This chapter sets the stage for understanding Korean-led world missions vis-à-vis colonial expansion, American global hegemony, and the so-called “global war on terror.”

Chapter 3 offers a contrast to Chapter 2’s emphasis on “friendly” relations by discussing *how missions construct a racially and geographically differentiated world* that must be reached and incorporated into a Christian totality. As in Chapter 2, I begin with a discussion of historical and theological legacies of world evangelization, and how they have produced a set of power-laden geographical imaginations about race, geopolitics, and Korea’s place in the world. I discuss how rhetorical strategies and mapping practices such as the “10/40 Window” and “unreached people groups” produce notions of cultural distance and political proximity that direct and orient—and Orientalize—proselytizing efforts. These strategies must be distinguished, I argue, from other militaristic mapping metaphors that target objects in order to destroy them. Instead, I suggest that evangelism’s professed interest in salvation and inter-connectivity signals a need to consider affective dimensions of encountering difference. I argue that world evangelization is not only a complex of normative ideas and orienting imaginaries, but fundamentally a praxis-oriented project.

Part II consists of three chapters that engage with this praxis-oriented character of world evangelization. Whereas Part I dealt primarily with political-ideological leaders, Part II makes an effort to bring into focus the ongoing processes of self-construction and mobilization of “ordinary” evangelicals who make up the vast majority of the Korean-led world mission force.

Chapter 4 is based primarily on a *congregational ethnography of an immigrant Korean/American church in California*. I discuss the spatial politics of reproduction in the evangelical cell church, a popular organizational structure in which the congregation is divided into small groups or “cells” no larger than twelve, and mandated to remain healthy in faith and propagate in number, like the living organism it refers to. I argue that the church’s gender regimes not only normalize the internal structures of domination and subordination, but also reinscribe the reproductive body politic and spatial imperative of evangelical propagation. The cell church model is analyzed through multiple registers—biological reproduction, revolutionary capacity, and pastoral flocks. The profound significance of the cell church model is in its reproductive imperative to propagate across scale. As you will see, the cell church accomplishes this by fostering a symbolic biopolitical-geopolitical attachment between cell groups and mission destinations. I conclude this chapter by arguing that evangelism involves multi-scalar technologies and gendered logic of reproduction, one that simultaneously disciplines the body at the micro-geographical scale (i.e. the “cell”) and propels it onto the global scale.

In Chapter 5, I focus on *evangelical missions that target ethnic Korean residents and displaced North Korean migrants in China*. Based on ethnographic research and interviews conducted in the US, South Korea, and China, I discuss the vexed dynamics of mobility, security, and custody involved in missionary advocacy for North Korean migrants. While recognizing the role that missionaries play in securing assistance for North Koreans in situations both dire and desperate, I show how missionaries act as self-appointed custodians of vulnerable subjects who find themselves confined in isolated networks disciplined by evangelical agendas. I present three compelling stories based on in-depth interviews with North Korean women in “missionary custody”—a term I use to elaborate on the condition of both care and control, attention and detention. As such, this chapter raises questions about the heroic and custodial discourse of evangelical deliverance and the ethics of religio-humanitarian advocacy. Also discussed in this chapter is how the historical imagination of

northeast China as a territory of the ancient Korean kingdom of Koguryo allows missionaries to envision “God’s master plan” that represents China and North Korea as purposeful nodes in world evangelization.

Chapter 6 discusses a *Korean/American short-term mission trip to Tanzania and Uganda*, based on ethnographic research and interviews. In contrast to the ethnic kinship missions and discourse of deliverance that pervade evangelical activities in China and North Korea, this chapter grapples with racialized difference and developmentalist directive that animate Africa missions. I focus on three aspects of short-term missions: how they intensified internal power dynamics and hierarchical stratification along gender and age; how the trip sublimated differences and distances through a vocabulary of historical commonality and developmental solidarity; and finally, how short-term missions intentionally circumscribed the missionaries’ experience of Africa as an affective encounter with the world and a nostalgic encounter with Korea’s historical past. This chapter examines the mission trip as a process of subjection and subject-formation.

In the concluding Chapter 7, I review the case studies presented in the dissertation, and highlight the central arguments I have put forth. I also return briefly to the case of missionaries taken hostage in Afghanistan—mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation—and reflect on the implications of both religious and secular criticisms that arose in the aftermath. I argue that we must recognize that much of contemporary evangelical missions are indistinguishable from the supposedly secular projects of sending development aid and humanitarian relief. I offer some concluding thoughts on the prospects of transforming missions. Insofar as missions rely on a wholesale faith in capitalist development and geographical imaginations that privilege the inherent virtues of the compassionate donor, the heroic aid provider, and the devoted volunteer, missionaries perpetuate the power-laden systems of inequality that in turn rationalize a perceived need for overseas missions—religious or humanitarian.

PART I

Chapter 2. The Political Theology of US-Korea Alliance

The emergence of Korean-led world missions is tied inextricably to the configuration of conservative Protestantism in South Korea, notable for its fundamental embrace of pro-Americanism (*ch'inmi*) and anti-Communism (*pan'gong*). This chapter examines these core tenets through three interconnected genealogies: historical and theological ties between American and Korean evangelicalism; geopolitical and military alliance between the US and South Korea; and the articulation of American global hegemony within Korean Christianity's global ambitions.³⁸ These are not by any means direct lines of causation. I stress instead the notion of affinities—real, imagined and felt connections that are historically affirmed and politically cultivated. I suggest that the privileged location of the US and more specifically, the ideology of pro-Americanism, has produced for Korean Christianity a perception of proximity and affinity to American global hegemony far beyond the realm of theology.

Drawing from historical research, as well as interviews and ethnographies conducted at missionary gatherings and theological conferences in South Korea and the US, this chapter weaves together the many strands that together constitute the political theology of US-Korea alliance. It is an effort to situate the historical fragments in the wider worlds of power, and examine how particular histories are given new meaning and life in the production of global missions.

Imagining Historical Ties

The history of Christianity in Korea officially begins in 1784 with two Confucian *Silhak* scholars smuggling contraband books and crucifixes from China to found a small Catholic congregation.³⁹ Because the orthodox neo-Confucians in power did not look favorably upon Catholicism's heretical influence, foreign missionaries at first faced severe persecution in Korea. The first missionary in Korea was a Chinese Catholic priest who arrived in 1795 and executed in the first Catholic massacres in 1801. Three French priests and seventy-eight Catholics met similar fates in the persecution of 1839, as did the first Korean priest in 1846. In 1866, after nine Frenchmen along with some 2,000 converts were killed, the French retaliated with a punitive expedition, only to suffer humiliating defeat in what was the first armed conflict between Korea and a Western power. By the early 1880s, Korea was widely understood as a "forbidden land," where "no foreigner dares to enter without running the risk of paying for his hardihood with his life" (Oppert 1880, cited in Cumings 1997, 98). Korea was a treacherous mission field known for its isolationist defiance as a "Hermit Kingdom." A fuller discussion of foreign missions in Korea is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I will trace the contours of Korea's religious-political history as rendered in evangelical imaginations, and make critical interventions in the key moments that bear the most weight in contemporary practice.

³⁸ I use Christianity and Protestantism somewhat interchangeably in this chapter and throughout the dissertation. "Christian" typically denotes "Protestant," as is the case with the common Korean practice in which the "Christian" moniker excludes Catholics. Academic theologians may debate this endlessly, but in common usage among both the clergy and the laity—in public sermons and private conversations—"Christian" usually means for Koreans Protestant and only Protestant. Therefore, in following the vernacular practice, I use phrases like "conservative Christianity" as opposed to "conservative Protestantism" because I believe this better captures the nuance in everyday usage. However, I do not use "Christian" when the comparative counterpart is Catholic. In those cases, I use "Protestant" to contrast to "Catholic."

³⁹ The term "Korea" is admittedly anachronistic here. By "Korea" in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, I am referring to the Yi Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) in power for over five hundred years in spite of frequent waves of domestic problems and threats from foreign powers, namely China and Japan.

American contributions to Korean modernity

In contrast to the Catholics, Protestant missionaries started later and fared better. Their timing was auspicious—Japan had forced open Korea’s ports with the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876, and the so-called Shufeldt Treaty in 1882 had established relations between Korea and the US. By 1884 when American Protestant missions began, large-scale Christian persecutions were a thing of the past. In the early nineteenth century, the American missionary enterprise was “fueled by the growing economic strength of the republic and propelled by the dominance of evangelical Protestantism” in the United States (Ryu 2001, 93). From the outset, American missionaries enjoyed privileged friendships and extraordinary access to the Korean royal family (M. Yi 1998). Horace N. Allen, a Presbyterian missionary and a medical doctor, had the great fortune of arriving in Korea in 1884 just in time to save the queen’s life, and was immediately appointed to a post as a physician to the royal family (Clark 1986, Cumings 1997). Having gained the trust of the king with his medical skills, Allen went on to establish Korea’s first modern hospital—now known as Severance Hospital affiliated with Yonsei University, now a top-ranked prestigious national university. The beginnings of Yonsei University in 1915 involved another prominent American missionary, Horace G. Underwood, a Presbyterian credited for establishing the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in Korea. Henry G. Appenzeller, a Methodist missionary who arrived in Korea in 1885, founded Pai Chai Hakdang, the first modern Western-styled school in Korea. Soon afterwards, four Protestant denominations, with privileged access to the Korean state, agreed to divide up the country into four non-competing mission fields. American Northern Presbyterian Mission (USA) was assigned to the northwest region where the current North Korean capital city of Pyongyang is located. The southwestern region of Korea was assigned to Southern Baptists, the northeast to Canadian Presbyterians, and the southeast to Australian Presbyterians.

The “opening” of Korea to the world in the nineteenth century was, in the historian Bruce Cumings’ words, “the beginning of the end for old Korea” (Cumings 1997, 95). The new Korea, with New World missionaries and Japan and Russia vying for power inside the Korean royal court, was in serious decline and embroiled in political turmoil. It was fertile ground for Protestantism which renders its historical self-definition as “a rupture with corrupt traditions or, on the mission frontier, as having brought the unsaved into a new historical trajectory” (Keane 2002). American missionaries were positioned as a civilizing force, with promises of deliverance into modernity. Many Korean intellectuals considered themselves lacking in knowledge of the Western Enlightenment, and desired “civilization” as a way to strengthen their social power against the colonial threats from Japan (Schmid 2002). Reflecting their predominantly middle-class composition, American Protestant missions tended to prioritize medicine, literacy, and education—a legacy of secularized proselytizing strategies that continues to influence contemporary Korean-led global missions.

Many missionaries promoted in particular literacy and women’s education (H. Choi 1999), and though missionary teachings “invariably instilled American cultural and religious mores that deeply influenced Korean women” (Yoo 2008, 17), missions appealed broadly as modernizing projects. Contemporary assessment of American missionaries’ impact on Korean society has tended to be overwhelmingly favorable, especially concerning missionary *contribution* to the formation of empowered and modern womanhood. What has often been neglected are “the complex nature of modernity,” and prevailing assumptions posit that mission schools simply fostered “a desire for liberation from patriarchal Confucian norms” and paved the road to female empowerment (H. Choi 2004, 134-135). There is much need to examine more critically the role of foreign missions in Korea as a “moral equivalent for imperialism,” and investigate how Western cultural modalities of modern technology, medicine, and education animated the “civilizing” mission imperatives (Hutchison 1987, 91).

In spite of how the American Protestant missionaries' "spirit of white supremacy, religious triumphalism, and cultural imperialism" sought to eradicate Korean traditions, religions, and customs as antithetical to modernity (Oak 2002, 3), the most commonly invoked image of American missions in Korean history remains one reflected in the following excerpt from a prayer delivered by Pastor H at an international mission conference in Seoul in 2007:

From 1884 and on, American missionaries arrived in Korea to devote themselves for the glory of the Lord and made enormous sacrifices to plant the seeds for all of us. Not only did they build churches, but they also trained and cultivated the next generation of Christian leaders. They built modern schools and modern hospitals that produced God's faithful servants who served this nation time and time again, withstanding crisis after crisis. The precious sweat and blood the American missionaries once shed in Korea, a nation that used to receive missionaries, have transformed Korea into a nation that can now send missionaries to the frontiers of world.⁴⁰

In this prayer, secularized mission schools and hospitals are credited without question for educating and equipping *Christian* leaders to lead Korea. Moreover, Pastor H explicitly draws a causal link between the American missionaries' accomplishments and contemporary Korean missionaries' task at hand. The contention is that the missionary legacy of "sweat and blood" shed on behalf of Korean people, on Korean soil, is what binds together Americans and Koreans in contemporary missionary imagination. This sentiment of historical debt and shared legacy appears repeatedly in Korean mission theologies and in practice, and has become an incontrovertible tenet in the project of contemporary Korean-led world missions.

Anti-colonial claims and the March First Movement

The relationship between Christianity and imperialism is particularly vexed in the context of Korean colonial modernity. It is typically argued that because Korea was colonized by Japan (1910-1945) which was not a Western power, American missionaries in Korea were regarded not as colonial agents themselves, but instead perceived as an ally in Korea's pursuit of national sovereignty. Unlike in many parts of the world, in other words, the American missionaries did not figure as a colonial force from the outset. Instead they became identified as an *anti-colonial* resource. Though there is a grain of truth in this historiography, the insistence on missionary impartiality—neutral between Japanese colonialism, US imperialism, and Korean nationalism—has been the subject of much critical inquiry (see M. Yi 1995, Kwak 2000, Oak 2002, Dudden 2004, Yoo 2008). Several critics have reassessed the role of American missionaries during the colonial era as having largely acquiesced to Japan's rule over Korea and as attempting to mollify nationalist stirrings through theological articulations of compliance and accommodation (Noh 1994, M. Yi 2003, Dudden 2004, Yöksahak Yönkuso 2004, J. Hwang 2008). Furthermore, many of these scholars have argued that it is much too simplistic to portray missionary efforts in purist polarities: either pro-Japanese colonialism or anti-colonial nationalist resistance. They argue that the lines between colonial domination, collaboration, and resistance remain permeable and contradictory, not only for the American missionaries but for Korean Christians as well.

Reification of Christianity's resistance legacy works to omit numerous instances of Christian complicity with Japanese colonialism. For instance, the paradigmatic March First Independence Movement in 1919 is typically represented as a popular uprising led by courageous independence

⁴⁰ Pastor H, prayer given at an international mission strategy conference in Seoul, July 7, 2007.

leaders who risked their lives and inspired the masses by drafting the Korean Declaration of Independence. Fifteen out of the thirty-three signatories were self-identified Christians, and their leadership is invoked frequently in national and Christian historiography to characterize the position of Korean Christianity as a fundamentally anti-colonial and pro-nationalist force. The March First Movement also marks an important moment for the discourse of persecuted and martyred Christians. The Christian Council of Korea (CCK) states the following on its web page, titled “important factor [sic] for growth of Protestant Churches in Korea,” under the heading, “Martyred by Japan”:

Many Protestants joined the independence movements despite severe hardship. [...] Many Christians suffered from brutal torture and even died from after-effects. Many Christians lost their lives in the March First Movement, brutally massacred by Japan.⁴¹

Critical historians have attempted to destabilize such portrayal by pointing out that the esteemed thirty-three leaders of the March First Movement in fact disbanded and fled immediately after proclaiming the Declaration of Independence, and that the majority of this leadership either recanted their role or subsequently turned themselves in to the colonial authorities (M. Yi 1995, Yöksahak Yönkuso 2004). Cumings concedes that “the churches were sanctuaries in times of violence, like that of the 1919 independence movement, and many Western missionaries encouraged underdog and egalitarian impulses” (Cumings 1997, 157). But he also concludes that Christian opposition to Japanese colonialism is “both a fact and a legend” since while American missionaries were “appalled at the violence of the colonial authorities,” many also “blamed radicals and agitators for provoking the violence” (157). I agree in arguing that it would be inaccurate to characterize Christianity as anti-colonial, or the anti-colonial resistance as a predominantly Christian endeavor with a strong missionary leadership.

The conflation of evangelical Christianity with anti-colonial resistance, however, remains today a key political-theological linchpin. Conservative Christian groups have recently demonstrated their emergent political power and organized mass-scale Christian events invoking the “spirit” of the March First Movement. Held annually since 2003 under the banner of “Save the Nation Prayer Rally [*Kukuk Kidohoe*],” these gatherings ostensibly commemorate the March First Independence Movement and the August 15 Day of Independence from Japan’s colonial rule. Commemorations of these two historical dates are not extraordinary by any means, as a variety of progressive and conservative, political and cultural, secular and religious events have sought to interpret in their own terms the significance of Korea’s national independence. What is remarkable, however, is that the main focus of these particular Christian prayer rallies concern not the legacy of Japanese colonialism but a staunch insistence on *American contribution*. On a day that marks Korean independence, the Christian participants were seen waving South Korean flags alongside *American* flags, and carried signs that read “Thank you, America”—in English, so that Americans could actually read them. In an interview, Pastor M who leads a sizable megachurch in Seoul explained to me the logic of US-Korea connection as follows:

Why do Christians commemorate March First, even though it’s not technically a Christian occasion? It’s because we believe it shows how God has chosen our people and shown His love by gracing us with liberation and independence as a sovereign nation. We didn’t achieve this with our own hands. From the moment Japan showed

⁴¹ The Christian Council of Korea, website, <http://www.cck.or.kr>. Accessed on June 25, 2009. The fact that the “Martyred by Japan” section is followed by “Martyred by the Communist Party” section illustrates the importance of anti-colonial (Japanese) and anti-Communist ideologies in conservative Christianity’s historical self-definition.

their ambitions with the treaty of 1905 to the annexation in 1910, Koreans fought vigorously for independence, but they couldn't match Japan's soldiers or weapons, and many ended up just losing their lives. After the end of the First World War, US President Woodrow Wilson motivated independence fighters with promises of sovereignty, and inspired them to organize the March First Movement in 1919. But despite all these efforts, common sense tells us that it was absolutely impossible for Koreans to liberate ourselves. It was God who used the might of other powerful nations to defeat Japan and give us independence. The Japanese Empire was as strong and invincible as the walls of Jericho [in the Bible], and the fact that it crumbled is evidence of God's work for our people, and this is why we [Christians] commemorate March First.⁴²

His theological-historical narrative underscores two key points. First, it interprets Korean independence as God's work, not a result of human endeavor. Though independence fighters are seen as righteous in their cause and effort, the "impossible" feat of national liberation is seen as realized only through God's design. Secondly, Pastor M reveals American contribution as twofold—ideological sway and military power—and locates the US as operating firmly on the side of God. The paradoxical claim that Korea's national sovereignty is *beholden* to the combined might of American Christianity and the military makes sense to Pastor M because he does not consider the US to be an imperial power to begin with.

Theologizing anti-Communism under dictatorship

Divergent social forces and theological factions within Korean Christianity clashed bitterly over ideological and theological disputes throughout the tumultuous post-liberation era including the US military government (1945-1948) and the election of the US-aligned President Syngman Rhee in the south (1948-1960). The outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the subsequent division of Korea into US-dominated South and Soviet-dominated North intensified denominational differences and sharpened institutional divides, affecting all facets of social and political cleavages among Christian groups (M. Yi 1995, Kang 2007, K. Chong 2008).

Historians have described the Korean War as a "civil struggle" between "a revolutionary national movement, which had its roots in tough anti-colonial struggle, and a conservative movement tied to the status quo" (Halliday and Cumings 1988, 10). The war and national division significantly influenced as well the geography of Christian status quo in Korea. Much of the intellectual leadership and demographic base of Christianity prior to 1945 had been in the northern region, particularly concentrated in Pyongyang and the surrounding areas. Many Christians in this region also belonged to the emerging middle class and landlord class, and suffered great financial and property losses as a result of land reforms led by the North Korean Workers' Party in 1946—"one of the most rapid and thoroughgoing land redistribution efforts in history" (Armstrong 2004, 77). Newly dispossessed and displaced, Christians from the north began fleeing to the south in massive numbers in the days between liberation and outbreak of Korean War, carrying with them intense animosity towards Communism.

Many had also endured devastating personal losses. Stories of Communist-led destruction of churches and massacres of Christians circulated widely in the south, cementing the equation of Communism with persecution of Christians. A missionary who specializes in helping North Koreans escape to South Korea told me that more than half of her family was killed by Communists during the Korean War. "[North Korean Communists] started the [Korean] War, killed thousands of their

⁴² Pastor M, interviewed in Seoul on July 9, 2007.

own brothers and sisters. What else could it be but the work of Satan,” she shuddered, “It’s no wonder nothing grows there anymore. The soil is soaked with blood.”⁴³ Her statement encapsulates the blending of “theological anti-Communism” with firsthand “experiential anti-Communism” (C. Yu 1992, 144).

Commemoration of Christians martyred at the hands of North Korean Communists have become a virtual cottage industry in the last thirty years, ranging from film and theatre productions, radio dramas, music recitals, and art exhibits. As the sociologist of religion Kang In-chul discusses in meticulous detail in his book, *Protestantism and Anti-Communism in Korea* (2007), the continual practice of discovery, selection, and naming persecuted Christians works to conceal the intrinsically political nature of commemorating martyrdom. Kang argues that the project of martyr selection—individuals plucked from tens of thousands of unnamed Christians killed during the war for a variety of religious or political reasons—actually commenced many years *after* the end of the Korean War. Without discounting the reality of loss and suffering, Kang situates the political expediency of Christian martyrdom projects in the particularities of post-war historical context (2007, 142-145). The martyr discourse, in Kang’s words, stabilized the perpetrator-victim duality as an irrefutable historical fact with Christians pitted against Communists.

The large numbers of Christians from the north, with their vehemently anti-North sentiments, formed “the core of the fiercely anticommunist strand of South Korean Protestantism” (Armstrong 2004, 118). They clashed bitterly with progressive Christians and other leftists in the south, and denounced class-based struggles as proxies for Communism. Their anti-Communist theological-political formation was successfully reinforced by the South Korean state with President Syngman Rhee at the helm, a Princeton-educated Methodist elder who had lived in the US for nearly four decades (Cumings 1997). Rhee favored US-educated Christians and anti-Communist expatriates from the north in his appointments, and showered his supporters with political and financial rewards. The anti-Communist Christians formed an important support base for Rhee’s campaigns to root out political dissent from the Left consisting of Communists, anarchists, socialists, and any others who opposed Rhee’s dictatorship. If it may be said that the Americans’ favorable position with the royal court at the turn of the nineteenth century permitted Christianity to spread with the state’s assent, Rhee imagined Korea led by Christian leaders and supported by the US, understood as a Christian nation.

In tandem with the establishment of anti-Communism as a ruling state ideology, pro-Americanism also spread widely as a socio-political phenomenon in the post-war South Korea. With the century-long history of missionary contact, the Protestant church in Korea was arguably the most “Americanized” segment of society, “a stronghold of pro-Americanism and the source of pro-American rhetoric that seeped into every sphere of civil society” (Kang 2003, 273). In addition to the romanticized representations of American-style liberal democratic values, America now had a new face and presence in post-war Korea: the US military. With the US military government “coming to the rescue” for three chaotic years after liberation, and again “rescuing” South Korea from Communists during the three devastating years of Korean War, the US military entered the Korean evangelical imagination as a messianic figure. One missionary made this point to me by commenting, “if it weren’t for the American military ending the war and saving Korea, we would be praying to Kim Il Sung right now.”⁴⁴ Organized around the idea of an historical affinity and strategic alliance between the US and South Korea, such comments reveal a sentiment of indebtedness to the early American missionaries for bringing the “gift” of the Gospel to Korea, and to the US military for “rescuing” South Korea from Communism during the Korean War and Cold War periods. This

⁴³ Anonymous, interviewed in Seoul on January 5, 2006.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, interviewed in Seoul on January 6, 2006.

political-theological formation has produced a variant of American exceptionalism in which Korea emerges as the epicenter of evangelical geopolitics.

Following Rhee, South Korea underwent three successive military dictatorships of Park Chung Hee (1963-1979), Chun Doo-hwan (1980-1988), and Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993). During the three decades of rule under military generals, Christian factions fell on opposing sides of democratization efforts, and countless denominations split and re-merged as a result of theological and political differences. Some Christians participated in anti-authoritarian, pro-democracy efforts associated with a theological movement known as *minjung* theology—akin to Latin American liberation theology, now considered mostly defunct—and promoted empowerment and agency of the exploited urban workers and the rural poor (Suh 1981). Other Christians sided enthusiastically with the dictatorship, bestowing their blessings on the authoritarian regimes.⁴⁵ Prominent pro-American pastors like Ryu Hyōng-gi and Han Kyōng-jik drew strength from US-Korea networks, and were able to call upon Presbyterian and Methodist denominations in the US to raise sufficient funds to build and lead universities in Seoul (Kang 2007, 529). Han is even said to have volunteered to lead a delegation to the US to urge international support for Park Chung Hee, who had seized power through a military coup d'état in 1961 (Kang 2007, 536-537).

Conservative Christianity's political alignment with the authoritarian state throughout the sixties and until the eighties supplied theological-political rationalizations for state repression in the name of fighting Communism.⁴⁶ The aggressive evangelism and global missions associated with Christianity today can be traced precisely to this strand of Christianity—one that consistently sided with the status quo and state power, from the Japanese colonial government, the US military government, and South Korea's own authoritarian regimes.

It must be noted, however, that many South Korean social movements, from pro-democracy student activism to labor organizing, had been deeply influenced by the social gospel orientation of liberal and ecumenically-oriented Christian formations (see P. Chang 2006). In the 1960s and 1970s, industrial and urban missions sought to transform traditional evangelism from spreading the Gospel to “finding the body of Jesus Christ among the workers themselves,” by promoting somatic experience and incarnational theology (Suh 1981, 38). Many Christian missionaries joined college students in abandoning their class privilege, and chose to work alongside workers and peasants in factories and farms in what was known as a “somatic identification” with the workers, sharing their “emotional and perceptual experiences of fatigue, pain and anger” (Suh 1981, 38). Churches, especially urban Catholic parishes, often offered sanctuaries for fugitives activists, and “challenged the legitimizing rhetoric of the state” (P. Chang 2007, 326). Representing this progressive legacy today is the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), founded in 1924, which fosters solidarity with non-Christian faith traditions and promotes peace and justice programs in partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC).⁴⁷

However, progressive ecumenical Christianity has seen striking decline—in number and influence—since the 1980s, outmatched by the rise of conservative evangelical Christianity in South Korea. The national representative body far more visible than NCCCK in the contemporary political

⁴⁵ One example of this church-authoritarian state collusion is the National Prayer Breakfast, which is discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁴⁶ The rise of conservative megachurches started taking shape in the late 1980s, and became a marked phenomenon *after* democratization, i.e. under Kim Young Sam (1993-1998), Kim Dae Jung (1998-2003), and Roh Moo Hyun (2003-2008). Several factors led to megachurch growth, including various tax exemption laws that favored large-scale religious organizations, popularity of seminary education and consequent overproduction of ordained pastors facing a competitive religious marketplace, the rise of a prosperous middle class in Korea, and a broadening of civil society and a rise of voluntarism which gave a boost to membership in not only churches but also civic organizations.

⁴⁷ Chapter 3 further discusses the evangelical-ecumenical continuum and the socio-political location of WCC.

landscape is the conservative Christian Council of Korea (CCK), founded much later in 1989 and representing sixty-one Protestant denominations in the country.

Military Alliance

As I have discussed thus far, a major aspect of the perceived military alliance between the US and Korea revolves around the history of US involvement in the Korean War and the prospect of continuing bilateral military cooperation. Military security on the Korean peninsula has long centered around US cooperation in building deterrence capabilities against North Korea, and this has been used to justify the continuing presence of US troops stationed throughout South Korea since the Korean War. Concern for military security has also long occupied conservative Christians. Pastor Kim Hong-do who heads Kumnan Church, the world's largest Methodist congregation with over 120,000 members, explicitly stated his perspective on war as follows:

If Kim Jong-il's nuclear weapons reunify north and south Korea under Communism, over 70 million people will suffer and die under his evil regime. It would be infinitely better for us to attack first and destroy Kim Jong-il's nuclear missiles ourselves, even if that meant 500,000 or a million people would be sacrificed in the process. War is not always a bad thing.⁴⁸

Granted, Kim Hong-do is perhaps too easy a target for criticism. He was widely condemned for sermonizing in 2005 that the devastating tsunami in Southeast Asia was a sign of Christian God's judgment against Islam. He was convicted of embezzling church funds in 2006, and convicted again for election fraud in 2008, the same year he found himself embroiled in a succession debacle for appointing his own son to inherit his post as head pastor of Kumnan Church. A frequent speaker at Christian rallies and conservative political events, Kim has come to represent for his critics everything that is objectionable about conservative Christianity in Korea today—he is wealthy and popular, both doggedly unapologetic and extremely vocal. But if Kim Hong-do's status is any indication of his influence—and he remains a well-respected figure among many evangelicals—his rhetorical flourishes wield significant influence in adding a bombastic tenor to conservative evangelical discourse overall. He is no doubt aware of the importance of discursive struggles. In July 2009, Kim threw his support behind a controversial media deregulation legislation which would effectively promote conservative corporate monopoly in print and broadcasting media. His choice of words did not disappoint—he urged fellow Christians to pray and fulfill their mission by engaging in a “spiritual warfare” so that the legislation can “cut off Satan's tongue and gaping mouth.”⁴⁹ He was referring to his critics in the progressive and independent media.

Christians rally in support for US militarism in 2003

One might not expect such excitable speech from conservatives, especially coming from religious clergy. After all, it is usually the images of angry leftists and violent anti-American

⁴⁸ Pastor Kim Hong-do, sermon on June 15, 2003, posted on Kumnan Church website. <http://www.kumnan.org> (accessed June 29, 2003).

⁴⁹ Chōng-hwan Yi, “Midiōbōp T'ong'gwa Dwaesō Sat'anūi K'un Ip'kwa Hyō Challabōryōya [“The Media Legislation Must Pass and Cut Off Satan's Gaping Mouth and Tongue”],” *News N Joy*, July 13, 2009. Chapter 3 discusses Kim Hong-do's connection to American evangelicalism and Fuller Theological Seminary in more detail.

outbursts that dominate representations of political culture in Korea.⁵⁰ But like Kim Hong-do's dramatic prose, there have also been a series of spectacularly strident pro-American demonstrations in recent years, nearly all of them orchestrated by conservative Christian groups. The first of these extraordinary mass gatherings was a protest rally *opposing* the potential withdrawal of US troops from Korea. Taking place on January 11, 2003, the rally was organized by the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), and another conservative umbrella organization called the National Council of Christian Leaders in Korea. The occasion was titled: "Prayer Rally for Our Nation and People."⁵¹ There have certainly been larger Christian gatherings that filled Olympic stadiums, but this extraordinary event was organized to resemble a mass political protest. It was a "prayer rally" with an explicitly Christian focus, and "for our nation" with a decidedly patriotic tone. An estimated 60,000 to 100,000 evangelical Christians in attendance urged US troops to *remain* in Korea, and condemned anti-Americanism and nuclear North Korea.⁵² Protesters displayed two massive Korean and US flags, each approximately the size of four tennis courts. Also seen were banners that read, some in English, "Korea and USA are blood brothers!" "We reject Anti-US movement," and "We support US military."⁵³ Pastor Kim Hong-do, no stranger to controversy, even gave a prayer in English so that he can "capture the hearts of US President Bush and the Congress."⁵⁴

This January 2003 rally was historically unprecedented first and foremost because its participants were mobilized by the Right, not the Left. Similar mass mobilizations have long been a signature of pro-democracy or labor movements, nearly always leaning politically left and in opposition against the authoritarian state. Conservatives had typically frowned upon mass protests during the democratization movements, and conservative evangelicals usually espoused moderate and incremental reform rather than mass protest for radical social change. But this time in 2003, the character of the state was different: the new President-elect Roh Moo-hyun was widely perceived to be left-of-center. Though Roh's policies would later disappoint his progressive supporters, he had campaigned on a platform of political and administrative reform, pledging to make the South Korean society more equitable and to make South Korea a more equal partner in its alliance with the US.

It must be noted that Roh had been elected in no small part due to the mounting outrage over the acquittal of US soldiers responsible for the death of two school-age Korean girls in the summer of 2002, whose tragic deaths were initially overshadowed by the spectacle of the World Cup soccer games. But by November 2002, largely spontaneous candlelight vigils erupted night after night, involving hundreds of thousands of high school students, housewives, and others not typically associated with social or political activism. Several Catholic, Episcopalian and liberal Protestant religious leaders supported the candlelight vigils and held commemorative services. Ecumenical groups like the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) publicly criticized the US for their lack of accountability. There were widespread public demands to reform the structurally unequal State of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that "has granted a routine amnesty to thousands of US civilians and military personnel guilty of crimes" (H. Park 2003). The broad-based scale of these demonstrations had not been seen since the tumultuous times at the height of pro-democracy

⁵⁰ For other critical interventions in understanding anti-Americanism as beyond pathologies of irrational and untenable political position, see Hyun Ok Park, "Anti-Americanism and Realignment in the Two Koreas," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 119 (2003); Katharine Moon, "Korean Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and Democratic Consolidation," in *Korea's Democratization*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵¹ *Nara-wa Minjok-ül Wihan P'yŏnghwa Kidohoe*.

⁵² Jin-young Bae, "Nara Wa Minjok Ŭl Wihan P'yŏnghwa Kidohoe, Kim Ki-Su Moksa [Peace Prayer Rally for Nation and People, Reverend Kim Ki-Su] " *Wolgan Chosun (Monthly Chosun)*, February, 2003.

⁵³ Yong-chŏl PakSin, "P'yŏnghwa Kidohoe Nŭn Pan'gong Chiphoe? [Peace Prayer Rally Is an Anti-Communist Rally?]," *OhmyNews*, January 13, 2003.

⁵⁴ Sŭng-hun Yi, "Ch'inmi Pan'kongŭn Han'kuk Kaesin'kyo Ŭi "11 Kyemyŏng" In'ga? [Is Pro-American Anti-Communism the 11th Commandment for Korean Protestantism?]," *OhmyNews*, July 9, 2003.

struggles in the late 1980s. Seasoned activists were taken off guard by the unorganized and politically ambiguous character of the vigils, but found themselves stirred by the scale of the protests, and reminisced about a time not long ago when similar large-scale movements brought about massive social change. This time, unlike the late 1980s, the protesters had a friendly administration, and the target of their outrage was not the Korean state, but the US.

And thus in 2003, *after* democratization and with a liberal party in power, it was the conservatives who found themselves rallying against the state. They were anxious about the tide of criticisms of US foreign policies, and worried about the sweeping reforms Roh promised.

Theologizing anti-Communism under democracy

The conservatives' ideological signposts, "Pro-American" and "anti-North Korea," are efficiently condensed into a single Korean phrase with just four syllables—*ch'inmi panbuk*—as opposed to the despised Communist sympathizers on the left, or *panmi ch'inbuk*, literally "anti-American" and "pro-North Korea." These ideological denotations are certainly reductive and the pro/anti polarity is no doubt overly simplistic. Nonetheless, the currency of the idiom of left/right, pro/anti, and progressive/conservative designations reveals a great deal about the ideological chasm and oppositional political culture in South Korea. It also speaks volumes that the US and North Korea occupy irreconcilable ends of pro- and anti-, so that it is impossible in this ideological landscape for one to claim to be, for example, simultaneously pro-American and pro-North Korea.

Following two rallies in January 2003 and another large-scale event that commemorated the March First Movement, CCK organized a fourth mass protest rally on June 21, 2003, this time commemorating the Korean War (1950-1953). The event boasted the most secular and political title of them all: *Pan-haek Pan-Kim Han-Mi Tongmaeng Kanghwa* or "June 25 National People's Rally to Fortify Anti-nuclear, Anti-Kim [Jong-il, i.e. North Korea], Korea-US Alliance" One leader declared on stage, "We love America," to which the audience roared back in response. The loud speakers blared the US National Anthem to commemorate the American veterans. One pastor led a prayer and asked God to "decapitate the heads of all Communists and their spies on earth." A journalist retorted, "Is pro-Americanism/anti-Communism the Eleventh Commandment for Korean Protestants?"⁵⁵ As in previous rallies, participants displayed massive Korean and American flags, but this time added the flag of the United Nations to express Korea's indebtedness to the American-led UN troops that fought on the side of South Korea during the Korean War.

Shortly thereafter in an interview with the ultra-conservative *Wolgan Chosun*, Kim Kyöng-nae, a high-profile evangelical leader and former newspaper editor at *Kyunghyang Sinmun*, articulated the purpose of the June 2003 rally. In his words, the rally's intent was to achieve "spiritual and ideological unity," and it "represented a Right-wing resurgence to counter the Left-wing Communist hegemony that began during the Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam administrations in the late 1980s and 1990s, and exploded in full force under the Kim Dae Jung administration."⁵⁶ He said that the Right had cowered for years and acquiesced to the Left, but that it was finally time to regain the "ideological territory" by painting the Seoul City Square in *blue*—as opposed to the color red which is not only associated with Communism but also the color of the Korean national soccer team. During the 2002 World Cup competitions, Korean soccer fans used the slogan "Be the Reds!" and saturated the city in bright red t-shirts. As frivolous as it may sound, diehard anti-Communists of a certain generation—especially those who experienced the Korean War firsthand, like Kim Kyöng-

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Chin-yöng Pae, "Intöbyu: Kim Kyöng-Nae Pan-Haek Pan-Kim Hanmidongmaeng Kanghwa 6-25 Kukmindaeohoe Chiphangwiwonjang [Interview with Kim Kyöng-Nae, President of the June 25 National People's Rally to Fortify Anti-Nuclear, Anti-North Korea, Korea-US Alliance]," *Wolgan Chosun*, July, 2003.

nae—still loathe the color red for all its ideological associations. Many in fact recoiled at the sight of red-clad soccer fans gathered at the city center during the World Cup. Memories of hundreds of thousands of people wearing an identical red-color t-shirt later became conflated with images of candlelight vigil protesters against US military violence. Some conservative evangelicals who subscribe to the idea of a “spiritual warfare” perceived both the World Cup celebrations and the candlelight vigils as a terrifying spectacle, and believed that Satan instigated these mass gatherings to persuade people to embrace the color red and by extension accept Communism. One elderly deaconess told me that she shuddered every time she saw a photo of the mass gatherings in 2002 because the “real Reds [*ppalgaengidül*]” were hiding in that sea of red.

As the hard line ideologue Kim Kyöng-nae alluded to earlier, conservatives point particularly to the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun administrations as the period during which the country turned “leftward.”⁵⁷ The Roh years were no panacea for progressives. After all, it was under Roh that Korean troops were dispatched to both Afghanistan and Iraq, despite fierce anti-war protests. It was during the Roh administration that negotiations began for a bilateral free trade between Korea with the US, and Roh’s embrace of neoliberal reform deepened social inequality and intensified class stratification. A commonplace saying among the Korean Left captures the malaise: out of the thirty member nations of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Koreans work the longest hours, sleep and play the least number of hours, rank the highest in suicide, and come in at number twenty-four out of thirty in overall satisfaction with life.

Conservatives and progressives today continue to clash over the issues of US military presence in Korea, North Korea and reunification policy, and Korea’s involvement in US-led “Global War on Terror” and the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. April 2004 saw the election of a left-of-center majority in the National Assembly which was “not only liberal but is also made up of nearly 60% first-term legislators,” among whom a significant number had “previous experience as political activists or dissidents not favorably predisposed to the past authoritarian governments’ cozy relationships with the United States” (Cha 2005, 36). With liberals and former dissidents in power and democratic protest no longer outlawed, the table had turned and the conservatives kept finding themselves organizing “anti-government” rallies against the ruling party.

