

CHAPTER 4

PRACTICES OF CULTURAL PUBLIC DIALOGUE: CENTERING ON *MADANGGŬK*

Public dialogue is communication through a relationship with the world. Therefore, it presents “context-reading” as a premise. Korean theologies and the *madanggŭk* movement began with the question of “who is the owner or the subject of society and culture?” The answer is “*minjung*” (the populace) in a Korean term which designates the ruled, namely, laborers, peasants and the poor. Generally speaking, *minjung* refers to the whole alienated class of the politically suppressed, economically deprived, culturally ignored, religiously removed, and ideologically anti-subjectivized (Song K.D. 1990:70-71).

The concern for these alienated people has a special meaning in Korean society, because, as Ahn Byung Mu (1982:19) points out, “In our history, there is only a nation, but no *minjung*. ... *Minjung* who has formed the nation is in a state of being neglected and suffering under the cloak for the good of the nation.” It means that Korea is, therefore, a nation that has lost *minjung*. The church, theology and cultural movements that attempted to “dialogue with the other” could therefore not avoid “context-reading,” that is, “reading *minjung* reality.” Public dialogue is thus closely connected with the concept of “*minjung*.” Therefore, the Korean term “*minjung*” will be used in this chapter without translating it to its English equivalent “the populace or the common people.”

The concept “*minjung*” came to the fore at the beginning of the 1970s. This was, so to speak, the flowering of *minjung*. As indicated in Chapter 3, under the policy of “rapid modernization” and “the high degree of foreign dependence” that got into its stride in the 1970s, *minjung* was increasingly sacrificed, the social contradictions were revealed more clearly, and the *minjung* movement for the right to live was established. Stimulated by serious *minjung* matters, both the theological world and the *minjung* movement began to concern itself with public dialogue with *minjung* and society. In

particular, the immolation of a Christian youth “Chun Tae Il” in November 1970 served as momentum for Korean theologians and intellectuals to participate in the alienated and oppressed minjung reality (Hwang Y.Y. 1998:125-126).

Where can we read reality/context? Suh Nam Dong (1982:256-276) suggests that reality can be found in the minjung stories—(1) firstly in the history of the Korean minjung movement, (2) secondly in the history of the Korean church, (3) thirdly in the traditional Korean religion, and (4) lastly in the folk tale, *t'alch'um* (Korean mask dance), *p'ansori* (a Korean style of opera) and Korean popular songs (minjung songs). What is significant here is the fact that the scope of reading reality is widened from Korean history to encompass Korean traditional culture.

Chapter 3 dealt with the history of Korean Christianity and the Korean minjung movement in connection with “public dialogue,” which are the first two stories among the four suggested by Suh. The stories showed the process through which the populace was freed and made the subject who determined their destiny by themselves. Although the practical faith of the Korean church was distorted by the privatization of faith, there have nonetheless been practices for public dialogue with society, history and others. Chapter 4 will explore the attempts of public dialogue in relation to the other two stories— traditional Korean religion/culture and Korean minjung reality.

Therefore, this chapter, focusing on practices of “cultural” public dialogue, consists largely of two parts. One is related to cultural public dialogue in the theological domain, especially Korean theologies which have paid attention to “culture” and have influenced minjung cultural movements as a foundation of ideology, directly or indirectly. Here the central theological idea and practices of cultural public dialogue are discussed. The second part concerns the practices of public dialogue through performing art called “*madanggŭk*” (theatre in an open public area) that is representative among minjung cultural movements.

This study is carried out by asking the following questions: the first is “what is the

historical background of the madanggük?” Here both artistic and social aspects are addressed. The second question is “what are the practices of the cultural public dialogue through madanggük?” The practices and the trends of public dialogue through madanggük are dealt with, centering on performed representative madanggük works of the 1970s and 1980s. The third question is “what are the central thoughts and the general characteristics of public dialogue in madanggük performance?” The fourth question is “what is the meaning of madanggük as a means of communication and what are the basic problems and limitations of madanggük as a kind of communication?” This research into the meaning and limitations of madanggük’s communicability aims to contribute to the formation of an alternative public dialogue based on mutual communication, which is the ultimate purpose of this thesis.

4.1 Korean Theology and Cultural Public Dialogue

4.1.1 Korean Theology and Reading Context

The representative theologies that attempted to fulfill public dialogue are the “Indigenization theology” that emerged in the 1960s and the “*Minjung* theology” that developed in the 1970s. Under the impact of the socio-participation theology of the W.C.C., Secularization theology, Liberation theology, Asian theology, and Third World theology, Korean theologies became interested in context-reading, which caused Korean Christianity to take part in practices of public dialogue with society. Meanwhile, the influence of Paul Tillich’s “theology of culture” caused Korean Christianity to have a positive effect on culture, especially traditional culture (Huh B.S. 1987:180). In this process, Indigenization Theology and *Minjung* theology began to engage in public dialogue with the other, using Korean traditional culture as a mechanism for public dialogue. For this reason, the two theologies are named “*Korean theology*” or “*Korean cultural theology*” (Kim J.C. 1993:160). In addition, the Korean theologies gained another name, the so-called “contextualization theology” in the sense that they

developed from “context-reading.”

The main focus of the Korean theologies is to define “what do the Korean people believe about Jesus in the present context” (Kim K.S. 1993:91). To answer this question, Indigenization theology tried to understand the Korean reality in the midst of traditional Korean religious culture, and Minjung theology focused on the common people’s reality in the Korean political-economic situation. The former took a religious cultural approach to communicating with traditional Korean religious culture, while the latter took minjung cultural approach to praxis for the isolated populace.

The cultural approach of Korean theologies aimed in common to re-establish “Korean” Christianity on the ground in Korean culture. For this purpose, Indigenization theology emerged in the 1960s and focused on reflecting that the reckless adaptation of Western theology without proper criticism had resulted in the loss of Korean tradition. Indigenization theology pursued the de-westernization of the Gospel, and the establishment of “Korean” theology based on the Korean religious mind and traditional culture (Kim J.C. 1993:160). With an interest in so-called “our things” (traditional Korean culture) it tried to form a relationship between Christianity and traditional religion and culture.

One religion has not been replaced by another in Korea; rather, several religions coexist in a state of religious accumulation. Kim Yong Bock (1993:122-123) explains it thus, “Korean minjung has experienced pluralism and accumulated religion in the life. In other words, minjung has experienced the representative religious culture of Korea such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism not separately but simultaneously and pluralistically.” The religious cultures of Korea can be understood separately in the aspect of analysis, but not in the dimension of experience.

In this respect, the main concern of Indigenization theology was how to deal with the existence of this religious pluralism and with the loss of religious culture. As a response

to this religious cultural situation, it attempted to create a religious discussion with other traditional Korean religions beyond the accomplishment of evangelism. These attempts resulted in Yun Sung Bum's (1976) theology of *Sung* (Faithfulness); the study of Shamanism by Ryu Dong Sik (1975); the study of Buddhism by Byun Sun Hwan (1982) which tried to connect Korean religious culture and Christianity; Rhyu Dong Sik's (1988) theology of *Pungryu* (Wind and Flow); the study of Korean cultural theology by Kim Kyung Jae (1983) and Kim Kwang Sik (1987) among others. As researched above, Indigenization theology has made every effort to bring about religious integration in the religious pluralistic situation. On the question of hermeneutics, it has contributed to the "indigenization" of Korean Christianity through traditional Korean culture.

While in traditional Korean religious culture Indigenization theology finds out "our things" and reads the popular reality, Minjung theology focuses on the problems of the reality regarding minjung as the subject of the nation. Minjung theology finds out "our things" (traditional Korean culture) in the Korean social reality—the political, economic and social context.

From the beginning of the 1970s, issues related to autocracy, socio-economic inequality, the alienated and the oppressed minjung began to come to the surface of society. The concern with the reality of minjung was often expressed through labor movements, agricultural movements and movements for the urban poor. Christianity has shown such concern through the mission for minjung and the Minjung theology that the so-called minjung theologians in general regard the event of Chun Tae Il as a symbolic event. Minjung theology itself resulted from "*minjung events*" (Hwang Y.Y. 1998:125-126) in the 1970s. For this reason, Ahn Byung Mu (1991:28-34) calls Minjung theology "*Event theology*." According to his explanation, event theology understands the current minjung events (affairs) as God's intervention in history. Therefore, its task is to discover God who works actively in the historical events, as well as to interpret and testify the Christ events by participating in minjung events. God exists in the events, and theology testifies the facts. Event theology is thus "the theology of testimony." In

this way, Minjung theology can be conceptualized in the words “event” and “testimony.” Therefore, Suh Nam Dong (1982:237-276), one of the representative minjung theologians, suggests the necessity of “the confluence of minjung story (minjung tradition) in Christianity and minjung story (minjung tradition) in Korea” and “the interpretation of this confluence process.”

Minjung theology is a theology that is accelerated by Christian praxis discovering and participating in Korean minjung’s suffering and resistance. Strictly speaking, Minjung theology did not conscientize minjung; rather, it became conscientized by the minjung. Nonetheless, as Kang Won Don (1990b:88-89) indicates, the discovery of the minjung reality of Minjung theology has a significant meaning in that “it led a revolutionary shift of the hermeneutical concept from the *above* to the *under* in perceiving history and reality.”

In conclusion, while Indigenization theology concerns religious culture from a philosophical standpoint, Minjung theology concerns minjung culture from a practical standpoint. While Indigenization theology insists on the liberation of theology advocating cosmological Christology, Minjung theology persists in the liberation of minjung claiming the theory of “*minjung-Jesus*.” Even though they are different from each other from the point of emphasis, these Korean theologies, as Park Jong Chun (1991:98-99) notes, have something in common in their conviction that the de-westernization and the liberation of theology can be accomplished by the praxis for minjung liberation. They all pursue “praxis” and see “our things” (traditional culture) as a medium for that praxis.

4.1.2 Minjung Theology and the Minjung Cultural Movement

If Minjung theology was established in the theological realm, the *minjung cultural movement* emerged from the realm of culture in the 1960s in a response to minjung reality. The concern with minjung gave birth to *minjung sociology*, *minjung literature* and

minjung art. Together with these, the minjung movement developed the enlightenment movement, the conscientization movement and the resistance movement. In this process, the minjung cultural movement engaged in dialogue with the oppressed minjung through a diverse cultural or artistic mechanism.

The central purpose of Minjung theology and the minjung cultural movement lies in the liberation of minjung, by acknowledging it as the subject of art and the nation. Here they ask some questions concerning minjung. The first is “what is the salvation (liberation) of minjung?” The answer is the liberation or exodus from the dehumanization, i.e. freedom from the ruling class and the realization of humanization by overcoming alienation. In order to meet and understand the needs of the populace, they started by reading minjung reality.

This led to the next question: “how is the salvation of minjung realized?” For this, Kim Yong Bock (1983b:56) proposes the “narratives of minjung themselves” as a method for reading reality and liberating minjung. Through story telling they willingly speak about their experiences of suffering, and we can understand them. He called the minjung narrative “the social biography of Korean minjung” (Suh K.S. 1990:52)²⁹ which contains three narratives: first, a story of ‘*Han*’ (a bitter feeling or agony) of minjung fatigued under the governor’s regime; second, a story of ‘*Dan*’ (decision or resolution for cutting) a struggle to overcome the vicious circle of the ruler, the exploitation and the oppression; and third, a story of the vision and hope of the minjung to be the subject of history. These narratives of the so-called social biography of minjung provide a clue for methodology, or the means for their liberation. Minjung liberation cannot be achieved through resistance and violence. Rather, warning against the vicious circle of

²⁹ Many stories about the poor are included in his article “*A Study of the Poor Women in Korea*” as examples of the socio-biography of Korean minjung: “*The Chun Tae-il’s Diary*” that tells how he burnt himself to death in order to make known the laborer’s agony in a clothing factory in the early part of 1970s, Song Hyo Soon’s “*The Way to Seoul*” describing her story of labor in the capital Seoul where she grew up as a teenager, and Lee Dong Chul’s “*The Ggobang Village People*”, etc. The socio-biography is composed by words and writings of minjung themselves (Christian Research Institute 1983). Huh Byung Sub also presented an article “*A Study of Minjung Reality*” with the premise that theology must recognize minjung reality.

struggle and violence, Suh Nam Dong and Ahn Byung Mu suggest “the dialectic of *Han* and *Dan*” as a method for liberation (Song K.D. 1990:80). It is not revenge but ‘*Dan*’ which cuts the vicious circle of revenge and the struggle for power. Liberation of the populace means humanization by the dialectic of ‘*Han*’ and ‘*Dan*’ which ultimately leads to the third story of vision and hope.

The history (or story) of the suffering of the oppressed Korean minjung required the hermeneutics of the Gospel from the perspective of minjung. Suh Nam Dong (1982:271) advocated “the conflux of two stories,” insisting that “the minjung story of Christendom and the minjung story of Korea should join together in the action of the *Missio Dei* of the Korean church.” In fact, it is possible to participate in action and interpretation in the confluence of the minjung story of the Bible and the present minjung story of Korea. In the process of the conflux and story telling of the minjung, minjung becomes the subject; theology becomes their hermeneutics by listening and interpreting and then telling their story again in connection with God’s story. Therefore, the popular cultural movement is a popular artistic expression of the two stories.

Some theologians search for the possibility of theological humanization in the Korean minjung culture such as Korean folk tales, *t’alch’um* (mask dance) and *p’ansori* (a Korean style of opera), in which the popular consciousness is contained. Suh Nam Dong (1982:265) considers *p’ansori* and *t’alch’um* as “a kind of religious ritual for the liberation of the oppressed minjung.” Hyun Young Hak (1982a:16), insisting that “Christianity must be incarnate into the populace and must learn the wisdom and the justice within minjung,” proposes turning our attention toward popular culture.³⁰ This means that traditional art is acknowledged as a starting point for theological epistemology and praxis for public dialogue of Christianity (cf. Suh K.S. 1986; Huh B.S. 1986).

³⁰ Hyun Young Hak is one of the representative theologians who led the methodological concern about public dialogue with the world to the notice of “minjung culture.” In the process of his study of mask dance, Hyun (1982b:384) looks for “religious transcendence with criticism” in humour, critical consciousness, vulgarism, and struggle peculiar to the performing folk art.

The Korean theologies influenced the popular cultural movement in the sphere of ideology. However, this was not direct. Strictly speaking, t'alch'um and madanggük, which were forerunners among the cultural movements for cultural public dialogue, did not originate from Christianity. Rather, with interest in the revival of tradition, some intellectuals and college/university students from the theatrical circle and the t'alch'um circle started the madanggük and the t'alch'um movement. Meanwhile, the theological discussion about the "culture" is inadequate and no longer developed. Huh Byung Sub (1987:181) refers to this point as follows: "While in the domain of general studies, the study of the popular cultural movement in the dimensions of theory and practice has steadily been done to some extent, Korean Christianity has no study group and practical group for the popular culture. Hyun Young Hak is the only one who attempted the interpretation of t'alch'um in theological perspective, but it was limited to a small article. In fact, there are few books related to the Christian interpretation and theory of the popular culture."

Despite the lack of research into the cultural movement, the practices that Korean Christianity fulfilled in the popular cultural movement are worthy of close attention. Some progressive churches and Christians took a positive part in the madanggük movement that was inherited from t'alch'um in a modern style. With a Christian identity, they began to criticize the reality of the alienated minjung through the performing art-cultural medium of madanggük. Some church buildings were used as places to prepare and perform the madanggük. Strictly speaking, therefore, the popular cultural movement was generated not from Minjung theology; rather, the two had a mutual relationship. Minjung theology provides a theological ideology for the popular movement; on the other hand, theologians accepted an art-cultural dimension through the madanggük or t'alch'um movement as a new method for praxis of public dialogue. Korean Christianity thus gained an opportunity to convert the resisting pattern of public dialogue into an artistic and cultural pattern.

4.2 The Advent and Identity of *Madanggük*

Considering the fact that public dialogue begins with the reading context, it is no wonder that madanggük as an artistic communication emerged in close connection with the context of the times. In addition, considering the fact that madanggük is a product of a response to reality, surveying the background of the advent of madanggük is crucial. Madanggük arose from the t'alch'um revival movement³¹ in the 1960s. The madanggük movement, including the t'alch'um revival movement, is valued as a great cultural event. There are two main aspects in the historical background of the advent of madanggük as public dialogue. One is artistic in that madanggük is a drama; the other is social in that it is a public dialogue with society. In other words, madanggük has a cultural or artistic dimension in the artistic context of the annihilation of traditional Korean culture, and a social dimension in the context of dictatorship.

4.2.1 Artistic and Social Background

The artistic background is largely connected to three historical events. The first event was Japanese colonial policy to annihilate Korean national culture from the 1900s. As a result, the national cultural heritage of Korea such as t'alch'um, which is a representative Korean traditional performance art, and *p'ansori*, puppet drama, began to disappear (Huh E. 1999:175). A representative case was "the Korean market survey" enforced by the Japanese empire from 1913 to 1917. The purpose of this survey was not only to occupy the Korean market but also to forbid the Korean people from gathering together in the market place. On the pretext of abolishing superstitions, Japan prohibited village festivals that had served to strengthen the solidarity of the Korean people. In those days, the market place functioned as a place of public dialogue, social gathering, recreation, assembly and festival as well as goods-exchange for the Korean people (Korean Folklore Academy 1994:68-69). Therefore,

³¹ In November 1969, the Traditional Folk Study Society was organized at Pusan University, and in following year, the Folk Mask Dance Drama Society at Seoul National University. T'alch'um societies were soon formed in almost all colleges and universities all over the nation. In this way, the t'alch'um movement became a characteristic of college culture in the 1970s. This trend is called the "t'alch'um revival movement."

the Korean market survey by Japan meant the loss of a spontaneous space for culture and communication as well as the loss of economic infra-structure.

The second event occurred when Japan forced the Korean people to accept the Japanese *shinp'a* (new wave) drama and modern Western-style drama, instead of traditional Korean performing art. In order to get rid of the will for national subjectivity and independence, Japanese imperialism encouraged the Korean people regard the national Korean heritage as a vulgar and backwardly inferior culture. Instead of Korean culture, Japan transplanted the Japanese *shinp'a* drama into the Korean lower classes, and infused modern Western-style drama into the upper class intellectuals. The problem was that these new dramas, copied from Japanese *shinp'a* drama and Western modern drama, belonged mainly to the category of sentimental melodrama (Lee G.R. 1995:21).

After Korea's liberation, the Japanese *shinp'a* drama lost its prestige in Korea, but Western and American melodrama became more influential, with no recovery of the lost traditional Korean culture. This is not merely a matter of nationality. One of the most important points is the fact that indiscriminate import and imitation of Western drama promoted colonial consciousness, i.e. cultural colonialism among the Korean people, instead of the progressive spirit that characterized original Western drama in its own countries.

As a result of the indiscriminate import and imitation of Western drama in Korea, firstly, Korean drama showed a tendency towards translated drama based on the ambiguous and obscure Western high drama. Secondly, evaluation of drama was based in a perspective of Western modernism such as theatre of the absurd, experimental drama, and the avant-garde theatre (Ahn J.K. 1983:165-169). Thirdly, Korean drama began to be polluted by commercialism and purism (Oh J.W. 1980:302). The problem of commercialism was raised in that without due consideration Korean drama followed the phenomenon of the commercialization of Broadway in America, which balanced the

budget by drawing the upper classes and intellectuals into a type of spectator of drama. On the other hand, under the influence of art purism, the clarity of Korean traditional drama was regarded as what should be abandoned and replaced by the pattern of Western modernist drama with ambiguity, alienation, obscurity and high level of refinement. The problem of purism is, as Ahn Jong Kwan (1983:171) indicates, that it made even cognitive faculties about the world, history and objects ambiguous.