“Please don’t go”: keeping US military in charge of Korea

In 2006, the Roh administration began to negotiate for the transfer of wartime operational control of Korean troops from the Korea-US Combined Forces Command (CFC) back to South Korea. The impetus was presumably to assert national pride and postures of self-reliance, as Roh was elected amidst growing criticisms of US hegemony and its influence over Korea. Political Scientist Chung-in Moon explains the longer history behind the military alliance:

Authority over wartime operational control is crucial because it directly relates to the deployment and assignment of combat missions for 650,000 South Korean troops, as well as defining the terms of engagement in wartime. Although it is a matter of national sovereignty for South Koreans, South Korea has delegated its authority to the US on three separate occasions. The first occurred when President Rhee Syngman

⁵⁷ In Kim Kyöng-nae’s narrative, the beginning of the Left’s rise coincides exactly with the height of the anti-authoritarian democratization movement that culminated with the election of Kim Young Sam in 1992, the first democratically elected civilian President in modern Korean history. Right-wing ideologues typically blame Kim Dae Jung for promoting Leftist causes, but not Kim Young Sam who won the election by forging an alliance with the ruling conservatives. I thus understand Kim’s narrative as pointing to Leftist *dissent* under Roh Tae Woo and Kim Young Sam, which is then seen as gaining state power under Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun.

delegated command and control authority to General MacArthur, the Commander of the United Nations Command (UNC), in July 1950 during the Korean War. Thereafter, President Rhee transferred operational control to the Commander of USFK in 1954 after South Korea and the US signed the Mutual Defense Treaty at the conclusion of the Korean War. The final transfer took place when President Park Chung-hee [Park Chung Hee] delegated operational control of Korean troops to the CFC in 1978, which was formed as a way of managing the would-be power vacuum in the wake of Carter's decision to withdraw American troops (C. Moon 2006).

While the proponents saw the transfer as a logistical and symbolic restoration of South Korean sovereignty, conservative forces voiced formidable opposition, insisting on upholding the Korea-US alliance as a matter of national security. For example, in a scathing editorial, *Chosun Ilbo* editors argued for the US to maintain operational control because a transfer would “topple one of the pillars of [Korean] national security,” and added, “It's no exaggeration to say that the CFC is the backbone of the Korea-US alliance, on which our security, foreign policy and economy have depended for five decades.” The editorial denounced the transfer efforts as endangering public safety and “a crime [...] against 47 million people and their descendants.”⁵⁸

Moon explains that conservatives oppose the transfer in 2006 on five grounds. First and most commonly raised criticism was that the transfer would compromise national security. Second, the conservatives feared that the transfer would lead to “the dissolution of the CFC, reduction and withdrawal of American forces, and ultimately to the dismantling” of the Korea-US alliance. Third, they questioned the timing of the transfer as too hasty and rigid. Fourth, they claimed that the South Korean military was simply not ready for this responsibility. And fifth, the conservatives claimed that the transfer of wartime operational control would discourage the US from defending South Korea in the event of war, presumably to be initiated by North Korea (C. Moon 2006). These reasons were effectively captured in the protesters' placards that urged the US military, “Please don't go.”

Roh had already infuriated conservative Christian groups by attempting to regulate and tax private schools, a significant source of revenue for religious institutions. On September 2, 2006, some 200,000 protesters gathered in front of Seoul City Hall in a mass rally, with CCK mobilizing the majority of the turnout by using its extensive church networks. One CCK-affiliated church deaconess told me she suspected her entire congregation of several thousand attended upon the pastor's urging at the previous Sunday service. Speakers after speakers at the rally admonished the Roh administration, and asserted that without the US in command, South Korea will be overtaken by Communism. Several Christian leaders and pastors gave speeches and prayers on stage, making explicit what they considered to be a religious mandate to support Korea-US military alliance. In fact, CCK had launched a national petition campaign to “stop discussion on the transfer of wartime operational control,” and a CCK leader told me that this particular issue was among the organization's top priorities for the year. Other conservative political forces behind this opposition included the Korean Veterans Association, Korean Retired Generals and Admirals Association, and the fledgling New Right Union. Also participating in the rally were about twenty members of the right-wing Grand National Party, including the former party leader Park Geun-hye and the then-mayor of Seoul, Lee Myung Bak, two conservative rivals contending for the candidacy for Presidency.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Editors, “Wartime Operational Control: The Balance Sheet,” *Chosun Ilbo*, August 25, 2006.

⁵⁹ President Lee Myung Bak is known as much for his Christian faith as he is for his conservative and neoliberal developmentalist track record. He made a fortune in construction, razing and cementing his way into the nickname of “Bulldozer.”

The struggles around the CFC operational control illustrate the extent to which pro-Americanism and anti-Communism function as the profound bedrock of conservative Christianity in South Korea. Through mass mobilizations and discursive battles, conservative Christians continually produce a sense of historical affinity and foster military alliance with the United States. From an unwary appreciation of nineteenth century American civilizing missions and the positioning of the US as a salvific hero in the Korean War, to the Christian efforts to maintain US military presence in Korea in contemporary times, the US figures centrally in the Korean evangelical imagination.

Feeling Affinity with US Hegemony

This chapter has shown how conservative Korean Christians accentuate American *contribution* to Korea's modernity and national security in order to foster a sentiment of affinity and alliance between Korea and the US. Mass protest rallies mobilize individual and collective feelings of appreciation and apprehension, which are then used to legitimize belligerent politics that buttress US hegemony in Korea and elsewhere. The ligaments between political theology and mission practice—if one were to simplify this connection as a dialectical interaction between ideology and materiality—are not pre-given or entirely rational intentionalities. Rather, they are rendered intelligible through narratives of subjective, lived experience. By extension, the political-theological project of orienting Christians to think and *feel* an affinity with the US can be said to shape how Korean Christians approach and face the world at large.

My discussion is in part influenced by Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006). Focusing on directionality and spatiality of desires, Ahmed contends that not only do bodies take shape through associations with particular time-space geometries, but that they also become *oriented* through lived experience and always-spatial interrelations. She pays particular attention to how feelings of distance and proximity operate. Rather than corroborating the ontological claim of a stable, pre-existing modern subject—e.g. that the prefigured subject precedes its political expression—Ahmed's phenomenological theories prioritize relationality over subjectivity, and provocatively locates the sensing and acting subject as simultaneously inhabiting, constituting and being constituted by a differentiated world of power relations. She writes:

Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitation, as well as “who” or “what” we direct our energy and attention toward. (Ahmed 2006, 13)

Extending this approach to examine the evangelical political theologies of US-Korea relations, I interpret Korean Christian insistence on affinity and alliance as an effort to orient and direct hegemonic desires. In other words, it is my contention that while US-Korea relations and historical ties play a major role in evangelical imaginaries and subjectivities, it is also critical to examine what orientations are accomplished as a result—how Korean Christians are being *directed* and *propelled* through these “orientating” practices across a far-reaching spatial grid of global mission fields.

Both “alliance” and “affinity” denote a positively “sticky” relationship. An “alliance” foregrounds the notion of shared interests as the binding agent between two parties. Alliance suggests a rational, goal-oriented, and ultimately pragmatist union.⁶⁰ In contrast, “affinity” is defined as a

⁶⁰ *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (2005) defines an alliance as “the result of formal agreements (i.e., treaties) between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.” Available online from <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict> (accessed October 12, 2009).

close connection based on “natural” attraction or feeling of kinship.⁶¹ A sense of affinity may be encouraged by inducing feelings of empathy, similarity, and gratitude. It intimates an emotional attachment, but does not necessitate reciprocity. If an alliance might prompt two parties to hold hands or link arms, for instance, an affinity might not at all result in actual intimacy—instead, the mere *feeling* of proximity or attraction *towards* another suffices as proof of affinity. This is precisely why the affinity expressed by conservative Korean Christians towards their beloved America has been characterized by critics as “unrequited love”—their sense of affinity does not solicit for equality or reciprocity from the US.

Conservative Korean Christian insistence on the importance of US-Korea alliance is a constant invocation for how one ought to feel about the US, and how one ought to direct her/his energies regarding the US. The following excerpt by a prominent Korean conservative leader outlines one approach to understanding US-Korea relations vis-à-vis the war in Iraq and the hegemonic world order:

America’s worldview corresponds to the Christian worldview. To oppose such a nation is an act of betrayal and ingratitude... America owns 40% of the world’s economy and 50% of world’s military power. Even if all of Europe and Korea, China, and Japan joined together, they can not defeat America...

War is God’s right. There is no peace in the Middle East with [Saddam] Hussein there... To help America is what God wants. But God does not want American unilateralism. God is seeking a companion for America. As God created Eve to be Adam’s companion, we must be America’s helpmate. Satan fears US-Korea alliance, and so Satan stresses anti-Americanism. What God wants is for Jesus-believing America and Korea to join hands. Korea may not be second place, but we can at least be fourth or fifth place [in the world order].⁶²

It is unclear where the figures of “forty percent of the world’s economy” and “fifty percent of the world’s military power” are drawn from in this excerpt. What matters more perhaps is that in this rhetoric, America’s dominance appears indubitable. Not only does the US represent a righteous Christian nation, but it is also recognized as wielding unequalled economic and military might as a hegemonic world power. American power therefore serves as its own moral legitimacy—as the Christian God is mighty and the US is powerful, the course of righteousness lies on the side of power.

What is particularly striking in this passage is the idea that Korea’s destiny is to become Eve to America’s Adam, a helpmate that God desires for the hegemon.⁶³ Kim Sang-Chul, who delivered this speech at a prayer rally in 2004, is an influential conservative with a history of high-profile

⁶¹ Affinity is defined as: “1) a natural liking or sympathy for someone or something. 2) a close relationship based on a common origin or structure. 3) relationship by marriage. 4) the tendency of a substance to combine with another.” “Affinity.” *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*. 2009. Retrieved October 12, 2009, from http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/affinity

⁶² Kim Sang-Chul, speech delivered at a prayer rally at Seoul Church on March 1, 2004. A full transcript was posted on Seoul Church website at www.seoulchurch.or.kr [accessed on May 15, 2004]. This speech is also quoted in part in In-chul Kang, *Han'gukŭi Kaesinkyowa Pan'gongjuŭi: Posujök Kaesinkyoyŭi Chöngch'ijök Haengdongjuŭi T'amgu [Protestantism and Anti-Communism in Korea: An Examination of Ideas and Practices of Conservative Protestantism]* (Seoul: Jungsim, 2007).

⁶³ This language of intimate relations brings to mind the title of Katharine Moon’s book, *Sex Among Allies*. Moon’s work is on militarized sexual labor in international relations, and focuses on how sex workers in American military camp towns in Korea were used to preserve and reinforce US-Korea alliance. Interestingly, her book was published in Korean as *Tongmaengsokŭi Seksŭ*, which means not “sex among allies” but “sex within an alliance.” Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex among Allies : Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); ———, *Tongmaengsokŭi Seksŭ*, Samin ed. (Seoul: Samin, 2002).

leadership positions. He holds the record for the shortest term ever served as the mayor of Seoul—he was appointed by Kim Young Sam in 1993 and fired after just seven days in office—but has since established himself as an influential conservative leader, serving as the president of the aforementioned June 25 National People’s Rally to Fortify Anti-nuclear, Anti-Kim [Jong-il], Korea-US Alliance, and secretary general of the CCK-affiliated Committee to Help North Korea Refugees (CNKR). His statement embodies an explicit recognition of Korea’s limited power and influence— aspiring to become at best a fourth or fifth-place contender in the world order, but nonetheless essential in maintaining and expanding US global hegemony.

Others express a more ambitious destiny for Korea. Paul Choi, an outspoken leader of a Korean mission agency called InterCP and the author of numerous books on world evangelization, states in an article titled “New World Order and World Evangelization”:

The final curtains have closed on the age of world mission led by the Western Christian Church, including the American Church. In other words, the age of our White brothers managing the world in the name of Christ has come to an end. Today, the non-Western church, especially the Korean church, is more important than ever. The West and the non-West will long suffer from the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael, and the Korean Church, since we are pro-West yet Asian, will play an important role as the peace maker... The “Global Christian Leadership” has been passed on to the Korean church. (P. Choi 2004)

In this commentary, Choi articulates three commonplace propositions about Koreans and world evangelism. Choi’s first proposition posits that the “final curtains” have closed on the age of empire, and a new chapter of history has begun. He articulates a belief that the Christian world is currently undergoing significant change, a sentiment echoed by many theologians and religious historians who describe that a “great transformation” or a major “paradigm shift” is at work (Raiser 1991, Wallis 2002, A. Walls 1996, Wickeri 2003).

Secondly, Choi’s commentary explicitly acknowledges the colonial legacy of Christianity and the “old” world order which featured Europeans and Americans as “managers” of the world, yet the language of “management” depoliticizes this history as one of corporate bureaucracy. Managers are not rulers—they simply enforce rules and maintain order. The following passage by the theologian Hwang Hong Eyoul sheds some light on the theology of management.

The word for “economy” in Greek is *oikonomia*, which consists of: *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law) and means household management. According to the creation story in Genesis, God created humankind to govern creation as a steward/stewardess. Therefore, in God’s economy, humans should carry out their stewardship of God’s household as suffering servants, or messianic people. (H. E. Hwang 2003, 95)

Thirdly, Choi’s phrase “our White brothers” unmistakably aligns Korea with the Western “managers,” even as he claims that Korea maintains a neutral position between the West and the Rest. An affinity with the “White brothers” and condescension towards the “non-Western” people are clearly indicated in his choice of words, which are even more clearly marked in the intrinsically hierarchical structure of the Korean language in which this passage was originally written. In it, he uses a deferential and honorific language to refer to the “White brothers,” but not the others.

Whereas rhetoricians like Kim Sang-Chul position Korea as America’s helpmate, mission strategists like Choi insist that Korea occupies a liminal position neither in the West nor the rest, an in-between geopolitical position that serves both as a strategic advantage and a kind of divine destiny, whereby Koreans are urged to mediate as “peace makers in the continuing conflict between the Old

Testament's Isaac and Ishmael"—Abraham's warring sons, who are said to be the respective progenitors of Judeo-Christianity and Islam (P. Choi 2004). In his book on Zionist eschatology, *Back to Jerusalem: God's Final Project* (2004), Choi illustrates this point with a map that shows South Korea at the center of the world map, a focal point of convergence between a giant rightward red arrow marked "The Rest" and a leftward blue arrow marked "the West." Korea's geopolitical location is represented literally as where the Western trajectory meets the Rest's counter-trajectory. If one were to extend the metaphor of "clash of civilizations" and "seismic shifts," Korea is rendered as located at the epicenter of tectonic shifts.

Whether as an intimate helpmate or a destined heir, what Choi's depiction of Korea's pivotal location shares with Kim's description of Korea's role as America's helpmate is their common belief in Korea's affinity to US hegemony. Korea's proximity to US power defines its role and destiny as an imminent global mission leader. The insistence on Korea's privileged relations with the US thus evades the immense power differentials that persist not only between Korea and the US, but also throughout the world. The resulting geopolitical alignment and mission orientation locates Korea firmly on the triumphant side of power, and sanction the actions of the powerful. It locates Korea as a partner in the co-operation of US hegemony. As the next chapter will demonstrate in further detail, this worldly orientation yields highly asymmetrical practices as evangelicals reach out into the world.

Chapter 3. Evangelism's Reach: the 10/40 Window and Unreached People

The previous chapter discussed how notions of alliance and affinity—*friendly* relations based on feelings of similarity and solidarity—are cultivated as a constitutive element in the project of global missions. In contrast, this chapter focuses on the construction of difference by scrutinizing racially and geographically differentiated relations. My contention here is that global missions entail a praxis-oriented emphasis on translating intentions into concrete practices that involve “reaching” all corners of the world.

I begin by discussing the contestations surrounding what it means to save the world. Historical contexts of theological debates and milestone international gatherings illuminate how certain discourses of world evangelization emerged. I show how rhetorical strategies such as the “10/40 Window” and “unreached people groups” orient proselytizing efforts and rationalize racial difference by employing the language of cartography, demography, and anthropology. This chapter also suggests that evangelism’s “reaching” process lies at the heart of global missions as an effort towards inter-connectivity and incorporation into a hegemonic totality. Though difference and otherness are constantly produced in evangelical imaginations, they are produced in order to be vanquished. It is in this sense that missionary subjectivity is constituted not only through identification—such as in Korean affinity with the US—but also through the production of distance and otherness against which it defines itself.

Evangelism and the World

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), one of the most influential American evangelist of the late nineteenth century, described the task of world evangelization as follows:

I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, “Save all you can.” God will come in judgment and burn up this world... If you have any friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off (Moody quoted in Kritzingner 2003, 21).

Moody’s image of the world as a sinking ship does not simply refer to widespread misery and devastation. It refers to dispensational premillennialism theology which sees limited human capacity to bring about the Second Coming. Since world evangelization or any other human action is not about preventing the world from “burning up”—since apocalypse is destined to happen regardless of human action—what is telling in this passage is that Moody himself is seen as already having escaped from danger. Further, Moody the evangelist is assigned the daunting task of saving others by sharing with them the lifeboat he has been given. Considering the finite capacity of human endeavor and the presumably limited capacity of the one single lifeboat, Moody is well aware that he cannot save everyone. A certain degree of failure is guaranteed. The ethical position he embraces is to “do all you can,” with the humbling awareness that his action will not be sufficient but is nonetheless acceptable. We must not forget that while Moody the missionary fulfills his role as the heroic rescuer in direct communication with God, the unfortunate, unsaved masses face certain death in this picture.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Moody’s lifeboat metaphor is reminiscent of the development ladder picture painted by Ha Joon Chang’s book, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective* (London: Anthem, 2002). Discussing how advanced capitalist nations attempt to “kick away the ladder” that allowed them to climb where they are, Chang argues that it

Moody effectively fused dispensational premillennialism with the belief in the superiority of the United States through an unabashed pursuit of wealth and prosperity (Brouwer, et al. 1996). The rise of American evangelicalism coincided with the rise of the United States as a nation and an emerging world power (Marsden 1987). The early twentieth century saw numerous voluntary and mission societies in the US thrive in their effort to bring the gospel to the needy, buoyed by a sense of destiny and “guided by a vision of spiritual and moral progress” (Bornstein 2003, 18). The emergent American Fundamentalist movement in post-World War I era was also fomented in opposition to the modernist embrace of science and liberalizing theological tendencies that were seen by conservatives as unacceptable doctrinal compromises. Put differently, it was galvanized as a theological-political opposition to Darwinian evolutionism and Communism. Concerned with the perceived decline in cultural mores, the Fundamentalist movement reaffirmed a fundamental set of Christian beliefs including the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible and the insistence on the virgin birth of Christ as historical truth.

The “new evangelicalism” of the 1940s in the US embraced and modified elements of this early and fundamentalist evangelicalism (Marsden 1991). Between 1945 and 1975, during the heyday of American liberalism in economics, politics and religion, evangelicals breathed new life into the old gospel of wealth and resurrected a gospel of prosperity based not only on an emphasis on hard work, but also on the idea that Christians were entitled to material blessings on the sole basis of their faith (Brouwer, et al. 1996). In a sense, prosperity gospel, a theology that holds that material prosperity is evidence of God’s favor, was applied not only to individuals but also to the scale of nation-states. Eschewing the earlier disavowal of modern science, this effort relied on mathematical calculations of national wealth and poverty by accounting for the number of adherents and degree of “reachedness” in what some have come to deride as “statistical Christianity” (E. Smith 1972).

Ecumenism and the backlash

This confidence in progress and prosperity were disrupted by the decolonizing context of Third World independence following the World War II. Affirming the call for worldwide peace and reconciliation, ecumenism—the idea that there should be a single, unified Christian Church across doctrine, history, and practice—gained ground in the leadership of World Council of Churches (WCC) which includes most of the Orthodox Churches and a number of Protestant churches and works closely with the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC’s inaugural assembly in Amsterdam (1948) issued a declaration on religious liberty and the importance of the churches’ work for human rights, and the Uppsala Assembly in 1968 marked a turn towards social and ethical questions in reflecting on the church’s relation to the world. The ecumenical leadership at Uppsala concurred with the controversial Vatican II decree which de-emphasized foreign proselytizing missions and prioritized Christian solidarity with the poor and oppressed, proposing for instance an increased participation in secular programs for urban renewal and civil rights. After a five-year study project titled “Salvation Today,” WCC presented its findings at the Bangkok Conference of 1972-1973, clearly outlining salvation in four dimensions: economic justice, human dignity, solidarity and hope (Thomas 1995, 122).

Significant debate ensued. Brought to the fore were major rifts regarding the future of world evangelization, with considerable debate concerning the meaning of mission and the definition of salvation itself. The split is often described as an ecumenical-evangelical divide—ecumenicals

is no coincidence that economic development has become more difficult for developing countries during the last two decades with the so-called “global standard” policies and institutions imposed by the developed countries. Moody, in this case, may be described as holding the ladder for some in the wreckage—the passage implies friends first—then kicking away the ladder after capacity has been reached.

mainly emphasizing the unity of the church and the transformation of society and evangelicals stressing evangelism and personal conversion (Bosch 1991). Alternatively, some have suggested less polarizing conceptualizations such as a “liberationist-conversionist continuum” (Kritzinger 2003). Put somewhat simplistically, the conservative and conversionist evangelicals were beginning to rally against the ecumenical leaders’ liberationist and this-worldly direction. They vociferously objected to WCC’s “preoccupation” with “political liberation, land distribution, better pay for factory workers, [and] the downfall of oppressive systems of government” (MacGavran 1972a quoted in Thomas 1995, 129). To this day, many conservative evangelicals in both the US and South Korea regard the WCC as a bastion of theological deviations influenced by Marxism and socialism and criticize the WCC for being overly concerned with dialogue with non-Christians (Diamond 1999, 212).

As far as many evangelicals were concerned, WCC’s actions were considered as a betrayal of the Gospel. Outraged by the Uppsala Assembly, a theologian named Donald McGavran issued the following challenge to the WCC, entitled “Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?”

By “the two billion” I mean the “that great number of [persons] at least two billion, who either have never heard of Jesus Christ or have no real chance to believe in Him as Lord and Savior.” These inconceivable multitudes live and die in a famine of the Word of God, more terrible by far than the sporadic physical famines which occur in unfortunate lands. The Church, to be relevant, ... must plan her activity, marshal her forces, carry on her campaign of mercy and liberation, and be faithful to her Lord with the two billion in mind. If the sufferings of a few million in Vietnam, South Africa, Jordan, Buchenwald, or the slums of Rio de Janeiro or Detroit rightly excite the indignation and compassion of the Church, how much more should the spiritual sufferings of two thousand million move her to bring multitudes of them out of darkness into God’s wonderful light (MacGavran 1972a quoted in Thomas 1995, 129).

Rejecting the ecumenical position of mission as this-worldly improvement through philanthropy, famine relief, medicine and dialogue, conversionist evangelicals like McGavran criticized the WCC’s focus on “good deeds” and concern for social justice as secondary to the *essential* task of other-worldly mission—which they defined more narrowly as “discipling the peoples of the earth” (McGavran 1986).

Buoyed by the resurgence of Pentecostal and charismatic movements and global evangelical Christianity, evangelicals convened the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne (often referred to simply as Lausanne).⁶⁵ Responding to McGavran’s call for renewal of world missions, Lausanne redefined world evangelization as “church planting” involving proselytization across “cultural frontiers,” and stated that neither “social action evangelism” nor “political liberation salvation” was sufficient. But Lausanne nonetheless conceded that Christian social responsibility should include a measure of social-political involvement. While clearly underscoring the primacy of evangelism, in other words, Lausanne did not deny the importance of social actions. Rather than reverse the ecumenical tide of the WCC, Lausanne affirmed key aspects of ecumenical emphasis on worldly engagement and reshaped the course of world missions to come.

It was here at the 1974 Lausanne conference that Ralph Winter—professor of anthropology and linguistics at the School of World Missions at Fuller Seminary in southern California and named one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America by *Time Magazine* in 2005 (Van Biema, et al.

⁶⁵ The significance of Lausanne is underscored by the fact that several parachurch agencies I visited in Korea used the Lausanne Covenant as a litmus test for prospective members, some of whom were required to agree with and add their signatures to a copy of the Lausanne Covenant as a precondition for membership.

2005)—followed up on McGavran’s opposition against the WCC and concern for the “two billion,” and introduced the concept of billions of “people groups” unreached by the Gospel. Winter also put great emphasis on militaristic strategy development and anthropological approach to evangelism (Rynkiewicz 2007). Declaring that “the shattering truth is that at least four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of *any* Christian’s evangelism,” he admonished Christians for their lethargy in foreign missions (Winter 1975). Hired by McGavran to teach at the influential Fuller School of World Mission, Winter went on to establish the US Center for World Missions in 1976, referring to it as the headquarters for missionary research and “*a Pentagon for mission agencies around the world*” (my emphasis, Diamond 1999, 214). With hundreds of mission strategists working together to “gather information, coordinate efforts and develop the most effective plans possible to reach the nations,” Winter was at the center of a new scientific wave of world evangelization (Diamond 1999, 214).⁶⁶

Mapping The 10/40 Window

In so far as mapping involves exploration, selection, definition, generalization and translation of data, it assumes a range of social cum representational powers, and as the military histories of geography and cartography suggest, the power to map can be closely entwined with the power of conquest and social control. (N. Smith and Katz 1995, 70).

While Ralph Winter is credited for jump starting the modern missionary movement and introducing the concept of “unreached people groups,” the term “10/40 Window” was coined by Luis Bush, an Argentine-American mission strategist who addressed the plenary session of the 1989 International Congress on World Evangelization in Manila, Philippines (Lausanne II 1989). The 10/40 Window is essentially a rectangle on the world map—invariably using the oft-critiqued Mercator projection⁶⁷—that demarcates an area from ten to forty degrees latitude north of the Equator in the Eastern Hemisphere, covering nearly four billion people and sixty-two countries in North Africa, the Middle East, West to Central Asia and East Asia (see Figure 1).

⁶⁶ Along with their contemporaries at Fuller—including Peter Wagner, Alan Tippett, and Arthur Glasser—both Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter are recognized household names in Korean evangelical circles. McGavran’s mission paradigms, and especially his work on aggressive church growth have greatly influenced several generations of megachurch pastors and conservative leaders in South Korea, many of whom claim a direct connection to their legacy—Pak Chong-sun, the former president of the Christian Council of Korea (CCK), Pastor Kwak Sŏn-hŭi of Somang Church, Pastor Kim Sŏn-do of Kwanglim Church, Pastor Kim Ch’ang-in of Kwangsung Church, and the infamous Pastor Kim Hong-do of Kumnan Church are all graduates of Fuller Theological Seminary, known as one of the most popular destinations for Koreans seeking seminary education abroad.

⁶⁷ Gerhardus Mercator’s map, originally created in 1569, became commonly used throughout the eighteenth century as an icon of Western superiority and ideological centrality with its distorted enlargement of Europe. Despite well-known criticisms, the Mercator remains to this day as the most ubiquitous and popular world map projection including virtually all missionary maps featuring the 10/40 Window. See Harley (1989), Wood (1992), Kaiser & Wood (2001), and Pickles (2004).

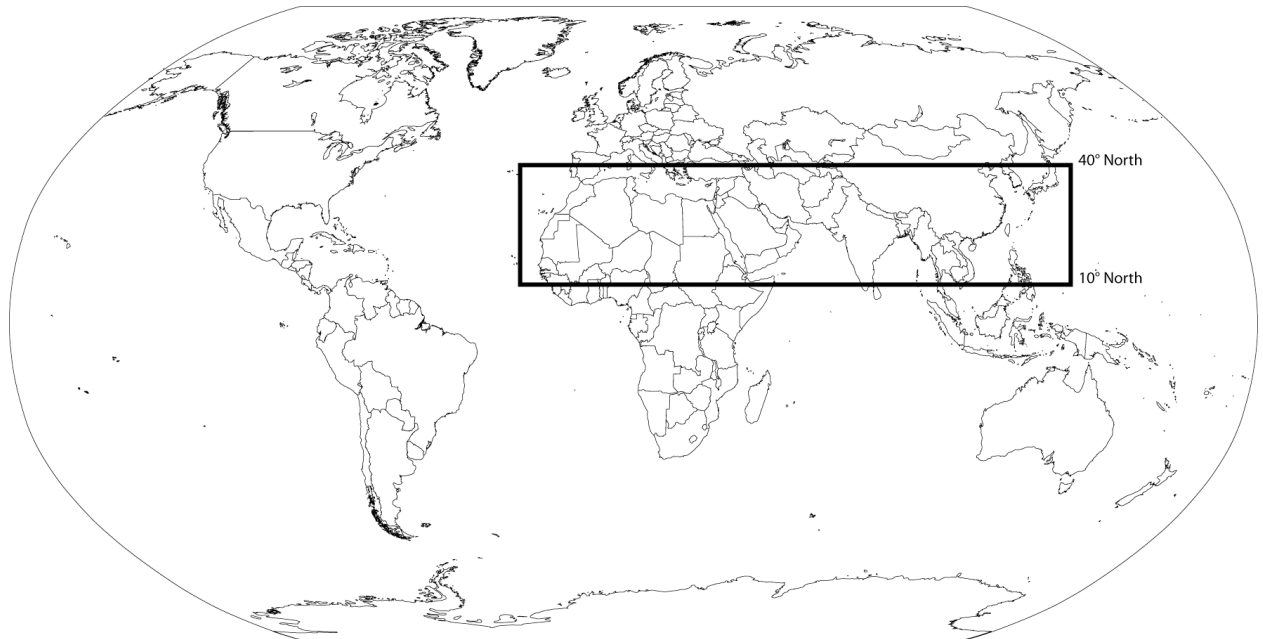


Figure 1. The 10/40 Window. Drawn by author.

In the 10/40 Window is where we find the so-called “Axis of Evil” including Iran, Iraq and North Korea, US-occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, and the majority of world’s Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist populations. In addition to North Korea, almost two million ethnic Koreans in China are located within the 10/40 Window, while approximately half million ethnic Koreans in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan fall just outside the 10/40 Window. A sizable number of Korean missionaries today are working in and near the 10/40 Window. This enormous area is said to be suffering from the “greatest degrees of poverty, illiteracy, disease and suffering” and most significantly, the “least exposure to Christianity” (Bush 1996a, np). The defined boundaries of 10/40 Window are far from precise. National borders obviously do not conform to the rectangular margins of the 10/40 Window, resulting in ambiguous inclusions and exclusions. Included are the Philippines, which already has a sizable Catholic and Protestant populations, but the largely non-Christian Indonesia, Sri Lanka or Uzbekistan fall out of bounds (see Figure 2).

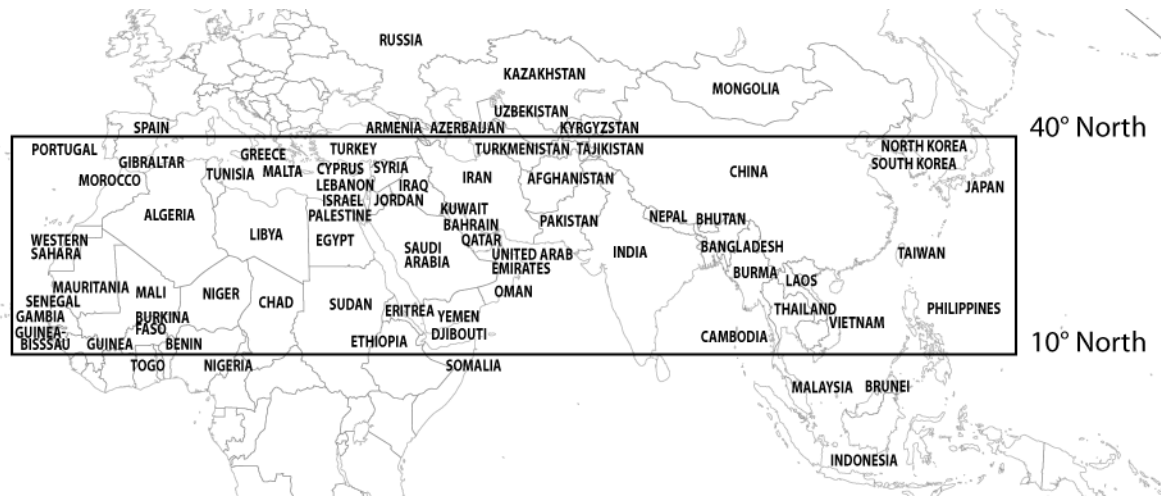


Figure 2. Countries in and near the 10/40 Window. Drawn by author.

The concept of the 10/40 Window gained traction at the 1989 Global Consultation on World Evangelism (GCOWE) in Singapore, which followed the Lausanne II held in the Philippines earlier that year. Attended by many of the same people who had participated in Lausanne I and II, but also drawing significant numbers from evangelicals in Asia, GCOWE was organized by Thomas Wang, a Chinese-born American leader of the AD2000 Movement.⁶⁸ As a project committed to building, in Wang’s own words, a “network of networks” (quoted in Koop 1995), the AD2000 Movement set out with the goal as the “harvest of the unreached people groups throughout the world” under the slogan, “A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the Year 2000” (Bush 1996a). As the year 2000 drew near, the organization extended its expiration date and renamed itself as AD2000 *and Beyond* Movement (my emphasis). In 1995 the AD2000 and Beyond Movement organized the second GCOWE in Seoul, South Korea, drawing nearly 4,000 Christian leaders from 186 countries over nine days “to develop strategies and plans to achieve Christian evangelization of the entire world” (Aikman 1995, np). Ralph Winter called it “the most strategic Christian gathering in history” (Bush 1996d, np). It was at this gathering in Seoul that the 10/40 Window was formally selected to be the primary focus for evangelism for the coming decade (Coote 2000).

It is by now a common contention that mapping is a selective process. Cartography is a representational practice that purports to capture reality (see Harley 1989, 1990, Pickles 1992, 2004, Wood 1992) but in fact is part of “a *recursive* social process in which maps shape a world that in turn shapes its maps” (Sparke 2005, 12, emphasis in original). It is significant that the 10/40 Window employs the metaphor of a window, replete with suggestions of framing, viewing, displaying, and targeting. Windows typically function as a metaphor for looking outward. But here, the 10/40 window reflects the evangelical desires of those who peer into it. At the same time, it creates a portal through which the salvation of the world can be achieved. It is a regime of vision—one that fixes people and histories onto a territorialized destiny—and the beholder of this perspectival vision is the privileged subject of a new social, economic, and religious order.

⁶⁸ Wang recently led the Great Commission Center International in San Francisco, and gained some notoriety as a leading opponent against same-sex marriage in California. Identified as a member of the missionary Chinese Ministerial Committee in Mountain View, California, Wang told the *San Jose Mercury News*: “We will not stand by to watch biblical marriage be destroyed by a radical agenda” (April 15, 2004). Wang also told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that “legalizing same-sex marriage would eventually lead to polygamy, multipartner marriage and incest” (April 26, 2004).

Bringing the map to life

It must also be said that the 10/40 Window has become a mainstay in evangelical imaginations not because of its cartographical clarity, but rather because a web of validating discourses continue to animate and reproduce it. Consider the following statements:

The core of the spiritually and materially neediest people of our world live in a rectangular-shaped window. [It] is where humanity suffers more than any other region in the earth... due to the historic bondages and alliances made with Satan himself. (Bush 1995)

The majority of those enslaved by Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism live within The 10/40 Window. From its center in The 10/40 Window, Islam is reaching out energetically to all parts of the globe; in similar strategy, we must penetrate the heart of Islam with the liberating truth of the gospel. We must do all in our power to show Muslims that the highest prophet described in the Koran is not Mohammed, but Jesus Christ. (Bush 1996b)

Most of the world's areas of greatest physical and spiritual need, most of the world's least-reached peoples and most of the governments that oppose Christianity. (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 755)

The first excerpt is from Luis Bush's welcome speech delivered at the GCOWE gathering in Seoul. His reference to Satanic "historic bondages and alliances" alludes to Communism and Islam. By describing the historical condition of the 10/40 Window as one of archaic captivity, Bush naturalizes the need for liberation, which can be delivered only through Christianity. The language of captivity continues in the second excerpt in which faith in any religion other than Christianity is likened to spiritual enslavement (see also Aikman 1995, Bush 1996b, c). At the center of the 10/40 Window, Islam in particular emerges monstrous, with tentacles reaching for territorial expansion. To slay this monster, Bush urges Christians to rely on the Truth—that Islam is a religion based on a false belief in the wrong prophet. It is important to note that he distinguishes Muslims from Islam, so that while Islam figures as the enemy, Muslims are simply those who are deceived and enslaved by Islam. The third excerpt, quoted from the evangelical almanac and prayer guide *Operation World* (2001), also echoes this differentiation by separating the people from the government, whereby repressive rulers are seen as an obstacle to what people actually need and desire.

The discourse of the 10/40 Window and the unreached peoples is strikingly reminiscent of the "neoliberal geopolitics" of Thomas P.M. Barnett, a prominent military analyst and influential advisor to the Pentagon (Roberts, et al. 2003). Barnett's book, entitled *The Pentagon's New Map* (2004), proposes a new map of the world to discuss the "Non-Integrating Gap"—defined as those regions which "remain fundamentally *disconnected*" from globalization's expanding web of connectivity (121). He draws explicitly and liberally from Thomas Friedman's "smooth spaces," Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," and Francis Fukuyama's "end of history," in asserting globalization to be America's "greatest gift to history" and the "most perfectly flawed projection of the American Dream onto the global landscape." He then declares that disconnectedness from globalization is the "ultimate enemy" (50 and 124), as disconnectedness from global capitalism equals dangerous criminals with nothing but disregard for the rule of law. In contrast to the Non-Integrating Gap, the Functioning Core is defined by Barnett as a region that accepts the "connectivity" of globalization and welcomes the "content flows associated with integrating one's national economy to the global economy" (125). He approvingly cites Thomas Friedman's distinction between the

“Lexus world” which embraces globalization and the “olive tree world” that prefers to “remain trapped in a simpler world” squabbling over meaningless gains (125). Huntington’s “fault-line wars” that result from a “clash of civilization” makes an appearance in Barnett’s work dressed up as the “bloody” boundaries between the Core and the Gap. As Gillian Hart (2006) points out, these remarkably similar images of “smoothed global space” not only downplay American dominance, but also enable the inequalities and asymmetries they try to obscure.

To my knowledge, Barnett is not explicitly tied to the projects of evangelical Christian missions. It is obvious, however, that there exists unmistakable rhetorical resonance between the idea of disconnectedness of the “Non-Integrating Gap” and the idea of unreachedness of the 10/40 Window. Both constitute a collective “ensemble of representational practices that separate the world’s components into bounded units, disaggregate their relational histories, turn difference into hierarchy and naturalize these representations” (Hart 2006, 22).