This tendency prevented traditional performing art that had been enjoyed by the common people or lower classes from becoming a popular art form for the public. After that time in Korea, performing art related only to the minority of the intellectuals; the common people were excluded from art and culture. In this respect, the prevailing purism, commercialism and the indiscriminate imitation of Western culture revealed in the end the nature of “inhumanity and non-popularity” (Ahn J.K. 1983:163,175; Lee Y.M. 1997a:29-30).

The third event which helps to form an artistic background to madanggük is related to the revival of the Korean cultural tradition under the military regime of Park Chung Hee after the liberation of Korea in 1950. Although the government-initiated cultural policy helped to rediscover traditional folk art and give it heightened interest,³² it soon became clear that the government was more inclined toward the importation of foreign culture, denouncing traditional culture as a feudal legacy and thus a hindrance to the modernization process. A cultural heritage law was exploited by placing all items and genres of culture under its strict control. Culture was to be evaluated and transformed for political purposes, i.e. as a way of maintaining a dictatorship. In addition, the government-initiated cultural policy was confined to a preservation of the original forms, classifying and commenting on terms and notions. This was the so-called “taxidermization” of traditional art and culture, detaching itself from the life of the common people, i.e. defacing minjung-oriented and field-oriented features (Kim K.O.

³² The Korean Folklore Academy was established in 1954 and the Society for Korean Mask Drama Preservation in 1959, and so the Folk mask drama was appointed as an important and inviolate cultural asset.

1997; Chae H.W. 1982:206). In this situation, the loss of tradition meant the loss of realism, which helped to bring about the failure of the development of a voluntary and spontaneous participative drama.

The social context as well as the artistic context effected the advent of the madanggük. The political situation at that point was under oppressive dictatorship: the undemocratic regime of President Lee Seung Man in the 1950s, and the despotic regime of President Park Chung Hee after the May 16 military coup in 1961. Moreover, the growth in the economy made the society rotten with the problems of social inequality, extreme antagonism among classes, and alienation of workers, farmers, and the urban poor. Under the military dictatorship, freedom of expression and freedom of speech or the press were suppressed, and the students' associations of all high schools, colleges and universities were broken up by force. This situation persisted into the 1980s. Therefore, the national desire for democratic government, economic independence, social equality, and cultural subjectivity deepened more and more. Above all, a new medium for expressing the truth about the distorted events and social contradictions was needed.

4.2.2 Response to Context

4.2.2.1 Creative Inheritance of Traditional Performance

Madanggük as an art movement and an expressive action emerged as a new alternative to the criticism and opposition to the extorted existing performance world (Seo Y.H. 1997:15). The Minjung cultural movement began with a reflection of the extinction of traditional culture, the reckless import and imitation of Western drama, the prevalence of purism and commercialism, and the political manipulation of traditional culture by the government. In the process of this response to the artistic situation, madanggük was created.

In reaction to a series of drastic cultural changes, a group of young intellectuals and

college students, most of whom attended Seoul National University, began in the early 1960s to think about a traditional cultural genre. In a narrow sense, the loss of traditional Korean culture meant the closure of a cultural gateway for public dialogue within an oppressive situation; in a broader sense it meant the loss of national identity under the motto of “Westernization is Modernization.” Therefore, those who regarded the whole situation as a threat began to organize a movement whose aim was the study of “traditional” culture. The name they chose for the movement was the “science of national culture” (*Gukhak*). In the process of searching for “our things” indigenous to Korea, the new performance pattern, “madanggŭk,” came spontaneously into being.

The “college theatrical group” and the “folk drama study group” of Seoul National University, which are the matrix of madanggŭk, were confronted by two immediate tasks of an artistic nature. One was a creative inheritance of traditional culture; the other was a critical adoption of foreign culture. When most other college theatrical groups as well as the established theatrical world in those days leaned towards “translated drama,” the college theatrical group of Seoul University leant on the one hand to “creative drama,” and on the other performed the classical drama works such as *Yangbanjyun*, *Hojil*, *Husaengjyun* in the form of folk drama. Meanwhile, “the mask dance group” organized by students of Seoul National University in 1965 focused on discovering and learning about “minjung” culture through various study groups. They concentrated on mask-dance theatre (*kamyongŭk*), mask dance (*t'alch'um*), folk songs (*minyo*), performances of farmers' music (*p'ungmul nori*) and dance (*ch'um*), all of which had been regarded as the cultural genres of the uncultivated peasants or humble folk. Under the influence of the t'alch'um revival movement, many college students developed an overwhelming interest in t'alch'um. Consequently, t'alch'um study groups were organized in almost all colleges throughout the country, and even in middle and high schools, churches, cultural and social organizations, including factories and farm villages (Chae H.W. 1982:206-209; Moon H.Y. 1985:56). The t'alch'um group played a role in the spread of madanggŭk as a creative inheritance of t'alch'um.

The theatrical group and the t'alch'um group joined forces in order to invent a new

genre of performing art, synthesizing many elements of the traditional peasant culture such as *t'alch'um*, *p'ansori*, folk song and dance, and the traditional operetta and shamanistic rituals. This is the madanggük, the only true indigenous performance style in Korean contemporary theatrical history. Madanggük is, therefore, the creative fruit of a process of integration between critical realism directivity (the theatrical group) and the inheritance of creative tradition (the *t'alch'um* group). They are not merely “students” learning traditional culture, but true “creators” of a new cultural mediating structure for public dialogue.

If this is the case, why did they direct their attention to folk performance art including *t'alch'um*? The reason is that the ideological foundation of *t'alch'um* is *minjung* orientation. The folk drama based its principle on the struggle and critical consciousness of the reality of *minjung* (Cho D.I. 1988:221). The *t'alch'um* mode, which has the function of reading reality from the perspective of the populace and the will to solve *minjung* problems, coincides with the *minjung* cultural consciousness and action ideology of the cultural groups of the colleges/universities. As a result, from the end of 1960 the *t'alch'um* and the madanggük movements were developed in such domains as the college, the village, work fields and religion.

4.2.2.2 A Minjung Medium for Expression of Social Reality

Madanggük entered a developmental stage early in the 1970s. If the madanggük of the 1960s was “an artistic response” to the historical context by searching for a creative national power from within the traditional culture, that of the 1970s could not help operating as “a social response” to the political situation, in an effort to find a new gateway to expression in the form of a traditional culture. Under the newly introduced National Security Law and *Yushin* Restoration Constitution, any direct criticism against the regime meant prosecution as a procommunist and an antinational reaction. Therefore, it was necessary to seek a new medium in order to describe, interpret and express socio-cultural experiences. As Victor Turner (1974:10) indicates, this new way

is often expressed in “art and religion,” and the criticism against the government was expressed in “metaphorical” ways through art or religion. Some liberal theologians and church leaders were fighting for human rights and democracy, and in order to do so, some student groups invented a new cultural mechanism, namely, the *madanggŭk*.

Madanggŭk was one of the most effective cultural mechanisms through which the people could express feelings and opinions which could not be conveyed anywhere else. So Lee Gang Ryul (1995:25) regarded madanggŭk as “a minjung medium for communication.”³³ Madanggŭk, as a positive medium for expression, dealt aggressively with the social issues of the time, such as the undemocratic political system (*Yushin* regime), farming community matters and labor problems, government suppression of the media and the economic invasion by Japan. In the disguise of performance art, the people were able to engage in political discourse. That is why, when a military dictatorship ruled the country, madanggŭk won the positive support of the public and grew dramatically. In this way, madanggŭk has the features of a social movement beyond an art category.

Madanggŭk was performed in the practical sphere of the social movement beyond the sphere of theatrical art, and accordingly, it came to take on the characteristics of “progressive drama” manifesting the practical will of reality (Lee Y.M. 1997a:59-60). According to Lim Jin Taek’s statement on the future of madanggŭk, “madanggŭk is a practical work of art giving shape to social reality truly. ... New drama should be ‘a drama with the realities of life’ and ‘a drama as praxis toward free and equal society’” (Lee Y.M. 1997a:43).³⁴ The madanggŭk as a public dialogue of the practical dimension carried the characteristics of a kind of “political proxy assembly” (Lee Y.M. 1993:91), so that the idea of “madanggŭk is becoming generally accepted as ‘the political

³³ There are vigorous studies of Korean traditional performances; *P’ansori* (a Korean style of opera or a Korean traditional narrative song), folk song, puppet drama, especially mask dance (Lee G.R. 1995:25,40-41).

³⁴ For this reason, Lee Young Mi (1997a:43) insists that it has to be evaluated as an important part of Korean theatrical history despite the fact that it is not a performance within the theatrical world.

performance” (Kim B.O. 1995:234; Lee Y.M. 2001:71).

4.2.3 Definition of *Madang* and Identity of *Madanggŭk*

Madanggŭk performances are held in a round open area (*wonhyongp’an*).³⁵ The literal definition of “*madanggŭk*” is “a drama performed in *madang*” or “a drama to be seen in *madang*.” The word “*madang*” indicates “an open area” like “garden” or “plain.” At the same time, “*madang*” implies “situation and time” indicating “on this occasion” or “in this atmosphere.” Therefore, the word *madang* contains two concepts: one is “a space of open ground,” the other is “time related to a situation.” Here *madang* becomes “a space of life,” i.e. a place for life planning, a space for play, a place to express the joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure of the community (Sim W.S. 1988:581-582; Lim J.T. 1990:18-19).

The space of “*madang*” here is not limited only to the meaning of “outdoor.” Physical conditions, for example, whether the performance is held indoors or outdoors, whether the area is circular or square, do not determine whether the performance is a madanggŭk or not. The outdoor circular performance area is only a representation of the form taken by the original madanggŭk. In other words, the madanggŭk is a drama portraying the populace’s concrete reality in “the *madang* of life” (the centre of reality), not making a sharp distinction between outdoors and indoors. This is the first and most important condition for “madanggŭk.”

Therefore, not all drama that deals with social reality is madanggŭk. And all drama performed in “*madang*” space cannot be madanggŭk either. Madanggŭk goes beyond the limits of drama art performed in an open area *madang*, and advances toward the concern of minjung’s life space and social participation.

Thus, in a word “*madanggŭk*” comprises both aspects of a mode and a value of drama,

³⁵ The reason that the term “circular stage” is not used is because the word “stage” has the connotation of a special place set well above the ground. Madanggŭk used a regular wooden floor for indoor performances, or simply the open area for outdoor performances. The centre of the performance area is a round circle around which the audience gathers.

both concepts of space and time, and both spheres of performance art and a social movement directivity.³⁶ Madanggük is a drama pursuing a synthesis between artistry and social participation. Therefore, the madanggük movement, as discussed above, could be completed by carrying out the two functions, i.e. the artistic function of the creative inheritance of traditional performance and the social function of practical participation. Here the shift from artistic to social communication took place not in stages but in a synthesis of the two. That is why madanggük is expressed rather as “the spirit” of drama that provides a practical value in the social change movement, than as “a mode” of drama.

4.3 Practices of Public Dialogue through Madanggük Performance

The practices of public dialogue through madanggük show various features depending on the era. In the 1960s these practices were characterized by “nationalism” in achieving two art-cultural tasks—the creative heritage of traditional culture and the critical adoption of foreign culture. In the 1970s, however, they showed the minjung-oriented and social movement-oriented features more evidently as a mechanism of public dialogue against the dictatorship and contradictions of social structure in a new form of performance art. In the 1980s, it became widely popular and firmly established its status as “a progressive drama,” playing an important role as a social or cultural movement, resisting the existing governing ideology.

4.3.1 Involvement of Christianity in the Madanggük Movement

The development of the madanggük movement as a practice of public dialogue has to be understood from the perspective of practical background as well as the artistic and

³⁶ The term “madanggük” became an official name to indicate a certain form of drama in Lim Jin Taek’s essay “For a New Drama” (included in Lim 1990) in which madanggük was used to refer to a new style of dramas, i.e., minjung and national dramas such as ‘*Chinogwi*,’ ‘*Sori Gut Agu*’ created in the 1970s. After 1987, “national drama” was established as the word to represent a progressive theatre (Lee Y.M. 1997a:42-43).

political background. Practices of public dialogue and social participation through madanggŭk were possible through the participation of practical leaders and large organizations such as the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) and the Korean National Council of Churches (K.N.C.C.), which followed the line of social participation.

The first aspect of the practical background is the Christian youth movements' active participation in the public dialogue. Christian youth started to criticize the privatized established churches that were biased toward individual salvation, ignorant of the social context. Soon the Korean Student Christian Federation (K.S.C.F.) was organized in 1969 by delegates of 69 colleges from all over the country. They got together in support of the K.N.C.C. and the W.C.C. By joining a mine, a factory, a wharf, a labor union during school holidays, they experienced the reality of minjung. As a result of the experience and by reading the context from a realistic and a practical standpoint, they joined the anti-dictatorship movement, the campus liberalization movement, the labor movement and the movement for the poor, despite the government's suppression. In 1976, the youth of six denominations were admitted to the K.N.C.C. and joined hands to form the Ecumenical Youth Council (E.Y.C). From the beginning, the E.Y.C. took an active part in the movement for minjung by setting its goal as minjung directivity. The E.Y.C. cultural sub-committee served as a stimulus for the indigenization of Korean Christianity by destroying the Western frame in pursuit of their heritage and the development of minjung culture (Lee D.S. 1984:87).

The second aspect of the practical background is the Urban Industrial Mission. In the early 1960s, Industrial Mission groups were organized primarily for the purpose of industrial evangelism. However, the somatic incarnational experience of the industrial missionaries who were involved in the lives of the workers changed the goal of the Industrial Mission from evangelism to "finding the body of Jesus Christ among the workers themselves." Toward the end of the 1960s, Urban Industrial Mission groups were formed in the Seoul metropolitan area. From the beginning, the basic concern of the Urban Industrial Mission was to develop a powerful system at grassroots level in

order to enable the urban poor to recover their rights and protect their interests. For this purpose, it would provide the urban poor with an education for conscientization, which would help laborers to realize that self-knowledge was a starting point for the recognition of their power and a means of asserting themselves and obtaining their rights and meeting their needs. The Student Development Service Corps (S.D.S.C) organized by the Korean Student Christian Federation (K.S.C.F) was especially physically involved in the situation of workers, farmers, and the urban poor by working in factories and joining in the community organizations. This experience stimulated them to fight for justice and social change; this action became a dynamic thrust not only for the S.D.S.C. but also for Korean Christian student movements as a whole. The experience of the S.D.S.C. also influenced the secular student movements. Afterwards, they came to follow the S.D.S.C. action model for social justice (Suh K.S. 1983:38-43).

The Christian youth and the progressive churches played an important role in the development of public dialogue through madanggük. From the early 1970s, some progressive Korean churches, such as the Seoul Cheil Church, the Saemunan Church and the Kyongdong Church, formed a relationship with cultural public dialogue through madanggük, participating positively in madanggük performances such as *Gold-crowned Jesus*, *Chinogwi* (Soothing Dead Soul), and *Sori Gut Agu* (Shamanistic Ritual in Voice for Hungry Ghost), *Doingil Banjik Munje Haekyulhara* (Solve the Problem of the Doingil Textile Factory). The Christian youth took part in theatre, and church building and various Christian organizations buildings were used for rehearsal and performance places of the theatre as well. The Korean church together with the activists of the cultural movement performed madanggük works at prayer meetings for imprisoned and democratic individuals, or in farming areas, joining in the social service activities of the farming village. In addition, the encounter of Christianity and laborers was a chance to keep close contact with the labor union. The Urban Industrial Mission presented a course on cultural labor education, teaching traditional culture such as *t'alch'um*, *madanggük*, *p'ungmul* (performance of farmer's music) and a short drama. In this way, the Korean church and the madanggük were closely related in the practice of

public dialogue. The madanggŭk and t'alch'um movement of Korean Christianity was a means to the development of cultural public dialogue in society, and served as a stepping-stone for the field-directivity of cultural public dialogue (Park I.B. 1985:437).

4.3.2 The First Performances for Public Dialogue

Cultural public dialogue started collectively in the early 1960s with a view to overcoming the cultural reality of anti-nation and anti-minjung. It was an artistic response to a national situation. When the disgraceful policy of restoring diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan of the Park Chung Hee regime in the early 1960s was confronted with countrywide opposition because it encouraged an unrestricted influx of Japanese culture, a student group from Seoul National University, including some progressive intellectuals, performed the "Shamanistic Ritual to Revive the Spirit of Countryside" (*Hyangto Uishik Chohon Gut*, 1963. 11), which is regarded as the origin of madanggŭk. This performance was presented in the form of traditional peasant's mask-dance theatre. In the following year, about 1,500 college students participated in a performance called "Funeral Ritual of Nationalistic Democracy" (*Minjokchok Mminjujuui Janryesik*, 1964. 5. 22) which was a production with the purpose of opposing the Nationalistic Democracy that the Park Chung Hee regime invented in order to legitimize its dictatorial rule, based on patriarchal authority. The performance is not merely a simple theatrical performance, but rather "active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and draws more efficient or interesting 'designs for living'" (Turner 1986:24). This style of performance, as a struggle, was a distinctive form recreating the atmosphere of 1960s.

4.3.3 Practices of Public Dialogue through Madanggŭk in the 1970s

In the mid-1960s, the madanggŭk as a creative drama arose from people's interest in the traditional folk theatre, and the madanggŭk works aimed to deal with the social reality. During the 1970s, under an oppressive dictatorship and the excessive labor-

intensive industries, the social situation was so uneasy that many unprecedented cases occurred. Responding to such situations, madanggük began to develop a new theatre form through collective and practical experimentation. In a word, the *artistic* madanggük that was re-created from t'alch'um came to enlarge its domain, moving into *social* madanggük, which is a kind of social drama (Lee Y.M. 2001:53).

The majority of madanggük works of the 1970s showed a tendency towards criticism of the unreasonable reality of society which shaped the difficulties and sufferings of minjung. The works dealt with matters falsely reported in the news under the suppression of the press and expression. Here the madanggük functioned as an agency of public dialogue announcing the truth of events, as a substitute for an organ of public opinion when the press was stifled.

With the passage of time, the concept of "*minjung-gŭk*" (minjung theatre) was created, which was a more ideological and practical concept than the creative drama. The *minjung-gŭk* was proposed as an alternative measure for reading reality by dealing with the concrete life and the struggle for the right to live of the minjung. The works in focus are as follows:

Napoleon Cognac satirizing the life of the wealthy classes,

Gold-crowned Jesus embodying the ideal human being that Christianity pursues,

Coppered Lee Soon Shin, the story of a poor taffy seller in 1972,

A Burning Flame performed by college students from the Seoul Cheil Church in the winter of 1972, which dealt with labor problems and cherished the memory of the self-immolation event of Chun Tae Il.

Winter Trees dealt with the joys and sorrows as well as the reality of homeless people, who had their houses demolished and were forcedly expelled from their hometown and driven to the City of Syungnam. This was presented together with the college student department of the Saemunan Church early in 1973.

Although these were once-off performances, they led Christian youth to become

voluntarily more involved in cultural activities.³⁷ Later on, the t'alch'um revival movement tried the modern and creative tradition inheritance, and this linked with the critical realism of a college theatrical group to form "madanggük" as a creative style. The products of these creative efforts were *Chinogwi* (1973), also called *Chyongsan Byulgog*, and *Sori Gut Agu* (1974).

Chinogwi was aimed at change in form, known as an *enlightening theatre* designed to conquer the difficulties of the farming population who suffered from natural disasters and oppression by the landowners and governing classes. It revealed a practical will toward minjung with an extrovert mood and performed in an open area, and with the bold expression of traditional folk performance (Lee Y.M. 2001:47). In order to perform in an agricultural area, it was designed to be performed in the full *madang pan* (open place) excluding all stage factors such as stage setting, stage lights, make-up, and plot division of act and scene. Therefore, *Chinogwi* is acknowledged as the first representative madanggük because, portraying "national pattern" it strove to solve the question of "minjung-oriented form" that previous *minjung theatres* could not solve (Lim J.T. 1990:132; Lee G.R. 1995:32).