The 10/40 Window presents the world in components, first in the idea of the 10/40 Window as a discernible region, then in terms of nations and governments within the Window. There are even strategic cities—evangelical publications like *Praying Through the Window* or *Window Watchman* call for Christians worldwide to prioritize the conversion of people groups in “100 Gateway Cities” located in the 10/40 Window.⁶⁹ Another initiative called Window International Network dispatches daily country profiles—with details gathered from Wikipedia and the *CIA World Factbook* and summaries of current news events—and provides a list of specific prayer items customized for each country. For example, one is to pray for North Korea on October 28:

Pray that renegade and hostile terrorists the North Korean government sponsor are caught and properly dealt with for their continued violence against innocent people. (Mark 4:22). Pray for the salvation of Kim Jong-Il and other North Korean leaders, and all prisoners and guards, and for all torture camps to be closed down. Thank God that despite the odds, in one of the harshest places in the world, there are Christians surviving.⁷⁰

The rhetorical strategy of the 10/40 Window defines human suffering as a condition of both spiritual and material poverty, and equates the spread of Christianity with assurances of prosperity. The oft-repeated evangelical axiom that “the poor are lost, and the lost are poor” echoes this conflation between prosperity and Christianity (see Bush 1996b). With Christianity seen as providing a liberatory antidote to poverty, proselytizing missions are imagined as rescue aid, akin to Moody’s aforementioned lifeboat. It is a deeply depoliticized conception of not only proselytization but also of aid more generally—both reduced to well-intentioned and helpful acts of generosity.⁷¹

Similarly, publications such as *Adoption: A Practical Guide to Successfully Adopting an Unreached People Group* (1993) encourage people to consider “adopting” a specific unreached people to encourage not only financial ties but also affective ties through the metaphor of family adoption. This evangelism-as-adoption effort departs from the daily prayer model of Window International Network because it reflects a post-national geography of world evangelization that

⁶⁹ Included on the list of 100 Gateway Cities in the 10/40 Window are: Kabul, Afghanistan; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Beijing, China (plus sixteen other Chinese cities); Cairo, Egypt; Calcutta, India (plus ten other cities in India); Jakarta, Indonesia; Tehran, Iran; Baghdad, Iraq; Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Pyongyang, North Korea; Dakar, Senegal; Taipei, Taiwan; Bangkok, Thailand; Istanbul, Turkey; Tashkent, Uzbekistan; and Hanoi, Vietnam, just to name a few. The list is no longer maintained, as the sponsoring organization AD2000 Movement is now defunct, but an archived list from 2001 can be found online: <http://www.ad2000.org/1040city.htm>.

⁷⁰ Daily email newsletter from Window International Network, October 26, 2009.

⁷¹ As discussed in Chapter 2, conservative Korean evangelicals likewise tend to accept this equation of Christianity as Americans’ gift to Korea, a gift that Korea is indebted to return by sharing the Gospel with the world.

conceives units of conversion in terms of ethno-linguistic groups, and focuses its attention on people groups, not individuals or nation-states. The following explanation offered by the Adopt-A-People Campaign of the US Center For World Mission reveals what it means to connect to another through adoption:

What then does it mean to adopt a people? It means that a church, or a group within a church, works through their chosen and approved mission agency to provide informed, concerned, dedicated prayer and financial support for a specific unreached people group. It means maintaining that commitment until a church planting movement is started that can reach the rest of the people without needing outside cross-cultural help. We are not “adopting” the people group into our congregation, denomination or mission agency. We are praying, giving, and serving to see a people adopted into God’s family (Yoder 1999, np).

Discursive strategies like these daily prayer reminders and adopt-a-people campaign remind us that although the 10/40 Window is a cartographic objectification of the subjective (Panofsky 1991), it remains persuasive not only through the powerful logic of its abstraction but also through the relentless reproduction of narratives that animate it. As both a region and the lens used to view the region, the 10/40 Window establishes specific symbolic orders and discursive formations to bring into focus the occupants—each tagged with ethnicity and language, affixing “permanent associations between space, territory, and cultural organization” (Moallem 2006, 19). It is what Stuart Hall may call a “spectacle of the other,” signifying racial difference through geographical containment (Hall 1997).

[U]sing visual aids helps encourage prayer. Perhaps a large world map or colourful flags would help. If you know people who have traveled widely, consider borrowing souvenirs from them which help people see or feel a foreign culture. ... Perhaps you can think of a symbol which will help illustrate prayer. To depict that prayer helps break through spiritual darkness in the 10/40 Window, one church set up a large map with black paper over each of the 10/40 Window countries. Each time they prayed, they removed one of the black coverings to reveal the colourful country underneath. (Johnstone, et al. 1996)

The passage above is excerpted from *Praying through the Window III: The Unreached Peoples*, a prayer guide that recommends displaying a map of the 10/40 Window to orient church members toward world evangelization. To set the mood for prayer, the book suggests watching videos highlighting a “foreign culture” from the Window or borrowing travel souvenirs to construct a feeling of proximity and intimacy. The book also encourages evangelicals to befriend immigrants to familiarize themselves with foreign languages, food and cultural customs. However contrived these methods may seem, they are techniques intended to create a feeling of connection and attachment to faraway places in order to “reach” them even if only symbolically. Instead of pinning flags on the map as in colonial or military conquest, church members are encouraged to bask in self-satisfaction after prayer by unveiling each country from darkness—forgetting for a moment that they themselves had staged the whole covering and uncovering of the map. To paraphrase Sara Ahmed (2006), these “orientating” techniques shape how evangelicals apprehend the world and toward whom and what they direct their energy.

Reaching the Unreached People Groups

While the 10/40 Window designates priority destination areas, nations, and cities, the primary target of evangelism remains the inhabitants of the 10/40 Window. As it is well known, colonial missionaries were compelled by the so-called “White Man’s Burden” to enlighten and uplift the dark “heathen regions,” and to “save” poor souls from eternal damnation (Kipling 1899). Mission schools were seen as “beachheads of Christian civilization in pagan territory which had helped in vanquishing pagan culture” (Saayman 1991 quoted in Kritzing 2003, 26). In a remarkable resemblance to the logic behind the 10/40 Window, the Vatican Mission Exposition in 1925 claimed to present a “window on the world,” and displayed curios from mission efforts to win “the thousand million souls still unconverted” (Considine 1925).

Similarly racist and imperialist language of “heathens” and “civilizing missions” may no longer be in vogue among most mainstream evangelicals today, but still prevalent are comparable ideas that downplay the flexible and historically contingent character of race and ethnicity. Reproducing variations on the so-called objectivism of race, several projects of world evangelization produce racial definitions and profiles in technocratic, pseudo-scientific terms. Nowhere is this more evident than in the proliferating discourse of people groups and unreached people groups who are said to populate the 10/40 Window. The Lausanne Strategy Working Group in 1982 defined a people group as follows:

a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc. or combinations of these... [It is] the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement *without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance* (Winter 1989, my emphasis).

Similarly, the evangelical almanac *Operation World* identifies “ethnolinguistic people group” as a population category, claiming that “a person’s identity and primary loyalty” is primarily determined by language and/or ethnicity (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 757). In this schema, ethnicity, race, language, and culture are all tied to biological and cultural heritage. The idea posits that there exist distinct and discernible “people groups” who share a common *cultural identity* and *internal affinity*. It also posits that within such group, there are no cultural or linguistic barriers that may hinder understanding or acceptance. This conception of in-group cohesion will be elaborated later in the discussion of cultural and geographical distance. Suffice it to say that not only does this rhetoric homogenize each group, but it essentially naturalizes ethnicity and language as unquestioned determinants for individual and collective identity formation. Such doctrine of racial typology and classification has little support in contemporary social science, as scholars of race and ethnicity have thoroughly debunked the modernist view of the social order and the world imaginary as consisting of discrete groups, each with its own discernible characteristics (Banton 2000). As in other projects of racial taxonomy, these “practices of naming and knowledge construction deny all autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending power, control, authority and domination over them” (Goldberg 2000, 155).

The absurd and impossible task of defining and accounting for all discrete people groups in the world has nonetheless kept numerous evangelization projects busy over the years. Theological effort to justify the demarcation of ethnolinguistic people group as a biblically based terminology begins with the pivotal passage in the Bible known as the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18), which says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Claiming that the Greek word *ethne* was translated as “nations” in English despite the original meaning referring to a distinct “people with a

unifying ethnic identity,” the advocates of “unreached people groups” concept interpret the Great Commission as a mandate to make disciples of all “ethnic groups,” not nations in the contemporary or Westphalian sense (Piper 2004, 161).

The etymology of the word “ethnicity” does support this argument to some extent. The problem, however, is that the idea of an ethnolinguistic people group is assumed to be an anthropological and scientific fact. On the contrary, the term “ethnicity” was first introduced by researchers in the early 1940s who sought to avoid the word “race” that had become inextricably associated with anti-Semitism, the so-called “Jewish race” and Nazi genocidal policies (D. Hiebert 2000). By avoiding the reference to race and opting instead for ethnicity and language, the “ethnolinguistic people group” discourse attempts to depoliticize what is in actuality a variation of racial taxonomy project. *Operation World* defines “unreached people” as follows:

an ethnolinguistic people among whom there is no viable indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their own people without outside (cross-cultural) assistance. Other researchers have adopted the terms “hidden people” or “frontier people group.” (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 759)

Unreached people are considered “hidden” because it is believed that they have not been able to “hear the gospel in their own language in a way that makes sense to them” (Moreau, et al. 2004, 13). In other words, proselytization is seen as necessarily including the work of translation and cross-cultural communication. As such, ethnolinguistics stresses intelligibility and communicability of the Christian Gospel. Long-term missionaries have been historically well-known for their language acquisition and Bible translation activities. There was a long-standing belief, particularly among the British, in the supremacy of the English language and an innate relationship between English and Christianity, reason and rationality.⁷² And the opportunities of language education are not lost on contemporary mission strategists:

...Since the 1980s no professional skill has grown more quickly in use than that of teaching English... The demand for English language skills has swelled tremendously over the past fifty years as English has evolved into a world language. North Americans, most of whom speak English as their first tongue, have a built-in advantage in teaching English to speakers of other languages. (Moreau, et al. 2004, 197)

Since North American missionaries occupy a privileged location in the global political economy of English, they take great advantage of the widespread demand for English language skills worldwide. In fact, missionary instruction of English has been criticized as “a means to convert the unsuspecting English language learner” with “profound moral and political questions” (Pennycook and Makoni 2005, 139).

Quantifying the unreached

The cartography of the 10/40 Window and the geo-statistical project of classifying the world’s unreached people groups are critical components of mission praxis. For years, Ralph Winter claimed that there are as many as 24,000 people groups in the world. In 2001, *Operation World*

⁷² Charles Grant, Chairman of the British East India Company and Christian missionary in India, wrote in 1792: “The use and understanding of the English language would enable the Hindus to reason, and to obtain new and better views of their duty as rational and Christian creatures” (Clive 1973, 345 quoted in Pennycook 2003, 339).

declared that there was now a “reasonably complete listing of the world’s peoples and languages,” and that “for the first time in history,” they have come up with a “reasonably clear picture of the remaining task for us to disciple the nations” (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 15). The authors of *Operation World* revised the total estimate to 12,000 ethnolinguistic peoples in the world and another large-scale evangelical statistics project, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett, et al. 2001) later arrived at a similar figure.

Out of these 12,000-plus people groups, over 9,000 are considered already reached by the Christian gospel. An estimated 3,000 to 3,600 peoples, however, are considered “World A” people, defined as living in an area of the world that is less than half evangelized. “World B” is defined as over 50% evangelized but less than 60% Christian and “World C” refers to areas that are over 95% evangelized, with over 60% of the population being Christian. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the unevangelized World A people are said to originate from the 10/40 Window area. The World A-B-C scale was invented by the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and is reproduced in various research and database projects including *Operation World*. In one particularly interesting illustration (Barrett, et al. 2001, 40), the authors of *World Christian Encyclopedia* combine World A-B-C with a more commonly used tripartite imagination of the world—First, Second and Third World (see Figure 3).

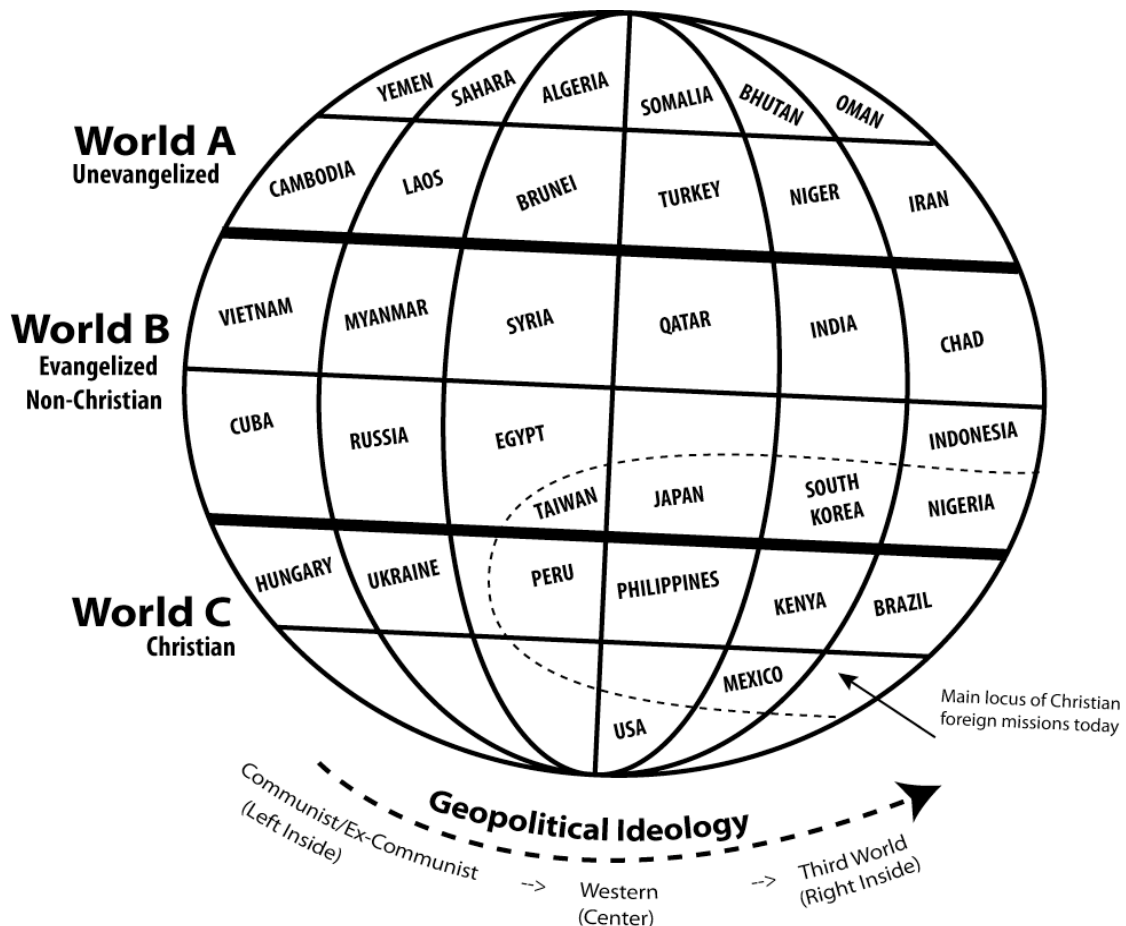


Figure 3. Worlds A, B, C and geopolitical ideology. Modified and redrawn by author.

This peculiar diagram divides the globe into a grid and places within it a select few names of countries—including curiosities like “Sahara”—providing coordinates on the vertical evangelization

scale (Worlds A, B, C) and the horizontal “geopolitical ideology” scale moving from “Communist/Ex-Communist World” to “Western World” to “Third World.” The United States, for instance, is squarely at the intersection of the Christian world and the Western world, while Mexico is located in the Third World-Christian world intersection and Cambodia is in the Unevangelized-Communist World. If the 10/40 Window aligns missionary mandates with imperial and developmentalist targeting, this diagram puts geopolitical dynamics and world evangelization as co-determinants of a country’s location in the world. It also contends that there is an unnecessary preponderance of mission effort and resources directed to the world that is already Christian (World C), instead of where it is considered most needed (World A).

Using a coding system also developed by the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, the Joshua Project—which directly grew out of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement and now operates as a part of Ralph Winter’s US Center for World Mission (Bush 1996a, c)—provides an elaborate racial classification system. With the claim that “accurate, regularly updated ethnic people group information is critical” for the project of world evangelization (Bush 1996c), the system uses a three-part coding rubric with categories ranging from “Australoid” and “Mongoloid” to “Negroid” and “Arctic Mongoloid” (Joshua Project 2009).

Datasets thus generated are used by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) specialists like Global Mapping International, who produce numerous maps pinning these ethnic/racial classifications onto the world map. These statistical projects code the global space with a dizzying array of datasets, typologies, charts and graphs. Projects like *World Christian Encyclopedia* and *Operation World* are founded upon the faith in the need for quantification and enumeration of evangelization (Barrett, et al. 2001, Johnstone, et al. 2001) and argue that statistics provide “solid factual basis for action” (Johnstone et al. 2001, xviii). They geo-code the world through demography, cartography and GIS, offering terms like “missiometrics” and “evangelistics” (Barrett and Johnson 2001). They laud the 10/40 Window as a “brilliantly successful” focus, arguing that it has resulted in manifold increase in the deployment of missionaries to reach the unreached people groups (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 6).

The enormity of these statistical projects has been likened to the impossible task of counting “every soul on earth” (Ostling and Matheson 1982, np). Despite the seemingly technical explanations and elaborate coding rubric, the underlying framework of these mapping and classification projects reflects the persistence of anthropological and scientific racism. As a result, one theologian laments that the 10/40 Window concept and people group research are based on outdated anthropology, poor-quality geography and questionable theology, and comments that this combination has become “another colonial burden that has to be borne” by Christians (Rynkiewich 2007, 225).

How then to reach the unreached? The word “reaching” literally suggests making overtures to contact. If the previous discourse of “civilizing mission” entailed taking up residence among the “heathens” in order to uplift and transform them, the notion of “reaching” appears to aim for far less, for it merely strives for contact with the unreached. But the point of evangelical contact is only the beginning, for the Gospel is supposed to continue to spread and multiply.

The idea of “reachedness” refers not to an individual person’s conversion, but instead applies to a collective people group. Note that the unit of analysis does not involve territorial nation-states but rather focuses on the occupants. As one website puts it: “God sees faces, not places. His Son, Jesus, died for people . . . not countries!” (Adopt-a-People Clearinghouse 2009).

The five stages of reachedness are outlined as follows (Camp 1993). The first is “Reported” or when the people group is simply brought to the attention of a Christian research group which then tries to verify their unreached status. The second, “Selected,” refers to the stage when a denomination

or mission agency takes on the responsibility to reach the people group. Third is the “Adopted” stage when churches or fellowship groups agree to support the selected people group with prayers and financial assistance. The fourth or “Engaged” stage occurs when cross-cultural missionaries are on site in order to plant churches. And finally, the fifth is the “Reached” stage, achieved when a strong church-planting movement of sufficient size and strength has been established and can evangelize the rest of the group with no or very little outside help. There exists some disagreement in the precise definition, but a people group is usually deemed “reached” not when every single member or the majority are converted, but rather, when mission efforts have established a local, indigenous church with the capacity and resources to continue to evangelize the rest of the group (Johnstone, et al. 2001).

Overcoming cultural and geographical distance

The Unreached Peoples Program director of World Vision International claims that a people group is the largest group within which the gospel can “flow along natural lines,” and that unless the gospel comes from someone within one’s own people group, the gospel will be considered foreign and inaccessible (Robb 1996, 16). Similar discourse is found in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (known simply as *Perspectives*), one of the most widely used mission curricula today. Developed by Ralph Winter in 1973, *Perspectives* is now a large-scale international training program operating out of Winter’s US Center for World Mission. Over 70,000 people in North America and over 30,000 elsewhere are said to have taken *Perspectives* and its training module has been translated and offered in numerous languages. Some mission agencies in South Korea even consider a certificate of completion in *Perspectives* a prerequisite training for mission participation.

At the core of *Perspectives* is an unsophisticated but elaborate typology of ethnolinguistic people groups. Claiming that the world can be best viewed in terms of people groups, the “16 Core Ideas” document from *Perspectives* states as follows:

The gospel flourishes *amidst* a people group, and moves with more difficulty *between* people groups. [...] Seeing the world’s population as individuals, or even as countries defined by geopolitical boundaries, can be helpful for some aspects of mission. But seeing humanity as a mosaic of people groups is strategically important when analyzing the entire task of world evangelization. Since every people group will require a unique approach and strategy, it becomes important to understand distinctive features of the peoples. (2008, emphasis added)

The idea that there is an in-group coherence that allows a “natural flow” of Christianity is derived from Winter’s popular typology of cross-cultural and frontier missions that divides evangelism into E-1, E-2, and E-3. In it he posits that E-1 evangelism denotes mission activities “among people just like us,” while E-2 evangelism engages those who are “near cultural neighbors.” The highest-priority E-3 evangelism takes places “among those who are culturally very different” (Winter 1981, 314). The call to understand “distinctive features” of people who are “culturally very different” is backed up with anthropological theories. As in colonial anthropology, Winter never questions the centrality of the white American evangelical as the locus against which all difference is measured and produced. But he argues that there are different kinds of differences—“geographical distance” and “cultural distance.” With white Americans squarely in the E-1 position, for instance, “Hispanic missions” are considered E-2 (neighbors), but Navajo missions, geographically in North America but far from white Americans in cultural distance, are relegated to E-3 (cross-cultural). One can be geographically proximate and culturally very different, and vice versa.

While the rhetoric of cultural distance certainly reifies a static sense of cultural identity and a territorialized demarcation of cultural boundaries, the relations of distance depend on who is placed at the center. Using Winter’s typology, the following illustration (see Figure 4) appears in *World Mission: an Analysis of the World Christian Movement* (1994).

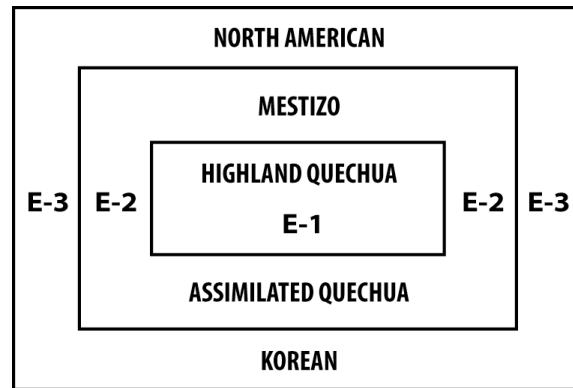


Figure 4. Diagramming “Cultural Distances.” Drawn by author.⁷³

The figure is designed to illustrate these relationships—and importantly, the relationalities—by showing the so-called cultural distance between the Highland Quechuas of Peru and others. As the Highland Quechuas are in focus, they occupy the center E-1 position. Because the Highland Quechuas are said to be farthest away from North Americans and Koreans because of significant cultural and linguistic barriers, those groups occupy the outermost E-3 distance. Meanwhile, the Mestizo and “assimilated Quechuas” are considered to be cultural neighbors because of shared ancestry and customs and thus occupy the intermediary E-2 group. Arguing that in “today’s complex world, there are many ‘Jeruselems,’ ‘Judeas,’ ‘Samaritas’ and ‘uttermost parts,’” the authors concede that one person’s Samaria is another’s Judea (Lewis et al. 1994, 7-10). They explain that the New Testament’s apostle Paul himself was ethnically a Jew but raised in a Gentile culture and that this background put him culturally closer to the Gentiles than the other apostles. This explanation of an intermediary or hybrid cultural neighbor is offered in part to show why Paul is considered a particularly effective model of a cross-cultural missionary in the Bible. Similar rhetoric of cultural proximity and neighborliness is used today in numerous multi-ethnic congregations in North America, where immigrants and people of color are seen as uniquely well-suited and capable of reaching those who are culturally proximate to them. Through this frame of cultural distance as access and approachability, in other words, immigrants and people of color are seen as important resources for an otherwise declining North American Christianity.

To a certain extent, postcolonial criticisms of power and dominance and the struggles for self-determination in the post-War era of decolonization have heightened the attention paid to dynamics of cultural difference and importance of self-sufficient, local Christian leadership. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of cultural distance undermines the persistence of inequality or injustice. It reduces asymmetrical power relations to cultural miscommunication to be mitigated by diversity awareness or cultural sensitivity training, preferably informed by those deemed cultural insiders.

As discussed thus far, various methods are employed to reach the unreached peoples and foster connectivity. Maps and other visual tools are used to orient people to visualize and cultivate a sense of long-distance intimacy. Statistical projects render the target calculable and visible. Ideas around “cultural distance” reinforce the idea that there are impermeable boundaries around discrete

⁷³ Redrawn with permission from Jonathan Lewis, Meg Crossman, and Stephen Hoke, *World Mission: An Analysis of the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena, Calif.: W. Carey Library, 1994).

units of “culture,” that the distance between these discrete units are measurable, and ultimately, that these distances and barriers are bridgeable through empirical knowledge and the right strategy.

The people group discourse accomplishes several important objectives for the project of world evangelization. First, it posits that enumerating and quantifying the world’s population, as well as measuring evangelization, is a new and empirical approach to an age-old task. Some use terms like “evangelistics,” for instance, to refer to “the science that studies the propagation of Christianity,” dedicated to validating and improving evangelical missions (Barrett and Johnson 2001b). Secondly, while recognizing the world’s diversity in language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class and caste as potential deterrents to proselytizing, the people group discourse reduces difference to a matter of cross-cultural barriers to overcome. Altogether eviscerated are power and politics at work. Third, like the GIS-driven 10/40 Window mapping practices, the empiricist pseudo-scientific approach of the people group discourse rationalizes the religious imperative and fixes in place the target of missions. In the 10/40 Window, unreached people groups are the *objects* of mission at a standstill—poor and needy, disconnected and out of reach—with each ethnolinguistic group affixed to a territory. In contrast, evangelical missionaries are defined in terms of their mapping capacity and mobility, traversing in and out of the 10/40 Window as they see fit.

Evangelical Mission as Geopolitical Praxis

Understanding world evangelization not only as a complex of normative ideas and orienting imaginaries, but also as a set of concrete practices and proselytizing strategies designed to reach the so-called unreached people groups, this chapter has examined the racialized, pseudo-scientific geographies of difference and distance. From the unprecedented rise in popularity of maps and geographical literacy in the eighteenth century (Brückner 2006) and the imperial mapping that sought to govern the contact zones in the “new world” (M. Pratt 1992), to the American popular geopolitics of the Cold War (Sharp 2000), geographical knowledge has long been complicit with imperial projects. This power-laden history of maps and mapping has been the subject of much critical scholarship (Brückner 2006, Pickles 2004, M. Pratt 1992). The logocentric ambitions of statistical methods and GIS, and their shared faith in a fundamentally ordered (or orderable) world require continual and sustained scrutiny (Barnes 1994).

The “cartographic eye,” David Matless writes, “is equated with the eye of power-as-domination” (Matless 1999, 193). To understand maps and mappings simply as representative practice for the goal of domination, however, would reduce the 10/40 Window to a cartographic embodiment of power, a mimetic reflection of geopolitical interests. Instead, I suggest that the 10/40 Window’s function is more broad and varied, as part of a larger power-knowledge system that constitutes and renders the world legible for governance.

On one hand, the contemporary geography of evangelical Christian missions—spatial arrangements and geopolitical alignments that underpin missionary enterprises—illustrates clearly the militaristic penchant for envisioning the world, or particular regions, as a target (Chow 2006, C. Kaplan 2006). This is demonstrated also in missionary co-operation with the “Global War on Terror” and Barnett’s neoliberal geopolitics as discussed earlier. Missions are by definition deliberative and purposive. As demonstrated by the 10/40 Window, evangelicals are equipped with a master narrative about the inexorable forces of Christianity and capitalist modernity as they embark on a territorialized strategy for world evangelization. On the other hand, it is critical to understand that these strategies do not simply regurgitate imperial hostilities of the past or unquestioningly endorse American unilateralism. Instead, we must recognize that missionary subjectivities are forged in the context of Third World liberation, contending with forces of global capitalism and hegemonic humanitarianism.

There has been much discussion of what William Connolly has called the “bellicose ethos” of the American neoconservatives and the Christian Right (see also Brouwer, et al. 1996, Brown 2006, Buss and Herman 2003, Connolly 2008, Diamond 1999, Runions 2007). Connolly offers an analytical framework called the “evangelical-capitalist resonance machine” as an assemblage with a shared spiritual disposition toward the world in their “readiness to defend neoliberal ideology in the face of significant counter-evidence” (Connolly 2005, Connolly 2008:42). His argument is that the connection between evangelical Christianity and neoliberal capitalism can not be simplified in terms of causality or a shared allegiance to a singular, universal creed or ideology. Instead, Connolly proposes the concept of “resonance” as a useful way for discussing the complex and historical dynamics between economic, religious, and geopolitical forces that together produce—and put into practice—this particularly bellicose and ravenous convergence.

While these scholarships help us understand the pugnacious ideologies and warmongering efforts coming from the particularly bellicose convergence between economic, religious and geopolitical forces in the United States, what we do not get is a discussion of how the project of world evangelization is rationalized in terms of reaching and embracing, through relations of connectivity and generosity. This is precisely what has been called the “new evangelical internationalism” (McAlister 2006, np). After all, even the diehard evangelicals today begrudgingly acknowledge the damaging legacy of colonialism and admit that the romance of missions has all but faded away amidst pleas for pluralism and tolerance. Instead, they vow now to make missions less paternalistic and more equitable, more contextualized and culturally sensitive. The trouble is, these evangelization strategies together constitute a kind of an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1994), depoliticizing poverty and inequality and demonstrating a startling ignorance of the historical and political realities of the people and places they purportedly intend to help. The scientific racism of unreached people discourse and the targeting of the 10/40 Window produce a cartographic gaze that privileges a distinctly hegemonic subjectivity, English-speaking and prosperous. Despite their claims to social science—anthropology, demography, and geography—these discursive strategies revive and simplify concepts that have been contested and debunked in many academic quarters.

Geopolitical visions are by definition deliberate and praxis-oriented. Rhetorical strategies like the 10/40 Window shape one’s gaze, target and fix the object of mission, condition one’s disposition towards the world and authorize concrete actions. The project of world evangelization must thus be understood as a simultaneously world-making and particularizing process, a far-reaching endeavor to absolve the powerful, absorb differences and incorporate the “frontiers” of the world into a Christian totality.

The project of world evangelization is fueled by an unapologetic defense and rationalization of territorial ambitions of political and religious expansion in all facets of contemporary life, i.e. “empire as a way of life” (W. Williams 1980, 5). The confluence of political and theological rationalities transforms the realities of territorial expansion, colonial conquest and military intervention into pious rhetoric about ending poverty and stopping religious persecution and ensuring political and religious freedom for all (Brown 2006, Connolly 2005).

Whether we understand this convergence or articulation as an “evangelical-capitalist resonance machine” (Connolly 2005) or as “dreamwork” (Stuart Hall, cited in Brown 2006, 690), the crucial point here is that we understand the imbrications of political economic and religious rationalities not in terms of causality or manipulation (the contention that neoconservatives are simply disguising their “true” intentions behind religious rhetoric), or in terms of self-evident, congruent correspondence between ideology and practice (i.e. the idea that practice is nothing more than ideology in action). There is a clear blending and harmonizing dynamic—resonance—between evangelical missionary enterprises and projects of imperialism and colonialism, but with respect to rhetoric, personnel and infrastructure, they certainly are not one and the same thing, nor do they necessarily cause or enable the other in deterministic ways.

Proselytizing missions, as diverse as they are in intent and form, may seem regressive and repugnant to their critics, but they nonetheless exemplify a philosophy of praxis—believing by doing, synthesizing a unity of theory and practice (Crehan 2002, Forgacs 2000). Persuasive narratives can convince people that a certain course of history is not only possible, but also desirable and inevitable. Nonetheless, the power of persuasion lies not in the abstract realm of ideologies, narratives, or master blueprints, but in practice, as ideas become embedded in practical activity (Gramsci 1972, 330). The 10/40 Window itself may be a clever idea, but it has been persuasive precisely because it has been successfully embedded in the practical activity of a variety of evangelization efforts—through research, strategic planning and short-term and long-term missions—all the while obscuring its power-laden history.

While geopolitical visions like the 10/40 Window certainly function as an ideological blueprint, it is not sufficient to critique it for being a “normative universalist project” and for being too superficial to “foster an emotive connection to a particular place and its people” (Gerhardt 2008, 915). Such framework relies on a global-local duality that privileges local knowledge as inherently more authentic, more truthful and more intimate. It is true that the 10/40 Window is projected from a bird’s eye point of view—or put more aptly, using the “god trick,” a conquering gaze from nowhere (Haraway 1991). But it also operates in concert with a host of other projects—like the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, *Operation World*, and *Praying Through the Window*—which are collectively committed to documenting and cataloguing every particularity and locality on earth, producing in the process the most detailed minutiae about every inch of the globe in order to grasp it, to reach it and to foster long-distance intimacies with it. All sorts of attachments and intimacies are created despite being long-distance. Imagine an evangelical family looking at a prayer calendar featuring the day’s unreached people group or someone holding a photo of a child they “adopted” through long-distance missionary sponsorship. Even if they are based on erroneous information and even if they rely on problematic ideological constructions, these connections do create a mix of symbolic and concrete encounters. Some connections are more tangible and intimate than others, but all are intent on producing affective ties across distance and proximity. What makes the difference is the practice of connecting, the vexed process of reaching itself.

We see today an emerging evangelical ethics of alterity, coordinated through purpose-driven encounters with modernity’s strangers in need of rescue and love (Ahmed 2000, Warren 2002). Rather than forceful persuasion and outright conversion, this rhetoric stresses reaching out and creating connections, emphasizing humanitarian aid and cultural exchange as the preferred mode of missionary encounter. The 10/40 Window obscures its power-laden histories and practices behind the insistence on the virtues of generosity, sharing and “caring at a distance” (C. Barnett and Land 2007).

Such evangelical orientations continuously shape how one apprehends “this world of shared inhabitation” and toward whom or what to direct the missionizing energy (Ahmed 2006). The 10/40 Window is a cartographic imperative that normalizes particular technologies of navigation and direction-setting. The directions and orientations produced by the 10/40 Window—as well as the attendant discourses of the unreached people groups and cultural distance—suggest that in addition to analyzing how geopolitical visions and geographical imaginaries amplify or reflect certain motivations and intentions, we have much to gain by also considering *how* and *what kinds* of relations and connections are elicited in the process. After all, the 10/40 Window is not just a technology of designation, but more significantly a normative one, orienting one’s attention in aiming towards it, targeting it and pursuing it. If militarized mapping practices envision the world as a target and equate seeing with destroying (Chow 2006, C. Kaplan 2006), evangelicals are instructed to target the world through the 10/40 Window ostensibly in order to save it. The activities that accompany this vision tell us much about the political praxis of evangelical connection and global integration.

PART II

The contemporary enterprise of world evangelization is a transnational and transdenominational project involving varying sizes and scales of actors. It involves national religious-political organizations like the Christian Council of Korea (discussed in Chapter 2) and international theological movement groupings like the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne (discussed in Chapter 3). Whereas those examples focused on the ideological landscape of institutional leadership, the following three chapters provide a glimpse into the self-construction and mobilization of “ordinary” evangelicals who make up the vast majority of the mission force.

Chapter 4. Congregational Space of a Korean/American Cell Church

Ethnic churches are powerful institutions that significantly shape the lives and experiences of immigrants in the United States. In this chapter, I begin with a political geography of ethnic churches and conservative immigrant Korean/American Christianity, focusing on several key moments of conservative political mobilizations in California. I then present an ethnographic study of a Korean/American congregation in California to examine the politics of evangelism as they are incorporated into the organizational structure and embedded in institutional practice. I explore the congregation as an extroverted space that opens up to transnational networks with a profoundly “global sense of place” (Massey 1994). The space of the congregation is conveyed as an ongoing social construction with multiple political geographies and spatial logics.

Space of Congregation

The space of the immigrant church has typically been treated as an ethnic enclave. A dominant theme in this literature is that the immigrant church eases anxieties about being uprooted and displaced, and that it meets practical social needs of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 1996, Waldinger and Der-Martirosian 2001). This portrait tends to emphasize generational transition, and questions concerning ethnic cohesion and “loss” of ethnic identity vis-à-vis frameworks of segregation, assimilation, and incorporation. Enclaves have been studied as distinct territorial configurations, consisting of social networks that provide resources and support for members in need (Portes and Kenneth 1980, Portes and Rumbaut 1996, Waldinger and Der-Martirosian 2001).

The Korean/American immigrant church appears in this literature as a microcosm of social relations or a miniature enclave. In terms of human geography, an “enclave” is a piece of land that is totally enclosed within a foreign territory. The “ethnic enclave” thus denotes a space that is territorially bound as a partial *section* of the mainstream. Like other enclaves, churches are thus depicted as finite and territorialized configurations, *necessarily* facilitating adjustment and *positively* helping the maintenance of identity and tradition. Theologian Fumitaka Matsuoka (1995) asserts that Christian churches have historically sustained immigrants, and that “churches continue to serve as a locus of Korean American community life” (28). Karen J. Chai (1998) outlines four ways in which ethnic Korean churches service the needs of their members: opportunity for fellowship, maintenance of cultural tradition, provision of social services, and rewards from social structures. Another sociologist Kyeyoung Park (1989) argues that the church satisfies the needs for social status, prestige, and recognition within the immigrant community, providing a “hierarchical structure which can serve as a ladder of achievement for church members” (74). The claim that Korean church restores social status lost or downgraded in the process of immigration—especially for men—is particularly meaningful because restoring status also implies upholding of hierarchy.

There is significant interest in questions of ethnic solidarity. Consider the abiding interest in dynamics of “ethnic confinement” and “adhesive adaptation” (Hurh and Kim 1984), the role of ethnicity in transition and assimilation (K. C. Kim and Kim 2001), “maintaining Korean culture and enhancing co-ethnic social networks” (Min 2002, 17), and identity formation of second-generation, or US-born, Korean American Christians as part of a generational process (Chai 1998, 2001, K. Chong 1998, K. Park 1989). Congregational studies, especially ethnographies, typically depict churchgoers as utilizing ethnic resources to mobilize capital and secure a sense of belonging. They are seen as struggling with their ethnic, Christian, and gender identities and finding meaningful ways to celebrate “old” identities or create new hybrid ones. But these studies are almost always insular—

there is very little discussion of how the “outside” of the evangelical church is an integral part of the constitution and construction of its “inside” and vice versa.

Much knowledge has been produced regarding the social function of the immigrant Korean/American church. However, the popular method of congregational ethnography, coupled with a narrow scope of research and inadequate attention to power and space, has produced a body of literature based on problematic conceptualization of the church as a bounded social institution that arises somewhat *naturally* in response to the needs of immigrants, as opposed to understanding churches as transnational religious institutions with both the capacity for and history of political mobilization.⁷⁴ The following discussion is an attempt to bridge a political-ideological analysis with an in-depth congregational ethnography.

Korean/American Conservatism in California

Immigrant Korean/American churches are socio-cultural and religio-political institutions with deep historical and theological affinities to American Evangelicalism and the Christian Right (see Chapter 2). It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Christian church is at the heart of Korean American life. There is a general consensus in the scholarship that the Christian church has historically played a key role in promoting and facilitating Korean immigration to the United States, as well as in aiding in the adjustment and settlement process. With nearly seventy percent of immigrant Korean Americans self-identified as Christians, mostly Protestant, the Korean/American Christian church exerts considerable social and political influence on an overwhelming majority of Korean Americans. In particular, the issues concerning lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights and same-sex marriage provide an important litmus test for social and religious conservatism, and present a helpful illustration of both theological and ideological conservatism and documented patterns of political mobilization.

In 1999, conservative Korean American pastors in Southern California launched an effort to qualify an initiative called the California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act (CDSRA) for the California state ballot.⁷⁵ First public meetings for CDSRA were first publicized through Korean-language newspapers in December 1999, and it was reported that hundreds of Korean American religious leaders as well as leaders of civic organizations like the Korean American Coalition—a national civil rights organization fashioned after the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)—were in attendance. They were joined by Christian Coalition representatives, California Senator Pete Knight, the author of anti-gay Proposition 22, a.k.a. “the Knight Initiative,” and the Republican Richard Mountjoy, who had introduced the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in the California State Assembly. A roster of 267 Korean American names, mostly Protestant pastors of immigrant Korean churches, was soon published in full-page advertisements in Korean-language newspapers throughout the Los Angeles area, and in the weeks following, more than a dozen articles appeared in the Korean-language media about church petition drives seeking to counter “homosexual special rights.” On the list was Pastor Kwak of Korean Evangelical Church (KEC), the case study featured in this chapter.