With *Chinogwi* as a starting point, the madanggük, satirizing the reality in the form of traditional drama, continued onto *Sori Gut Agu* (Shamanistic Ritual in Voice for Hungry Ghost, 1974).³⁸ *Sori Gut Agu* depicted the continuation of the politico-economic exploitation of Korea by Japan during the time of Japanese colonial rule, and called for the building of a relationship between the two countries based on equality.

The early works of madanggük focused on revealing the truth of matters by dealing with the actual (non-fictional) events. They revealed the direct, field-centered, and

³⁷ These works were confined within a stage style, even though the *minjung* was directive in content and theme. Therefore, the common people could not approach and accept them intimately (Lim J.T. 1990:130).

³⁸ *Sori Gut Agu* shows a transient form of change from the original t'alch'um to creative t'alch'um and madanggük by dealing with the reality of today according to the patterns of traditional performance and by using various expression techniques (Park I.B. 1985:430-431).

immediate characteristics. After the mid-1970s, madanggük as cultural public dialogue visited and performed in the labor field of the common people, making its way through the suppression. Madanggük was not created as a mere drama. Rather, it took on the features of a political movement, and pointed to the field-centered cultural movement. In this way, the madanggük movement began to develop.

In 1974, the anti-*Yushin* movement swept over all university and college campuses to rescind the *Yushin* (Revitalizing Reforms) system of Park Chung Hee and to demand the resignation of the dictatorial Park regime. The organs of public opinion, beginning with the *Tonga-ilbo* (*Tonga (East Asia) Daily News*), set forward the Practical Movement for the Freedom of the Press. In November of the same year, the National Council for Democracy Restoration was established, and the anti-*Yushin* movement spread all over the country. At that time, ta'Ich'um and theatrical groups at colleges gave wings to their imagination by dealing with the political issues through performing art, in spite of a police round-up of students during these political activities.

Madanggük as public dialogue responded to the critical situation of minjung's desires for democratization, the growth of their consciousness, the *Yushin* system and its emergency measures. The pertinent madanggük performances are as follows:

*Kim Sang Jin's Funeral*³⁹ was performed as the funeral of Kim Sang Jin who committed suicide after reading the declaration of anti-*Yushin*.

Chin Tonga Gut (Shamanistic Ritual for East Asia, 1975) dealt with a press corps of the *Tonga-ilbo* (*East Asia Daily Newspaper*) who were dismissed because they demanded freedom of speech. These were examples showing that political activity could not be separated from the cultural movement (Park I.B. 1985:432).

Regarding the national resistance against the *Yushin* regime, the government planned to manipulate the votes. Hence, on 12 February 1975, plebiscite day, the organization

³⁹ He was a student from the National Seoul University. The government cremated his remains without giving him a funeral; thereupon the students went ahead with his funeral and a demonstration of indignation, in November 1974.

for protection of civil rights and churches, including the National Council for Democracy Restoration, planned to hold a movement against the harsh oppression and violence of dictatorship. The activists of madanggük also planned to express their veto by performing madanggük plays throughout the day, in the Myung-dong Catholic Church. But, in the middle of their preparations, they were taken to a police station by the government that had got wind of their plan beforehand. Nevertheless, it set a precedent for coping effectively with political questions through cultural means (Park I.B. 1985:432).

Meanwhile, the government put pressure on colleges by implementing emergency measure no. 9 in 1975 as a precaution against the demonstrations that could occur where performances were taking place. The government insisted on only the original form of t'alch'um and indoor performance instead of an open area called *madang*. At this time, public dialogue through madanggük began to take place in practices outside colleges, consequently the field-oriented activities aiming to reach the minjung increased. The madanggük movement of the 1970s concentrated particularly on the united activity with the labor unions. From the 1970s, the number of laborers formed an overwhelming majority of 50 percent of the working population, increasing from 48 hundred thousand in 1970 to 77 hundred thousand laborers in 1977. There was a high growth in the economy; nonetheless, the working conditions of laborers grew steadily worse. Furthermore, under the influence of a worldwide economic depression, huge delays in payment by Korean enterprises, based on the high degree of foreign dependence, was the order of the day. Under these conditions, the laborers and the labor union members joined with the churches linked to the Urban Industrial Mission to deal with this crisis. At that time, the madanggük activists connected with the church t'alch'um movement met them to practice public dialogue through madanggük. From the autumn of 1977, the Incheon Urban Industrial Mission began to teach t'alch'um or madanggük to the laborers of Dongil textile factory and others. The representative works in the field of labor and peasantry are as follows:

“*Dongil Banjik Munje Haekyulhara*”⁴⁰ (Solve the Problem of the Dongil Textile Factory, 1978) dealing with the case of the labor union members of Dongil Textile Factory who were violently dismissed by the government and had excrement poured over them,

Tucksan-kol Story of 1978 revealing the truth regarding the murder of a person who was working for the removal of shacks under Park Hong Suk, which was misrepresented in the news.

Hamp’yong Koguma (Sweet Potatoes of Hamp’yong County, 1978) portraying the case of the farmers’ disputes regarding the purchase of sweet potatoes in Hampyong, i.e. a fight by peasants who produced sweet potatoes based on the local government’s promise to purchase them, but who were betrayed after all.

*Kongjang-ui pulbit*⁴¹ (Lights from Factory) of 1979 handling the problems of factory workers exploited by capitalists, mainly through songs and dances.

Hamp’yong Koguma was produced especially by the peasants of Hamp’yong by themselves; *Dongil Banjik Munje Haekyulhara* was also a dramatic work through which the workers of Dongil Banjik factory re-enacted their experiences realistically. Consequently, these madanggŭk works aroused great interest among spectators, to such an extent that no division between drama and reality existed. After the performance of “*Chin Tonga Gut*,” there were a report meeting and a prompt fund-raising campaign. In the case of *Dongil Banjik Munje Haekyulhara*, all performers and some spectators were hauled to the police station because of an unexpected demonstration at the very end of the performance. *Hamp’yong Koguma* could create “a communal mood” worthy of madanggŭk as it was presented in the atmosphere of celebrating a triumph of a struggle at a farmers’ meeting place in Hamp’yong province (cf. Chae & Lim 1982:73-83; Lee Y.M. 2001:48-49).

⁴⁰ It has a significant meaning in that the discharged employees of Dongil Textile participated in its production and cast it by themselves (Lee Y.M. 2001:49).

⁴¹ It was a style of song-*gut* recorded on cassette with the support of the Association of Social Mission of the Korean Church, and it influenced the succeeding song movement and dance form afterwards (Lim J.T. 1990:27; Lee Y.M. 2001:52).

While the madanggük works mentioned above dealt with actual cases, there are works that selected fictional material to give shape to a society or an individual at that time. The works were adapted from the plays that did not belong to a madanggük pattern, and were rewritten into the madanggük mode and performed in the style of madanggük. The fictional works dealing with the minjung reality are as follows:

Toeji kkum (A Dream of Pig, 1977) was adapted from Hwang Suk Young's novel. *Dong Myung* (Eastern Brightness), *Massgame* (1978) and *Nobimunseo* (Slave Documentary, 1979) were adapted from the original by Yoon Dae Sung.

Toeji kkum portrayed rag pickers' miserable stories of a day in the form of a combatant group dance and a march to express their iron will, rather than desperation.

Nobimunseo dramatized the reality of the ruler's deception and oppression of the ruled people with a story about the reality of a slave at the end of the Korean dynasty. It is the story about the promised emancipation of slaves which was not fulfilled; the slaves then resisted desperately against the government force and died a heroic death. This performance continued into another demonstration as a follow-up program where the audience joined in spontaneously (Lim J.T. 1990:28). These are acknowledged as ambitious pieces of work as they carried a strong social criticism and minjung consciousness. They also attempted to establish the unique principle of madanggük style through new styles and techniques (Lee Y.M. 2001:50).

Miyal (1979) modernized the character "*Miyal*" who was a representative woman image in t'alch'um, as a stereotype of the lower class of minjung women of today, who left the farmland and was employed in the factory but was dismissed as a result of a fight against the vicious enterprise. At last she met a tragic end by becoming a prostitute.

Yesu'ui Sang-ae (Life of Jesus, 1977) and *Yesu-cheon* (Biography of Jesus, 1978) were written as scripts for a meeting of A Youth Christians United Association. These were dramatic works that carried out public dialogue for minjung by the confluence of

the Jesus story with the present Korean minjung story.⁴² Other Christian works of the confluence are *Yeun* (Prophecy, 1976) dealing with the theme of the temptation in the desert and performed at the place of a Christian youths united meeting, *Aesooni* (1975) dealing with Esther's life, *Minjung Haebang Nori* (National Liberation Play, 1975) addressing the theme of Exodus and national liberation, and *Minjung-ui Yesu* (Jesus of Minjung, 1980) and *Chukunja Kaundaeso Ilunara* (Rise from among the Dead, 1981).

In the practicing process, the form of expression became diverse. The madanggük of those times was a work revealing the truth about minjung matters in public; consequently, it was performed in narrative style with realistic description. In addition, it gradually took on a strong field-centered and politico-social character, because it was co-operatively written by the people concerned and was performed by them. Therefore, it was characterized as an open drama to give rise to active participation of the the audience. On the other hand, madanggük positively adopted the principles of traditional t'alch'um such as the episodic structure and setting, the participative method of conveying the line, the practical use of space and time, the operation of *madang pan* and so on. The integration of realistic narrative techniques and principles of traditional t'alch'um led to the creation of the unique principle of madanggük.

In spite of the oppressive situation, the public dialogue through madanggük solidified its peculiar cultural footing, joining with socially participative churches and the influential organizations of the minjung movement and of the democracy movement as well as with activities in colleges. At this time, night schools for workers tried a short drama and role-play, and the Christian Academy presented cultural trials in educational courses for peasants and workers. These cultural efforts of minjung influenced the activities of public dialogue through madanggük of the 1980s.

⁴² Because of its features of the mask dance, it was called "a creative mask dance" (Lee Y.M. 2001:50).