CDSRA sought to “prohibit public entities from endorsing, educating, recognizing or promoting homosexuality as acceptable, moral behavior.” CDSRA’s website further explained the

⁷⁴ Although the focus is on two South Korean congregations, not immigrant Korean/American congregations, Kelly H. Chong’s recent book, *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea* (2008), is a noteworthy exception especially in her attention to detail regarding the historical and political dynamics that traverse the boundaries of the particular congregations.

⁷⁵ Their demands were so right-wing that even the Southern California chapters of the Christian Coalition and the Republican Party declined to support their campaign.

goals of the initiative as an effort to “prohibit public entities from including the phrase ‘sexual orientation’ in any law, regulation, rule, ordinance, code, policy, resolution, declaration, or proclamation” because it argued that “sexual orientation is the rubric used to instill the false concept that homo-sexuality [sic] is an immutable human characteristic,” and because “sexual orientation is also a euphemism used to mask the offensiveness of homosexuality and other unnatural forms of sexual relations.”⁷⁶ CDSRA proponents specifically pointed to a set of anti-discrimination bills enacted into California law in January 2000, including those protecting students in public schools from anti-gay bias, ensuring fair housing and employment for LGBT Californians, and providing health insurance for domestic partners of state employees. Claiming that these were “special rights,” they argued that LGBT activists were mandating acceptance to a degree that denied Christians their religious freedom and moral prerogative to oppose homosexuality.

CDSRA needed to collect 419,260 signatures of registered voters to qualify for the ballot—an unlikely goal for a campaign with no organized staff, no concerted fundraising effort, and no major endorsement outside the Korean American community which only had about 50,000 registered voters in Southern California at the time. As expected, CDSRA failed to qualify as a ballot initiative, but as feared, the momentum built around CDSRA later delivered a significant number of immigrant votes against same-sex marriage in 2000 (California Proposition 22), and again in banning same-sex marriage in 2008 (California Proposition 8).

According to 2000 figures released by the Korean General Consulate, there are approximately two million Korean Americans in the United States, of which an estimated 31.7 percent (650,000) reside in Southern California. It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of Korean Americans attend almost a thousand Korean American churches in Los Angeles County, Orange County, and San Diego County. Many of these churches are massive in scale—Young Nak Presbyterian Church boasts 10,000 members, and the Oriental Mission Church claims 4,500 members—and many are involved in multimillion dollar expansion projects. Immigrant Korean/American churches are predominantly Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Evangelical, with Catholics in the minority. Remarkably, CDSRA brought together ministers and congregations of all Protestant denominations, despite the fact that Korean churches are usually divided along denominational lines, and the religious landscape is typically rife with institutional and ideological rivalries. More significantly, CDSRA became the first statewide political campaign to extensively involve Korean American churches, much to the dismay of many who have long sought the churches’ participation in other political issues like immigrant rights, welfare reform, and bilingual education.

Voter surveys and a comprehensive exit poll of Asian Americans in California conducted in 2009 by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), API Equality-LA, API Equality, and California Faith for Equality found that similar to other racial and ethnic groups, age and religiosity were the main determining factors in voting for Asian Americans concerning Proposition 8 (Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California 2009). While Asian Americans on the whole supported Proposition 8 by a narrow margin—54% Yes to 46% No—Korean Americans were found to be far more likely to support the anti-gay proposition, with 72% voting Yes. Rather than interpret this data to simply mean that Korean Americans are more likely to be opposed to gay rights, I would argue that the institutional strength of Korean churches played a major role in shaping the voter base. From early on in the election campaign, backers of Proposition 8 had sent letters to 800 Korean faith-based leaders in Los Angeles and Orange Counties and paid for fourteen Korean-language advertisements on television and in major daily newspapers.⁷⁷ The pastors reciprocated by writing op-ed columns and delivering Sunday sermons urging the congregants to vote yes on Prop 8.

⁷⁶ Quoted from CDSRA campaign literature.

⁷⁷ Kai Ma, “To Have and to Hold,” *KoreAm Journal*, December, 2008.

Observers in South Korea and the US agree that conservative Korean American pastors, almost all of them male, have become a visible power bloc in the political arenas of several Protestant denominations. The divisive issue of gay rights and same-sex marriage have emerged as a particularly revealing demonstration of the social conservatism of Korean/American Christianity. In 2000, the National Korean Presbyterian Council, representing 350 Korean-American congregations and over 37,000 individuals in the Presbyterian Church (USA), argued that “homosexual partnerships are incompatible with God’s created order,” as “clearly and unambiguously written in the Scripture,” and sent every PCUSA congregation in the United States a letter urging them to support an amendment prohibiting Presbyterian ministers from conducting marriage-like ceremonies for same-sex couples.⁷⁸ The following excerpt from this letter illustrates some of the familiar themes discussed in Chapter 2 such as their pro-American affinities and a sense of gratitude to the history of American missions in Korea:

We give thanks to this denomination that sent missionaries whose shed blood and broken bodies stirred our sleeping forefathers in the Land of Morning Calm (Korea) to call the great name of Jesus Christ in their fervent early morning prayer. In recent decades, many Koreans came to this blessed land with the legacy of Presbyterian Church and built churches and worshipped the true and only God wherever they settled... [If same-sex unions were allowed, the] Korean-American constituency, which has experienced 50% increase in membership and 90% increase in per capita during the last ten years, will see a devastating blow in its membership growth because Koreans, particularly young people, are conservative and evangelical in their faith and will turn away from our denomination. In a word, the blessing of same-sex union would bring our demise as a church of Jesus Christ” (K. S. Shim and Lee 2004).

KEC, an Immigrant Korean/American Church

On the way to Korean Evangelical Church (KEC)⁷⁹, I drive past a dozen “For Lease” signs, several empty business parks, and buildings displaying familiar but not household-name brands like Sun, Creative, and Lockheed Martin. Newly built apartment complexes suddenly appear, and just as suddenly disappear as the neighborhood changes to single-detached homes with multiple cars in the driveway. I see several American flags displayed in front of houses. KEC is located in a mixed residential-commercial area full of contrasts in proximity: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Latino small businesses in mini-malls adjacent to rundown American diners, with hundreds of no-name manufacturing companies and corporate industrial giants not far away. The church is visible from

⁷⁸ While the conservatism of the National Korean Presbyterian Council (NKPC) within the Presbyterian Church (USA) is worth noting, it must be said that the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA)—to which KEC belongs—and its mother denomination, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), is arguably even more conservative theologically and politically, especially concerning gay rights. The conservatism expressed by the NKPC is not limited to the ordained pastoral leadership. The Presbyterian Panel Study of 1997-99 found that 90 percent of Korean Presbyterians “highly disapproved” same-sex partnership or lifestyle, compared to the relatively lower proportions of African American and White Americans (roughly half) who “highly disapproved” of an openly gay or lesbian lifestyle. The Presbyterian Church (USA), “The Presbyterian Panel: Listening to Presbyterians, 1997-1999 Background Report,” (Louisville, Kentucky: Presbyterian Church (USA), 1988); Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, “The Ethnic Roles of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001)..

⁷⁹ Korean Evangelical Church (KEC) is a pseudonym, as are all proper names associated with it.

two or three blocks away, with its tall white steeple protruding above the tan-brown shingle rooftops. As is the case in many parts of California, pedestrians are few and far between in this neighborhood. On Sundays, however, one is likely to catch sight of small groups of well-dressed Koreans walking towards the church with a Bible in hand, an indication that the church has outgrown its parking lot.

KEC is one of the largest Korean congregations in Northern California. It grew significantly in the last ten years and reached almost one thousand adult members by the year 2003. The church has outgrown the building that it currently occupies, which has resulted in reorganizing Sunday programs so that there are several consecutive and repetitive services instead of a single large service. And they expect to grow. A deaconess of the church tells me KEC is actively seeking a new site with a multi-million dollar construction budget.

Presbyterians are the majority among Korean American Protestants. As a member of the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (KPCA), KEC belongs not to the US-based mainline Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), but to the a daughter denomination of the South Korea-based Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK).⁸⁰ KEC is one of the older and more established Korean churches in the area, with a well-respected leader in Pastor Kwak. Local newspapers often print stories about Pastor Kwak as a respected community leader, and he appears frequently as an invited speaker for parachurch organizations including a mission agency specializing in helping North Koreans in China. He also serves as a leader in the South Korea-based “Father School,” a self-proclaimed movement to produce “godly man” based on evangelical Christian gender-normative perspectives (see also A. Kim 2008).

The institutional features of KEC appear typical to many other immigrant Protestant Korean congregations, based on my research and other ethnographic studies of immigrant Korean/American churches in Atlanta and Houston (J. H. Kim 1997, Kwon 1997) and studies of second-generation Korean Americans in churches located in Boston and Chicago (Chai 1998, K. Chong 1998). As in other cases, several sub-groups or ministries exist within KEC, divided along the lines of language spoken, age, and gender. These sub-groups include the women’s ministry, children’s ministry, English-speaking ministry (EM), and the Korean-speaking young adults ministry (KYM). Services are held in three distinct clusters demarcated by both age and language—about eighty percent of the congregation belongs to the Korean-language Adults Ministry (KM), and the other twenty percent are evenly divided between the second-generation EM and the immigrant KYM. The Children’s Ministry was not a part of this research. Each ministry maintains its own leadership structure, a distinct social circle, and organizes its own extracurricular activities. While the predominantly immigrant KYM is generally subsumed under the KM, the primarily English speaking Korean American EM functions almost as a separate church, with its own name, its own pastor, and a separate budget. All these are common features of immigrant Korean/American congregations in the United States.

Also similar to other immigrant Korean/American churches is KEC’s hierarchical and patriarchal in structure, with the male pastor as the head of the organization, supported by an all-male Council of Elders, who supervise deacons and deaconesses under them. It is worth noting that the position of “deaconess” or *kwōnsa* is found only within Korean denominations. They are essentially the female counterpart to the position of deacons, but in Korean churches, deaconesses are bestowed upon women over the age of fifty. Since women are not allowed to become Elders in Korean churches—and since female pastors are extremely rare if not unheard of for mid-size churches like KEC—the deaconess is typically the highest title available for churchgoing women. The exception,

⁸⁰ The history of Korean Presbyterianism is one of countless division and endless fragmentation. As of 2007, there exist over 200 independent Korean Presbyterian denominations. PCK (*Hapdong*) is currently the largest Presbyterian denomination in Korea and is said to be the world’s largest Presbyterian denomination.

of course, is the pastor's wife, who plays a visible and active role in all affairs of the congregation, especially concerning the women's ministry.

Cell church model

Immediately after the research began at KEC, I learned that KEC has operated for several years as a "cell church," a model described by some as a "church without walls" (Green 2002). One cell church expert argues that in the cell church structure, "learning takes place through experiences in the cells. Leaders are chosen and equipped through the cells, and every member must be mobilized through the cells" (Tay 2002, 8-9). The cell church structure thus distributes churchgoers into a network of small groups or "cells" that each cultivate their own internal membership while maintaining ties to the body of the larger church. From the perspective of the churchgoer, the cell becomes her/his primary contact with the congregation. In addition to the mandatory weekly cell meetings, cell groups at KEC take turns volunteering on Sundays, handing out service programs or setting up refreshments for fellowship afterwards. One woman told me there was a "healthy spirit of competition" among cell groups, with each group vying for recognition as the most dynamic and devoted cell.

By most accounts, it was David Yonggi Cho who pioneered the first generation of cell churches (Pak 2003). Cho is a world-renowned pastor presiding over the world's largest church, Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, which currently boasts 250,000 in worship attendance every Sunday. The model has since been adapted by Lawrence Khong of the Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC) in Singapore, associated with the church growth expert Ralph W. Neighbour (Khong 2000, Neighbour 1990). It was modified as the "Groups of 12" or the "G-12 model" by César Castellanos of the International Charismatic Mission in Bogota, Colombia, where a total of 50,000 people are said to gather in worship and 150,000 distributed among 20,000 weekly cell groups (Barrett and Johnson 2001a, Comiskey 1998). The G-12 is a refinement of the original cell church model, adding the emphasis on supervised discipleship and generational growth. The cell church model has been a mainstay among both South Korean and Korean American congregations, albeit with some variations and adaptations. It is said that there are over 400 cell churches throughout the US (Wuthnow 1994).

The central tenet of the cell church is that it encourages congregants to meet at least once during the week, in addition to the Sunday service. It is a structure designed to provide fellowship and a sense of intimacy, which can be especially difficult to find in large congregations like KEC. The cells provided a range of potential activities. There were weekly cell meetings, and social activities such as movie nights and basketball games in which men played and women cheered. There were soup kitchen volunteer opportunities over the Thanksgiving holidays, and a day spent trying to proselytize at the local mall. The cell structure essentially functioned as a programmatic apparatus designed to keep the members busy and occupied, engaged with church activities throughout the week.

Cells and biology

The cell church, however, is more than just an effective organizational structure. Its operational logic and practice embody the multifaceted imperatives of evangelism. The obvious biological metaphor of the cell points to the definition of cells as the smallest membrane-bound biological units capable of replication. Cells can function cooperatively with others as part of a tissue or an organ, or they can function independently as free-living micro-organisms. In the cell church model, each cell is perceived as a living organism mandated to remain healthy in faith and propagate

through evangelism. “Divide and multiply, or else the cell shall die” was the *modus operandi* behind the cell church’s operation.

Through the biological metaphor of the cell church, evangelism emerges as a natural and organic process, and the impulse to reproduce and propagate emerges as a biological necessity. A church that does not prioritize evangelism was seen as a perversion against nature. Church growth was thus cast in terms of its reproductive capacity. In a particularly chastising sermon one day, Pastor Kwak preached that just as it is unnatural for families not to reproduce, it was unnatural for churches not to grow. He reproached married heterosexual couples who opted not to have children, and said that childlessness was a sign of selfishness. He asserted that non-growth was against the natural order of God. In the same sermon, he denounced as “selfish cells” those that did not reproduce, those that did not divide and multiply like all healthy cells are supposed to. In another sermon about the importance of home and family, Pastor Kwak emphasized the heteronormativity of growth and reproduction:

A family is where one man and one woman come together to raise children. Sometimes it may feel stale and boring [laughter], but a family always has the power to become new and alive. Why? Because there is the power to reproduce. Sometimes a couple decides not to give birth or raise children, and want to live selfishly like that. But still, there is power in the family. A church has the power to give birth and reproduce.⁸¹

I asked other churchgoers how they felt about all this talk of reproduction and whether they felt at all offended by Pastor Kwak’s criticisms of childlessness. Some shrugged and said they were not listening.⁸² Others felt that his words were a bit harsh, but defended the intent behind Pastor Kwak’s words—“the details aren’t what matter,” one EM member said, “and in general, I think he just means we need to keep growing to stay alive.”

The cell church structure by design promoted aggressive growth and reproduction by cultivating small group meetings outside the weekly Sunday service. Every cell was expected to grow in size by evangelism, and to divide and multiply within a finite but unspecified time frame. If a cell failed to prosper and propagate, it was deemed unhealthy and subject to be shut down. Time and time again, however, many of the cells did not operate or reproduce as mandated by the KEC leadership. During the course of my research, I found that many of the cells did not in fact meet regularly on their own, and many cells struggled with dwindling membership and participation. Certainly, a handful of exemplary cells were prominently visible in volunteer or leadership roles, but many other cells laid dormant, completely inactive.

While the cells were compelled to reproduce on their own, it was unclear whether KEC ever intended to evangelize in the local community. An example was a “Help for the Homeless” event held during the Thanksgiving holidays. Volunteers from KEC and other partnering organizations such as the local Lyons Club bussed in almost 300 non-Korean homeless men, women and children from shelters throughout the area. After a short worship service at KEC including prayers, hymnals, and a brief sermon, the homeless guests were fed and groomed by volunteer hair dressers and barbers, given free sleeping bags purchased with donations from KEC members. Many photographs were

⁸¹ Pastor Kwak, “The Church in the Home, Part 2,” sermon at KEC. Sunday, 14 September, 2003.

⁸² I hung on to every word of every sermon at KEC because I was fascinated by Pastor Kwak’s rhetorical strategies, but it was clear that many churchgoers respectfully sat through the sermons but did not find them particularly stimulating or interesting. My analysis of the sermons, relying on a kind of reader-response criticism, recognizes the congregants in the audience as active agents who interpret and create new meanings as they participate in the sermons—even if by listening passively or not at all.

taken and handshakes exchanged. And then KEC sent the homeless back to downtown where they came from—without making any long-term commitment to actually try to incorporate them into the congregation. When I asked a volunteer if he thought it was odd to return the homeless guests to the streets without trying to offer housing or recruit them to join the church, he answered that it would simply be impossible—because the homeless were not Korean, and they did not speak Korean. A Korean church was seen as simply unable to incorporate non-Koreans into its corpus.

Many people volunteered their time and resources presumably with good intentions, and social service activities like the KEC homeless event served a purpose, however short-lived or short-sighted. But it also illustrated how KEC prioritized church growth and evangelism over serving local needs which they did not recognize as their own needs. The event in fact reinforced for the KEC members the perception that the needy are an Other—non-Korean strangers, no matter how close by they lived. Put differently, KEC invited the poor and the needy from the local areas—for half a day out of the year—without a long-term commitment for sustained or systemic change, and instead used the occasion to reinforce the dichotomy of inside-outside, us and them.

Cells and revolution

Whereas the biological metaphor of the cell church portrayed church growth and reproduction as a matter of life and death, there is another metaphor in operation—the cells as decentralized and networked political units. A cell church strategist cites the following passage by Herbert Butterfield, a religious historian discussing the power of individuals who band together in small groups (Comiskey 1996).

If it is the individual who matters most in the sense that he is the maker of history, the next important force and the strongest organizational unit in the world's story would appear to be the thing which we call a "cell"; *for it is a remorseless self-multiplier; it is exceptionally difficult to destroy*; it can preserve its intensity of local life while vast organizations quickly wither when they are weakened at the center; it can defy the power of governments; and it is the appropriate lever for prying open any status quo. (Butterfield 1979, 24, emphasis added).

When discussions of political structure refer to cells, as Butterfield's passage above does, one is likely alluding to the Marxist theory of revolution by way of guerilla warfare, i.e. focalism. Inspired by Ernesto "Ché" Guevara, the foco theory of revolution or *foquismo*, posited that small, localized focal power can successfully form the vanguard for insurrection and revolutionary change (Guevara and Deutschmann 2003). The operational concept of *foquismo* was for voluntarist and insurrectionary guerilla cells to mount heroic and courageous actions in order to gain popular sympathy. In another sense, *foquismo* was "a recruitment technique as much as anything else," as Mark Ensalaco writes, since the initial foco and the next—and so on—were supposed to bifurcate and replicate until "a revolutionary vanguard was springing into existence" (Ensalaco 2000, 145). Without a large and inflexible central leadership whose vulnerability could jeopardize the entire cause of resistance, *foquismo* counted on small cells of guerrillas in the countryside to ultimately replace the vanguard party. Ché's theory was an implicit criticism of Communist parties that had all but abandoned revolutionary violence, and an infusion of a revolutionary moral imperative.

Strangely enough, Pastor Kwak discussed the potential for his church cells to engage in militant, bottom-up, guerilla warfare, as if he were a student of *foquismo* himself.

Lenin once said that if he could get a hundred soldiers to give their lives for the cause of the Communist revolution, he could turn the whole world upside down. That's

what he said—about a revolution that turned out to be a total failure. What we need is a revolution that saves lives, not kills lives. If the cell church lives, the whole church lives. We need to love and encourage each other, and take care of each other spiritually. This is a bottom-up revolution of love.⁸³

Rather than revolutionary violence, however, Kwak called for revolutionary love, one that creates life, not death.⁸⁴

References to Lenin and talk of revolution are hardly what one expects to hear at a Korean/American Church. But the rhetoric of revolution was common and frequent at KEC. Granted, Kwak's passing reference to Lenin conveniently invoked images of Soviet Communism—stoking the anti-Communist flames among Korean/American Christians—and he could have easily used Kim Il Sung or Mao as examples. The remarkable irony, however, is that Leninist theory of party organization actually contains a structure of cells as well. The basic unit of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the “party cell,” composed of any small to large number of members, to be managed by a party bureau (Moore 1965). One typology of political parties describes Leninist parties as adopting a semi-secret cell structure with highly selective recruitment of members, intensive indoctrination, and uncompromising ideological conformity, for the objective of overthrowing the existing political system and implementing revolutionary change in society (Gunther and Diamond 2003).

If the cell church model were in fact based on *foquismo*, then the evangelical focus would be autonomous units charged with the task of mounting heroic acts of evangelism to draw new recruits into the congregation and expand the church's sphere of influence. This was not the case. The cells at KEC were primarily concerned with training and “disciplining” the membership and fortifying its hierarchical structure. KEC was nothing if not centralized. One low-ranking leader at KEC explained that “Jesus is the head, the church His body, and the cells are parts of the whole body,” referencing the Bible which describes the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27). In the corporatist focus on hierarchical, bureaucratic management, the cell church model is in fact closer to Leninist than guerilla warfare.

The cell church model was invoked to radicalize the very notion of what it meant to congregate and evangelize, what church membership meant to the churchgoers, and how the church should engage with the world outside. In one sermon, Pastor Kwak explicitly likened the call of evangelism to military duty:

Everyone knows about the reservists in the military, right? I was in the reserves myself in Korea. We would line up for roll call, and if you took a look at us, you'd think we were just pathetic. You wouldn't have seen a group of well-disciplined soldiers, but a bunch of guys pretending like they're real soldiers. One minute a soldier, and the next minute when the uniform comes off, nothing. As Christians, we

⁸³ Pastor Kwak, “The Church in the Home, Part 4,” sermon at KEC. Sunday, 28 September, 2003.

⁸⁴ Kwak's rhetorical move—leaving intact the violently transformative force of a revolution and redeeming it by recasting the intent as positive—is strikingly similar to the metaphoric power of “Atomic Bomb of Love,” a term associated with one of the best-known Korean Christian martyrs, Pastor Son Yang-wŏn (1902-1950). The scale of atom bomb's capacity for horrific destruction is matched by the epic proportion of Son's heroic expression of Christian love. The famous story is familiar to most Koreans: Son forgave the Communist soldier who killed his two teenage sons, later adopting him as his own son. When the Korean War broke out, Son refused to flee and abandon the patients in his care at a leprosy colony, and was killed by Communists who demanded that he renounce Christianity and vow loyalty to Communism. A 1977 feature film portrayed this story, as did a musical opera in 2008. Used in contexts other than references to Son, the metaphor of “Atomic Bomb of Love” has proven to be particularly convenient for anti-Communist Christians who fervently oppose North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

can't be like those reservists that gather and then disperse like nothing happened. We need to go out there in the world like real soldiers and make some changes!⁸⁵

The militarized reminder of battling worldwide persecution made Sunday services feel at times like mobilization rallies. Judging from the bellicose messages I just discussed, it is no surprise that people left the service feeling energized to take action. But inspirational sermons are just that—sermons. Most KEC members I spoke with admitted to leaving Sunday services feeling motivated to do more, yet few had the time or the inclination to follow through and step up in their church participation. Despite the militant and revolutionary talk, KEC was in fact a middle-class, immigrant church with hardly a revolutionary disposition in its politics. Cell groups met occasionally for Bible study and fellowship, and grappled with mundane issues like who should be in charge of trash disposal and recycling and which cell group should volunteer to direct parking lot traffic on which Sundays. They operated more or less as interconnected subdivisions designed to facilitate bureaucratic supervision and ideological discipline. Dissatisfied with the widespread state of inactivity, the leadership at KEC began to revise the organizational structure to better cultivate and discipline the congregation. The following two sections focus on these shifting aspects of disciplinary power.

Cells and flocks

One day at the Sunday service, Pastor Kwak and the Council of Elders announced that too many cells were dormant or nearly dead, and that it was time for a major re-organization of the church. The Uganda cell was singled out for woefully neglecting its obligation to the missionary in Uganda, and failing to organize a fundraiser recently when the missionary returned to California for a visit. Other cells were meeting regularly but not growing, and it was pointed out that a lack of strong leadership was the cause of pervasive stagnancy. This was not entirely a surprise—Pastor Kwak had been sermonizing for nearly two months about the need to get rid of old structures and embrace the new—but still, I could hear the grumbling in the pews.

The reorganization plan outlined several items. First, all cells were to be vacated. Repopulation would begin from the top, starting with Pastor Kwak and the Elders. Unlike the cell, which was voluntary, everyone in the congregation was now instructed to select and belong to a new cell group, renamed as *mokjang* or “flocks.” Each flock would be led by an appointed group leader called, not surprisingly, a “shepherd.” A roster was distributed, listing the shepherd’s name, gender, age, and marital status. If married—all but two were married—the roster also listed the number of children in the family. Pastor Kwak acknowledged that it may be difficult to dissociate from previous cell group friends and peers, but urged everyone to let go of past connections and to look ahead to a new beginning in a new flock. In this revised structure, all members would now follow a shepherd and each shepherd would report to their supervising Elders, who would in turn report directly to Pastor Kwak. The congregation was urged to submit themselves to their overseers and spiritual counselors until they themselves were mature enough to become a shepherd and lead a flock of their own.

The second part of the reorganization plan was to intensify the “shepherd training” curriculum and to institute mechanisms to more closely supervise the flocks. At one such shepherd training I attended, instructions were given in painstaking detail, covering everything from retention strategies to suggested formats of flock meetings. The training even included menu preparation: meals were to be served *before* the group meeting, not afterwards, so that participants are not distracted by hunger or meetings cut short for food preparation. Certain side dishes (*panch'an*) were

⁸⁵ Pastor Kwak, “The Church in the Home, Part 3,” sermon at KEC. Sunday, 21 September, 2003.

recommended as more suitable for simple meals, and women in particular were urged to just set aside dirty dishes and not wash them until *after* the meeting ends so that the noise does not disrupt the group. For several weeks at similar trainings, the flocks and shepherds received detailed instructions on the tenets of discipleship.

As it turned out, the most controversial aspect of the restructuring was the cancellation of well-attended Wednesday night service, which was often used for special prayer rallies or missionary report-back sessions. Because of the added emphasis on increasing the activity of flocks, the leaders felt that Wednesday night services would require too much time from the congregants. One man raised his hand to question the decision and defended the Wednesday service as a timeless tradition. In response, Pastor Kwak sternly reiterated that the cancellation was a necessary measure as the church moved towards a new future. “To help something live,” he said, “we must help something die.” Another Elder provided a lengthy and technical explanation of the theological underpinnings of the new organization. In this new structure, flocks were not to exceed twelve members as to emulate Jesus and his twelve disciples, which according to this Elder was the most organic and Biblical group formation. Since each flock was now led by a shepherd, the shepherd was now to emulate Jesus as the model leader.

But the flock metaphor also added another important emphasis. Whereas the biological metaphor of the cell stressed the biopolitics of evangelism as a matter of life and death, and the political metaphor of the cell stressed the revolutionary capacity of small-scale insurgency, the flock metaphor infused the congregation with the ideology of heteronormative family and patriarchal-pastoral power.⁸⁶ Pastor Kwak himself was an active leader in a movement that promoted parental leadership and stressed restoring the authority of fathers—perceived to be waning particularly in the immigrant context where the father’s role as the breadwinner was compromised. The following excerpt from a sermon emphasized the overriding importance of fathers and families as the bedrock of society:

At the final moment of his creation of heaven and earth, God created the family as his ultimate masterpiece. Family is the first community established on this earth... The crumbling of the family weakens the church, shakes up the society, and the world falls deeper into confusion, void, and darkness. Our utmost task today is to restore the family. That is the first step to revive the church, and a shortcut to restore God’s Kingdom on earth. And remember, at the center of the family stands the father.⁸⁷

KEC’s Global Connections

Mission never has been the province solely of those who go; it also belongs to those who send—by their prayers and by their gifts. (Moreau, et al. 2004, 203)

⁸⁶ Another instance of likening church leaders to fathers can be seen in the organizational dynamic between the Korean-speaking Korean Ministry (KM) and the English Ministry (EM). At KEC, very few of the members of the EM were actual children of KM members. However, both EM and KM members referred to EM as the service for “kids” and KM as the service for “adults.” The commonplace age-based stratification in Korean social context was compounded in this case by generational stratification in which the first-generation, immigrant Koreans perpetually occupy the position of “parents,” while the second-generation, US-born Korean Americans are deemed to be the “children” of immigrants, regardless of actual age. Pastor Yuk, a thirty-something Korean American man in charge of the EM, had expressed some frustration with the infantilization of the EM in the overall KEC structure. But even so, he still likened it to an internal family struggle. “Just because we disagree with our parents,” he said, “it doesn’t mean that we should just pack up and move out.”

⁸⁷ Pastor Kwak, “The Church in the Home, Part 2,” sermon at KEC. Sunday, 14 September, 2003.

The cell church model—whether it is the cells, the G-12 model, or the flocks variety—is not a new invention in church organization. Nor is it particular to Korean/American churches. It may very well be a modification of long-standing small group traditions like the Bible study group articulated with the pervasive Korean practice of subdividing the congregation into geographical, regional districts or *kuyōk*. It must be pointed out, however, that the *kuyōk* structure is in fact related to church growth. As churches grew larger, members traveled greater distances to attend church services, and as a result, it became a necessary convenience for the church to encourage more locally based meetings during the week.⁸⁸ Since most churches in Korea—or ethnic Korean churches in North America—do not function as a *local* church, the *kuyōk* structure expresses the church’s jurisdiction across several localities. While the cell church model is perhaps the most explicit about the evangelical imperative to propagate, these other structures also reflect strategies for growth and expansion.

The spatial logic of the cell church can be understood as a dialectic of inward discipline and outward growth. The body of the congregation—its distribution, alignments, norms, and ideals—is the object of the church’s governmental power and discipline. It is the locus of multiple and contradictory strategies of mobilization ranging from *foquismo*’s voluntarism and Leninist hierarchy to pastoral leadership and patriarchal authority. Week after week at KEC, I confronted institutional arrangements that stretch far beyond the congregation. Every joint and limb of its structure embodied the evangelical rhetoric of cultivation and growth, and reproduction and propagation. Contrary to the dominant literature on immigrant congregations as a space for local *gathering*, in other words, I found that KEC was just as concerned with *sending*.⁸⁹

KEC’s cell church structure aggressively promoted church growth through the rhetoric of propagation and world evangelism, employing a range of spatial strategies—for example, the disciplined body in the family-flock and the reproduction of cells in the congregational body. At one remarkable prayer revival lasting over five hours on a Friday night, over 700 attendees followed Pastor Kwak in urgent prayer—scale by scale, beginning with prayers for Christian guidance for the world at large, followed by blessings for President Bush then the newly elected California Governor Schwarzenegger. This was followed by prayers for the sins of San Francisco—”crawling with homosexuals”—to be washed clean, for the well-being of KEC, for the health of the cell groups, for the shepherd-leaders and finally, all the individual members of the flock. It remarkably encapsulated the effectiveness of geographical imaginations and scalar thinking.

Another significant manifestation of geographical imaginations was again in the cell church structure. After the entire congregation was divided and classified into nearly sixty cells, each one of them was assigned a geographical designation such as China, Uganda, or North Korea. The designations mostly referred to nations but also included several provinces and cities in Korea. These geographical imaginaries connected cell groups in California to faraway places exhibiting both symbolic and material need. North Korea cell, for instance, was to pray for regime change and protection of Christians in North Korea. They read books and watched films on North Korea, and posted related information on their website. China cell, on the other hand, decided to help raise money to support Korean missionaries posted there. They worked with local mission agencies and

⁸⁸ A critical movement against rampant church growth in Korea put forth a compellingly simple proposition: stop the church vans. Megachurches have the financial resources to employ a fleet of passenger vans and even full-size buses to pick up church members who live far away. Critics of megachurches point out that these church members could easily find a church to attend closer to home, and that the circulation of these church vans not only destroy the local characters of churches but also threaten the survival of small churches who can not compete against the brand-name megachurches with shiny vans. In the competitive religious marketplace, one such critic told me, small mom-and-pop churches find it increasingly difficult to compete against the reach of megachurches.

⁸⁹ The Latin origin of the word “mission” is *missio*, or “to send.”

coordinated a special fundraiser to benefit an orphanage in China. The cells' connection to the faraway mission fields, in other words, fostered KEC's link to transnational missionary networks. Similar to the adopt-a-people approach to mission discussed in the previous chapter, these geographical strategies instantiated translocal linkages between the cell groups and mission fields elsewhere in symbolic yet intimate gestures of reaching.

The symbolic attachment between a cell group and a mission destination elsewhere effectively reinforced spatial thinking. In their spatial logic, cells were more than units of organization or nodes of connection. They were also quasi-magical portals through which the entire world symbolically opened up. The more I probed into the minutiae of the cell groups, the wider world appeared.⁹⁰ Perhaps this is precisely the spatial magic of world missions—that an individual conversion can signal hope for an entire people group's salvation, that one congregation can “adopt” an entire nation they knew little about, and that one can transform the world simply by reaching for it through prayers. Evangelical missions are both concretely local and profoundly global, moving both inward and outward, upward and downward, in discourse and practice. After all, the spatial imperative of evangelical missions—the intent to propagate the Gospel across spatial scale—is key to the expansion of evangelical territoriality.

KEC was not only a space that gathers or congregates, but also a space that disciplined subjectivities and mobilized dynamic trajectories. It was not merely a positive and coalescing space based on shared ethnic identity, nor was it merely a point of arrival and gathering for immigrants. KEC was a highly contested and power-laden site of uncertain departures and subjectivities in the making. Such understanding moves us towards what the geographer Doreen Massey (1994) calls an “extroverted” and “global sense of space”:

Instead of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, [places] can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself... [This] allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local (Massey 1994, 154-155).

KEC, with its dual imperative for institutional reproduction on a cell-scale and the world evangelization on a global scale, was both the *product* and the *condition* of the social and political process of place-making. By conceptualizing the enclave as not only a point of arrival, but also an extroverted point of multiple connections with the wider world, we gain an understanding of far-reaching missionary orientations.

From KEC to the world

Week after week, KEC congregants were instructed in all manners of world geography. From a discussion of Biblical geography to contemporary geopolitics, members were oriented towards the world far exceeding the confines of the congregation and encouraged to seek connections with the world through evangelism.

⁹⁰ Visually speaking, the scalar descending movement was reminiscent of Kees Boeke's classic book, *Cosmic View: the Universe in 40 Jumps* (1957) or the Ray and Charles Eameses' film, *Powers of Ten* (1977). From the cosmic scale in the outer universe, one zooms further and further down the scale, to the continent and country, to the city and the congregation, down to the cells, but once the infinitesimal scale of the cell is reached, the whole world appears again.

At an informal meeting, Jangho, a local businessman and designated shepherd of the China cell, discussed KEC's short-term mission programs in China. He had recently returned from a week-long mission trip to the Changbai Korean Autonomous County in the Jilin Province of northeast China. In attendance were a handful of other church members considering participating. Jangho spent some time detailing the time and fundraising commitments involved—everyone was to raise their own funds for the trip—and explained that the ethnic Korean Chinese Christians he visited have built over forty small underground churches with the support of South Korean and Korean American Christians. KEC was not a major institutional actor in this work, but through their association with other transnational missionary networks, KEC members were becoming more involved in these missionary activities in China.

Jangho told us at length about an orphanage KEC helps sustain, and stressed repeatedly that the staff and volunteers at the orphanage could use all the help they can get. Pointing to one of our plastic water bottles, Jangho said, “you can't bring that.” According to him, the orphanage had adequate supplies of food and medicine for the children. But one policy the orphanage staff instituted in order to control the amount of diapers to change was to limit the amount of water intake for the children. “More water, more pee,” Jangho said, “and more pee means more diapers. So they get maybe a cup a day.” He had a conflicted smile as he recounted, “I had become so used to carrying around a water bottle everywhere, and drinking as much as water as I wanted, any time I wanted. But this was a problem at the orphanage because the kids there would not leave me alone. Because they wanted water. It's like they were hungry vampires... but for water.” The callous tone of the story appeared deliberate. It was as though he was trying to tell us the most disturbing stories in the most matter-of-fact way to underscore the pervasiveness of hardship and devastation in China. The distressing story of water deprivation at the orphanage was also a metaphor—though not just a metaphor—in that it was a story of innocent people thirsting for something we took for granted. Water, in other words, stood for Christianity. The world was thirsty for the Gospel.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Jangho also claimed that he has personally witnessed “rampant demonic possessions” in China. Like in a scene straight out of films like *The Exorcist*, Jangho said he has seen scores of demon-possessed people, feverish with pains and pleasures of madness, arrive at church services and Christian medical clinics. Dragged there by family members, these people would resist desperately against the healing powers of prayers and one can plainly see the havoc wreaked by Satan's last-ditch assault against the church. These were not just cases of untreated mental illness and other illnesses, he said, because anyone can see “something else at work.” We used to see a lot more of this in Korea, Jangho said, but not any more. The picture he painted of China was a nation wrought with demonic possession in the form of untreated mental illness and diseases, worsened by poverty and years of Communist rule. His firsthand witness account was delivered with certainty and authority, and his testimony was presented as factual observation, not subjective experience.

On the way out of the meeting, two of the attendants said that they probably will not be able to go this year because of financial constraints. They could not take the time off work, and they were unsure that they could raise the amount of money required for the trip. They also said to each other, and to me, that they thought Jangho was an incredibly brave and admirable man. They interpreted their own trepidation and inability as an affirmation of other missionaries' fortitude. They would continue to pray and wait for a time when they are called to go, they said.

Later, I asked an Elder of KEC about the China mission, and he retorted, “China mission is important, but China is nothing. From next year and on, our real focus is Central Asia.” He led me to a colorful world map posted on the wall in the hallway outside the pastor's office.⁹¹ “This way,” the

⁹¹ The map was titled “Swift World Evangelization: To the Last Frontier!” and produced by InterCP, a South Korean mission agency specializing in Central Asia missions. Its founding director, Paul Choi, would visit KEC the next month and deliver a rousing guest sermon about the destiny of Koreans to lead the effort for world evangelization.

Elder said, first pointing to Korea, and sweeping his hand westward across the map all the way to Israel, “here is where we will set off our [Christian Gospel] bomb.” It was at that moment at KEC that I first learned about the 10/40 Window. Starting again from Korea, his finger traced a red horizontal line drawn across Asia this time: “We will follow the Silk Road all the way across the 10/40 window, and deliver the Gospel to the unreached people all throughout. China is a big part of this, but ultimately, when Jerusalem returns to Jesus, when Jews finally accept the Gospel, then we will know that the time has come for the Second Coming of Christ our Savior.” China was but one part of a far-reaching global project, and the Elder beamed with determination.

Chapter 5. North Korea and China Missions

I have discussed thus far how the project of world evangelization employs geographical imaginaries and spatial strategies such as the 10/40 Window, unreached people groups, and the cell church. Evangelism constructs—through a variety of images, maps, sermons, and other discursive strategies—a perception of the world space as one that must be reached and cultivated through purposeful and deliberate connectivity. As such, evangelical geographical imaginaries are a tool of power and control, used to rationalize the perception of need for Christianity and to justify the projects of global missions.