4.3.4 Practices of Public Dialogue through *Madanggŭk* in the 1980s

In the spring of 1980, cultural public dialogue entered a new phase through a flood of madanggŭk performances. After the collapse of Park Chung Hee's Yushin dictatorship in 10, 26, 1979, political activity by students grew, and the scope of the cultural movement began to extend into the fine arts, movies, and *p'ungmul* (traditional Korean peasant music) movement as well as the t'alch'um or madanggŭk movement. The Minjung Cultural Movement Association was established in 1984, covering wide spheres such as freedom of speech and the press, women, religion and education including art (Choe S.W. 1988:63). The minjung cultural movement spread to the common people and increased in size leading the "demonstration-culture" in the 1980s, to such an extent that it was called the "madanggŭk age."

What is the reason for the popularity of madanggŭk or creative t'alch'um? Between 1980 and 1987, the dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan, achieved through his military coup, provoked large scale resistance and a great many demonstrations. Under such circumstances, a long-term popular assembly for thousands or tens of thousands of people was required, and such an assembly could not be maintained only by political slogans. An assembly-culture different from that of the 1970s was needed in the 1980s. Consequently, the cultural performances took the lead in public dialogue of those assemblies (Lee Y.M. 2001:53; 1997a:14).

4.3.4.1 Proxy Assembly

From the start, madanggŭk took the lead in the student political activities and assemblies of colleges in the 1980s (Lee Y.M. 1997a:15). After ideological circles in the social sciences were forcibly broken up, the cultural or theatrical circles undertook public dialogue through madanggŭk or creative t'alch'um. The students, who could not open the political rally under the oppressive regime, discovered a new channel for expression through the medium of cultural performance. A great many college

campuses, including Seoul National University, held the so-called “*madang pan*” every week. In the open places where almost all college or university students got together, madanggük was performed, depicting the political reality in a creative t'alch'um or madanggük style. This meant that madanggük was a kind of “proxy assembly,” which is why it was often followed by a demonstration. Even if the quality of madanggük works was below standard, madanggük performance was an effective means of public dialogue, arousing the collective sympathies of college students.

During this period, the works of the 1970s, such as *Chin Tonga Gut*, “*Kim Sang Jin's Funeral*” and *Dongil Bangjik Munje Haekyulhara!*, were performed again. On the other hand, new plays were created in 1980:

Nocktu Kott (Green Gram Flower), *Nodong'ui Hoetpul* (the Torch of the Labor) dealing with labor disputes,

Doohwan Chu'm (Doohwan dance) criticizing Chun Doo-Hwan's *coup d'etat* and the behind-the-scenes immoral collaboration with and endorsement of foreign powers, especially the U.S.A.,

Kangjaengi Darijaengi (River Monger and Bridge Monger) also dealing with a satirical criticism of Chun Doo Hwan, concerning the power of the elite's privatization of public policy and their distortion of history at the expense of innocent people.

Kwanak Gut and *Sawryul Gut* are memorial festivals of the April 19 Revolution of 1960, while *Hatnim-kwa Dalnim* (the Sun and the Moon) and *Namsae Gut Nori* (A Play for Shamanistic Ritual of Smell) address social issues.

The madanggük movement introduced a new dimension of subversion into the dominant group. Experiencing subversion with regard to the theme and structure of the dramas provides the performers with an opportunity to transform its art into a cultural mechanism for political discourse, through which people can build a new vision of community through political discourse. Because of this, the player and the audience have become, actively or passively, stigmatized in the establishment's view, as both producer and consumer of a new political discourse. For these reasons, madanggük

became the target of official pressure.

The madanggük in the early 1980s was performed in the field of labor and on the peasant front as well as in college students' rallies. During this period, the activities of the labor unions of Dongil-bangjik, Bando, Wonpung-mobang were strengthened, and the peasants' movement was developed through peasant organizations including the Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne (J.O.C: Catholic Young Laborers Association). The t'alch'um circles organized there were at the centre of cultural public dialogue. Since anti-governmental criticism and the challenge to state authority were not permitted, people had to seek a disguised form of resistance. Under these circumstances, madanggük provided a major space for political and social discourse. Through the performance art of madanggük, old issues were revived in order to seek new interpretations in a public space. To use metaphorical language, they raised political questions on current issues of human rights and social justice.

Cultural public dialogue in the field of labor and agriculture, summoning up labor's courage and self-confidence, helped people to manage the so-called "*Nodongja Noripan*" (the worker's play centre) by themselves by filling madanggük with their real experiences of life. One of the famous works of the "worker's play centre" is *Yangbangua Maltuki-ui Tae'rib* (Antagonism between the Aristocratic and his Servant *Maltuki*) created by members of the labor union of the Wonpung woollen textile factory in Daerim-dong, Seoul, and performed at the commemorative ceremony of Labor Day in March 1980. Adapted from a *Maltuki* episode of t'alch'um, it attacked a company manager, satirized a vicious entrepreneur, and made the antagonism between the laborers and the president of the company a main point in the dispute. Evaluated as a drama work, this greatly enhanced the sense of reality and context (Lim J.T. 1990:137-138).

The madanggük works for laborers and farmers in the early and mid-1980s are as follows:

“*Toeji p’uri*” (Pig’s Shamanistic Ritual) portraying the pig market crisis at the end of the 1970s that epitomized the current issue of rural economic instability, and which was performed at Kwangju YMCA and farm villages in March 1980,

Pungnyun Pungnyun Ttongpungnyun (Bumper Year, Bumper Year, A Dung Bumper Year) showing the optimistic view of farmers in fighting against an increase in the government purchase price of rice,

Nomo-gane (Pass Over) describing the laborers’ suffering as a result of being dismissed for fighting for improved working conditions,

Jang p’uri (Shamanistic Ritual for a Market) describing a struggle for the right to live by merchants of Osige local market in Donglae in Pusan province,

Nong p’uri (Shamanistic Ritual for Agricultural Village) performed on the subject of peasants’ problems in farming villages in Jinju province,

Uridry Tasi Iryosunun Nal (Our Re-standing Day) which was a cooperative composition by union members of the Chungje clothing factory and their stories,

Chamminjok Haebang-ul uihan Korri-Gut (Shamanistic Ritual for True National Liberation) warning against national survival being dependent on powerful countries,

Kaksuri Mo’ydyun Nal (A beggar’s Meeting Day) performed by a group of oppressed people at a unity festival in Bogumzari village,

Somorital gut (Shamanistic Ritual with a Cow Mask) in which the cows indigenous to Korea as well as farmers appeared on stage in order to object against the import of agricultural and stockbreeding products including imported beef,

Oh Han-sub gut (Shamanistic Ritual for Oh Han Sub) which is a story of an heir to farming, Oh Han Sub, who committed suicide because of bad debts,

Ssal p’uri (Shamanistic Ritual for Rice): Here rice symbolizes Korea’s struggle against the Western world. The drama criticized the way the government dealt with the Uruguay Round Table Talks by depicting how rural agriculture and the traditional Korean cultural identity would be destroyed by an influx of foreign capital and culture. Practices toward peasants and workers also marked the madanggük by the mid-1980s.

These madanggük works are inclined to conjoin closely with the minjung movement because madanggük or t’alch’um was the only medium through which laborers could

express their reality.

4.3.4.2 Labor Drama

With 1987 as its starting point, madanggük began to show the features of the public dialogue for laborers and farmers much more strongly. Before this, public dialogue through madanggük underwent a temporary stoppage during the oppressive political phase between 1985 and 1986.⁴³ The leading figures took advantage of the standstill period by concentrating on writing about the history and the principles of madanggük. On the other hand, the existing theatre troupes, for instance, the Yonu-mudae, also attempted the modernization of traditional performance.⁴⁴

However, the retrogression of cultural public dialogue was overcome by the efforts of the activists of the madanggük movement, and the period of public dialogue for workers began in earnest. The June Democratization movement of 1987, which aimed at fighting against the dictatorship to prolong the life of Chun Doo Hwan's regime, caused the government to proclaim "the June 29 Declaration." The 6.29 Declaration made it possible to hold a presidential election according to the revised constitution, to release political prisoners, and to secure the freedom of press and speech. Right after the June Resistance, the so-called "Great Labor Strife" broke out on a nationwide scale and lasted from July to August and September of the same year.

In addition, with the turning point to appeasement of a government policy, freedom was given to some extent to the performing art movement. During this time, many madanggük works with formally controlled and suppressed themes poured out (Lim J.T.

⁴³ College madanggük during this period declined not only because of the oppressive situation, but also because of the lack of creative power for madanggük and field experiences with which to fill the contents of madanggük.

⁴⁴ Compared with the previous madanggük from college, labor and peasant in their field of work, the dramas "in" the stage space focused on a stage-formalization of folk theme, and so they did not represent the vivid reality that was a characteristic of madanggük performed on "*madang*" outside the established art world. Therefore, it had its limitations in that it confined the folk performance's living force to the stage.

1990:148), and public dialogue through performing art became widely active in a lawful space.⁴⁵ This was the emergence of “a full labor theatre.”

The labor theatre at that time was characterized by an expression of the labor reality focusing on cases representative of the struggle. It aimed to support the struggle, so each dramatic work was performed provincially between 100 or 150 times. According to Rah Won Sick (1989:11), the t'alch'um or madanggük clubs, which were organized in the work place, played a role in increasing the laborers' consciousness and thus drew the masses into cultural public dialogue. He goes on: “The activities of t'alch'um or madanggük contributed much to the achievement of victory for labor dispute by bolstering their enthusiasm for strife.”

The works written after the mid-1980s focused on revealing the collective struggles of minjung against the social contradictions, which is a typical trend in madanggük. The case runs as follows:

Haetaejegwa Nodongjangui Sarye-gŭk (A Case Drama of Labor Strife at the Haetae Confectionary Company) dramatized the struggle process for women's right to work in 1985.

Sunbong-e Soso (In the Van) treated the Guro collective strife of 1985.

The labor drama of spring of 1987 began with *Shuetmul-cherum* (Like a Rust Stain) and *Uottyon Sang-il nal* (A Certain Birthday) that were performed for workers in a small cultural space of the Guro industrial complex in Seoul (Lee Y.M. 1991:453).

Saenalul Yonun Saramdul (People Opening a New Day) reported the struggle case of a mine in Taebak, Kwangwon province.

Uri Syungli-harira (We shall Win!) described women's labor struggle of the Free Fashion of German Clothing Company in the City of Irry.

Makjang-ul Ganda (Going to Mine) portrayed the struggle of Samchyuk Mine

⁴⁵ As the first “*Minjokgŭk Hanmadang*” (folk drama festival) started throughout the country in March and April 1988, and the “Association for National Folk Drama Movement” was organized in July, the madanggük movement performed nationwide both nominally and literally.

Industry in Kwangwon province.⁴⁶

Hoetpul (Torch), *Nodingja-ui Saebyuk* (Laborer's Dawn), *Don Nolbu-jun* (Korean Scrooge), *Kkyuptegirul Byutkoso* (Taking Off a Shell) were performed by the theatrical troupe "Hyunjang." *Uri Gongjang I'yagi* (A Story of Our Factory), *Ilto-ui Hamsung* (A Great Outcry from Working Place) were performed by "Noripae Handurye." *Huttojimyun Juknunda* of 1989 (If Scattered, We shall Die), *Dongjiyo! Nowa Hamkkeramyun* (Comrade! If We are Together), *Pass Dujang, Pirohwoebokje Hanal* (Two Pieces of PAS, One Pill of Fatigue-Recovering Medicine) and *Himchan Saenal-ul Hyanghoe* (Toward a Powerful New Day) were performed by "Noripae Ilteo."

Among them *Huttojimyun Juknunda* (If Scattered, We shall Die) in particular were made with the aim of supporting all the other struggles for wage increases, by dramatizing the exemplary struggle case for wage increases of the Changwon Sammi Metal Company.

Minjukkotshinparam (Democratic Flower and New Wind) portrayed the fight of the democratic labor union against the contemptible maneuvers of the union of Apollo Shoe-making Factory in the City of Pusan.

Ddaldul-a Iryunara (Daughters, Stand up!) dealt with the struggle case of the Junil Textile Company of the City of Kwangju.

Meeting spontaneous audiences collectively and continuously through a tour all over the country, performing each play dozens or hundreds of times, these labor madanggük performances tested the madanggük pattern and popularized it at last.

On the other hand, the peasant madanggük was performed against the backdrop of the great peasants' movement which started in 1989. For instances, *Homi pu'ri* (A Story of a Hoe), *A'chum'ma Manse!* (Woman, Hurrah!) and *Hwangso Ul'um* (Cow's Tear)

⁴⁶ *Uri Syungli-harira!* (We shall Win!) and *Makjang-ul Ganda* (Going to mine), made by the 'Handurye' theatrical troupe in cooperation with the Korean Women's Labor Association during the period of July and August Great Strife, were favourably received by the workers as they dealt with the vivid reality of the labor field and the laborers' optimism and dynamism. That point contrasted strikingly with the works of college madanggük and professional theatrical troupes that showed stylized performances and idealialism.

portrayed the reality of rural problems, touring through agricultural villages. Besides this, there were *Woel'kub Toduk* (Salary Thief) dealing with labor problems, and *Sunsaem'yo* (Teacher!) dealing with educational problems. As mentioned above, the characteristics of madanggŭk as public dialogue after the mid-1980s are condensed in the labor and peasant drama (Lee Y.M. 2001:59-62; 1997a:82,197).

Meanwhile, there is the madanggŭk that deals not with contemporary events but with the past historical events and struggles.

Horangi Nory (Tiger Play, 1981) and *Ilosoneun Saramdl* (Standing People, 1988) dealt with the Kwangju May Resistance of 1980.

Hanlasan (Hanla Mountain) portrayed the historical event of the 3.1 Mass Slaughter of Cheju island directly after the 1945 Liberation of Korea.

Zam'nyo pu'ri (A Shamanistic ritual for Women Divers) showed the struggle of the women divers' of Sehwa village on Cheju island under the rule of Japanese imperialism.

Gab'ose Ga'bose (Gab'ose Let's go! 1988) dealt with the historical event of the *Donghak* Revolution of 1894.⁴⁷

Iddang'un Nikang Nakang (This Land, Mine or Yours?) relived the massacre of the innocent people of Kuechang.

4.3.5 New Attempts for Cultural Public Dialogue

The public dialogue of the 1980s lays its emphasis through its performances on the inspiration of the collective spirit and on spreading propaganda on a large scale. By ensuring the collective spirit, referred to as *shinmyong*, in the field of student activities and popular assemblies, cultural public dialogue distilled the recognition and the emotion of the people into one, bringing about a voluntary participation in the social movement. After the Gwangju Resistance of May 1980, as new trials of cultural public dialogue, the concepts such as "*madang gut*," "*daedong nori*," "*chongŭk*" and "*tal nori*"

⁴⁷ *Donghak* Revolution is the revolution that the faithful followers of *Donghak* religion took in leading the protest against the governor's corruption and foreign invasion in 1894.

were proposed. These aimed to strengthen both social participation and the sense of festivity. The purpose was to intensify the directivity toward minjung and their field through “the spirit of play” (Chae & Lim 1982:85).⁴⁸

4.3.5.1 From *Madanggŭk* To *Madanggut*

As a much more progressive and broader notion and praxis became necessary, and in an effort to solve the ideology and mode of performance an article by Chae Hee Wan and Lim Jin Taek (1982:69-87,139) “*From Madanggŭk to Madanggut*” appeared. The literal meaning of *gut* is “a ritual for exorcism.” However, here “*gut*” indicates “festivity of the community” taking root in the life of minjung. The “from *madanggŭk* to *madanggut*” established some guidelines. Firstly, *madanggut* emphasized the need to overcome a Western dramatic mode and to adopt an expressive form of traditional folk performance. It thus suggested that *madang* (an open place for *madanggŭk* performance) should be the central place for *madanggut* and for a field-centered social movement and the collective spirit, *shinmyong*. Secondly, beyond a mere performance tour or an invitation performance, *madanggut* pursued harmony with the assemblies and the events making “life, play, and fight.” Thirdly, to spearhead the cultural and social movements in this age, it should utilize much more diverse expressive media. In one word, the “from *gŭk* to *gut*” implies not a change of expressive mode, but rather a shift from performance-centered to assembly-centered, and from culture to social movement. It is a proclamation of a close relationship with the social movement creating a minjung assembly.

The *madanggut* laid great emphasis on social movement directivity, but was a mere name or an ideological notion in the coercive political atmosphere (Lim J.T. 1990:140). Nevertheless, after 1987, attempts to practice *madanggut* emerged; including *Liberation gut*, *Unification gut*, *Labor gut*, *Street gut* at the tenth anniversary celebration of the Gwangju Resistance, and *Kkotdazi*, that is, a “singing gut” (Lim J.T. 1990:149).

⁴⁸ Chae Hee Wan and Lim Jin Taek (1982:85) insisted, “The representative spirit of *madanggŭk* is “play-spirit” and “*madang*-spirit.”

4.3.5.2 Life Drama, Short Drama and *Talnori* (Mask Play)

The activists of cultural public dialogue, who had contact with farm villages and laborers, realized the necessity for the simplification of the art form for participation in minjung's reality and society. In the field of labor and peasant, some of the theatrical group proposed "life drama," a kind of amateur drama that the workers created by themselves and in co-operation with co-workers in their life field.⁴⁹ "Short drama" was highly thought of in that it suggested a concrete alternative plan to life drama or life education drama with an easy approach based on the *madang* formative principle of t'alch'um (Lim J.T. 1990:144). "*Talnori*" was suggested by the t'alch'um study group when they were in the process of exploring ways to revitalize t'alch'um for effective public dialogue in the present day. It is a style of play in which performers wear a mask and dance out a simple plot during a village or street festival.

These kinds of madanggük are "educational" dramas rather than events or assemblies (Lee Y.M. 2001:86-87). They are part of the programs for non-professionals' self-development or conscientization. So the effect of madanggük as educational drama is not merely confined to recognition and awareness, but encompasses also the acquisition of positive self-expression and confidence, and identifies and intensifies collectivity and community-spirit. This awareness and communal experience allow the participants to experience a voluntary participation in the world.

4.3.5.3 *Daedong Nori*

"*Daedong Nori*" (literally meaning "a play in solidarity") emphasized the festivity, reconciliation and the unity of the community, while *madang-gut* focused on the directivity of political rallies and social movements through collective *shinmyong* (Lim

⁴⁹ A successful case of public dialogue through a life drama is "*Datzzi puri*" performed by a drama group of housewives called *Dong-uri*, and "Daughter play *madang*" (*Talnori madang*) performed at a function of Women's Equal Fellowship. The reason these live dramas were successful is that groups with common social background performed them voluntarily. However, it has the limitation of mere artificial "drama-making" portraying personal troubles instead of common social consciousness, which results in the loss of collective cohesion.

J.T. 1990:143). Ryu Hae Jung's (1985:155-159) theory of *daedong nori* is emphatic on the need for conscious *daedong nori*, urging the importance of "*Chon-gŭk* (a short drama)." On the assumption that "t'alch'um of today is a short drama *concours* of minjung of today," he regarded a play in the life field as the new *daedong nori* of the present day, consisting of short drama *concours*→ chaotic festival→ group dancing→ candlelight ritual, based on the structure of traditional *daedong nori*⁵⁰. On the other hand, Kim Sung Jin's (1983) theory is a modern seasonal *daedong nori*, setting its core in communal play such as *p'ungmul*, a frantic festival and group fighting-play in a passage ritual.

Daedong Nori, which laid stress on collective *shinmyong* and communal relationships, was used as a cultural mechanism for public dialogue in both large and small communities. In fact, *daedong nori* with *p'ungmul*, a tug of war, a singing contest, and a party piece contest was used to solidify the community very effectively during college festivals or cultural festivals of the workers.