Furthermore, I have argued that evangelical missions are by definition a praxis-oriented project, connecting imagined geographies with affective and embodied mission practices. This chapter addresses one such connectivity by focusing on South Korean missionary projects that reach out to North Koreans, especially those residing illegally in China. I emphasize how evangelical geographical imaginaries imbue new meanings and interpretations of contemporary politics, and how these practices in turn rationalize and empower certain mission practices. The intent is not to explain geographical imaginaries as mental maps or ideological blueprints that are simply implemented in practice. Rather, this chapter shows how these widely circulating geographical imaginaries—ranging from premodern Korea's historical-territorial claims in China to aspirations for Korean reunification, and from Biblical narratives of deliverance from North Korea to re-figuring the Silk Road as a new proselytizing route—shape and are shaped by actual evangelical practices that both affirm and challenge these imaginaries.

As in other chapters, I provide political and historical context by engaging with a variety of Korean and English-language primary and secondary sources including Christian publications and sermons and the voluminous body of para-scholarly literature. These include reports by NGOs and religious advocacy groups, and first-person testimonials by North Korean border crossers and missionaries published in magazines, newspapers, and websites. For discussion of actual mission practices, I rely on interviews, conducted in South Korea, with North Korean refugees, missionaries, theologians, and secular actors in North Korea advocacy. Additionally, I draw from ethnographic observations from a three-week trip to northeast China in 2006 when I accompanied a team of investigative journalists as a Korean-English interpreter. We were able to meet with a number of evangelicals and missionaries, including those operating safe houses for illegal migrants from North Korea. All names, except names of published authors, are pseudonyms.



Figure 5. Map of Northeast Asia. Drawn by author.⁹²

Estranged Neighbors to the North

To discuss the theological-political underpinnings of North Korea and China missions, it is necessary to first provide a brief background on the complexities of humanitarian and advocacy

⁹² The map highlights North Hamgyong (Hamkyŏng) Province where most North Korean refugees originate from and Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture where many of them settle. Major cities of Harbin and Shenyang are also popular destinations, as well as Dandong, a border city from where the North Korean city of Sinuiju across the river can be viewed. Wunu Mountain City is a historic site of the ancient kingdom of Koguryo (discussed later in this chapter).

efforts concerning North Korean border crossers.⁹³ North Korea is a “country every American loves to hate,” as the historian Bruce Cumings writes in the very first sentence of his preface to *North Korea* (2004, viii). Media coverage of the North Korean regime routinely depicts the leader Kim Jong Il as insane or diabolical, and the citizenry is portrayed as imprisoned, brainwashed, and starved by the garrison state. The international community has repeatedly denounced North Korea for having one of the worst human rights records in the world and for being “the last worst place on Earth” (Rendler 2005), and in April 2005, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) meeting adopted a third consecutive resolution condemning North Korea for violations of rights to freedom of the press, speech, movement, and religion. In 2006, for the 34th straight year North Korea earned the worst possible score on political rights and civil liberties in the *Freedom in the World* report released by the DC-based NGO, Freedom House (Freedom House 2006).

The ritualistic invocation of North Korea as “reclusive,” “unpredictable,” and “bizarre” actually detracts attention from what is in fact quite well-known. Rich and detailed accounts offer copious amount of information and analysis concerning how a form of nationalist isolationism arose in tension with global revolution and global capitalism in Manchuria (H. Park 2005), how the beginnings of the Democratic People’s Republic was fomented during the brief and turbulent five-year period between liberation from Japan’s colonial rule and the Korean War (Armstrong 2004). In addition, we know that North Korea’s current capital Pyongyang had been the center of Korean Protestant Christianity since the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, so much so that it was known by some as the “Jerusalem of the East” (Clark 2003). It has been documented time and time again that North Korea’s half-century-long enmity with the United States was consolidated through the brutal, bitterly fought Korean War and the ensuing Cold War, and that the collapse of the Soviet Union brought about severe energy crisis and North Korea’s denigrated status as a “rogue state” in the contemporary capitalist world order (see Cumings 1981, 1997).

In contrast to the persistent discourse in the US concerning North Korea’s incomprehensibility, Koreans in the south, even the vehement anti-Communists, do not reproach North Korea as an alien or inscrutable other. After all, North and South Korea share histories, separated families, and a common language with which to understand each other, and in spite of geopolitical animosities and ideological gulfs now spanning over five decades, they are simultaneously distant neighbors and intimate strangers. Especially with the arrival of over 10,000 North Korean refugees and defectors in the last decade alone, South Koreans increasingly face the task of living with North Korea. North Koreans can often “pass” as South Koreans except when the deficits of their biographies are revealed—lack of formal education, regional dialects, and lack of family or childhood roots in South Korea.

Geography is frequently invoked both in terms of proximity, e.g. Pyongyang is mere 120 miles from Seoul, and in neo-Malthusian, cartographic deterministic way, the territorial partition of the Korean peninsula often figures as an “unnatural” rupture. North-South reunification demands that homogeneity and unity be restored through a correction—by merging two states on divergent paths now for over fifty years into a single state. With the Korean War generation aging and actual North-

⁹³ Major reports on North Korea include: David Hawk, “The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea’s Prison Camps,” (Washington, DC: US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2003); Amnesty International, “Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea),” (2004); Human Rights Watch, “North Korea: Human Rights Concerns for the 61st Session of the UN Commission,” (2005); Norma Kang Muico, “An Absence of Choice: The Sexual Exploitation of North Korean Women in China,” (Anti-Slavery International, 2005); Yoonok Chang et al., “The North Korean Refugee Crisis: Human Rights and International Response,” ed. Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland (Washington, DC: US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2006); International Crisis Group, “Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond,” (Seoul/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2006); Christine Ahn, “Famine and the Future of Food Security in North Korea,” (Oakland, California: Food First: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 2005).

South family ties dying out, the majority of South Koreans today care far less about the prospect of reunification than have the generations past. Nonetheless, the reality of the division and the specter of unification serve as a psychic reminder that there remains an unfinished chapter in Korea's modernity (see Grinker 1998).

Geographical dimensions of North Koreans outside North Korea

To the north of North Korea, the China-North Korea border has become increasingly militarized and crossings criminalized, yet tens of thousands of people manage to cross and re-cross this treacherous border on an ongoing basis. To the south of North Korea, its border with South Korea is known as the most militarized national border in contemporary times, and has remained impenetrable since the end of the Korean War.

The conditions that determine and constrain the lives of North Koreans are produced by the materiality of these borders. North Korea does not allow legal emigration, and unauthorized exit from North Korea, though common in recent years, remains illegal. Defection and attempted defection, including the attempt to enter a foreign diplomatic facility for the purpose of seeking political asylum, are considered high treason. Punishment is said to range from indefinite terms of imprisonment and forced labor to confiscation of property—and even execution, according to some accounts. It is considered a particularly grave offense for North Korean border crossers to interact with South Koreans, especially Christian missionaries, whom the North Korean government regards as allies to the US and thus enemies of the North Korean state. The imperviousness of North Korea's territorial borders, for many, has been defined in biopolitical terms of life and death.⁹⁴ In her discussion of the neoliberal space of free trade zones, Aihwa Ong makes this passing remark about North Korean interest in developing free trade zones:

The North Korean regime seems to represent a deviant sovereignty that is based on the power to take away life rather than the securitization of the health and well-being of the population. Biopolitical considerations only affect a tiny minority of the elite classes, whereas the majority seems condemned to bare life. The political elite in Pyongyang and privileged workers appear to be the only ones to enjoy a political existence of social benefits and pleasures, while the struggle for sheer survival is the norm for ordinary citizens. [...] Because these privileged [free trade] zones are established outside the archipelago of labor camps, the North Korean use of the political exception is a *reversal of Agamben opposition between civilization as normativity, and the death camp as a zone of exception* (Ong 2006, 117, my emphasis).

In other words, the suspension of rights and reduction to bare life are the normative conditions in contemporary North Korea, and only by leaving North Korea can one expect to find life and freedom. Several human rights reports follow a similar line of conceptualization and associate North Korea itself—the entire nation—as a giant gulag and concentration camp (see Hawk 2003,

⁹⁴ There is another historical case that illustrates this conception of North Korean borders as permitting inflows but prohibiting outflows. A total of 93,340 ethnic Koreans in Japan, or Zainichi Koreans, migrated from Japan to North Korea under a repatriation program since 1959, and only about a hundred such repatriates are believed to have later escaped from North Korea. Kang Chol-Hwan, the author of *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, is considered to be one of these lucky few. Koreans who voluntarily chose repatriation from Japan to North Korea beginning in 1959 and continuing into the 1960s Sonia Ryang, *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin* (London: Routledge, 2000). faced little to no possibilities of contacting family members who remained behind in Japan.

2007). North Korea appears as a giant death camp, defined not by the militarized borders surrounding it or the devastating effects of US sanctions, but determined solely by the will of its rulers.

Former US President George W. Bush captured this emphasis on North Korea's deviant sovereignty when he professed his hatred of Kim Jong Il as a man who would rather build bombs than feed his people. Former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi likewise called Kim untrustworthy because "he makes his own people go hungry."⁹⁵ By most accounts, two to three million people in North Korea died of starvation and hunger-related illnesses between mid to late 1990s (Natsios 1999). The persistent effects of the famine can be felt to this day. A large-scale, random sample survey in 2004—conducted jointly by the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and the North Korean government's Central Bureau of Statistics and Institute of Child Nutrition—found that 37 percent of young children under five years of age were still chronically malnourished, and that one-third of mothers were malnourished and suffering from severe anemia.⁹⁶ WFP assessments have consistently shown severe disparities in food availability between the food-surplus south and west of the country and the food-deficit north and northeast, and even more pronounced urban-rural disparities. Given the cutbacks in food aid due to dwindling international assistance and increasing talk of more punitive sanctions, it appears that the international community is also letting North Korean people go hungry.

China

The paucity of verifiable information and the wide circulation of speculative statistics make a statistical overview of North Korean refugees a difficult task. Though there are no official statistics that account for the exact number of North Korean migrants or refugees currently in China, it is estimated that there are anywhere between 100,000 to 300,000 North Koreans pursuing better livelihood by living illegally in China today. Out of them, only a miniscule number of approximately 10,000 have settled in South Korea thus far. The Washington DC-based NGO Refugees International provides a conservative estimate of the current number to be around 50,000, while Good Friends, a well-regarded South Korean Buddhist human rights advocacy group claims the number is as high as 500,000.⁹⁷ Recent findings suggest that the North Korean population is becoming more diffuse.⁹⁸ Recent research conducted by a South Korean Buddhist NGO, Good Friends, suggests that although the short-term migrants in the years immediately after the food crisis had settled along the China-North Korea border region, many are becoming longer-term residents in China, and by and large, they are leaving the border region and moving into the interior areas—for increased safety and more economic opportunity. According to Good Friends, approximately 200,000 North Koreans have moved to major urban areas of the northeast provinces including Liáoyáng, Shěnyáng, Dàlián, and

⁹⁵ Kevin Kim, "Understanding North Korea: The Motives Behind Kim Jong Il's Madness," *In These Times*, March 17, 2003.

⁹⁶ The survey assessed 4,800 children under six years of age and 2,109 mothers with children under two across seven of the DPRK's nine provinces and in the capital, Pyongyang. From World Food Programme, <http://www.wfp.org>

⁹⁷ The 2006 research findings were presented at the Experts Roundtable for North Korean Human Rights symposium on May 29, 2006 in South Korea. Good Friends has consistently produced the most comprehensive and credible field research since the beginning of the North Korean food and refugee crisis, including the most recent survey conducted from January to March in 2006 in over 3,000 villages throughout northeast China. Their 1999 report was based on survey results from 2,479 villages in Yánbiān, and three provinces in the northeast (Jílín, Liáoníng, and Hēilóngjiāng). However, at the time of their presentation at the symposium, Good Friends decided not to disclose exact location details from the 2006 report due to security and safety concerns for their research subjects.

⁹⁸ The report by the International Crisis Group, "Perilous Journeys: the Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond" (2006) marks a significant new effort to discuss conditions *beyond* the northeast China-North Korea border region.

Dāndōng, while about 300,000 North Koreans have settled in the remote interior regions, especially in predominantly Han Chinese villages. Good Friends also suggests that North Korean border crossers are moving from predominantly ethnic Korean areas to hide in more remote Han Chinese areas in order to avoid arrest and repatriation. As more North Koreans are becoming proficient in Chinese culture and language, they are being absorbed along with Han Chinese migrants into the larger rural-to-urban migration flows, seeking low-wage work in cities. The interviews I conducted in the area, though a small sample, also confirm these patterns.

Southeast Asia

The fact that the North-South Korea border remains extremely militarized directly contributes to the circuitous routes North Koreans travel in order to seek asylum in South Korea and elsewhere. Increasing flows of irregular secondary movements of North Koreans—defined as moving in an irregular manner from the first country of asylum or transit country to another country—are aided by clandestine missionary networks that transport North Koreans on “underground railroad”-style journeys throughout Northeast and Southeast Asia, including through the treacherous Gobi Desert in Mongolia, and by sea to Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand. If the refugees are recognized by these transit-country governments, North Koreans can expect to be sent to South Korea where they will be provided asylum in the form of an automatic South Korean citizenship. The map below provides a sense of how incredibly circuitous these routes can be, especially given how close North Korea is to South Korea (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Mapping irregular secondary movements of North Korean seeking asylum in South Korea. Drawn by author.⁹⁹

Hundreds of North Koreans and their advocates on these circuitous and risky routes likely experience discriminatory denial of access to labor market, housing, health care and education in the country of residence as well as exploitative and dangerous conditions. As a case in point, in March 2005, Jeffrey Bahk, a Korean American pastor and former businessman from Atlanta, Georgia was presumed dead after reportedly missing for over two months in Thailand. Park and six North Koreans

⁹⁹ The route is a composite representation based on stories of people who have traveled through China and Southeast Asia to reach South Korea, and in no way indicates an actual route used by asylum seekers.

were in Myanmar, trying to cross into Laos after two unsuccessful attempts to gain entry to the South Korean Embassy in Myanmar. Bahk, 63, drowned while the group tried to swim across the river from Myanmar to Laos, but the six North Koreans eventually made it to South Korea. Bahk was part of a network coordinated by the notorious South Korean missionary Chun Ki-won, who I will discuss further later in this chapter.

Europe, North America, and elsewhere

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reported in 2008 that a total of 170 North Koreans have sought asylum in Canada since 1996. Two were granted asylum in 2003, none in 2004, and only one in 2005. But the number rose to 25 applications in 2006, and reached 109 in 2007. IRB explained in an interview with Radio Free Asia (March 25, 2008) that Canada is an attractive destination because asylum seekers are eligible for state assistance and educational programs the moment an application is submitted, and they are eligible for public housing in Canada while the application is pending. According to HanVoice, a Canadian NGO that works with North Korean refugees in the greater Toronto area, many of the North Korean asylum seekers also receive help from the Korean immigrant community in Canada in forms of in-kind donations and work opportunities. The majority of North Korean asylum seekers are said to be working in Korean-owned businesses in Canada. According to the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) in early 2006, seven European countries including Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden have granted political asylum to a total of about 280 North Korean refugees since the late 1990s (Yang 2006).

As of May 2009, US has granted asylum to a total of 81 North Korean refugees.¹⁰⁰ However, experts estimate that there is a significant number of undocumented North Koreans throughout North America. An anonymous evangelical informant has suggested that there are more than 100 North Koreans living illegally in California, 150 in the East Coast, and about 300 in the Mountain states near the US-Canada border.¹⁰¹ Given the fact that the 2000 US Census data indicates that there are over 180,000 undocumented Korean immigrants living in the United States, with at least 50,000 residing in Southern California, it is reasonable to suspect that a significant number of North Koreans are represented within this undocumented population of Koreans, presumably having entered the US after first gaining status in South Korea.¹⁰²

Gender dimensions of North Korean migrants

Based on research conducted from 2005 to 2006, Good Friends estimates that there are approximately 50,000 children under the age of 16, and that gender distribution is similar to 1999 when women constituted approximately 75.5% of North Koreans in China. The highly gendered makeup of the population is reflected also in the number of North Korean defectors entering South Korea. In 2005, almost 1,500 North Korean migrants arrived in South Korea, and nearly 70% of them were women.¹⁰³ Because of the large numbers of women among North Korean migrants, as

¹⁰⁰ *Chosun Ilbo*, May 7, 2009.

¹⁰¹ This number of illegal immigrants was estimated from the foreign-born population figure and the number of legal immigrants based on the Census Bureau's population survey. The report on illegal immigrants from 1990-2000 indicates that the number of Korean illegal immigrants increased from 77,226 in 1990 to 182,621 in 2000. Illegal immigrants thus comprise 16.9 percent of the total number of Koreans (1,076,872) in the United States, and Korea now ranks eighth in illegal immigrants in the United States, following Mexico, El Salvador, Russia and China.

¹⁰² Jonghun Kim, "The Dark Reality of Life of Korean Illegal Immigrants," *Korea Daily News*, March 23, 2003.

¹⁰³ Official statistics from the Korean Ministry of Statistics, 2006.

well as the particularly precarious nature of illegal migration in China, it may well be argued that the North Korean human rights issue is fundamentally a gendered one.

Especially in China, North Korean women face enormous challenges. Their employment options are primarily in poverty-wage, informal sector jobs or sex work, and many of the women become trafficked into marriages to ethnic Han Chinese men in rural areas where the female to male ratio can be extremely skewed. The shortage of women in rural areas is partly due to China's "One Child Policy" but also the result of massive rural-to-urban migration that led to a large number of women leaving the countryside. North Korean women have come to play a major role in filling this gap, either voluntarily entering marriage with rural Chinese men or tricked and trafficked in such arrangement. It may first appear that marriage might provide some stability and increased security for North Korean women, but the reality is far more bleak. According to patriarchal, patrilineal customs, Children born between the Chinese men and North Korean women are by definition Chinese, and can legally be entered into the Chinese family registry. The mother of the child, however, cannot be added without legal documented status. As illegal migrants, the women can be arrested and deported back to North Korea at any time, while the children born in China will likely stay with the Chinese father. Ethnographic accounts of these dynamics, as well as other lived experiences of North Korean women, will be elaborated later in this chapter.

"God's Master Plan"

One of the most visible mission organizations in Northern California—not far from KEC, the cell church discussed in the previous chapter—is an Oakland-based organization called Spiritual Awakening Mission, better known as its acronym SAM. A self-proclaimed "medical mission and relief organization," SAM "aims to provide medical care as well as humanitarian aid to the world's poorest and forgotten people throughout impoverished and desolate areas."¹⁰⁴ It is spearheaded by Dr. Park Sai Rok (Pak Se-rok) who in 1989 helped found the Christian Association for Medical Mission (CAMM) with a number of other Korean American doctors and businessmen to provide food, clothing, and medical supplies and personnel to the developing world (see CAMM website and Park's books).¹⁰⁵ A successful medical doctor and author of several books, Dr. Park is especially well-known for his efforts to establish The Third People's Hospital in Pyongyang, a 500-bed hospital that opened its doors in 1995 with the cooperation of the North Korean government. Shortly afterwards, he was accused of espionage and proselytizing in North Korea and banned from further activity in North Korea. Undeterred, Dr. Park founded the Christian Medical and Welfare Mission (CMWM) in 1997, which was later renamed SAM.¹⁰⁶ As an explicitly Christian medical missionary organization, SAM has successfully raised millions of dollars in medical supplies and personnel, and have built clinics in Dandong and Shenyang, two major cities in the China-North Korea border

¹⁰⁴ From Spiritual Awakening Mission organizational website. <http://www.samf.net/en/whoweare.html>. Last accessed on September 7, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Park is the author of two popular medical books: *We Yōjanūn Apūndega Manūn'ga* [*Why Women Often Get Sick*] (1999) and *We Namjanūn Apūndega Manūn'ga* [*Why Men Often Get Sick*] (2003). He has also written three Christian books: *Sarang-ūro Choguk-ūn Hanada* [*Homeland is One Through Love*] (1999), *Malssūm-ūro Sae Koguryō-rūl Kōnsōl haja* [*Let's Build a New Koguryō with the Gospel*] (2000), and *Sarangūi Wangjin Kabang* [*Doctor's Bag Filled with Love*] (2003) which was on the Korean national bestseller's list for several weeks. None are available in English.

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Park recollects in his book (2003) that the new name SAM came to him while singing his favorite hymnal. The word SAM is easy to say in both Korean and English, he writes, familiar to American English-speakers because of "Uncle Sam," and familiar to Korean-speakers who will appreciate the double meaning—the Korean homonym, *saem*, means a spring or a fountain of water.

area.¹⁰⁷ Though Dr. Park himself is no longer allowed to enter North Korea, SAM continues its medical mission efforts in China and North Korea, and ultimately plans to build a medical supply warehouse and a pharmaceutical plant in North Korea.

In his best-selling 2003 book titled *Doctor's Bag Filled with Love*, Dr. Park recounts the story of how he became involved in medical missionary work as one of initially pursuing material goods and wealth, then awakening to the futility of his achievements (S. R. Park 2003). He studied his way out of poverty, graduated from the prestigious Seoul National University Medical School in 1963, and completed his medical training in the US. He decided to settle down in the US because he hated how poor Korea was, and for decades, he ran a lucrative medical practice that allowed him to buy real estate and a “picturesque” home with a swimming pool and a golf course of his own. Rather than becoming content with his accomplishments and material possessions, however, Dr. Park found himself struggling with stress and failing health. One day, he had a born-again experience at a prayer rally, finally answering the prayers of his wife who had been a devout Christian for many years.

His speeches and books are full of moments of sudden revelation. Urgently needed funds miraculously become available after a night of tearful prayers, and visions and epiphanies suddenly alert him to new directions in life. In a particularly fascinating chapter in *Doctor's Bag Filled with Love*, Park describes a trip to the Wunu Mountain City (Mountain of Five Women, Wǔ Nǚ Shān) in the town of Huanren (Huánrén Mǎnzú Zìzhì Xiàn) in China's Liaoning Province (Liáoníng). Along with two other sites, Guonei City and Wandu Mountain City, Wunu Mountain City was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004 as part of “Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom.” The site includes archaeological remains of fourteen imperial tombs and twenty-six tombs of nobles, all belonging to the Koguryo dynasty that ruled over parts of northern China and the northern half of the Korean Peninsula from 277 BC to AD 668. It is an immensely popular destination in Korean historical tours because Huaren is known as the birthplace and former capital of Koguryo and by extension, the ancient historical birthplace of Korea. The following excerpt is worth quoting in its entirety for its breathtaking creativity in weaving together an astounding amount of geographical, historical, and theological narratives:

As a Korean, overlooking Wunu Mountain's rugged valleys, I was very deeply moved. It was as though I could hear the ancestors' heartbeats and feel their breaths near me. [...]

Looking at the world from atop, I knew there was a reason why I was there. As a scientist, I am very rational and capable of humanistic interpretations, but thankfully, God's grace has also opened my eyes to see the spiritual implications for all matters in life. Standing at the origin of Koguryo, once called the Great Empire of Northeast Asia, the sensors of my spiritual radar began to operate: Thirty-seven years before Jesus came, our Great Empire of Koguryo was established. At the same time in the West, it was the Roman Empire. And the Silk Road connected these two? [...]

Aha! Decades before Jesus arrived, God had established the Roman Empire in the West and the Koguryo Empire in the East in preparation for world evangelization.

¹⁰⁷ Dr. Park joined a Red Cross team of doctors to the site of the devastating Ryongchŏn train disaster in 2004. No official data is available on the exact number of those killed or injured, but Dr. Park later recollected in his book that thousands of people injured in the explosion had no access to emergency medical care. After days of intense prayer, Dr. Park says the inspiration came as a visual image of a doctor riding an old bike on a dirt-covered country road, with a medical bag in hand. He has since devised the Good Samaritan Program which provides North Korea with medical bags filled with first aid and other essential supplies, known as “love bags.”

After Christianizing Rome, God connected the two nations with the Silk Road so that Koguryo can spread the Gospel in the East, but Koguryo fell before this could be achieved. Koreans had been called to serve the cause of world evangelization since the days of Koguryo! I felt the stirring in my heart, and felt as though all barriers were cleared. God showed me his master plan that day. (S. R. Park 2003, 214-215)

This vision of “God’s master plan” clarified for Dr. Park the reasons why he had been working on North Korea medical missions—not only to heal North Koreans or inch towards reunification between North and South Korea, but to understand that the North-South division of Korea and the exodus of North Koreans into China were all part of God’s plan to repopulate the historic lands of Koguryo—northeast China—with Koreans, so that the chosen people [Koreans] will “rebuild a spiritual Koguryo and drive the horses of Gospel along the Silk Road across the Manchuria Plain until we reach Jerusalem”(S. R. Park 2003, 215).¹⁰⁸

Dr. Park’s epiphanic moment reveals a causal chain. First, North Korea must be a repressive regime so its people would flee to China. Ethnic Korean-Chinese Christians and South Korean Christians must then work together with the flow of North Koreans in northeast China. Reclaiming what was once the imperial territory of glorious kingdom of Koguryo, Koreans of different stripes—North, South, Chinese—would then push westward, spurring along the fall of Jerusalem which would signal the Second Coming of Christ. It presents a fantastically far-reaching and self-important geographical imaginary with Korean missionaries at the helm of “God’s master plan.” But it is also an enormously popular and increasingly commonplace discourse that compel Korean/American evangelical missionaries to imagine a predestined and meaningful connection to the region. The majority of North Korea and China mission tourist itineraries, including one offered by SAM, includes a visit to the Wunu Mountain City as the former capital city of Koguryo. Many of these tours, in fact, are advertised as a trip to Koguryo—not China or Manchuria as previously known, but to Koguryo, a premodern kingdom—effectively inflating a sense of historical grandeur of Korea, in the past and the predestined future.

As one of the most territorially expansive and powerful kingdoms in the region’s history, Koguryo’s place in Korea’s national historiography had long been undisputed. Therefore, when the Chinese government launched the controversial Northeast China Project in 2002, a \$2.4 billion project involving rewriting history textbooks and claiming Koguryo as China’s cultural heritage, nationalist historians in South Korea responded with an all-out effort to defend Koguryo as Korean.¹⁰⁹ This dispute over historical territory renewed interest in all Koguryo-related things in South Korean popular culture, and television was inundated with a huge increase in Koguryo-themed drama series like *Yeon Gaesomun* (2006), *Dae Joyeong* (2006), *Jumong* (2007), *Story of the First King’s Four Gods* (2007), and *Kingdom of the Winds* (2008), all of which dealt explicitly with Koguryo’s triumph over its Chinese enemies.¹¹⁰ A leader in the South Korean group leading the campaign explained: “There are three main reasons behind China’s efforts to incorporate Koguryo

¹⁰⁸ As mentioned at the end of Chapter 4, an elder at KEC had also used a similar narrative of crossing the 10/40 Window along the Silk Road. The idea that Koreans are the “chosen people” is often invoked by evangelicals to link the Biblical Israel to Korea, and even to express an affinity between the contemporary Israel and South Korea. A common saying reflecting this sentiment of divine destiny is that Koreans are the “chosen people” or “Choson people,” referring to the Chosŏn (Yi) Dynasty, which preceded the modern nation states of South and North Korea. See Sunny Lee, “Korean Holy Ghost Descends on China,” *Asia Times Online*, October 17, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ There was much controversy surrounding UNESCO’s 2004 inscription of ancient Koguryo tombs as well. Much of this was covered in the Korean media as “history war.”

¹¹⁰ Despite growing popularity of Korean films and TV dramas among Chinese viewers, there was Chinese backlash against the one-dimensional portrayals of the Chinese Tang dynasty in *Jumong* and *Taewang Sasin’ki* [The Story of the First King’s Four Gods], both of which feature the founding king of Koguryo.

into their history. First is to suppress the identity of the Korean-Chinese presently residing in Manchuria. Second is to prevent territorial loss in case the two Koreas become unified and try to expand northward. Third, the rising number of North Korean refugees in China near the northern border of North Korea may complicate territorial disputes.”¹¹¹

In other words, Dr. Park’s geographical imagination was not a solitary endeavor. It was produced amidst an immense surge in international controversy. The difference was that Dr. Park was actually there in person at Wunu Mountain City, surveying the ruins of Koguryo with his own eyes. He experienced the historical geography intimately—in his words, as if he could “hear the ancestors’ heartbeats and feel their breaths” near him—and the histories past, present and future were displayed before him. The evocative power of his story lies not only in the narrative rendered, but also in the ways that geographical imaginations represent evident truths made plainly visible from the majestic vantage point from the lofty mountaintop.

“The Underground Railroad”

Transnational religious networks consisting of primarily evangelical Christians—such as Dr. Park’s SAM—have carried out the bulk of the field advocacy work for North Koreans in northeast China. They deal with state authorities, greasing the wheels of bureaucracy with bribery, and they operate hundreds of safe houses throughout China and beyond. Ethnic Korean churches in China as well South Korean and Korean American Christian missionaries play a leading role in providing aid for North Korean border crossers. They operate transnational missionary networks that cultivate various transit routes involving train, boat, bus, car, or foot. They rely on church fundraisers and private donations to ensure their continued operation.

In the documentary film *Seoul Train*, these networks are explicitly referred to as “The Underground Railroad,” and credited for leading “hundreds of refugees to freedom over vast stretches of unforgiving Chinese territory.” Arguably the most notorious missionary of them all is the South Korean pastor Chun Ki-won, who is credited for helping hundreds of North Koreans escape to China. Once a businessman, Chun claims he first learned of the plight of North Koreans during a business trip to China in 1999, when he witnessed a North Korean woman being sold as a bride to a Chinese man as her husband watched helplessly. Like many others who visited the China-North Korea border region at the height of North Korean famine, he also claims to have witnessed bodies of North Koreans floating in the Tumen River.

In October 1999, Chun founded the Durihana Missionary Foundation, and began “rescuing” North Koreans from China, particularly focusing on the issue of homeless and orphaned children. In December 2001, Chun along with two other missionary activists—Qilong Jin, an ethnic Korean Chinese national and Joseph Choi, a Korean American missionary—were traveling with a group of 12 North Koreans when they became lost in a blizzard while attempting to cross the Mongolia border. Apprehended by Chinese authorities, Kim and Jin were all put on trial in Inner Mongolia, found guilty, and sent to Chinese prison. International mobilization ultimately led to a US Congressional Resolution regarding Chun and the refugees, passed by a phenomenal margin of 406-0.¹¹² Chun was deported to South Korea in August 2002 after spending nearly eight months in prison, while the fate of the 12 detained North Koreans remain unknown.

In May 2006, Chun accompanied the first five North Koreans granted asylum in the United States, the first since the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act allowed the US to accept refugees

¹¹¹ Jie-ho Choi, “Lost Kingdom, Modern Spat,” *JoongAng Daily*, January 12, 2004.

¹¹² *Expressing the Sense of Congress Regarding North Korean Refugees Who Are Detained in China and Returned to North Korea Where They Face Torture, Imprisonment, and Execution.*, H.CON.RES.213.

from North Korea. Upon arrival, the refugees have often been quoted for thanking President Bush and members of Congress who helped them reach the U.S.—including the US Senator Sam Brownback, the Republican from Kansas whom *Rolling Stone* dubbed “God’s Senator”(Sharlet 2006). A remarkable detail that went unnoticed in the media was that the 20-year-old woman who often served as the group’s spokesperson went by the name, “Chan Mi,” which was a pseudonym given by the missionary, Chun. In all likelihood, *ch’an* means “praise” and *mi* means “America.” The celebrated North Korean refugee, in other words, was born again with the name, “Praise America.” At a public forum in May 2006, Chun defended the idea of the US as the ultimate safe haven for North Korean refugees for two reasons. For one, Chun pointed out that North Koreans face enormous stigma and discrimination in South Korea, and claims that the South Korean government has not provided for the refugees in a responsible, humane manner. Secondly, Chun claimed that the US has a long history of accepting and taking care of refugees, as can be seen in the case of refugees from Vietnam who are now living out the American Dream.¹¹³

Chun Ki-won has been called the “Asian [Oskar] Schindler,”¹¹⁴ named after the German industrialist who saved hundreds of Jews from the Nazis, and the Holocaust metaphor does not end there. Although the term “Holocaust” is typically used sparingly and cautiously, the conditions in North Korea are frequently likened to concentration camps. Concerns for human rights in North Korea have certainly found strange bed fellows. At a 2002 conference on North Korea human rights held at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, North Korean defectors were joined by an Auschwitz survivor, a representative from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and Suzanne Scholte, the outspoken President of the Defense Forum Foundation and a founding board member of the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea. It exemplifies the theological-political linkages between evangelical Christians in the US and South Korea, as well as the connections between the hawkish neoconservatives in the US and the pro-American conservatives in South Korea, as I discussed in Chapter 2.

Evangelization above human rights

It should be emphasized that evangelical Christians are not a monolithic group with total internal consistency. Chun Ki-won, for instance, has received intense criticisms and is generally ostracized from other evangelicals including the conservative Christian Council of Korea. In an interview, JP, a high-ranking CCK leader, could barely contain his anger and frustration when the topic of Chun Ki-won’s publicity-seeking antics came up. He accused Chun of only contributing to the suffering of North Koreans by acting desperately without considering long-term strategies or coordination with others. “Chun is being used by the United States,” JP said, “and the US is only interested in using North Korea human rights as a political issue.”¹¹⁵ This was a surprising statement coming from a leader in an organization known to organize pro-American, anti-North Korean prayer rallies.

In contrast to Chun’s singlehanded efforts, JP explained the CCK’s position on improving conditions in North Korea are long-term and threefold. In order of priority, these were the economy, human rights, and reunification. When asked where evangelizing fits in, JP denied that missions have any place in human rights advocacy because missions take place at a “totally different level.” JP explained that democratization and improvement of human rights conditions will inevitably take

¹¹³ Chun, panelist at the Experts Roundtable for North Korean Human Rights symposium on May 29, 2006 in South Korea.

¹¹⁴ Description from the film *Seoul Train* (2005).

¹¹⁵ Interview with JP in Seoul, June 2, 2006.

place with capitalist economic development, and that when consumption and income levels increase, North Korea and China will necessarily experience democracy, progress, and liberalization.

JP added that rogue missionaries like Chun used the cover of Christian mission to advocate for human rights, and is in fact using helpless refugees in order to conduct profit-seeking business and meddle in politics. What became clear during the course of the interview was that JP objected strongly against Chuns' antagonizing the Chinese government. "Even though there are still parts of China that are hostile to us," JP said, "China is our companion and at the same time, an important object of missions. We can not alienate China."¹¹⁶ On the contrary, at the aforementioned public symposium held in Seoul, Chun Ki-won had insisted that his activism was religious, not political, and adamantly denied the charges that his rescue efforts were publicity stunts. He criticized the South Korean government for blindly following the lead of the Chinese government: "The whole world sees them [North Koreans] as refugees, but our government claims they are economic migrants—just because China does!"¹¹⁷

Both Chun's organization Durihana and the official CCK agree, however, that the ultimate goal lies not in changing Chinese policies. Durihana explicitly states:

For unification of the Korea peninsular, we will serve the North Korean refugees and exiled young North Korean orphans who are wandering in China separated from their families and will continue to devote ourselves with our two feet and knees until the day when the Gospel will spread into the land of North Korea.¹¹⁸

CCK's position is similar:

Korean Christianity does not believe that North Korean human rights problems can be solved only by activity for North Korean refugees and people in North Korea. For an improvement of North Korean Human Rights... Korean Churches have to make an effort to define the identify of the Republic of Korea, to solidify the Korea-US alliance, to assume the position of an influential guardian for the Korean society, government and citizens, and to mobilize global Christianity, forces of goodness and decency, friendly ally nations, and the United Nations in order to strive for the day that freedom, human rights, love, justice, and peace will arrive in North Korea. (J. Park 2006)

Sandy Rios, former President of Concerned Women of America, a group dedicated to bringing "Biblical principles into all levels of public policy," also heads the North Korea Freedom Coalition.¹¹⁹ Testifying before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 2003, Rios stated:

Not only are we determined to get information and freedom INTO North Korea, we are determined to get the word out in the West of the brutality and starvation of the North Korean people by their "Dear Leader." We believe that by God's grace the net effect of such a movement can be much the same as the fall of both Soviet Union and

¹¹⁶ Interview with JP in Seoul, June 2, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Chun, panelist at the Experts Roundtable for North Korean Human Rights symposium on May 29, 2006 in South Korea.

¹¹⁸ Durihana Missionary Foundation. Website [cited September 5, 2006]. Available from <http://www.durihana.net/main.htm>.

¹¹⁹ Rios is current president of Culture Campaign, a right-wing group whose mission is to "engage Christians in actively living out and declaring biblical truth in a secular, humanistic American culture." <http://www.culturecampaign.com>.

the Berlin Wall. No shots fired... just freedom imploding. President Bush has led the way on this issue by boldly and rightly declaring North Korea part of an Axis of Evil.¹²⁰

A Seoul-based nonprofit organization called the Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights (NKnet) echoed the sentiment in the following statement:

After the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the food crisis in North Korea, we reassessed our fiercely held views and concluded that socialism is not viable alternative [sic]—and that the North Korean idea of socialism is an even more reactionary regime. [We], therefore, strongly supports modern achievements of mankind, namely individual human rights, democracy and the free market system.¹²¹

South Korean conservatives and Washington hawks maintain a position that is hostile to the very idea of the North Korean state, and they regard the existence of border crossers as validating the claim that North Korea is a failed state, an illegitimate state on the verge of collapse. In the polarized ideological landscape of South Korean politics where one can either be pro- or anti-North Korea but not anywhere comfortably in between, the North Korean human rights debates have been framed such that the anti-Communist conservatives have been pushing for human rights and the so-called “pro-North Korea” progressives have been accused of opposing human rights.

Critical approaches to human rights

Only recently have there emerged more nuanced positions on North Korean human rights, including progressives who acknowledge the dire situations of border crossers in China and desperate conditions in North Korea while refusing to place the sole blame on the North Korean state, as well as conservatives who advocate for the border crossers without insisting on regime change in North Korea. Still, this emerging middle converges on two points. First is that humanitarian aid must not be politicized (and that this is possible), and secondly, that the key to promoting human rights lies in a successful economic development in North Korea, notably through market liberalization.

Most vocal criticism in this debate comes from South Korean feminists who question the very nature of developmentalism and the wholesale faith in capitalism. Drawing from critiques of South Korea’s own history of development as well as the current neoliberal paradigm, feminist critics problematize not only state violence but also gender violence stemming from patriarchy and gendered division of labor, and they criticize human rights movements for narrowly foregrounding injuries committed by governments while ignoring the harms brought against individuals about by non-state groups.

Lives in Missionary Custody

Before heading out to China in 2006, I visited the headquarters of the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) in Seoul. It was an unannounced visit, and I had no previous contacts there, but I was emboldened by my imminent departure and curiosity piqued by the recent series of protest rallies organized by CCK (see Chapter 2). I was nervous about entering the inner sanctum of conservative

¹²⁰ Sandy Rios, “Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs,” United States Senate, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2003/RiosTestimony031104.pdf>.

¹²¹ Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights website, <http://www.nknet.org> (accessed on September 16, 2006).

Korean Christianity. Visible throughout the office were desks decorated with remnants from the recent protests—banners and placards as well as Korean, American, and the United Nations flags. I nervously requested to speak with the missions director at CCK, and was surprised to find myself greeted promptly by a straight-talking man in his mid-forties who appeared more than willing to help with my research. Without hesitation or many questions, he placed several calls to China, and arranged meetings for me.

It was through this CCK connection that I was able to meet Ms. Yang, a third-generation ethnic Korean Chinese missionary who operated a safe house for North Koreans in hiding. I telephoned her once I arrived in China to arrange for a place to meet. I did not know my way around the city, so I suggested meeting in front of the only landmark I remembered from a brief walk through the Koreatown area the previous day. Ironically enough, it was the North Korean restaurant, a lavish business operated by the North Korean government and staffed by North Koreans under close supervision. I found it closed for business, and later found out from Ms. Yang that the closure was due to a scandal—several waitresses had recently run away, much to the chagrin of the North Korean government. The entire restaurant staff was sent back to North Korea, and it was rumored that a replacement team of better trained and more loyal staff would soon re-open the restaurant.¹²²

Ms. Yang came to meet me and the two journalists I was accompanying as an interpreter, and after brief introductions, we walked a few blocks and then took a taxi to another area in town. We were not told where we were going, and we knew better than to ask. She was a college-educated woman in her early forties who used to own a lucrative travel agency in Beijing. A few years ago, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She made a promise to God that if she survived, she would devote her life to missionary work. When her prayers were answered and her health recovered, she relocated with her family to the current location in northeast China for the express purpose of helping displaced North Koreans in the area. In a relatively posh two-story apartment unit with five bedrooms, Ms. Yang now lived with her mother, husband, and teenage son, plus fourteen North Koreans ranging in age from five to twenty-nine. In order to evade Chinese authorities, all children were kept indoors at all times. Until they became proficient in Chinese and able to blend in, no one was allowed to step foot outside the apartment. The exception was for two boys for whom Ms. Yang was able to obtain false identification papers, and they were able to attend a local high school for ethnic Koreans. The members of the safe house did not even dare attend church on Sundays because, as Ms. Yang said, even churchgoers were known to report North Koreans for the reward money offered by the Chinese government. Instead, they gathered at home for Sunday service, or on special occasions, they went to another safe house for a joint service there.

The intense level of secrecy and fear of exposure was palpable. A few hours after we got there, there was an unexpected knock on the door. Immediately, everyone stopped moving, and Ms. Yang quietly asked one of the older children if they were expecting anyone. There was another strange knock. Within seconds, all the children were moved to hide in various rooms throughout the house, and quietly Ms. Yang looked out through the peephole in the door. Breathing a loud sigh of relief, she opened the door to let in a teenage boy who entered giggling. He was one of the two boys with papers, returning home from school. He was supposed to use a secret knock, but was pulling a prank to scare everyone. He was reprimanded with a smack on the back of his head, and soon all the children were back out in the living room, laughing and playing. Ms. Yang yelled out to someone to come out and prepare lunch for the boy who just returned home. Two young girls came to the kitchen and started putting together a meal for him.

¹²² These restaurant jobs are highly selective and prestigious positions for North Koreans, comparable to foreign service appointments. The waitresses who work in the North Korean restaurants in China are, for the most part, college-educated with family members in good standing with the North Korean government.

Sarah's story

There is no doubt that underground missionary networks fundamentally shape the expectations and experiences of North Koreans in their custody. A great deal of evangelical objectives structure the shape and substance of missionary advocacy. Every North Korean woman I interviewed had some form of firsthand experience with trafficking and forced marriages in China, ranging from being deceived into a forced marriage to running away from helpful strangers they suspected of being brokers, and they all had multiple encounters with a variety of evangelicals and missionaries. In all cases, their troubles began not when they entered China but in North Korea.

The most recent arrival at the safe house was Sarah,¹²³ a 29-year-old woman who had arrived just ten days ago. The youngest of eight children, she grew up in a well-to-do family in a northern port city in North Korea. When she was thirteen years old, her mother became incapacitated with a serious illness and died when Sarah was fifteen. By then, her older siblings had married and moved away, and it became Sarah's job to care for her father. He had been a successful and well-respected man in town, but after his factory closed down and he could not find another job, he became an angry and frequently violent man.¹²⁴ Unable to make ends meet, he began to take out his frustration by beating Sarah routinely and severely, and she began to seek ways to escape from his physical abuse. When her school recruited workers for a grueling construction project in Pyongyang, Sarah volunteered. In return, she was promised the Party's recommendation to attend the university afterwards. After three and a half years of manual labor during which she received a meager daily ration of two small bowls of rice, Sarah returned home to discover that her father had lost everything. The house was sold as were everything inside, and Sarah realized that she would not be able to attend university—she had earned a recommendation but no money.

With an estranged father and seven older siblings who refused to support her, Sarah found herself with no choice other than to follow the suggestion of an acquaintance who had a distant cousin seeking a wife. Sarah was twenty years old. She had grown up with relative privilege in a small but vibrant commercial city, so when she arrived in a remote mountainside village to find a poor farmer living in a tiny wooden shack with his mother and two other siblings—with no electricity or running water—she was at first devastated. She had never seen a house like that before, she said, and she did not know human beings could live in such conditions. She had to learn quickly. She learned to farm, and she eventually gave birth to two sons. Her husband was a farmer who grew corn and potatoes, but during the peak of the famine, she saw no one in her village eating anything other than gruel—a watery concoction made with grass and small amounts of powdered corn. Sarah was twenty-one, and she recalled that food rations had begun to decline when she was fifteen years old. She had been hungry for most of her teenage years.

¹²³ With the missionary's help, she chose the Biblical name Sarah as her pseudonym. In the Old Testament, Sarah is the beautiful and privileged first wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac, who casts out Hagar, Abraham's second wife, and their son, Ishmael. Conservative Christians typically portray Sarah as a model of obedient wife and devoted matriarch. Some consider Abraham as the first missionary in the Bible, who followed God's instruction to leave home to go to a faraway land he did not know. This makes Sarah the first missionary's wife. Sarah knew most of these Biblical stories associated with her namesake.

¹²⁴ Research suggests that the majority of unauthorized exit from North Korea to China involve people from the northern parts of North Korea, which were hardest hit by the famine. North Hamgyong Province, for instance, once had considerable heavy industry, but as state-owned enterprises closed with extreme energy shortage, the population there were severely affected by unemployment and food shortages Courtland Robinson et al., "Demographic Methods to Assess Food Insecurity: A North Korean Case Study," *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 16, no. 4 (2001). Sarah's account of her family's decline matched this structural context to a tee.

Leaving North Korea

Sarah's husband, as it turns out, was an alcoholic who became increasingly abusive. With her husband unable to work, Sarah worked at the neighbors' farms in exchange for food. After years of struggling with backbreaking work and constant hunger, never mind the physical abuse, Sarah became convinced that her two children were going to die either from starvation or from their father's beatings. She even thought about killing herself and the children, but could not do it. For years, she had heard about finding work and food in China, but did not consider it as an option because all her brothers were Party officials and she did not want to cause them trouble by running away to China. But day after day, the children would cry, begging for food, and her husband would in turn beat them mercilessly to shut them up. Finally, Sarah decided to leave. One morning, she made gruel for the kids one last time, but she remembers no one was able to eat. The kids were crying because they were hungry for real food, and she was crying because she was about to leave without saying good-bye. Without telling anyone, she started walking towards China.

Sarah took with her the only thing valuable enough to sell—a large bundle of old newspapers she had collected over the years because she knew she could sell them to merchants to use as wrapping paper. They were old issues of *Rodong Sinmun*, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, and the most widely read newspaper in the country. I asked if she ever read the newspapers, and Sarah grimaced—all lies, she said, nothing but lies.

Life in China

Sarah met a sympathetic North Korean woman near the China border who offered to take her across the river. Sarah had no idea that she was in fact being pulled into a marriage brokering network. Even as she recounted the story of her border crossing, Sarah kept slipping back to thanking the helpful woman who guided her across the border, only to correct herself moments later that this helpful stranger may not have been a good person after all. Shortly afterwards arriving in China, she found herself locked in a storage shed with four other women, and one by one, they were taken to remote, rural villages to marry Han Chinese farmers who had purchased them.

Sarah's new husband was a decent but poor farmer around her age, she said, who borrowed so much money to purchase her that he could not afford even a small ceremony to celebrate the marriage. His house was filthy and full of family members suspicious of Sarah. Mindful of the watchful eye of her new husband and his family, Sarah looked for ways to escape. She found out that there was another North Korean woman in the village who had arrived three years ago under similar circumstances. As Sarah saw it, this other woman's story was more tragic than her own—she was a well-educated teacher from North Korea, forced into a marriage with an ugly, old, illiterate farmer. The two became like sisters, and helped each other cope. Sarah learned to speak Chinese and learned how to cook Chinese food, and her new husband and in-laws seemed delighted to see her trying to adjust. Soon, Sarah became pregnant, and the elated family showered her with affection, urging her to stay rather than risk an uncertain future in a strange land.

Missionaries and divorce

Sarah was not alone. South Korean and ethnic Korean Chinese missionaries in the area had found out about Sarah shortly after her arrival in the village, and visited her weekly with food, clothing, and the Bible. The Chinese family did not mind the visits as long as the missionaries were not encouraging Sarah to escape. And as it turned out, the missionaries actively discouraged Sarah from trying to leave. In fact, Ms. Yang, the missionary in charge of the safe house, herself had visited Sarah in the village, and confirmed that she told Sarah to stop fighting the marriage, and to believe in Jesus Christ instead. Sarah begged the missionaries to help her escape, but they refused to consider

divorce an option. Even a forced marriage was still a marriage, she was told. Fully aware that Sarah had been sold by a broker to her new husband, the missionaries nonetheless insisted on the sanctity of marriage. Sarah recalled the missionaries' message as follows:

The Bible has a section where it teaches you that divorce is bad, and that you must stay married and seek happiness through marriage. The Bible told me to stay married and try to be happy.

Ms. Yang, the missionary who conveyed this Biblical lesson to Sarah explained:

There was no reason for her to risk everything to leave! God had other plans for her. God planned for her to come to China, marry this man and survive, so that she can go back to North Korea later and spread the Gospel there. If she just ran away and got caught, and if she just got sent back to North Korea, what good is that?

Sarah eventually accepted what she understood to be Christian ethics of marriage—she found peace of mind and even some semblance of happiness once she quelled her desperation for escape. Once her new husband and in-laws realized that Sarah was no longer a flight risk, they treated her well.

Nine months after Sarah gave birth to a son, Sarah overheard a conversation in which her husband was arranging a sale. He already got what he wanted, a son, and now he was going to sell Sarah to another farmer in order to recover his costs and pay back his debt. If Sarah were to escape, he would lose everything. She was appalled at the thought of being sold as cattle, and contacted the missionaries about it. It was then and only then, Sarah said, that the missionaries agreed to help her leave—because the vows of marriage were voided by the husband who demonstrated a clear disregard for the sanctity of marriage. After two and a half years of being married to this man, and just ten days before I met her, Sarah fed her nine-month-old son one last time. As she once left behind her two children in North Korea, Sarah left early in the morning without saying good-bye and kept walking. The missionaries later picked her up in a taxi and brought her to the safe house.

On violence and the price of rescue

To many North Korea observers, Sarah's account would no doubt sound familiar. It may even ring as a cliché composite. The details of her story and the kinds of hardship she endured in her short life resemble countless other stories of North Korean women who often talk about how hunger destroyed families and communities that were once loving and cooperative. They talk about how economic difficulties turned once decent and hardworking men into abusive drunkards who abused their own wives or daughters. North Korean women I met in China rarely blamed the North Korean regime or the political ideology of its government. They hardly ever mentioned state violence except in references to prison camps for those captured and repatriated from China.¹²⁵ But the women always had plenty of stories about unhappy marriages and spousal violence.

Though commonplace, Sarah's story does reveal several surprising insights. First is the fact that she was sold into a forced marriage by brokers *within* North Korea, operating in cooperation with cross-border partners in China. Other similar stories confirm that the trafficking networks extend across the North Korea-China border, with transactions often beginning on the North Korea side of the border. Second, Sarah's account confirms that an extensive and decentralized network of South Korean and ethnic Korean Chinese evangelical missionaries are aware of the location of many North Korean women, whether they are confined in forced marriages in rural villages or working in massage parlors and brothels in urban centers. Third, Sarah's story reveals the troubling fact that the

¹²⁵ In South Korea, on the other hand, most North Korean refugees made a point of explicitly criticizing Kim Jong Il.

missionaries do not always advocate for North Korean women's freedom from repressive or coercive conditions. The fact that they actively discouraged Sarah from considering "divorce"—really, an escape from forced marriage—on religious grounds shows that there operates a disciplinary moral economy that puts a premium on the so-called family values rather than any measure of freedom or human rights.

It may well be argued that missionary networks and human trafficking networks in China intersect and overlap a great deal. Missionaries help sustain trafficking activities by participating as a purchaser, albeit to secure the women's freedom. Certainly, missionary networks play a critical role as North Korean women and girls have no legal rights in China, and can expect no legal protection from the state. It is a dreadful and complicated world, where the spaces of escape and captivity are indivisible. Those who are plucked from trafficking networks often find themselves instead sheltered in restrictive Christian networks that offer little other than Bible verse memorization as a daily routine, beholden to their rescuers who can determine matters of life and death—typically conceptualized as a contrast between (life) outside and (death) inside North Korea. The following story offers another account of women in missionary custody.

Esther's story

Whereas Sarah was the oldest member and the newest arrival at the safe house, sixteen-year-old Esther¹²⁶ had been living there with her younger brother for nearly a year. Born in 1990, she belongs to a generation of North Koreans whose entire childhood is defined by what the North Korean government refers to as "The Arduous March" of food crisis in mid- to late 1990s. Unlike Sarah, Esther's parents were poor farmers in a notoriously cold region of North Korea. It was so cold that pigs froze to death all the time, she said. Most of her memories from childhood consist of being cold and hungry and foraging for edible leaves and seeds, as well as potatoes and mushrooms growing in the mountains. At night, her father encouraged the children to steal from their better-off neighbors.

Adding to her hardship was her mother's death when Esther was just ten years old. She first stated that her mother died of stomach cancer, but then Ms. Yang interjected and told Esther not to lie about her mother's death. Ms. Yang said that Esther's father actually beat her to death. Esther protested that yes, her father did beat her, but the doctor did say that her mother had stomach cancer. Ms. Yang grew impatient and jumped in.

He beat her, and she couldn't eat, and that's how she died. That's what you told me. She starved to death. He told the kids to say stomach cancer if anyone asked. After that, Esther planned to kill her father because he killed her mother. She tried several times. Can you imagine how hurt and angry she must have been that she would have tried to kill her own father? She saw with her own eyes how he beat her mother to death. And the night that she planned to kill him, with poison she bought, that turned out to be the night that God helped them escape to China. You see, God really loves her because if she killed her own father, she would have gone to hell. This is what you told me, right, Esther?

Esther nodded with tears in her eyes. She said it was difficult for her to tell the truth but she had told this to Ms. Yang, and yes, this was indeed what happened. Esther's father had a close friend

¹²⁶ Like Sarah, Esther chose a Biblical name as her pseudonym. In evangelical readings, the story of Esther is a Cinderella story—born in poverty and obscurity, she becomes a queen reigning over one of the most powerful empires in history, the Persian empire. Esther is referred to as the savior of her people.

who had crossed the border to China a number of times. She heard the two men whispering together late one night, and the next day, her father simply said, let's go to China today. She did not want to go, but was forced to follow her father. They left behind the youngest boy who was just ten years old. His legs were apparently broken several times from the father's beatings, which left him with a severe limp. Because he could not walk well, the father decided he was not fit to travel with the family to China. Esther said she still cried every day, wondering about what happened to her youngest brother.

They crossed the border on a balmy spring day, easily crossing a shallow part of the Tumen River where they did not have to swim across. Her father's friend was aware of the border guards' shift change schedule, and all in all, the border-crossing was uneventful. The trouble began afterwards in China. Avoiding major roads for fear of getting caught, Esther's family walked continuously for seven hours. Along the way, they came across a couple of elderly ethnic Korean farmers who were planting soy beans in the field. They could tell Esther's family was from North Korea, and took pity on them—they gave them food, a bag of grains, and bottles of water. Along the way, they were helped by several other good Samaritans who offered them food and shelter, as they have apparently done numerous other times for other North Korean migrants.

One day in the city, a man overheard Esther's family talking to one another, and approached them. He said he could tell they were from North Korea and invited them to his house. This stranger promised to find a job for the father and send the kids to school. He pointed to a picture on the wall, and explained that it was Jesus. That was the first time Esther ever saw a picture of Jesus. The man showed them the cross, and explained that he was Christian, and told Esther stories about the Bible.

At this point, I thought this was going to be a story about missionary rescue. But surprisingly, Esther said that this Christian man had tried to arrange for her family to move to another house but that the plan fell through. She added, "Well, he first wanted to sell us, but couldn't." I asked for clarification—I thought this was a Christian man who was trying to help? Ms. Yang intervened again and said that he was in fact a professional broker who used the cover of Christianity to gain their trust but that he was going to sell them for a profit. Esther refused to see it that way. She insisted that he was actually Christian, that he had a cross on the wall and knew how to talk about the Bible. Ms. Yang, exasperated, yelled, "What kind of Christian would want to sell you? He wasn't really a Christian. It's impossible."

According to Ms. Yang, she had in fact purchased Esther and her brother from this broker herself. He had arranged to sell the two children to someone else, but due to some sort of a cell phone snafu, could not get in touch with the prospective buyer. Eager for a sale, the broker telephoned Ms. Yang and said that he was about to sell a fourteen-year-old—would she like to do something about it? "Imagine that," Ms. Yang said, "a fourteen-year-old for sale. I couldn't think about negotiating a price or anything like that. I just said yes, send her to me. I'll find the money."

Esther apparently had no idea that she was being sold to anyone. Her father had run off and abandoned the two of them for some time, and Ms. Yang suspected that he handed over the children to the fake Christian broker in exchange for money. Esther said she had no desire to look for her father, and did not wish to see him ever again.

Ms. Yang claimed that the fake Christian broker still calls her regularly. Just the other day, he called to say that there was a girl for 5000 RMB (approximately US\$700), and suggested that if Ms. Yang can not stand the idea of this poor girl being sold, she should rescue her by coming up with the money. After being pestered a multiple times, she changed her phone number to avoid further contact.

Other interviews also confirmed the extent to which missionary networks are intertwined with trafficking networks. Missionaries like Ms. Yang know a great deal about trafficking routes and markets, the identities and whereabouts of the brokers, and the prices at which the women and girls are being bought and sold. One missionary even recollected rescuing several girls at once from a broker by purchasing them at a discounted price. Ms. Yang at one point joked to a North Korean

teenager, in front of me, that a new television set could have been purchased for the price of his rescue. If the boy did not behave, she half-jokingly said, she could always use a new television.

Grace's story

Grace¹²⁷ was a shy, soft-spoken seventeen-year-old who was also the only one in the safe house who had served time in North Korean prison. Not long ago, Grace's father was a high ranking official in the Party and her mother a popular hair stylist. She remembered that until she was about ten years old, they were the wealthiest family in the neighborhood. News arrived that her mother's older sister went missing in China, and one day, Grace's parents left a note for the children to stay with the grandfather, and left to look for the missing woman. The grandfather refused to care for them, so Grace and her two brothers, ages twelve and fourteen, returned home by themselves, and the three of them lived on their own until the father returned six months later. He was immediately arrested and taken away, as was Grace's mother who also returned a few days afterwards, but both were eventually released and kept under close police scrutiny.

Grace's mother decided to leave again, and took fourteen-year-old Grace and her older brother across the river. The three of them were walking along the road one day, when a pile of firewood fell from a passing car. Grace's brother helped the driver retrieve the load, and the grateful driver turned out to be an ethnic Korean Christian. Grace and her brother did not know anything about Christianity, but apparently their mom had become a Christian during her previous stay in China, and trusted this man. He took them into his home and took care of them. He even killed a chicken to feed them, Grace said.

The family eventually found shelter in Ms. Yang's safe house, but not long afterwards, the house was raided by Chinese authorities and Grace was sent back to North Korea, along with her brother. Grace and her brother were transported to North Korea on a train with other North Korean runaways, she said, all in handcuffs—and shoe laces when there were no more handcuffs. They were sent to a children's prison where the youngest child she saw was five or six years old. She said the prison facility was in Sinuiju, just across the border from Dandong, and that she was beaten and segregated from others because the guards knew that she was exposed to Christianity. She was forbidden to mention Christianity to anyone else, and told her that she would be executed if she ever went back to China. After nine months in prison, she and her brother managed to escape while being transported to another prison facility, and together, they headed back to China to look for their mother.

Grace said that she wanted to become a missionary. When I asked where she eventually wanted to live, she lowered her head and was unable to answer the question. After a couple of minutes of silence, I asked if she wanted to stay in China, or return home to her father in North Korea. She repeated in a halting and barely audible voice, "I hope to... become a missionary... to spread the Gospel..." After another long pause, she said that she wanted to go back to North Korea. At that moment, Ms. Yang interjected and briskly answered on Grace's behalf, "Her destiny is to return to North Korea as a missionary, so she can build a church in her home town. She has had a vision from God, who showed her a church with a cross on top, near the place where she grew up." While Ms. Yang spoke confidently about Grace's hopes, dreams and destined future, Grace remained silent with her head lowered. Her hands were trembling. Whether she consented, and to what extent, to become a missionary will never be known.

There is a significant need to investigate directly and critically the missionary-facilitated migration and settlement of North Koreans, taking seriously both the religious motivations for

¹²⁷ Grace is a pseudonym she chose for herself. Though not based on a Biblical character, it is a popular name among Korean Christians.

advocacy and the socio-political impact of the missionary activities. There is no doubt that the missionaries provide much-needed help for North Koreans in places like China. However, as it is evident in the stories of Sarah, Esther, and Grace, the missionaries also define, discipline, and determine the lives of North Koreans in their custody.

Politics of Missionary Custody

When considering the issue of North Korean border crossers in the broader context of other transnational flows of labor migration, missionary networks, capital mobility, and human rights advocacy, it becomes clear that the issue of doing “good” by “helping” North Koreans have typically relied on the discourse of deliverance—people fleeing from evil North Korea and arriving in the liminal space of China or safe haven in South Korea. Such simplistic discourse of deliverance, in actuality, elides the myriad challenges facing North Korean border crossers before *and* after their departure from North Korea. Research after research have pointed to not only the need for macro-level analysis of state violence, globalization, and feminization of migrant labor force, but also for subject-level analysis of how the migrants’ experiences are determined by their structural location in multiple axes of domination. As illustrated in Sarah, Esther, and Grace’s stories, North Koreans leave home in desperate searches for food and livelihood in China. Their accounts also indicate that North Korean women often flee from violence—from abusive fathers and husbands who beat their wives and daughters, often with tremendous brutality.

Missionaries make decisions based not only on ethical concerns or humanitarian principles, but also on deeply-held religious values, such as insisting on the sanctity of marriage vows and refusing to help women out of forced marriages as in Sarah’s case. Especially given the ideologically conservative character of evangelical groups involved in human rights advocacy for North Korean border crossers, an emphasis on Christian morality and “family values” play a significant role in the advocacy and evangelizing process.¹²⁸

The lofty musings and ambitious historical and political geographies employed by philanthropic missionaries like Dr. Park and celebrity missionaries like Chun Ki-won contrast against the on-the-ground missionaries like Ms. Yang who negotiates on a daily basis the contradictory demands of patriarchal family and circuits of human trafficking. On the other hand, they share a common belief in God’s plan in which North Korean border crossers serve a grander purpose of evangelizing North Korea—sometimes involving young women like Grace whose future as a missionary is presented to her as a predetermined destiny. Missionary advocacy is marked by the emphasis on righteous custody of a people led astray. The pastoral power of missionaries is manifest not only in their roles as Schindlers or shepherds of helpless flocks, but also in the disciplinary power inherent in the exercise of missionary custody. The following definitions of *custody* are offered by the Oxford English Dictionary:

Safe keeping, protection, defence; charge, care, guardianship; the keeping of the officers of justice (for some presumed offence against the law); confinement, imprisonment.

Consider the multivalent deployment of *custody* in the following common usage: state custody, police custody, protective custody, and child custody. Accordingly, I employ the term *missionary custody* to denote the condition of both care and control, attention and detention of

¹²⁸ Some of the missionaries I interviewed spoke disparagingly about the trafficked women’s sexual mores, describing the women as having developed a “taste” for sexual promiscuity during their experiences in China.

vulnerable populations. By acting as self-appointed custodians for vulnerable subjects who can only expect prosecution without protection from the governments of North Korea or China, and by harboring border crossers located in the midst of “friction” of marketizing socialist economies and vexed geopolitics, evangelical missionaries discipline their subjects into the mold of proper Christian subjects and liberal citizen-workers suitable for capitalism.¹²⁹ They utilize far-reaching geographical imaginaries and the terrain of human rights to enact their religious prerogative to proselytize and expand the reach of their Gospel.

As regimes of truth and power, missionary networks fundamentally regulate and discipline the expectations and experiences of North Korean border crossers in their custody, instructing them in all matters concerning market capitalism, Christianity, and human rights. Decentralized and clandestine networks of evangelical Christians and missionaries continue to carry on the bulk of the advocacy work for North Koreans, and play a significant role in dealing with state authorities and trafficking brokers, operating safe houses, and making travel arrangements for those seeking asylum. While missionaries certainly provide assistance for North Korean women and girls in situations both dire and desperate, this chapter suggests that missionaries also confine vulnerable populations in isolated networks disciplined by evangelical agendas. The disciplinary power implicit in the missionary exercise of custodial power suggests far-reaching political and ethical implications.

¹²⁹ In analyzing diverse and conflicting social interactions that make up the contemporary world, anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing uses the metaphor of friction as “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference.” While she focuses on the rainforests of Indonesia as a particular “zone of awkward engagement,” her discussions of global interconnections and worldly encounters are appropriate for the China-North Korea border region—very much a zone of awkward engagement involving a cast of characters including local and international human rights activists, South Korean investors, South Korean and Korean American missionaries, UN funding and humanitarian agencies, entrepreneurs, diasporic nationalists, etc. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Chapter 6. Mission Experience in Tanzania and Uganda

In contrast to the ethnic kinship missions that define much of Korean/American evangelical activities in China and North Korea, this chapter grapples with racialized perceptions of difference that animate Korean/American missions to Africa. Drawing from ethnographic research of a short-term mission trip to Uganda and Tanzania in 2006, this chapter focuses on three aspects. First, I discuss how the overseas short-term mission intensified power-laden structures of privilege and hierarchy. This was accomplished through the regulation of travel logistics and rhetoric of differentiated labor along age and gender lines. I argue that the mission trip was deliberately structured to occasion a temporary embodiment of hardship in order to stir empathy for the suffering of others.

Secondly, I discuss how the mission trip sublimated difference by embracing a vocabulary of historical commonality and developmental solidarity. As I will show, this significantly altered my initial hypothesis about the function of racialized difference in Africa missions. The missionaries in Africa—in comparison to the oppositional politics of world evangelization (Chapter 3), naturalized propagation (Chapter 4), or custodial power of North Korea missions (Chapter 5)—drew inspiration from Korean history to emphasize developmental solidarity and experiential authority to alleviate both poverty and suffering. In the process, the missionaries validated hegemonic interpretations of Korea's authoritarian development experience and offered as a blueprint for success a linear development trajectory in which they were already deemed triumphant.

Thirdly, this chapter argues that the *experience* of an overseas mission is particularly accentuated in the short-term form. Staging a highly circumscribed engagement with the locality, the short-term mission operated above all as an affective process. Producing spaces that rendered affection as the primary means of experiencing the world, missionary impulses and modes of feeling both preceded and exceeded conscious ideologies and theological doctrines. As the missionaries embedded themselves in mundane mission practices, they grappled with emotional registers and symbolic coordinates of world evangelization. The intended mission experience, as an affective encounter with the sensible world, in turn legitimated established concepts, opinions, and ideologies. I suggest that the experiential feature of short-term missions is pivotal in understanding world evangelization as a simultaneously imaginary, discursive, and embodied world-making process.

I begin with caveats. First, because this case study concerns the *limited* engagements of the short-term missionaries with people and places they encountered, and how this greatly *circumscribed* missionary experience, my discussion features very limited number of actors who are not Korean/American missionaries. This is an unfortunate limitation of my research design. My intent is certainly not to dismiss the importance of on-the-ground and interactive dimensions of mission encounters, especially concerning the experiences of those being targeted by the missionaries. I have tried to fill in the gaps with as much relevant details as possible, but this case remains a partial story of missionaries, not a fuller account of mission encounters. Secondly, because this case study concerns how missionaries intentionally *disregarded local specificities*—historical, geographical, and political economic—and actively obscured existing racial and national differences, my discussion does not offer a meaningful distinction between Uganda and Tanzania, the two countries where the short-term mission trip took place. Thirdly, related to the second point, the word “Africa” is used throughout this dissertation as it was deployed on the mission, e.g. “Africa mission” “Korea-Africa connection,” etc. The missionary designation of “Africa” enacted many of the signifying practices that have come under vigorous postcolonial critique. For the missionaries in this case study, “Africa” designated not an actual or a particular place, but functioned more as an oblique shorthand for a composite of stereotypes they associated with Africa, e.g. poverty, AIDS, primitive, underdevelopment, violence, distant, etc. Obscuring the differences among the variety of African

cities and nations they visited and people they met, the missionaries ultimately understood Africa in homogenized, metaphorical terms.

Global Mission Frontier (GMF)

Global Mission Frontier (GMF) is a transnational Korean/American missionary organization with offices in Seoul, Northern and Southern California.¹³⁰ It is the brainchild of one man, Pastor Kim, a modestly successful Silicon Valley entrepreneur who is also the publisher of a local Korean-language Christian weekly newspaper. In 1994, he went to Rwanda to cover the genocide on a journalistic assignment, and was so devastated by what he saw that he made a career-changing decision upon return—he founded GMF and began working on world missions full-time. By 2001, he had become ordained as a Presbyterian minister and ran GMF as its full-time director. Today, GMF is a registered nonprofit organization with several paid staff and volunteers, dedicated to locating and proselytizing to the “unreached people groups” especially in East Africa (for a discussion of unreached people groups, see Chapter 3).

A soft-spoken but stern man in his early fifties, Pastor Kim personally oversees most aspects of the programs. He travels between Africa, California, and South Korea several times a year. His salary and travel expenses, as well as the entire operation of GMF, are supported by donations from individuals and sponsoring churches in the US and South Korea, as well as small business ventures affiliated with GMF. His teenage Korean American children have often accompanied Pastor Kim to Africa, as they did in 2006 when I participated in the mission trip. His wife works full-time as a nurse to support the family, and is rarely seen in the GMF office or on the mission field.

It is difficult to imagine from the modest appearance of GMF’s headquarter office in northern California that their programs year after year operate at such an impressive scale.¹³¹ GMF short-term missions officially began with Rwanda in 1995, and the small-scale summer program consisting of 72 people in 2001 has grown to involve more than 300 participants in four countries and thirty-two cities in 2004. Their emphasis is on East Africa, particularly the region surrounding Lake Victoria—a large fresh-water lake that borders Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and has one of Africa’s highest population densities (see Figure 7).¹³²

By most accounts, the Lake Victoria region is considered impoverished but politically stable, and with a significant Christian population. On the Uganda side of the lake, over eighty percent of the population is said to be Christian, and in Tanzania, where no official data on religious affiliation is available, the population is estimated to be roughly one-third Muslim, Christian, and followers of indigenous religions.¹³³ Kenya is predominantly Christian with nearly seventy-eight percent of Kenyans regarding themselves as either Protestant or Roman Catholic. Given these demographic profiles of widespread Christianity, GMF does not purport to *bring* Christianity where there are no

¹³⁰ GMF and all names associated with it are pseudonyms.

¹³¹ Pastor Kim explained that the offices in California and Seoul are kept humble for a reason. For the amount of money that would be spent on renovations, he said, an entire school in Rwanda could be supported for a year. He described it as a sound investment practice, taking advantage of a better rate of investment in the developing world.

¹³² With more than 2,138 miles of shoreline and at 68,800 square kilometers (26,560 square miles), Lake Victoria is the world’s second-largest fresh-water lake and Africa’s largest lake. It is nearly the size of the US state of West Virginia or approximately seventy percent of the size of South Korea. Or, to put it yet another way, it is the size of the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia or twice the size of Belgium. One of GMF’s most ambitious long-term goal is to purchase a large ferryboat to operate as a floating medical clinic, taking advantage of Lake Victoria to travel among the surrounding nations and provide free medical services. This goal has not been accomplished as of 2009.

¹³³ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, “2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census Main Report,” available from <http://www.ubos.org>. Last accessed March 2, 2009.

Christians—their focus is not to convert non-Christians. On several occasions, I have heard Pastor Kim describe GMF’s mission mandate as follows.

They say Africa mission is “200 mile wide, two inch deep” [sic]. Because the continent’s sub-Saharan south was colonized by Christian nations, Africa appears to have been Christianized. But in fact, Christian spirit has never truly taken root in Africa.¹³⁴

It is this idea, that there is widespread commitment to Christianity in Africa but that it is shallow and feeble, which drives GMF missions to Africa—to deepen and sophisticate Christianity through an infusion of educational and civilizing programs. GMF’s website states:

For the people of Africa who have lost a century to colonization, [GMF] seeks to improve their quality of lives, and help the spirit of Christianity take root through sound teachings. We operate educational ministries, civilizing ministries, medical ministries, ministries for unreached people groups, development ministries, and relief ministries to contribute to a foundation of self-reliance.

The Annual summer mission trip

GMF’s month-long summer mission trip to the Lake Victoria region is designed to “bring together Korea and Africa under the wings of God.” Typically involving more than 150 South Korean and Korean American participants, the mission team divides up into small groups and visits isolated island villages, refugee camps, schools, churches, and orphanages.¹³⁵ They also stage traditional Korean dance performances, organize charity sporting events, hold large-scale outdoor prayer rallies, and offer specialized workshops on topics such as “Christian motherhood,” economic development, and conflict resolution.¹³⁶

These short-term mission programs are designed to complement GMF’s long-term projects which include establishing missionary outpost facilities, funding and operating primary schools,

¹³⁴ Though Pastor Kim described this as a common saying, I could not find anyone else who had heard of Africa missions being described as “200 miles wide and 2 inches deep.” The closest quote to this is attributed to a former US Marine and missionary named Wes Bentley who said in 2002, “Christianity in Africa is 100 miles wide and 1/2 inch deep.” Bentley is affiliated with California-based Far Reaching Ministries (FRM), a mission agency which, through a special arrangement with the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), trains chaplains “to minister to the soldiers as they fight for freedom from the oppressive Islamic government of Sudan.” See Ed Compean, “Far Reaching into Africa,” *Calvary Chapel Magazine*, Fall, 2002. Pages 4-11.

¹³⁵ It must be noted that many of the “orphanages” are not in fact orphanages. They range from schools and community centers to temporary and short-term group homes for children whose parents are missing or away for work. GMF casually referred to many of these children as “orphans” as shorthand for “needy” children. Children and widows, of course, are familiar objects of pity and compassion, especially in the Bible. It has been argued that the social marginality of widows arises from the lack male guardianship in patriarchal society. Both widows and orphans are seen as people displaced from patriarchal kinship structures, and thus deserving of missionaries’ pity and custodial protection. For a theological discussion, see John Rook, “Making Widows: The Patriarchal Guardian at Work,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (1997).

¹³⁶ In 2002, GMF organized a friendly soccer match featuring Korea’s Hallelujah Football Club, and drew record crowds in Uganda. Hallelujah was Korea’s first professional soccer team, founded by a missionary group in 1980. After a few seasons as a professional team with a patchy record, Hallelujah FC dropped out of the professional league in 1985 and has since found moderate success in a non-professional league. Hallelujah maintains its identity as a Christian club committed to evangelism through sports. Their uniform bears a giant red cross, and their club emblem features a football and a cross in a globe-like yin-yang (*t’aegŭk*) formation as on the South Korean national flag. It is said to symbolize Korean-led world evangelization.

medical clinics, and seminaries, as well as building small factories throughout East Africa to help fund its activities. In one of its long-term programs to build a transnational educative network, GMF has recruited and funded more than a dozen young African Christian students to pursue professional, technical, and seminary education in South Korea. As of 2008, approximately eighteen students were enrolled with full scholarship in schools throughout South Korea. In addition to these non-governmental activities, GMF has also forged friendly relationships with dozens of local and national government officials especially in Uganda, who have since visited South Korea through exchange programs many of which were sponsored through KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency), the representative development assistance agency of the South Korean government.

The summer mission itinerary to the Lake Victoria region typically includes Rwanda and Burundi for the first two weeks, Uganda and Tanzania for the second two weeks, and concludes with the optional safari tour of Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. In total, the missionaries spend an estimated USD \$1.5 million in travel and program expenses for the month-long series of events. In 2006, I joined them for approximately three weeks—flying to Entebbe, Uganda and traveling with them until we reached the mission trip’s final destination in Mwanza, Tanzania (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Map of Lake Victoria region, showing cities where GMF mission activities took place in 2006. Drawn by author.

Settling Into Familiar Hierarchies

As arranged, GMF sent designated drivers to pick me up at the Entebbe International Airport in Uganda, approximately twenty miles from Kampala. The two men arrived late, and they almost left without me—they saw me waiting, but seeing my short hair and somewhat gender-neutral

manner of dress, mistook me initially for a man. As soon as we were in the car, they proceeded with a barrage of questions to “place” me—was I born in Korea or the United States, was I married or unmarried, was I single or in a relationship, and exactly how old was I? The older of the two, perhaps in his late thirties, offered this comment as part of his self-introduction: “I’m not married yet, but I’m a man so it’s ok. Women have to worry about getting too old to have babies, but men obviously don’t have to worry about that. But life does get easier when male missionaries get married.” He had been living in Uganda for a year as a long-term residential missionary supported by GMF, and was working as a local field coordinator for the duration of the summer mission program. These first exchanges signaled the extent to which gender and age hierarchies played out on the mission field.

Dynamics of gender and age stratification

Approximately thirty minutes outside Kampala, a GMF-run primary school housed the majority of the short-term missionaries. We were assigned to one of three rooms based on gender and age: all men, “younger” women (under thirty-five or so), or “older” women. There were more than twice as many women as there were men, and “younger” women far outnumbered those in their fifties and above. At the ripe old age of thirty four, I became the oldest resident of the younger women’s room, earning the title *wang õnni*, meaning something like the “head honcho sister.”

Throughout the first day, new participants arrived from the airport as well as those who were part of a longer itinerary returning from Rwanda and Burundi. The floors were soon strewn with foam pads and sleeping bags, mosquito nets and suitcases, with two clotheslines cutting across the room. For over a week, we slept on dirt-covered floors, getting accustomed to the demanding itinerary and unpredictable schedules of running water and electricity. Most of the young women from Korea appeared unconcerned about the lack of amenities. They were used to school trips and church camps under similar circumstances, they said, and this just felt like one of those camping trips, just farther away from home.

Before long, I realized that a number of English-speaking Korean Americans, who were members of a traditional Korean performance troupe, were absent from the school. Pastor Kim explained that unlike Koreans, Korean Americans are unable to handle discomfort—this he learned the hard way from previous years, he said. So instead, the Korean Americans were placed at a nearby guest house, where rooms were air conditioned and floors laminated, and instead of washing with cold water collected the night before, they could take warm showers every morning. The guest house was not at the top of the accommodations hierarchy, however. A group of Korean politicians, traveling with wives and personal assistants, stayed at a four-star hotel in downtown Kampala.

Older men

Everything—from room assignments to the daily division of labor—was arranged according to Korean social hierarchy, with age and gender being the two predominant axes of status determination. For example, men over the age of fifty generally were entitled to the best rooms and received the first meals. Almost all men in this age group were also ordained pastors, church elders, or high-ranking politicians from Korea, which further contributed to their elevated in-group status. They led seminars and hobnobbed with local pastors and civic leaders, but did little to no daily chores.

Older women

Women over the age of fifty were deemed frail enough to deserve the second best rooms, but they rarely had a moment of rest. They were invariably assigned to kitchen duties, including planning, cooking and cleaning up after meals. Feeding more than a hundred people three times a day is no

easy task, but it was evident that many of these women had ample firsthand experience doing precisely that. Korean churches typically serve meals after Sunday service, and this age-group of women are typically the ones in charge of the kitchen—at home and church. One deaconess said that she was used to the exhausting work, and simply shrugged, “this is what I’m good at.”¹³⁷

Younger men

Between the men and women under the age of thirty, it is difficult to say who fared better. The very few young men on the mission—there were less than fifteen out of 150—were expected to perform the most physically demanding tasks such as loading and unloading trucks and vans, and transporting everyone’s suitcases from place to place. They were assigned the dirtiest rooms—considered physically and emotionally demanding—and allotted the least amount of time for washing or sleeping. They were in fact expected to perform the most physically demanding tasks and endure the most difficult or uncomfortable physical hardship with the assumption that they were naturally fit and strong. If the Korean men had already completed their mandatory military service, even higher degree of discipline and endurance was expected from them. If they had not yet served in the military, the men were told that discomfort experienced during the mission trip would help them prepare for the kind of hardship and discipline they will experience in the military. In a way, the mission trip offered a preview for the militarized training the men would receive in the military.

Since Korean women do not face mandatory conscription, the military reference applied only to the men. The women’s *lack* of military training, however, was described as a physical and mental deficiency. During an economic development seminar, for instance, the seminar leader called me to the front of the classroom to sing with him. When I expressed some hesitation and confessed to not knowing the lyrics, he laughed and told the seminar participants: “You see, in Korea, men go to the military to learn how to do these things. Women don’t go to the military, so they don’t know how to do *anything*.” He did not necessarily mean to ridicule me, though some of the participants could see that my feelings were hurt. He was simply stating the truth as he saw it.

Younger women

The young women mostly took charge of activities involving children, such as preparing skits, leading Christian song and dance routines, and providing childcare during other programs. This role was also an extension of church duties most familiar to their age-gender group. As Sunday school teachers and volunteers at children’s ministry at their respective churches back home, most young women had plenty of experience in working with children. They considered it most “natural”—one woman even joked that it was perfect training for the future, one that presumably includes marriage and children of her own.

When I asked the young women why there were so few men in their age group on the mission trip, the answers were revealing: “Because men have jobs,” and “Because men have military service to worry about.” Several of the women had actually quit their jobs so they can come on the month-long mission trip, but most shrugged off concerns of their own job prospects. It would not be any worse than before, they said. Time taken off work, in other words, was not seen as particularly detrimental to their already precarious employment. In fact, many of the women were counting on the possibility of using the short-term mission trip to pad their resumes—missions counting as

¹³⁷ Her comment reminded me of a conversation I overheard at a mission conference in Seoul. A distinguished male theologian urged a much older deaconess who expressed some hesitation about participating in a short-term mission trip: “You have a very important role to play on a mission! Haven’t you heard of ‘dishwashing missions’?” She answered, “I guess I hadn’t considered that I would go to a place so far away to do something I’ve done all my life.”

“overseas volunteer work history” and “international travel experience”—and hoped that these factors would help their careers in the future.

For many of them, the mission took place in the significant mid-career drop in Korean women’s labor market participation, known in the sociological literature as the “M Curve,” a pattern particularly prominent in Korea and Japan. Also described as *kyōngnyōk tanchōl* or “career interruption,” the dip in the “M” reveals how pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing have a devastating effect on women’s labor market participation and career trajectories. As can be seen in women’s employment statistics and missionary demographics, women’s participation in overseas missions actually rises as their labor market participation decreases. The precarious employment pervasive among women yields an ironic consequence—relative mobility of under- or unemployed women who are “free” to volunteer their unwaged time and labor as overseas missionaries.

Korean churches have long relied on women who “display an unusual level of intensity in institutional dedication and enthusiasm” (K. Chong 2008, 112), and provide “reliable volunteer labor, ingeniously mobilized through a system of status and rewards issued by the church,” all the while remaining in subordinate positions and lower status (116). Women have become indispensable for overseas missions, especially in proselytizing activities geared towards women and children but also in their reproductive labor in cooking, cleaning, and otherwise caring for other missionaries, especially men who typically resume their patriarchal position in doing absolutely no kitchen or childcare work on the mission trip.

The overnight ferry from Bukoba to Mwanza

The age-gender stratification was likewise evident on an overnight ferry we took across Lake Victoria. We had taken a long bus ride from Kampala, Uganda to cross the border into Tanzania, and after a brief visit with a Korean missionary family in Bukoba, we headed out to the ferry terminal. Once aboard, we realized that GMF coordinators purchased only a limited number of second class cabin tickets for the ferry, and the rest were to travel on the cheapest third class compartment on top deck—with no cabins, no beds, and no seats for the thirteen-hour overnight ride across Lake Victoria. Given the dynamics around housing room assignments, the arrangements on the ferry should not have been surprising. The highest status group of older men immediately claimed the most comfortable cabins in second class, and the group of older women took the next best room. A select number of young women who were considered frail or sickly—either because they had real health concerns or because they were American-born—took turns in sharing the couple of extra beds in the older women’s cabin. Most of the twenty-something Korean men and women spent the entire night on deck, huddling inside a makeshift fortress built with foam mattresses, fighting gusty winds and swarms of mosquitoes and getting hardly a wink of sleep all night. Upon arrival in Mwanza, the young men were summoned to unload everyone’s suitcases, and the older men commended them with promises of a hearty breakfast.

The age-gender power matrix operated with a remarkable level of consensus, enforced by everyone and no one in particular at the same time. Even when someone grumbled with dissatisfaction, it never amounted to a charge of unfairness or a call for equity. One Korean American teenager who spent most of his time with Korean friends expressed some dissatisfaction at how he was treated like a “servant,” but he was resigned to his position in the hierarchy. He sighed, “this is just how Koreans are.”¹³⁸

¹³⁸ He was, incidentally, Pastor Kim’s son.

Korean and Korean American tensions

This is not to say that there was no tension or conflict among the missionaries. There was an ongoing feud, for example, between an immigrant Korean American woman from Los Angeles and a working middle-class deaconess from Seoul. The Korean American woman, a college-educated and English-speaking certified accountant in her early fifties, became widely disliked because she boasted often about her own leadership qualities and business acumen. After she made a van full of passengers turn back and take a thirty-minute detour because she had forgotten to take her daily dose of malaria medicine—“what if I die,” she implored—she became the subject of much ridicule in private. The mild-mannered Korean deaconess was around the same age, and the two women were assigned as co-presenters for a workshop on Christian conflict resolution.

It turned out, however, that the deaconess from Korea spoke no English. Since they had to rely on English-Swahili interpreters to present the workshop, it was deemed impractical for non-English speakers to play a leadership role. Resenting being relegated to the backseat when she was most familiar with the subject, and because she had looked forward to leading at least part of the workshop, the deaconess from Korea accused the Korean American accountant of disrespecting her simply because she did not speak English. They fought openly and loudly over this for several days, and after a particularly raucous shouting match one night and numerous complaints from sleepless roommates, the two women were finally assigned to different workshops.

The conflict between these two women was partly personal, but it also reflected the rift between Korean and Korean American participants. English-speaking Korean Americans consistently served as ad hoc interpreters and public presenters for most mission programs, sidelining Korean mission participants who were far more numerous. Several Korean missionaries reflected during the trip and afterwards that one of the lessons they learned in Africa was the importance of language proficiency for effective cross-cultural communication on the mission field. They did not mean proficiency in Swahili, however. As one young Korean woman put it, “I’ve been told all my life, ‘English, English, English,’ but I never took it seriously. It wasn’t until I was in Africa that I realized, I should really learn English.”

Korean Americans brought English proficiency to the mission trip, as well as an American sensibility of multiculturalism and a liberal critique of racism. The so-called Korean-Black conflict in many of the urban areas in the US has produced a generation of Korean Americans sensitive to the charge of racism against African Americans, and they showed this in the way they monitored and chastised South Koreans for their racism. They frequently confronted Korean missionaries for telling racist jokes—for example about dark-skinned Africans becoming invisible in the dark of the night, and far worse—and often talked about how they detested the racism they saw in immigrant Koreans in the US, including their own parents. In turn, South Korean missionaries rolled their eyes and retorted that they must be more careful of what they say in front of Korean Americans, not Africans.

(Not) Encountering Difference

Leaving the comforts of home can be a scary proposition for some, but the spiritual benefits outweigh the unfamiliar foods and cultural differences. But it is worth every hardship to follow God to the uttermost parts of the world, to serve Him no matter what the difficulties may be.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Excerpt from GMF brochure.

I selected Korean missions to Africa as a case study for this dissertation especially because I wanted to explore how perceptions of racial difference animated the project of Korean-led world missions, particularly in the short-term mission form. Explicit in the organizational name of Global Mission Frontier (GMF) is the colonial notion of “frontier,” and much of GMF’s program literature depicted Africa as the “uttermost end of the earth,” the “dark continent” full of mysterious forces, and a “missionary graveyard” marked with the legacy of missionizing failure. Unlike North Korea or China missions, Africa mission was unequivocally defined as a frontier mission, anticipated as an ultimate encounter with an entirely alien way of life. Exactly what kind of difference did the missionaries imagine, and how did the short-term missions shape their experience of difference?

Could missions be construed as what Mary Louise Pratt defines as “contact zones”—as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (M. Pratt 1992, 4)? Pratt offers this term as an analytic corrective to the idea of a colonial “frontier,” in order to shift the perspectival gaze from the colonizer or the traveling explorer—or missionary—to the power-laden constitution of relational space.

“contact zone” is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects *previously separated* by geographic and historical disjunctions, and whose trajectories *now intersect*. (M. Pratt 1992, 7, my emphasis)

To understand the space of short-term mission encounters as a kind of “contact zone,” one would have to accept that missions constitute an associative project—bringing together what was *previously separated* into proximity with one another. This is precisely the purported intent of missions, as the above excerpt from a GMF publication illustrates. Leaving home and traveling afar are said to involve psychic and physical discomfort, and it is precisely the difficulties of dislocation one encounters on the mission field that promise to yield the most gratifying spiritual rewards.

However, such approach conceptualizes the “encounter” or “contact” as a spatially and temporally bounded occurrence in which “different” subjects, as discrete identities, intersect with and transform one another. I am not suggesting that travel does *not* create proximities or build intimacies. In many cases, it is through local attachments and intimate experiences that one cultivates a sense of belonging and investment in a place, and this is precisely why short-term missions have become so appealing and successful. What I would like to add to this common-sense understanding of travel encounter as constituting a transformative space full of conciliatory relations is that the very ideas of overcoming differences or bridging distances actually legitimate the ontology of pre-existing differences.

Feminist geography’s interventions in theories of embodiment and difference have made critical contribution in this regard. Geraldine Pratt and Susan Hanson emphasize the *processes* through which differences—and I would add, distances—are produced.

Although the world is indeed increasingly well connected, we must hold this in balance with the observation that most people live intensely local lives; their homes, work places, recreation, shopping, friends, and often family are all located within a relatively small orbit. The simple and obvious fact that overcoming distance requires time and money means that the everyday events of daily life are well grounded within a circumscribed arena. (G. Pratt and Hanson 1994, 10-11)

Pratt and Hanson’s discussion of the local and their phrase, “grounded within a circumscribed arena,” perfectly captures the space constituted on the GMF short-term mission trip. Though the stated intent of the mission was about the capable *global* reach of Korean missionary enterprises into the “frontier”

of world evangelization, the GMF mission trip was in actuality circumscribed in such a way that severely limited the participants' local engagements. It was in so many ways an exercise in *not* encountering difference.

Pre-mission (dis)orientation

Prior to the GMF mission trip, prospective missionaries were told that GMF coordinators would take care of all daily travel logistics, and that they should not waste time reading political histories or travel guides about their mission destinations. Instead, they were asked to fortify their spiritual resolve through prayers and ask for God to provide the necessary wisdom and strength. This intentional mode of preparation may be well illustrated in the story of an immigrant Korean woman from Los Angeles who decided to fast for twenty-one days as part of her mission preparation. A believer in ideas of territorial spirits and spiritual warfare, she wanted to shore up her strength to confront any spiritual battles she may encounter on the mission field. She had done her part to arm herself, she said, and she was confident in her readiness. When she arrived in Uganda, however, her sense of preparedness was immediately shattered. She was flabbergasted that Ugandans she met did not speak a word of English. She had no idea that she would encounter non-English speakers.

This may have been an extreme case of ignorance, but it does point to what pre-mission preparations tended to prioritize. Pre-mission orientation meetings did provide basic instructions on local cultural customs, e.g. the importance for women to wear dresses in public, and offered several pages of useful words and phrases in Swahili—such as “Jesus loves you,” and “I am Christian.” We practiced singing Korean hymnals in Swahili, and discussed what people were most worried about: malaria. There were lists of things to bring and not to bring—do bring bags of candies, do not bring laptop computers, do bring gifts, but nothing too valuable. These lists circumscribed the extent to which the short-term missionaries would engage the locality, and that was precisely the intent.

A year after I participated in the GMF summer mission trip, I learned that new items were added to the list of prohibitions: no travel guide books, no books except the Bible, and no cell phones. Travel guide books and cell phones were banned because having them might empower a short-term missionary to stray from the mission itinerary and venture out on her own to investigate her surroundings. This was something I did from time to time on the mission trip—and I did bring a cell phone as a safety measure, which was not prohibited at the time—and I wondered if my actions somehow informed the new policies and altered the shape of future missions.

Short-term missions are derided by critics as “amateurization of missions” or “drive-by missions,” for precisely these reasons—they tend to forego in-depth cultural instructions and discount the need for language training. Long-term missionaries are particularly vocal about the disruptions caused by short-term missions, and criticize them for exhausting fragile networks and exploiting relations cultivated over a long time. One former missionary I interviewed even offered this terse advice: “What can Korean missionaries do to improve their short-term missions? They can stop.”

What I found especially remarkable was the extent to which GMF short-term missions emphasized the value of entering the mission field in blindfolds. Without nuances or complications, the bare act of bearing the Good News was what they perceived to be the value of short-term missions. To know nothing but what they were told, to see nothing but what was shown to them, and to question nothing but what has already been answered—these were the primary mandates of mission practice, requiring from the participants a leap of faith.

Politics of Solidarity and Empathy

For many of the participants in the GMF short-term mission, Africa actually reminded them first and foremost of Korea of their childhood. Rather than feeling out of place in an unfamiliar environment, the missionaries often articulated a sense of solidarity with Africa.

“Just Like Korea”

The following quote is from an immigrant Korean pastor from northern California who had traveled extensively throughout North America and Europe. Speaking of his first experience outside the industrialized world, he said:

Having grown up in a poor country, I thought I knew what it meant to be poor. But I was wrong. The people I met in Africa were far worse off than I was 40 some years ago in Korea. Four words describe what I saw there: dust, lack of water, mosquitoes, and lack of food. Kids can't go to school, husbands don't have jobs, churches have no resources—there is so much hunger for a better life.

Similarly, one elderly South Korean woman tearfully shared during a group conversation in Uganda:

If the Americans hadn't brought the Gospel to Korea and saved us from Communism and poverty, we would still be living like *this*.

By “this,” she was referring to what she perceived to be a life of hardship and suffering, lacking the accoutrement of modern life she has come to enjoy in Korea. GMF's own promotional video began with images and biographical profiles of white American missionaries arriving on Korean shores to save the nation from backwardness and Japanese colonialism, and concluded with the triumphant world-bound departure of Korean missionaries following in the American missionaries' footsteps. Another immigrant Korean pastor urged action based on what he saw in Africa:

Uganda... it looked just like Korea in the late 1950s to early 1960s. Our task is to go to Africa with the Bible and feed the Gospel to the hungry people there. But our most important mission is to instill in that land a desire to plow the land and plant the seeds for a prosperous nation, the way we did through our national modernization movement.

The triumphant success of Korea's “national modernization movement” was the overarching narrative that consistently provided the rationale and the *modus operandi* for Korean-led world missions. Perceiving Korea as having already achieved modernization, the missionaries saw present-day conditions in Uganda as a reminder of what they left behind—not in space, but in time. Many described the trip to Africa as akin to time travel, a chance to remember bittersweet memories of their childhood. “Stripped to nothing here,” one poetic missionary from Korea said, “I remember what it was like to have nothing.”

Most discomfort encountered on the trip was explained away with “This is Africa!” as though the missionaries were simply trying to emulate an authentic day-to-day life experience in Africa. As I will elaborate more later in this chapter, this intentional construction of hardship and the association of this hardship with Africa played a major role in homogenizing “Africa” as a two-dimensional

representation of suffering and deprivation. Instead of producing intimacy with the locality, this affective process of simulation actually had a distancing effect.

One such example was a Korean teenager rehearsing hip hop dance moves for a skit in Kampala. He said to me, “Africa doesn’t feel that different from Korea to me. It feels just like Korea in the 60s.” I could not help but point out that he was not born until the 90s, and asked what he meant by “just like the 60s.” He shrugged, “But the older people tell me what Korea was like. So I figure it used to look like this.” His comment revealed an instructively circular logic—Korea’s past and Africa’s present were not only comparable but mutually constitutive in the missionaries’ eyes. This framework was impressed upon even those who did not experience firsthand Korea’s underdeveloped past.

Better than the “real” *mzungu*

Enacting what I termed “Korean exceptionalism” in Chapter 1, GMF missionaries shrugged off any question of colonial complicity. They insisted that they had nothing to do with colonialism or the imperial legacies of European Christianity, neither in practice nor intent, and expressed in no uncertain terms that the Korean missionary position was fundamentally non-colonial and non-Western. They in fact saw themselves as better suited to proselytize than white Americans and Europeans. Though this was generally a self-serving policy of impunity, there was a grain of truth in the notion of solidarity and empathy at work. It was asserted that Koreans were in a better position for world evangelization because they were different from Europeans and Americans—the former colonial powers who have incurred the wrath of so many in the developing world for their destructive and exploitative policies. “Koreans are not racist like the white Europeans,” a GMF missionary claimed, “You will never see Europeans or Americans getting their hands dirty, working alongside Africans or eating with their hands, or sitting on dirty floors. Koreans don’t mind, and Africans like us better for it.”¹⁴⁰ A Korean American pastor told the following story from Uganda:

We were walking, and these children kept waving their hands and saying to us, “Mzungu! Mzungu!” A local pastor told us that means “white conquerer.” It’s understandable that they might call me “mzungu” since I’m different from them, but it looked like they liked me better than a “white conquerer.” We spent a night with the local church people, eating together and sleeping together. They seemed very surprised, but quite happy about it. I found out later that a real *mzungu* never shares a meal or sleeps in the same room with the locals.

This was a commonly invoked idea on the mission field—that Korean missionaries show humility and solidarity by being more personal and informal with the local people, and that they work harder and tolerate harsher working conditions. This supposedly endeared them to local Africans who have grown accustomed to the more distant and disdainful white Americans and Europeans. I could not find any corroborations for these claims by the missionaries, however. I consider it more likely the case that Korean missionaries considered it humbling to move downwards, towards a position of equality with Africans, and that this was for many of them, a conscious effort to “lower” themselves to the level of people they considered not only different but also inferior.

The extent to which the missionaries conflated present-day Uganda with post-war Korea of fifty years ago spoke volumes about their condescending attitudes towards the “backwardness” of

¹⁴⁰ Although this description is used widely as a common-sense, my research indicates it is a difficult claim to prove or disprove. Suffice it to say that such assertion overgeneralizes inter-group perceptions and inter-racial dynamics, and downplays the hierarchical power relations inherent in any encounter including overseas missions.

Ugandan economy and society. Perceiving themselves as having already *achieved* modernization, something that the Ugandans themselves have apparently failed to do, the missionaries beamed with a sense of pride and superiority. Likewise, the missionaries' prideful attitudes towards their own impressive acts of humility revealed a great deal about how they perceived the order of racial hierarchy to begin with. The idea that Korean missionaries were considered "closer" to Africans only articulated a logic of white supremacy whereby Koreans occupied an intermediate position between white Americans and Europeans above and black Africans below them.

The missionaries also took what they considered to be pitiable conditions of suffering as a grateful reminder for what they enjoyed back home, whether in the United States or South Korea. They talked frequently about responsibility, and about their urgent duty to share their success with the less fortunate. Sharing in this sense is not exactly solidarity. Rather than express horizontal commonality, it stresses the enabling capacity of the privileged. Insofar as the missionaries articulated a position of empathy, however, I do concede that what they felt was nonetheless a kind of connection, located somewhere between sincere and sentimental, somewhere between empathetic and patronizing.

Proselytizing the Korean Model of Development

The missionaries viewed economic development as a progressional process along the lines of Rostovian theories of linear stages of economic growth—each nation starting from the "traditional society" stage to cultivating "preconditions for take-off" in hopes of eventually taking off and continuing to fly (Rostow 1960). The ideology of developmental progress they held out promises poor countries like Uganda that they could "catch up" to higher levels of prosperity and Christianity, like Korea has done, if only they are given the right "pre-conditions for take-off." The missionaries insisted that because Korea had once struggled to take off, Koreans could empathize with the Ugandan struggle for development. Their Rostovian framework portrayed all nations as occupying different points of the same development trajectory. GMF's developmental mission shifted the focus from the racially charged proselytizing missions and gestured towards development as an inherently compassionate and empathetic project. Korean missionaries saw themselves as offering a lifeline to those lagging behind in development, cheerleading them to follow in the footsteps of Korean historical trajectory. They spoke with experiential authority: "If Korea could do it, so can you!" The caveat, however, was that the Ugandans must follow the "Korean model."

In charge of proselytizing the Korean model of development was Deacon Shin, a small businessman and a deacon from a small suburban church in the outskirts of Seoul. Small in stature but authoritative in soldier-like demeanor, Deacon Shin led one of the GMF's flagship programs: the week-long economic development seminar primarily focused on propagating Korea's Saemaul Undong as "the only way to lift Africa out of poverty into the loving arms of God."¹⁴¹

Saemaul Undong as a Christian model of Capitalist development

"...we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.' "
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ This was stated on the very cover of GMF mission's Saemaul Undong program booklet.

¹⁴² All Bible quotations are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise specified.

“We are told we must work and use our talents to create wealth. ‘If a man will not work he shall not eat’ wrote St. Paul to the Thessalonians...”

- Margaret Thatcher, “Sermon on the Mound,” 1988.

“Repeat after me: You don’t work, you don’t eat! No work, no eat!”

- Deacon Shin, Korean missionary in Tanzania, 2006.

Work or else starve—these unkind words were uttered in frustration by the seminar leader, Deacon Shin. He had started the seminar by introducing himself as hailing from the prosperous land of Samsung and LG, but this failed to impress the participants—they had never heard of the corporate brand names. “How about Hyundai?” Deacon Shin asked in disbelief, “you must have seen all the Hyundai advertising during the World Cup games?” Apparently, they had not. Visibly deflated, Deacon Shin explained that these are large, powerful companies from Korea, and that their very success stands as proof for the miracle of Korean economic development. But by the time he explained all this, the intended impact—to wow the seminar participants—was lost. Deacon Shin’s frustration was further compounded by the lackluster performance of the English-Swahili interpreter—a local pastor volunteering for a small stipend—as well as the intermittent power outages that kept disabling the video projector the missionaries brought from Korea. By lunch time on the first day, the Tanzanian participants appeared bored and uninspired, and the Korean missionaries were becoming increasingly flustered.

After lunch, Deacon Shin suddenly instructed everyone to stand up and stretch, and to repeat after him, “You don’t work, you don’t eat!” When some chuckled, he said firmly, “this is in the Bible!” and pointed to the Bible in his hand—and indeed, there it was in the Second Thessalonians in the New Testament: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” He explained that this verse captured the key to Korea’s economic miracle, and rallied the class in fist-pumping chants for several minutes: “No work, no eat! No work, no eat!”

Work or else starve—the unworthy, unproductive subject can expect no handout. In this producerist exaltation of work ethic above all else, virtuous were those who toiled diligently—regardless of whether it involved cultivation of land or wage labor in the service economy. Productivity itself was promoted as worthiness. Conversely, the non-productive subject was deemed unworthy of life itself, deserving of nothing in return for his/her idleness (see Song 2008). This very Bible verse had once been the centerpiece in Margaret Thatcher’s infamous “Sermon on the Mound” delivered during her reign as the British Prime Minister. She had used the very verse as a theological justification for neoliberal capitalism, and extolled the enterprising self and the mandate for individuals to fend for themselves without state aid (Thatcher 1988). Thatcher’s ideas about the virtues of diligence, market transactions, and personal responsibility upheld neoliberalism as the guiding economic doctrine and the prevailing political rationality for years to come (Harvey 2005).¹⁴³

Deacon Shin’s reference, however, was not to Thatcherism. He invoked the Bible verse as part of a distinctly Christianized narrative of Saemaul Undong. Also known as the New Community Movement, Saemaul Undong was officially launched in 1970 as a state-led modernization and rural development effort, and remains a subject hotly contested along ideological lines—was it a ruthless campaign for rural development or a great historical achievement despite some regrettable aspects,

¹⁴³ Assemblies of God, the world’s largest Pentecostal denomination, quotes the same verse and states on their website: “For one who is physically able to work to choose to accept welfare handouts rather than to work seems contrary to the spirit of Scripture.” Assemblies of God. Available from http://www.ag.org/top/Beliefs/charctr_09_work_ethic.cfm. (accessed on June 19, 2008). On Thatcherism, see Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (1988); Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (1978).

such as the brutal political repression? While there is general consensus that Korea's experience of industrialization and modernity was compressed and militarized (Abelmann 2003, Seungsook Moon 2005), and that this resulted in significant sacrifice and suffering, there remains ambivalence regarding how much Park Chung Hee and Saemaul Undong should be credited for Korea's post-1970s economic growth. Much of this ambivalence is based on irreconcilable ideological differences—the conservative-right maintains a claim for the need for a strong autonomous state in development, even if it is an authoritarian state, while those in the liberal-progressive camp insist that democracy and civil liberties not be sacrificed in the name of state projects (Paik 2005).

Moralizing force of Saemaul Undong

It would be a mistake to understand Saemaul Undong and the associated ideas about development simply as a top-down state-led project. As a moral discourse, Saemaul Undong shaped how people interpreted, understood, and engaged in the pursuit of a better life. Saemaul Undong certainly contained moralistic aspects, particularly in its emphasis on work ethic—discipline, productivity, and collective mobilization. It began as primarily a rural development and agricultural modernization plan and shifted to a national mobilization project, broadening its focus from a work-ethic-building movement to a panoptic disciplinary system (S. Han 2004, Davis 2004). In a 1972 speech, Park implored:

By widening the narrow farm roads, we are opening up a spiritual path for unhindered progress of the nation. The Saemaul Undong repudiates the diseases of inertia and indolence bred in the shade of ease and complacency and represents a spiritual revolution to eradicate the evil habits of waste and luxury.¹⁴⁴

Contrary to popular belief, Saemaul Undong did not expire with the installation of civilian government and democratization. It has in fact been corporatized and continues to function as an independent, non-governmental organization. In April 1989, Saemaul Undong Headquarters was renamed the National Council of Saemaul Undong Movement, “in an attempt to emphasize its nature as a private sector-led organization” (The National Council of Saemaul Undong Movement in Korea 1999, 43). Its profile may have diminished significantly in recent years, but the Saemaul Undong organization continues its operation to this day, often collaborating on international development and training programs with non-governmental organizations and government agencies such as the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). It has even found a missionary partner in GMF, and hopes to cooperate with GMF to expand its activities in Africa.

During its heyday, Saemaul Undong anthems blared from public announcement speakers at the crack of dawn, urging citizens to rise early to work and exercise, and mobilized even primary school children to sweep the streets in mandatory “beautification campaigns.” These are common collective memories for anyone who spent time in South Korea in the 1970s and 80s.¹⁴⁵ Saemaul Undong is commonly remembered not as the narrowly defined rural development policies that

¹⁴⁴ Park Chung Hee, Address Commemorating the 11th Anniversary of the May 16 Revolution and the May 16 National Prize Award Ceremony, May 16, 1972, President Park Chung-hee's Collected Speeches, volume 9, page 181. Cited in Sheila Miyoshi Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism* (Armonk, NY and London, England: M. E. Sharpe, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ For instance, since I was born in Seoul in 1972 and grew up during the Park era, my childhood memories are full of national mobilization campaigns such as “Consume Barley Day” and “Eat Potatoes Day,” as well as various “beautification campaigns” involving street sweeping and window washing for primary school children. Deacon Shin knew that I grew up in Korea, so at one point during the seminar, he called me to the front of the seminar to join him in singing the Saemaul Undong anthem. Much to my surprise (and dismay), I found myself able to sing along, remembering after all these years the cheery tune and propagandistic lyric.

ultimately failed, but rather as a driving moral force behind the spectacular economic achievement of the Park era, known for its “authoritarian developmentalism” or “developmental dictatorship” (H. Han 2003, P. Yi 2003).

Remarkably, Deacon Shin cast Saemaul Undong as an offshoot of a relatively little-known Christian initiative called the Canaan Farmer School. He told the origin story this way:

There was an outstanding leader, Park Chung Hee, who became the President [in Korea]. He came from a farming family. He learned from Kim Yong-ki, a Christian leader and a diligent person, who led a movement to awaken the people, who started the Canaan Farmer School. Mr. Kim believed that man comes from the land, and man must learn to till the soil. It's in the New Testament. If you don't want to work, don't eat. That was President Park's inspiration for Saemaul Undong. In the 1960s, President Kennedy also said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.” That's the spirit I respect. I hear many people complain that the government doesn't do enough, that the elders and the politicians don't do enough. But instead of blaming others, you must find a way to help yourself.

The following year in 2007, Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) Radio produced a dramatized account of GMF's work on promulgating Saemaul Undong in Africa. With voice actors playing the roles of Deacon Shin, Pastor Kim and other GMF missionaries, the radio drama was titled, “Saemaul Undong Starts a New Korean Wave in Africa.”¹⁴⁶ In the radio drama, Park Chung Hee is portrayed as passing through the town where Canaan Farmer School was located, and being surprised when he notices from the train a modernized agrarian landscape of orderly roofs. Park tells his assistant to find out the name of the village and to arrange a visit, and that is how the radio script explains the inspirational genesis of Saemaul Undong. In the radio drama, GMF missionaries were portrayed as upgrading Ugandan kitchens and mobilizing neighborhood cleanup campaigns, achieving instant results in improved conditions and changed outlooks. It even featured a Ugandan character—played by a Korean voice actor feigning a “Ugandan accent”—who conveys a heartfelt thank you in broken Korean to the GMF missionaries for bringing Saemaul Undong to Africa.

In both the fictionalized radio drama and Deacon's Shin's narrative in Tanzania, the Canaan Farmers School and its founder Kim Yong-ki were highlighted to such an extent that Kim nearly became synonymous with President Park Chung Hee himself. In other words, Saemaul Undong was presented as a *Christian* endeavor, and President Park was portrayed as a *Christian* farmer-cum-national leader. At no point was there any mention that Park in fact was not a Christian himself, that he was actually accused of promoting policies that favored Buddhists, or that he was a repressive dictator who came to power through a military coup and deposed by assassination in 1979. No matter—these were considered inconsequential details. What mattered was that South Korea was presented as a model of development, and the Korean missionaries were de facto development experts. The spiritual impetus for Korea's development success was legitimized and presented through their distinctly Christian lens.

Not only did this dramatized account stress the agrarian roots of Park Chung Hee, but it also legitimated Park's authoritarian rule (1963-1979) as “outstanding leadership,” as can be seen by Deacon Shin's statement above. He even included US President John F. Kennedy—ostensibly an

¹⁴⁶ KBS, “Saemaül Undong, sin hallyu-rül irük'ida,” as part of Inmul-kwa Sakön [People and Incidents] series, broadcast on March 11, 2007. Audio file available online at <http://www.kbs.co.kr>. The “Korean Wave” refers to *hallyu*, or the cross-national flows of Korean popular cultural products. A distinctly East Asian regional phenomenon, *hallyu* typically includes television drama, film, and music, but as in this case of Saemaul Undong, some use the term to refer more widely to include anything from Korea that enjoys popularity abroad.

“outstanding leader” himself—in this hodgepodge of a political-theological discourse in which Park’s disciplinary state, Kennedy’s call for public service, and Kim Yong-ki’s rural renewal program all became blended within a transnational, transhistorical Christian ethics of diligence, personal responsibility, and strong leadership.¹⁴⁷ Whether through military dictatorship, democratic presidency, or spiritual leadership, the three capable men in Deacon Shin’s narrative were seen as simply and virtuously leading the path to prosperity.

But who was Kim Yong-ki, and how many scholars of Saemaul Undong have heard of the Canaan Farmer School? The fact is, the Canaan Farmers School is a relatively obscure agricultural training institute and an agrarian cooperative founded in 1962 (Y.-k. Kim 1984). Although it claims to have been the inspiration behind Park’s Saemaul Undong and a continuing “spiritual locomotive” behind Korea’s development, Canaan Farmers School is not recognized in the scholarly literature as having had any significant influence.¹⁴⁸ There have been discussions of Christian influences on Park Chung Hee, especially concerning his speeches in which he spoke frequently about “spiritual revolutions” and “spiritual awakenings,” but it remains unlikely that Park’s comments were ever self-consciously religious or influenced at all by Christian theology.

Lessons from The Canaan Farmers School

Deacon Shin snickered during the seminar, “Unlike in Africa, we have a very cold winter in Korea. We have no food growing outside. No bananas, no pineapples on the street.” The suggestion that Africans are stricken with laziness because of an abundance of “naturally” growing food supply—pineapples growing by the roadside, for instance—was patently false and undeniably racist. But this offered an effective contrast for another popular claim—that Koreans have had to work very hard to cultivate their “human resources” because Korea lacks the abundant “natural resources” with which Africa is endowed.

One day, a group of high-ranking politicians from Korea were invited by a Ugandan member of the National Assembly on a tour of Jinja and the famed source of the River Nile. A former official in the Korean Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries marveled at the volume of the River Nile, and exclaimed, “All this water! Only if they would build dams and do *something* with it!” He had done no research on the local hydroelectric infrastructure and knew nothing about the current status of water resource development, but this being Africa, he assumed that the local people would have neither the initiative nor the capacity to utilize their God-given natural endowments. In other words, undeveloped natural resources were often linked to uncultivated human capacity.

But how then to inspire work ethic or diligence if survival were not at stake—if one could just eat bananas growing outside? If one could eat without working? GMF missionaries prepared a curriculum featuring a document called “Handbook of the Canaan Farmers School” and stated prominently on the cover: “Our vision is to eradicate poverty in all [sic] Africa by the year 2050 through sharing the Christian spirit and technological and agricultural techniques originating from the Canaan concept.” The subsequent pages provided a brief history of Canaan Farmers School,

¹⁴⁷ According to Bamyeh, “Ask not what your country can do for you, not just because it is unbecoming of the definition of citizenship to do so. In an age doubly haunted by globalization and budget deficits, with each of the two monsters demanding the sacrifice of the other, your country has made its choice: it decided that it can do nothing for you.” Mohammed A. Bamyeh, “The New Imperialism: Six Theses,” *Social Text* 18, no. 1 (2000).

¹⁴⁸ There is no mention of Canaan Farmer School or Kim Yong-ki in Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); ———, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, Updated ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Jager, *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism*; Carter J. Eckert and Ki-baek Yi, *Korea, Old and New: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

describing its purpose as “[serving] as a training ground for molding proper character” and “[heightening] the nation’s self-reliance.”

In a section titled “Detailed Guidelines of the Blessed People,” a list of 59 items provides detailed instructions covering “daily life of faith,” “economical life,” “social life,” and “family life.” Deacon Shin read aloud every single item on the lists and took nearly two hours to review and discuss the entire list. He did not see these lessons as samples to be adapted to local settings—they were presented as commandments from Korean history. As in other faith-based development efforts, the lessons were clearly inspired by Christian conceptions of virtue that conjoin worldly and spiritual aims of life, governing the most mundane endeavors (Bornstein 2003, Rist 1997). Here are a few items excerpted from the lists in the Handbook¹⁴⁹:

Economical Life

Use domestic products.
Don’t waste toothpaste.
Don’t waste soap.
Don’t eat snacks between meals.
Don’t visit coffee shops and tea houses too often.

Social Life

Don’t cut in line when waiting.
Don’t eat while walking.

Family Life

Rise early and go to sleep early.
No divorce without church’s approval.
Work at least four hours before each meal.
Fighting poverty ensures victory over Communism.
No one likes misery and pain, but it must be understood that one who experiences misery and pain most likely invited these to oneself.

This eclectic mix of instructions actually make some sense in the context of Korean history. “Use domestic products”: Directed consumption of domestic products was reflective of the Korean state’s protectionist policies in the 1960s and 1970s. “Don’t visit coffee shops and tea houses too often”: Under military dictatorship, coffee shops used to be among the few spaces where the dissident and the discontented could gather in spite of laws prohibiting public assembly, so the warning against frequent visits to coffee shops imply a dual directive—fiscal austerity and acquiescence to authority. “Don’t waste toothpaste”: In promoting frugality in matters national and personal, waste of any kind was discouraged, even something as trivial as toothpaste or soap. “Fighting poverty ensures victory over Communism”: Anti-Communism was practically a state religion in the decades following the Korea War, and economic development was understood as a matter of national security. South and North Korea raced against each other in their pursuit for economic growth.

Lost in translation

The missionaries failed to account for the historical and political context of the mission as well as the specific context of the Canaan Farmers School curriculum. These outdated and culturally-

¹⁴⁹ In a later section titled “Living Constitution for the People of Canaan,” more lists aim to govern people’s conduct, character, and self-realization.

specific lessons from the 1970s Korea did not translate at all in Tanzania in 2006. The puzzled participants repeatedly asked for clarifications: why are coffee shops worse than pubs? Why are snacks bad, and what if one became hungry between meals? And how much exactly constituted too much toothpaste? Deacon Shin and his assistant instructor soon became overwhelmed by the barrage of questions, and told the participants to try to interpret the lessons according to their local context. The seminar participants continued to complain that the lessons were inapplicable to their historical and cultural context, and lacked the kind of practical specificity that could be useful.

Perhaps the most telling moment of the mission's dissonance took place on the second day of the seminar. A buffet lunch consisting of curried goat and fried tilapia was served with the ubiquitous lukewarm bottles of orange sodas, and as the participants sat down to eat, Deacon Shin approached a small group. "How do you like the seminar so far?" he asked, and several participants nodded respectfully. But one man, who I later found out was a local government official with an advanced degree in soil sciences, asked Deacon Shin, "But I have a question. Are you from North Korea or South Korea?"

In the mid-1970s, North Korea had supplied modest amounts of military equipment and training to several African nations including Tanzania and Uganda, and North Korea's foreign political and economic initiatives among the Nonaligned nations had made North Korea, not South Korea, a more recognizable presence in Tanzania. In other words, the Tanzanians knew of North Korean leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il even though they have never heard of South Korean corporate success stories of LG or Samsung. Deacon Shin did not know this. To a South Korean missionary who is as fervently anti-North Korea as he is devoutly Christian, nothing could have more appalling than the possibility that anyone might attribute the triumphant economic advancement of capitalist South Korea to the famine-stricken, Communist North Korea. He blushed visibly and pointedly emphasized *South* Korea during the rest of the seminar.¹⁵⁰ Deacon Shin later told others that Tanzanians were so misled by their socialist history and so uneducated about the world that they did not even know the difference between North and South Korea.

Prosperity gospel and a theology of winners

Generally speaking, proselytizing overseas missions and foreign development aid share certain similarities: caring strangers with good intentions, perceived need and promise of relief, and arrival of goods and personnel with hopeful but uncertain outcome. GMF missionaries relied heavily on what is known as the "prosperity gospel," a theology that holds that material prosperity is evidence for God's favor, either preordained or earned. But particularly noticeable here was the fact that the prosperity gospel also operated on a national unit of scale, in which the wealth of nations—not individual persons or families—was determined by the degree of the *nation's* devotion to the Christian faith. Despite the fact that "Africa" is a continent of fifty-three countries, each with its particular socio-political dynamics and historical experiences, "Africa" was frequently seen as parallel unit of comparison to "Korea." South Korea's wealth, in other words, was seen as evidence for God's favor, while "African" poverty was interpreted as a result of insufficient Christian faith. Tyranny and political uncertainty, persistent poverty, the AIDS pandemic, and the perceived threat of

¹⁵⁰ The failures of Korean missionaries in Africa extend beyond language barriers or cultural misunderstandings. A recent op-ed pointedly criticized the Korean ambition to export Saemaul Undong at all cost, partly because "African politics has moved beyond ideological fascination and sloganeering," and ultimately, that is all there is in efforts to "export" Saemaul Undong. The author, an African economies researcher, argued that "Saemaul Undong works best under a wave of strong political mobilization by a political leader who galvanizes a whole country behind one central cause," i.e. an undemocratic dictatorship. Munyi, E.N. (2008) 'Exporting 'Saemaul' Movement'. *The Korea Times*. Seoul.

Islam's southward movement on the African continent were all understood as "signs that Christianity had not taken hold of the souls of African people."¹⁵¹

In the case of evangelical missions that embrace the neoliberal ethos—and Korean missionaries are not alone or unique by any means—the developmentalist ethos fundamentally relies on a "theology of winners"—one that presumes development as a necessary win, an indisputable improvement from being poor to being prosperous (Pask 2006). Korean mission theology practiced on the GMF mission trip certainly resonated with the neoliberal exhortation of market participation, self-reliance, and personal responsibility. But it also drew strength from an unexpected, homegrown genealogy: authoritarian-era Saemaul Undong. This seemingly paradoxical theology juggles the tenets of neoliberalism, according to which the state is supposed to recede behind market forces, with the history of authoritarian state-led development experience. In other words, the assemblage of neoliberal capitalism and the Protestant ethos of perpetual self-improvement was articulated with a distinctly Korean model of authoritarian developmentalism.

What explains this political-theological co-operation? How is it that the Korean developmental state, epitomized by state-led programs like Saemaul Undong could outgrow its mandate for rural development and national mobilization and reinvent itself as a relevant model for the neoliberal world order today? One way I venture to answer this is to say that contemporary missions depend on the pastoral and custodial power of capitalist development, whereby the missionaries not only convert but educate, discipline, and reproduce governable subjects suitable for wage labor in God's Kingdom. Offered by Koreans to the developing world as a blueprint for both economic and spiritual progress, the "gospel of capitalist deliverance" is a powerful political theology produced through a complex of mutually reinforcing beliefs—comprised of selective elements of modern Korean history and geography, reverberated through the prevailing political rationality of neoliberalism. Consider the oft-cited definition of neoliberalism—as a theory that privileges market exchange as "an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs" (Treanor 2005). As such, I understand neoliberalism not as an abstraction but also a set of practices and ethics invigorated by experience and faith. Devotees of neoliberal capitalism and evangelical Christianity sustain and reproduce their faith by engaging in practices that constantly fortify their disposition. Overseas proselytizing missions are one such practice, effectively nurturing and structuring both intent and outcome through embodied praxis.

In many ways, Korean missionaries are precisely the contemporary heirs to that legacy. They have transfigured their historical experience into a homegrown political theology of development worthy of worldwide attention and devotion. They remain ensconced in the virtue of their faith and practice, affirmed by their own experience. Their self-confident testimonies reveal a paradoxical convergence of Korean exceptionalism and the universalizing teleology of market triumphalism, a curious mix of "we have done it" pride and "anyone can do it" cheery optimism. But the continual reproduction of this ideology relies on an audience to preach to, preferably with less successful development experience in contrast to Korea. Furthermore, because the missionaries claimed experiential authority in terms of collective, not individual, experiences of development, they elevated all Koreans to be potential development experts and educators. When they proclaimed their purpose to teach Africans the merits of Korean economic development model, in other words, they implicitly authorized all Koreans to the status of expert instructors on matters of development.

¹⁵¹ Anonymous interview in San Jose, California on September 2, 2005. He quoted from *Operation World* (2001) which states, "Pray for mobilization of churches to tackle the causes and effects of AIDS. They alone have the belief system, moral authority and local presence to be effective in ministries of prevention and care. Pray that out of this tragedy may emerge a more effective, caring, relevant, attractive Church in Africa" (23).

Missions as Affective Encounters

Even dogs and pigs love and feed and raise their own offspring. If human beings only cared about their own and not others, how would we be any different from dogs and pigs? If we have enough to eat, shouldn't we do something for others? (Korean missionary from Kazakhstan, 2006)

You don't really understand until you see it with your own eyes. To see how they live, and to remember that we used to live like them, that's what I felt and learned on the short-term mission. (Korean missionary, 2006)

It was during my congregational ethnographic research at KEC in California (Chapter 4) that I began surveying local Christian newspapers and magazines published in Korean, and my interest was piqued by advertisements from a local mission agency recruiting participants for its upcoming summer mission. One Sunday, a junior pastor at KEC told this story as part of his sermon to a group of Korean American teenagers.

I met this missionary once, Mr. Kim, and he said that he was struggling a lot with his faith. He had been working as a missionary for many, many years but was beginning to doubt whether he was making any difference. One day, as he was on a mission trip in Africa, he saw all these kids chasing after the truck that he was riding in. It was just like the Korean War, Mr. Kim told me, and everybody in his generation all have memories of running after American soldiers for candy bars, for chocolate, for any freebies, or just for fun. These African kids were running after his truck, and when they stopped, a little boy came up to his window and reached out his hand. Except he didn't have a hand—he stuck out his amputated arm as if there was a hand attached to it. To see this African boy, living without an arm, made Mr. Kim feel the grace of God again, and he re-encountered Jesus at that moment. The point is, you never know when God will reach out to you.

The passage above draws a parallel between Korean kids running after American soldiers and African kids running after Korean missionaries. Similar images of Third World children (or women) chasing after humanitarian workers or foreign soldiers for a handout are well-circulated in popular imagination. Common in these representations is the figure of the foreigner as someone who is privileged with mobility, with the capacity and agency to be compassionate upon meeting the children's eyes. For one example among many others, a scene from the 1999 film *Three Kings* comes to mind.¹⁵² Taking place during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the film tries to complicate representations of Arabs and offers multiple spectator positions. But by the end, it ultimately reinscribes neocolonial politics of identification with the American hero—albeit a kind of anti-hero in the form of George Clooney—who intervenes in the affairs of colonized nations to solve the problem and rescue the refugees. Similar to the story above of the Korean missionary who encounters an African boy with a phantom limb, the American protagonist in *Three Kings* is redeemed through an ethical encounter with a pitiable Other who elicits his compassion.

A similar scene, this one more directly related to the context of Korean-led world missions, appears in the 1992 Korean film, *White Badge*, which tells the story of South Korean veterans of the

¹⁵² *Three Kings* (1999) is a remake of a World War II film, *Kelly's Heroes* (1970), which starred the quintessential American hero Clint Eastwood as the leader of a group of U.S. soldiers in France who steal a stash of Nazi gold.

Vietnam War.¹⁵³ The film is told through extensive flashbacks, and several flashbacks within flashbacks, as the veterans grapple with the memories of unspeakable violence and unshakable guilt. Narrative flashbacks disrupt a chronological sequence of events. By situating memories out of sequential order, flashbacks present the past and present events as contemporaneous and interrelated. In one particularly memorable scene in what is otherwise a violent and difficult film to watch, the protagonist in *White Badge* encounters a young boy in Vietnam, and has a flashback to his own childhood interactions with American soldiers during the Korean War. He sees himself in the young Vietnamese boy, and with his past rushing into the present, the Korean soldier becomes emotionally attached to Vietnam. The association is nostalgic in the way that childhood memories are bound to be, but the flashback is also meant to underscore the parallel similarities between the Korean War and the Vietnam War, especially concerning the politics of foreign occupation forces. The film—and the novel on which the film is based—compares Korean “national mercenaries” in a war not of their own to American soldiers in the Korean War, also not of their own.¹⁵⁴

Returning to the GMF mission field: a missionary named Sunja, a poet and essayist who later published a book of stories based on her experiences in Africa, told a story about a flashback of her own. With a small group of other missionaries in Uganda, she was tossing cheap toys and plastic sandals from the back of a van to the children running after them. As they would drive from neighborhood to neighborhood, Sunja thought it was fun to distribute shoes and other things the children might need, and enjoyed seeing the children’s happy faces. But suddenly, out of the blue, Sunja was overcome with memories of her childhood best friend, Misun. Growing up in poverty, the two girls used to run after American soldiers for chocolate. As they ran after a truck one day, Misun was accidentally hit in the face by an object tossed for her by an American soldier. Was it a shirt or something else, she could not remember, but whatever it was scarred Misun’s face, and it scarred her emotionally. As a result of this incident, Sunja’s friend Misun feels ashamed for having begged, and harbors to this day an intense hatred of American soldiers. Overwhelmed with this sudden flash of memory, Sunja became panic-stricken that the Ugandan children may similarly get hurt by the sandals she was tossing from the truck. And she worried that if something like that were to happen, the children would hate Korean missionaries for the rest of their lives like her friend hates American soldiers. Sunja yelled at the driver to stop the van, and yelled at everyone: “Stop throwing! Please stop throwing!”

But Sunja did not call for the gifting to stop. Sunja did not interpret what she was doing as an exercise of privilege and power. She simply regretted the unfortunate method in which the gifts were being given and wanted to alter the mechanics of the practice to avoid unintended consequences. She wrote:

I thought to myself, when we try to help people, we must respect their dignity. The invisible heart [intention] is far more precious than tangible objects. If only the American soldier had treated Misun a bit more carefully that day, she would not be still suffering... Instead of being filled with hatred, Misun might be trying to repay

¹⁵³ South Koreans were the largest foreign military force in Vietnam, second only to the Americans. See Charles K. Armstrong, “America’s Korea, Korea’s Vietnam,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (2001). For South Korean state’s political and economic interests in fighting in the Vietnam War, and the tremendous impact of the War on Korea’s economic development, see John Lie, *Han Unbound: The Political Economy of South Korea* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). For an incisive discussion of the sexualized violence committed by the Korean troops and the Vietnam War occasioned Korea’s emergence as a subimperial nation, see Jin-kyung Lee, “Surrogate Military, Subimperialism, and Masculinity: South Korea in the Vietnam War, 1965-73,” *positions* 17, no. 3 (2009).

¹⁵⁴ “National mercenary” is a term used by An Chŏng-hyo, the author of *White Badge*, which was originally published in Korean as *Hayan Chŏnjaeng* or “white war.” Chŏng-hyo An, *White Badge* (New York: Soho, 1989).

the debt of that soldier's gift by helping others [like I am]. But sadly, Misun's heart is filled with anger and hatred—towards US soldiers, the rich, and the world at large.¹⁵⁵

In other words, Sunja had no qualms with missionaries tossing gifts to African children running after them. She just wanted the things to be tossed more gently and more carefully.¹⁵⁶

It is significant that these poignant remembrances took place in sudden, emotional flashbacks. As an unexpected, involuntary resurfacing of the past, triggered through a particular engagement with the present, these flashbacks provided the missionaries contra-sequential access to the coordinates of Korea's past and a sense of distance traveled since. Africa as a mission site was instrumental precisely because it produced an emotional, nostalgic connection, or what might be called a "defining orientation" (Sedgwick 2003, 19) to Korea's imagined past. As it has been argued, "an emotional subject offers an intersubjective means to negotiating our place in the world, co-produced in cultural discourses of emotion as well as through psycho-social narratives" (Thien 2005, 453). Personal interpretations of the past not only explained how the missionaries arrived at the place they occupied, but also shaped how they experienced their immediate location. The emotional geographies of short-term missionaries reveal how the relational distance between Korea and Africa was rendered through an emotional language of intertwined past and present, producing the missionary as a compassionate figure of experiential authority.

Constructing missionary subjectivity

An account of GMF mission experiences would be incomplete without some of the stories of the younger participants. If missionaries like Sunja, Deacon Shin, and Pastor Kim primarily experienced the mission trip in ways that their historical autobiographies—homogenized and normalized—were overlaid onto the present, the "postdevelopment" generation had meaningfully different intentions and orientations.

After the treacherous ferry ride from Bukoba to Mwanza, approximately twenty missionaries staying at the GMF-run mission center—a large house, really—decided to sit together and talk about what they hoped to get out of their trip. It was a cross-generational meeting with staff and volunteers, men and women. For the most part, the older participants described their intent in broad and remarkably standardized strokes. Their stories often began with overcoming some sort of hardship or suffering, whether financial or personal, continued with either a born-again moment or a sign from God, and ended with an expression of commitment to mission service derived from a sense of achievement and gratitude for it. Such narrative structure also reflected the age of the speakers. Sunja's story was typical in this sense. Her business was thriving and her children just went off to college, so she now had the chance to do what she always wanted—to help the less fortunate.

¹⁵⁵ To me, her friend Misun sounded like someone who became critical and politically conscious through a transformative personal experience. Sunja pitied her for being filled with anger and hatred, but I smiled thinking that Misun sounds like she might have turned out to be a social activist. After all, being negative is often an euphemism for being critical.

¹⁵⁶ During the GMF mission trip, I had an occasion to meet with a non-GMF Korean missionary who had been living in Kampala for several years as the regional director of an international religious NGO with a markedly different mission theology. His group's orientation materials for staff, volunteers, and visitors included a "don't/what not to bring" list that differed significantly from GMF's. For instance, this other group told participants not to bring gifts, toys, clothing or other items to give away because they will only cause jealousy and divisions in the community, and because they did not want the local people to start expecting and relying on free giveaways without developing their own capacity. The director of this other NGO stated explicitly that giving things away to the people and the community can cripple the work that they were trying to do. He laughed out loud when I told him that GMF missionaries were teaching Saemaul Undong seminars.

The younger participants, however, revealed a greater inclination towards mission as a structure of self-discovery and self-discipline. Suah, in her early twenties and wearing a Sex Pistols t-shirt, came from a city in the southern region in South Korea. She told the group that she spent the last few years hanging out with the wrong crowd—“the theater crowd, you know,” she said wryly, to which there was a collective “Ah!” and many shook their the head in disapproval with a knowing look. There was a lot of drinking, Suah confessed, and a lot of other things left to the imagination, and Suah knew she was lost but did not want to be found. Recently, her parents faced catastrophic financial loss, and her middle-class family had to downgrade to a much more modest quality of life. It was humiliating, she said, and it was devastating to see her parents suffer. Suah blamed herself. She blamed her lack of faith and misbehavior for her parents’ misfortunes. God was punishing her guiltless, hardworking parents for something she did. One day, when she was browsing the web and came across a description of GMF’s Africa mission, and it immediately appealed to her. She maxed out her credit cards and paid for the mission trip. The mission was about penitence for Suah, a step in her own self-rehabilitation plan. She would lower herself to nothing so that she can start a new life when she returned. Africa as a place of possibility for bare-life fresh start was a common trope in the missionary narratives.

Another young Korean woman, Jiwon, had spent the last two years caring full-time for her terminally ill father. When he was diagnosed, she was about to leave for Europe to study musical composition on a prestigious full scholarship. Now, with her studies on indefinite hold and her mother struggling alone to make ends meet, Jiwon spent all her time accompanying her father to hospital visits and taking care of household work. Another woman who knew Jiwon from Korea added, with tears, that they attend the same church and everyone in the congregation has been praying for Jiwon’s family. A couple of months before the start of the GMF mission trip, Jiwon’s mother suggested that she take a break from the constant cloud of dread and sadness at home, and go somewhere far away to take her mind off things. The mission trip for Jiwon was about a temporary break from the misery of everyday life. Soft-spoken and serious in her demeanor, Jiwon told the group in earnestness that seeing firsthand how much suffering there is in Africa, she felt stronger about returning home to face the inevitable—her father’s imminent death.

Lastly, there was a vivacious social worker named Kiyon who was a year younger than me, thus the second-oldest among the younger generation of women. She had aspirations to become a long-term missionary, and was one of the very few people who actually memorized a few phrases and songs in Swahili before the mission trip. She volunteered for tasks no one else wanted to do, went out of her way to make conversation with people she encountered, and she was brilliant with children—energetic, funny, and dedicated. She surprised us with her story. Kiyon lost both of her parents in a car accident when she was only two years old, and not having any extended family who could take her in, she grew up in an orphanage. Her childhood memories included the countless time she got dressed up and tried to endear herself to prospective parents. There were also times when she had to say good-bye to her best friend who left with new adoptive parents who Kiyon had tried desperately to impress the day before. She explained that growing up in orphanage has conditioned her to act sociable and energetic at all times, and even though her social skills have served her well, she was not sure that this was her natural disposition. One of her fondest memories growing up was when white American visitors came. A group of volunteers from one of the American military bases nearby visited the children regularly with gifts and affection, and Kiyon recalled vividly how excited she was to see them, how happy she was to get a piece of candy from them. The sound of candy wrappers, she said, still makes her smile.

She became a social worker and a residential staff at an orphanage, and though she found the work gratifying, she was ready for change. She laughed that she has never lived anywhere but at an orphanage. When Kiyon’s pastor suggested the GMF summer mission trip, she was especially thrilled at the chance to work with orphans in Africa because, as she said, she knew firsthand how a

loving visitor from afar—like herself and the American soldiers from her childhood—can bring so much happiness to kids who are starved for affection.

Not everyone joined mission trips voluntarily or half as enthusiastically as Kiwon, however. Some were sent by their parents who hoped for a version of “boot camp,” so that the kids would learn a few hard lessons and return home with humility and appreciation. The year before I went on the mission trip, I heard a post-mission testimonial given by a Korean American high school student from California. She admitted she was in a bad way, and was smoking marijuana all the time. She made a deal with her parents to go on the GMF mission trip. They promised her a car once she completed the mission and returned home. By the time I heard her tearful testimonial back in California, she was attesting to the success of her parents’ plan. She may have been resistant at first, but now she was born again and not doing drugs, and this was all because she went to Africa and realized what a spoiled brat she had been all her life. She apologized to her parents, and thanked them for forcing her to go on a life-changing trip.¹⁵⁷

Admittedly, none of these stories deal directly with explicitly religious reasons for participating in a short-term mission. Many missionaries do describe some form of missionary calling. Nonetheless, I found just as many missionaries who came on the mission trip in order to *find* their calling. In other words, overseas short-term missions were not an exclusive arena for the most devout and faithful evangelicals. They were in actuality an instrument to recruit and shape missionary subjectivities.¹⁵⁸ This view of subjectivity is confirmed by feminist theorists like Teresa de Lauretis who writes:

Subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction—which I call experience; and thus it is produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one’s personal, subjective engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world. (1984, 159)

I understand the concept of subjectivity as the way a person relates to his or her social environment and to the world at large. It is not a fixed quality or orientation, but an ongoing construction. Similarly, to paraphrase Sara Ahmed, the missionaries were “orientated” in ways that not only shaped how they inhabited space, but also how they apprehended “this world of shared inhabitance” (Ahmed 2006, 3).

I contend that missions are by definition purpose-driven and deliberative, simultaneously a world-making and subject-making projects. Short-term mission trips like the GMF summer mission trip discussed in this chapter rely on a confluence of spatial dynamics that promote in-group solidarity while producing epistemic distance from their immediate surroundings. The affective dimensions of travel and mission encounter reveal a range of personal investments and expectations,

¹⁵⁷ The GMF staff remembered her a little bit differently. One staff told me that this girl was very resistant at first and also incredibly resourceful—she had somehow managed to obtain marijuana within a couple of days after arriving in Uganda, and stirred trouble by enticing a couple of other kids to smoke with her. She did eventually have a change of heart during the trip, and later apologized to everyone for having caused so much trouble.

¹⁵⁸ One such example was Shim Seung-min, the second hostage killed in Afghanistan in 2007. Having grown up in a family of generations of devoted Buddhists, Shim had very recently converted to Christianity—so recently and so secretly that his father had no idea of his son’s new faith or even that he was in Afghanistan as a Christian missionary until Shim was taken as a hostage. His parents were seen with other hostage family members during the first 2 weeks of the crisis, but after their son was killed, they withdrew from the public eye. His father later accused the church of deceiving his son into joining the mission under false pretenses and blamed the church for his son’s death. It was last reported that he was preparing to file a lawsuit against the church for fraud and negligence.

a diversity of subject positions that become consolidated and homogenized through the narrative structure of the mission. The mission is a performative space. The following passage by Judith Butler on performativity captures the essence of short-term missions as “a process of iterability”:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (Butler 1993, 95)

Short-term missions, in this sense, are not simply performed by missionaries. The regularized and constrained repetition of norms inherent in the (missionary) process of iterability is what constitutes the temporal and spatial condition for the (missionary) subject. Missions produce missionary subjectivities, and I concur with Butler in insisting that what they will become remains indeterminate.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

When the missionary hostage crisis took place in 2007, this dissertation project was already well under way. Because I had become acquainted with other mission projects that in many ways resembled the ill-fated Afghanistan mission, the dramatic incident appeared neither surprising nor puzzling. What in the world were they doing in Afghanistan, curious friends and colleagues would ask me in disbelief, and I had several answers at my disposal. The fact that the missionaries were predominantly female in their twenties and thirties confirmed an analysis I was developing on the interrelated dynamics between women's precarious employment at home and their voluntary reproductive labor on overseas missions. That the short-term missionaries sought to do "volunteer work" in Afghanistan with no language proficiency and little cultural competency reminded me of the GMF short-term mission trip to Uganda and Tanzania, where the participants were so sheltered by the structure of the mission trip that they rarely interacted or communicated in a meaningful way with the majority of the people they went to "serve." That the families and fellow church members of the Afghanistan mission team insisted on using terms like "humanitarian worker" and "church volunteer" to refer to the missionary hostages illustrated the claim that humanitarianism and volunteerism were virtuous endeavors uncorrupted by charges of imperialist domination.¹⁵⁹ The fact that the missionaries selected US-occupied Afghanistan as their destination supported my arguments concerning evangelical geopolitics, and demonstrated how Korean-led world missions were enmeshed in conservative Korean Christianity's alliance with American global hegemony.

What I have come to realize is that these answers were the easier ones. Unpacking and identifying the theological and political ideologies that animate the project of world evangelization can be done rather straightforwardly by tracing rhetorical strategies and narrating a history of ideas, or putting forth a structural analysis of how those ideologies are produced and institutionalized in practice. This is what the first two chapters of this dissertation have focused on. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the emergence of Korean-led world missions is tied inextricably to the affinities and alliances between Korea and the US. Conservative Korean Christians' eagerness to stand second in command to the US—literally in terms of the operational control of the Korean military and theologically in terms of Korea being second to the US in mission-sending—signal in one sense a manifestation of subimperial ambitions. Mission leaders like Paul Choi who posited the idea of a "new world order" with Korean Christians inheriting the managerial role of "global Christian leadership" from the US exemplify this theological-political position.

Through evangelical strategies like the 10/40 Window and the rhetoric of unreached people groups, as I discussed in Chapter 3, evangelical-humanitarian missions are orientated to targets like Afghanistan, described as one of the "least reached countries in the world" in *Operation World*, the evangelical equivalent to *CIA World Factbook*. It also portrays Afghanistan as "an open, festering wound that is poisoning the world," verified by the fact that "there are 48,000 mosques but not a single church building" (Johnstone, et al. 2001, 62). The Korean missionaries were trying to "heal" this wound by asserting a strategy of *evangelism through mere presence*, to be distinguished from conspicuous acts of proselytization. This was made evident in one of the most controversial evidences of the Korean missionaries' proselytizing intent in Afghanistan. One of the women taken hostage had previously participated in a mission trip to Afghanistan, and a photo essay surfaced showing her among a group of guitar-toting Koreans, praying and singing Christian hymnals inside an empty mosque. She boasted that thanks to the cover of the burka, she was able to pray, from

¹⁵⁹ In the pageant of euphemisms, the Christian Council of Korea (CCK) takes the crown. After the hostages were released, CCK issued a statement suggesting that churches and mission agencies nationwide rename their "short-term missions" as "international cultural exploration" (*munhwa t'amsa*), or "vision trip."

inside the mosque, for the salvation of Muslims in Afghanistan. The self-pleased manner in which she described deceiving and betraying the trust of the their Muslim hosts as well as the touristy presentation of the photos outraged even those who wished for the hostages' safe return. If Korean missionaries were carrying out a new evangelical ethics of alterity that ostensibly emphasizes humanitarian aid as the preferred mode of missionary encounter, the photo essay revealed that humanitarianism was no less a cover than the burka the missionaries wore to conceal their evangelical intention.

What remains more difficult to answer, however, are questions concerning the actual and embodied experience of the hostages. If they were unconcerned about the risks and dangers of their mission trip to Afghanistan, how did they experience the devastating breach of logistical or religious safeguards? If they were afraid, and I can only presume that they were indeed afraid during the uncertain weeks they spent in captivity, how were those fears experienced through the terms of the mission encounter? In other words, what can their embodied experiences tell us about the particularities of their encounter and the universalist project of world evangelization?

Though occupying a different set of spatial coordinates, the ethnographic chapters in this dissertation (Chapters 4-6), especially the short-term mission trip I discuss in Chapter 6, help shed some light on these questions. I showed that missionaries grapple with not only the disciplinary forces of theology and ideology, but also with other ruling ideologies and their own historical and personal experiences. To make sense of their circumscribed mission experiences, short-term missionaries draw from the imaginary and affective dimensions of confronting distance and difference. These affective encounters draw out memories and emotions, not somehow raw or pure, but always and necessarily mediated by the structures of experience. Missions take place in conjunction with, and in constant tension with, the intentional and deliberate ideologies and theologies that legislate the project of world evangelization. They are “processes that involve a ‘trialectical’ tension between meanings, situated practices, and power relations” (Pred 1992, 107).

In one sense, this dissertation as a whole is an attempt to understand the variegated interactions among ideologies, beliefs, and practices by examining the interplay between the far-reaching mission mandate—to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), known as the Great Commission—and concrete mission practices. These interactions, I argued, are made intelligible through what Raymond Williams has called “structures of feeling” (1977, 128-135). In choosing “feeling” to avoid the potentially static and mechanistic connotations of ideology, Williams wrote:

It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and acted and justified experiences. [...] We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; *specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought...* (R. Williams 1977, 132, my emphasis)

Williams' insight is especially relevant for understanding the nuanced ways that missionaries' knowledges, perceptions, and beliefs are constituted through affective elements. They are constituted and reinforced amidst willful ignorances and heartfelt indifferences, intentional blind spots and unexpected remembrances, and religious beliefs that pivot around a set of more secular beliefs.

One such secular belief system that accompanies a persuasive structure of feeling is Korea's national development experience. A passionately held faith in Korea's national advancement on the

world stage operates as a matter of genuine pride and purposeful destiny. Whether it is through the biopolitical mandate for congregational reproduction and overseas growth (Chapter 4) or the custodial power exercised over the itinerant North Koreans in China (Chapter 5), or most obviously in the modernization directive issued by the missionaries in Africa (Chapter 6), the ethics of development resonates like no other in Korean-led world missions.

It is no surprise that the main protagonists in contemporary Korean missionary projects are members of Korea's "development generation," meant in the sense of what Nancy Abelmann calls a "historical cohort" (2003, 3). Korea's "development generation" include people now in their fifties or older, born in the last days of Japanese colonial rule in the 1940s. They came of age during the Korean War and the post-war chaos in the 1950s, witnessed the establishment of American provisional government and the installation of US-supported Syngman Rhee dictatorship in subsequent years. They lived through the state-led reconstruction, modernization, and industrialization efforts in the 1960s that fundamentally transformed urban and rural landscapes throughout country. The development generation's anti-Communism and militarized social relations were legislated and consolidated through a series of repressive military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s (see Seungsook Moon 2005). They witnessed firsthand the growing struggles for democracy and political freedom and clamor for national advancement on the world stage, which symbolically culminated in the euphoria of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. For this generation, the Asian financial crisis in 1997 was not as a repudiation of the triumph of Korea's economic growth, but an episodic crisis to overcome. The 2007 election of President Lee Myung Bak, himself a celebrated protégé and epitome of authoritarian developmentalism, marks the pinnacle of this narrative trajectory of Korea's progress as a *fait accompli*.¹⁶⁰ "Development" for this development generation is defined entirely in terms of national economic growth and national advancement on the world stage.

This depiction of the development generation is intended to be polemical. It elides great many details and glosses over enormous internal contradictions, as collective biographies inevitably do. It encompasses a wide range of incongruent structures of feelings and differentiated class interests. Some in this generation no doubt collaborated with Japanese colonial projects and profited handsomely from ties to the military dictatorship. There is no acknowledgement of the brutal political repression and labor exploitation that took place in the name of Korea's national development. Despite Korea's economic growth and increase in GDP, not everyone in the development generation overcame poverty or achieved great wealth—in fact, many were never poor. Missionaries of this generation often talk about how Koreans had to resort to eating food scraps discarded by the US military, but I have yet to meet a single person for whom this was an actual, firsthand experience. Despite celebrations of the results of democratization, formal democracy, the fact remains that many Koreans throughout the 1970s and 1980s—and to the present—disapproved

¹⁶⁰ It is estimated that Lee Myung Bak garnered at least three million Protestant votes in the 2008 Presidential Election, which was over a quarter of all votes cast and certainly a deciding factor in the election. The collusion between conservative Protestant forces and Lee's administration has been captured in two popular neologisms. First is *ko-so-yōng*, an acronym referring to graduates of Korea University (ko), members of Somang Church (so), and residents of Yōngnam region (yōng) who are disproportionately overrepresented in all sectors of leadership, particularly among positions of wealth and prestige. The second neologism, *kang-bu-ja*, refers to the propertied rich (*puḍongsan puja*) in the wealthy Kangnam region. Lee Myung Bak has noticeably favored both of these formations, and has been criticized for exacerbating existing class, regional, and religious divisions. Striking is the prominence of Christianity in these new configurations of Korea's ruling class. See In-chul Kang, "Han'guk Sahoewa Han'guk Kidokkyōi Kwaje - Han'guk Kyohoeüi Chōngch'i Ch'amyoē Kwanhan Chongkyo Sahoehakchōk Punsōk," in *Han'guk kyohoe chōngch'i ch'amyoüi kwagō, hyōnjae, mirae (KNCC)* (Seoul, Korea: 2008); Eui-Young Yu, "Regionalism in Korea: Regional Origin Imbalance in the Leadership Structure of South Korea," in *Korea Confronts Globalization*, ed. Yunshik Chang, Hyun-ho Seok, and Donald Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 2008).

of pro-democracy struggles as premature and foolish, and criticized them as ill-advised protests of youthful idealism. Many, especially the current institutional leaders of conservative Christianity, had supported the military dictatorships and reaped considerable benefits.

But these real and significant differences are sublimated under the banner of Korea's success. The development generation, as leaders of Korean-led world missions, claims to have *collectively* experienced the full range of bitter hardship and sweet success of modern Korean history, having achieved economic development through their collective toil. Such historical narrative is what underpins conservative Korean Christianity's pro-American affinity (Chapter 2) and the modernization curriculum in GMF's Africa missions (Chapter 6). Regardless of personal allegiances or individual contribution, and in spite of firsthand experiences that might contradict this collective profile, missionaries engaged in the project of world evangelization portray *all* Koreans as protagonists and beneficiaries of a marvelous and miraculous history of Korea's advancement. As such, Korean missionaries imagine their role not only as lieutenants of US-led world missions, but as role models and instructors with qualifications derived from their experiential authority. At the same time, the development generation confronts practical challenges on overseas mission fields because of their national and nationalistic orientations. They find themselves increasingly relying on missionaries from the postdevelopment generation—who possesses more cosmopolitan sensibilities, and, not insignificantly, greater proficiency in English. The frictions between Korean missionaries and Korean American missionaries I discuss in Chapter 6 attest to this paradoxical and often contested relationship.

The assertion of developmentalist ethos has three implications for Korean-led world missions. First, in evangelical rhetoric and on the mission field, the development generation teaches the post-development generation how to interpret and memorialize Korean experience of development, and reminds each other about the significance of this legacy. What they espouse are contentious claims presented as incontrovertible truths, namely that Saemaul Undong and Protestant work ethic were the central driving force behind Korean economic growth. For these missionaries, there is no room for ambivalence, and political-economic or historical debates have no use when it comes to Korea's achievements. Korea's triumphant national trajectory is perceived as irrefutable as the Bible itself. The development generation claims to embody the *spirit* of Korean development, and this is precisely what they desire to instill in their instructional, i.e. civilizing mission to Africa.

Secondly, the very structure of world missions validates the developmentalist ethos. The cartographic construction of the 10/40 Window and the unreached people groups produces development's Other, unreached by Christianity and global capitalism and underdeveloped, whose very existence legitimates the necessity and urgency of world evangelization (Chapter 3). As such, missions echoes what Akhil Gupta argues about development—it is “Orientalism transformed into a science for action” (Gupta 1998, 37). World missions are necessarily spatial and affective strategies because they enable people to encounter a world of difference *in person*, however short-lived these encounters may be. Short-term missions are deliberately structured to occasion temporary embodiment of hardship and to stir empathy for the suffering Others, and global missions sustain these events as an ongoing engagement with the world. Korean-led world missions can thus be conceptualized as reaching the underdeveloped Other through purposive and deliberate encounters. Korea's development cannot be verified as progress unless it is contrasted against its underdeveloped past or present-day underdevelopment. By extension, North Korea figures not simply as a less developed nation, but as a kindred nation—related by birth and pre-division unity—gone terribly astray, whose rightful path must be restored through South Korea's Christian-capitalist custodial power (Chapter 5).

Thirdly, short-term missions are effective and *necessary* as technologies of corroboration and legitimization for the development generation. Consider the itinerary of a short-term mission. It begins with anticipation and departure, encounters and experiences places and people foreign and

unfamiliar, and concludes with return to normalcy, a homecoming. The experiential structure of mission-as-journey—with a discernible beginning, middle, and an end—is then reproduced through multiple iterations: individual and collective appraisals, testimonials, and recollections. In other words, while short-term missions may be characterized as short-lived connections between “here” and “there,” and between “us” and “them,” it must also be remembered that these connectivities are endlessly rehearsed and performed beyond the event of the mission. As I have argued in the dissertation, missionary subjectivities are not only interpellated by a religious calling, but produced through affective encounters of the global. For anyone to embrace the hardship entailed in missions—however short-term or glorified—there must be a palpable sense of personal relevance and purpose. Even if the driving force is ultimately based on deeply held religious convictions, the terrain of that faithfulness must include everyday significance, and for Korean missionaries, their faith draws from a variety of sources such as the developmentalist ethos.

It is also for these reasons that I have come to insist on portraying missionaries not simply as carrying out the agendas handed to them by their leaders and ideologues. There is no lack of bellicose rhetoric and evangelical flair for grand narratives, as can be seen in the examples used throughout the dissertation. But for every articulate ideologue or well-spoken mission theologian I have met, there are perhaps twenty ordinary evangelical missionaries who describe their missionary purpose in secular terms, e.g. “I wanted to travel and see the world.”

Perhaps my growing ambivalence towards the role of religious ideology in missionary practices comes from knowing that even for the most devout evangelicals, religious faith does not dictate every contour of their lives or subjectivities. Missionaries may express their proselytizing intentions as an irrefutable religious calling, but in actuality, their practices reflect a multiplicity of social locations. Everyday evangelism likewise involves multiple incentives. To illustrate through an example: one of the scariest experiences I had during the course of this dissertation research was when I was accosted by a belligerent Korean evangelist who wanted me to agree to “accept Jesus Christ as my only Lord and Savior”—or else. He demanded that I promise to devote my academic career to convince others that Christianity was the only path to Salvation. I did not agree with him, I did not know him, and I did not know what he knew about me. He had come uninvited to an interview I scheduled with someone else, and the confrontation seemed entirely based on an overzealous evangelist’s wish to provide spiritual guidance for a young female newcomer. At first I declined politely, and followed with a firm “no thank you,” but he became increasingly hostile and violent, at one point pounding his fist on the table between us. Red in the face and sweat dripping from his temples, he even cursed me—he told me that my health and my family’s fortune would deteriorate from my ungrateful rejection of his gracious gesture. I endured his fury for nearly an hour while another male pastor, the intended interviewee, sat by in silence. It was not until much later that I realized that this belligerent and offensive evangelist was also a frustrated Silicon Valley engineer who had recently lost his job. He was new at evangelizing, and was desperate to prove himself. Entitled to a certain class status and patriarchal authority, he was indignant that a young woman like me would dare to disobey him.

Likewise, a timid missionary I met in Uganda was also a recent immigrant undergoing a traumatic adjustment process in the US. Not only was she new to the mission team, she was new to Christianity, and new to the place she now had to call home. Her in-betweenness was not an empowered hybridity, and the mission trip further accentuated her out-of-placeness. Her questions to me were not about religion at all—it was about English. She wanted to know how I learned to speak English when I immigrated to the US, and she wanted to know how long it would take her to feel comfortable living in English, to feel at home in English. Kiyon, whose story I discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, was a vivacious social worker eager to work with orphans precisely because she herself was orphaned at an early age and carried with her heartfelt gratitude towards those who once extended her a loving hand. She may have chosen to interpret her life story through a religious lens,

and chosen to express her appreciation through missionary work, but what orientated her to the mission field was not the ideology of evangelical geopolitics or the rhetoric of the unreached peoples. She bristled at the suggestion that the wealth and privilege of Koreans enabled overseas missions. Like those expunged from the collective imagination of the development generation, Kiyon had never known wealth or privilege in her own life. From these stories and encounters, I have come to argue that the intricate imbrications between religious motivations and secular intentions always played out in the most mundane details of everyday practices.

The structure of the dissertation then reflects the some of the shifts in my own understanding. I first examined the theological and sociological currents that stimulate the selection of mission destinations, the institutional actors that mobilize transnational missionary networks, and the concrete projects and activities that are carried out on the mission fields. It began with ideological and institutional analyses of political theologies that animate world missions, and ended with affective experiences of missionary subject-formation. What I argue in this dissertation is that the rhetorical logic of evangelical missionary practices must be understood alongside the affective dimensions of mission experience, which are nonetheless structured and circumscribed by the discourses that enable it. The project of world evangelization does not simply impress itself upon passive bodies—it creates consensus through ideological orientation, institutional authority, and embodied practice, employing discursive, structural, and disciplinary power.

While theological criticism may engender some change in the dynamics of Korean-led world missions, it is my contention that such critique must necessarily entail a challenge to the power-knowledge, and discursive practices of developmentalism that underpin conservative Korean Christianity (see Watts 1993). Unless the “benevolence” of American dominance in Korea is contested, and unless the triumphant historical narrative of Korea’s development experience is called into question, the project of world evangelization remains intact. Insofar as missions rely on the wholesale faith in capitalist development, geographical imaginations that privilege the inherent virtues of the powerful—compassionate donors, heroic aid providers, devoted volunteers, and experienced teachers—they perpetuate the power-laden systems of inequality that necessitate, enable, and justify overseas missions, religious or humanitarian.

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