4.3.5.4 *Daedonggut* and *Jipchye-gŭk* (Collective Drama)

The concept of "*daedong gut*" appeared to consolidate the directivity of the social movement much more than "*daedong nori*" which advocated festivity and the play spirit.⁵¹ A representative model of *daedong gut* that concentrated all the desires of the community is "*Kkotdazi of Noraepangut*," a large-scale public performance. *Kkotdazi* attempted public dialogue with the collective *shinmyong* in order to solve the workers' common issues by dealing with the reality of the laborer audiences as a theme, thus encouraging active social participation by the audience. It strengthened the totality of life and art, and the collective *shinmyong* among spectators, which are distinctive features of '*gut*' (Park I.B. 1993:30). At the same time, along with such festivity it

⁵⁰ The traditional order is street parades (*kil nori*) → chaotic festival (*nanjang*)→ group dancing (*kunmu*)→ mask dance play (*tal nori*)→ ending play (*dwit p'uri*).

⁵¹ The principle of "*gut*" is to release "*han*" of *minjung*. "*Gut*" means that the humans and god enjoy resolving problems together in the process of the play, so the place of "*gut*" indicates the place of "play" (Moon M.M. 1994:140-141; Park I.B. 1987:163-164).

revealed the circumstances and struggles of the public through a combination of diverse genres such as song, drama, *p'ungmul*, dance, poem recitation, and pictures.

In the 1980s the minjung movement increased in size, and public assemblies were open on a large scale. To meet the needs of the times, the madanggŭk performances were also large in size, and focused on festivities in the mode of "total art." As a result, in the latter half of the decade, *Jipchye-gŭk* (Collective Drama) emerged as a new performance art. This was a kind of "total drama" which is formed through a combination of all sorts of media such as music, dance, pictures etc. Besides "*Kkotdazi of Noraepangut*" (1989~1994, 1999), "*Gobu Yuksamazi Gut*" (1984), "*Daedong Jangseunggut for National Unification*" and "*The World Where Minjung Becomes the Host*"(1988) continue to be performed annually by the Minjung Cultural Movement Association as Collective Dramas.

The madanggŭk of the 1980s continued to dramatize the reality of the suffering minjung as it had done during the 1970s. When the government banned speech and writing on a broad scale, many performances mainly covered the facts and events. At the end of the 1980s labor and peasant drama in particular became the main channel for public dialogue through madanggŭk.

As has been noted above, even the characteristics of the style of madanggŭk are connected to the ideological values. In the development of the madanggŭk movement, various concepts were proposed, such as creative drama, minjung drama, field drama, creative *t'alch'um*, *madang-gut*, situational drama, life drama, short drama, *tal-nori* (mask play), *drama-nori* (drama-play), *daedong-nori*, *daedong-gut*, drama of the workers, *noraepangut*, *street-gut*,⁵² and collective drama. Through these dramatic forms the principles of festivity and community became strengthened in a social movement-oriented public dialogue through madanggŭk. These concepts embrace the

⁵² *Street-gut* is an effort to integrate performance with political activity, for instance, "*Streetgut for the True National Liberation*" (1984).

meaning of both the notion of value and of style, and the practical methodology of a performing group. As such, madanggük is not fixed in the style of madanggük but adapts itself to public dialogue with minjung.

Park In Bae (1991:2) explains that the cultural public dialogue through performance art developed on the basis of “three roots of madanggük,” which correspond to the three stages of the development of madanggük. Firstly, it started to form a creative and realistic drama movement, which can be seen as the first root. The second root is the t'alch'um revival movement. In the 1960s minjung consciousness was understood through the lines and contents of the Korean mask dance t'alch'um; in the 1970s the open structure of the *madang pan* and movements based on *shinmyong* of the populace began to be understood through a new type of creative t'alch'um; and in the 1980s the expression of collective *shinmyong* emerged strongly in madanggük, which was not a simple mask dance drama, but a creative and modern application of community culture. The third root is a cultural movement in the field of reality, which originated from making good use of the cultural medium in the agrarian and labor movements. Reaching this root or stage, it was possible for the madanggük to overcome both a mode-centered and a mode-despised perspective, by recognizing the practical attitude and activity of participants beyond the aesthetic or mode-centered pattern. Madanggük played the role of a mechanism for a rich and varied self-expression of minjung reality, from which the public could gain a sense of minjung.

Therefore, as mentioned before, a distinctive characteristic of madanggük as cultural public dialogue is to reflect the reality of minjung life directly in the drama. Madanggük emerged from the practical concern and the expression of reality rather than from pure dramatic experiment (Yeo K.D. 1986:163). Indeed, madanggük developed together with minjung under the Korean national, ethnic and socio-political situation, because it is an activity of artistic expression produced when the practices of justice, peace, and human rights coincided under uncertain circumstances. It was a critical discourse *by* minjung and *for* minjung. That is why madanggük as public dialogue is described as “minjung-

oriented performance art for social change” beyond “a form of art in *madang* (public space).” In this respect, madanggük differed from the established theatre that followed the market trends and targeted particular spectators.

4.4 Interpretation on the Communicability of Madanggük

Public dialogue through madanggük should be described in terms of the subject, the approach to the subject, and the basic ideology that is followed, because it was more than a performing art in a *madang* space. Thus Chae Hee Wan and Lim Jin Taek (1982:70) describe madanggük as “a concept of value with an ideological system, which is difficult to understand with the explanation of the word only. It is a new ideology created in the process of exploring what the real spirit of theatre is.” It is thus necessary to understand the practical and ideological spheres of madanggük as well as its artistic sphere. In the process of observing who the subject or owner of madanggük is, “the possibilities and limitations of communicability” of madanggük will be explored: its structures; practical approaches to minjung; its ideology; characteristics; meanings and limitations of the practice of the madanggük movement.

4.4.1 Rediscovery of the Populace (Minjung)

The concern with minjung occurred in both artistic and social spheres. Confronting the reality of minjung alienation in these two spheres, madanggük begins by asking some questions—who should be the main audience, who is the subject of the theatre/drama, and who is the subject of the nation. As has already been explained, the reflection on the loss of traditional heritage and indiscriminately imported Western drama, from which madanggük appeared, meant a criticism of the “anti-minjung directivity” (Lee Y.M. 1997a:35) of the contemporary dramas that had alienated the ordinary people (minjung) from art. The rediscovery of minjung and the awareness of national cultural tradition together formed madanggük. Reflecting on the fact that modern theatre had

become an exclusive art form for a small number of intellectuals only and one which did not deal with the actual lives of the common people, madanggük approached minjung with the purpose of helping them to become the subject of reforming art-culture and society. As Kang Young Hee (1989:193-194) notes, the madanggük movement, resolutely adopting self-renewal by rejecting the mode of imported Western art, became a decisive switchover to the establishment of the “popular orthodoxy of the reformative art movement.” In the process, madanggük has performed public dialogue as a new way to communicate culturally with minjung and to establish minjung’s own initiative.

The concern with minjung is, however, not simply confined to an artistic sphere, but has advanced to accept minjung as “the reformative subject of society” as well as the subject of art. The minjung-oriented madanggük, recognizing minjung as the subject of expression, played an important role as an artistic medium for public discourse under an oppressive social system.

Voluntary Participation: The major premise of the populace-centered approach is based on “minjung’s own initiative.” This is revealed, first of all, in that the spectators are accepted as participants. In madanggük performances, there is no sharp distinction between the performer and the audience, which is quite different from conventional drama in which a stage demarcates the theatrical arena from the audience. In most of modern dramas, the theatre concerned selects a specific performance independently, while the audience maintains a passive role and is made up of strangers who have no prior relationship to each other. They do not experience any shared joy or participation during a performance. On the contrary, during madanggük performances, the audience is an indispensable element of the whole drama. The reason is that madanggük is a drama which is created not only unilaterally by performers but also by the active intervention of the audience and is performed through an incessant, direct communication between players and spectators. Through shared dialogue between the two groups, and through the audience’s participation in the whole theatre in a very

open atmosphere, the meaning and symbols of the play are dramatically transmitted from actors to audience.

What is typical of madanggük is the audience's experience of sharing the message through "their voluntary participation" in the play. In order to maximize the degree of audience participation, copies of the songs are distributed among them so that they can join in the singing when necessary. During the performance the audience participates in it with appropriate responses such as clapping or certain gestures and cries such as "*olssu!* (Yippee!)" "*olshigu!* (Whoopee!)" and "*chot'a!* (Hurray!)" (Kim K.O. 1997:14). Kim Kwang Ok (1997:11-12) notes that "dialogue is frequent between actors and audience, and the audience responds to the questions and requests of the actors. ... All the audience joins the actors in unveiling the power elites' hypocrisy, greediness, corruption, violation of social justice, and distortion of popular history and so on. After some show of lamentation, the oppressed begin to ridicule the established authority in their own way." At the climax, the drama portrays the victory over evil elements. As Kim Kwang Ok (1997:12) states, "overwhelmed by the joy of the people's victory, all the participants join hands and sing ... and dance" with the performers, or they "raise their fists and shout political slogans at particular dramatic situations" (Kim K.O. 1997:11) in the middle or at the end of the drama. Thus all participants share in the creation of their own communal world.

The fact that *p'ungmul nori* (dancing play with Korean peasant music) is a favorite among the common people before and after madanggük and t'alch'um performances show their voluntary desire to play and to speak rather than merely to listen and watch. In this manner, madanggük becomes a new medium for realizing their participative will, and for developing a new consciousness by focusing their participative power (Kim S.J. 1983:139).

Openness: The space of "*madang*" is also a decisive factor in acceptance of the audience, who are usually minjung (the common people), as the subject of public

dialogue through performance. Madanggük performances are mainly held in a large open door space or a round open area surrounded by spectators, instead of on a conventional stage in a well-appointed theatre. Here, “openness” of space and time is of greatest importance. The open round space of the performance fosters a sense of self-initiative and spontaneity in minjung, which raises the audience’s group spirit. Madanggük does not use stage sets or props, or flats, which divide the performance area into smaller sections.

Lee Yong Mi (1997b:50) explains: “Unlike a proscenium stage where everyone in the audience has the same directional view and where a fixed stage set and a number of props are used, madanggük audiences view the event sitting in a complete circle, all facing the center.” They watch the center of the *madang*, but at the same time they can also easily see the persons sitting next to them or across from them on the other side of the *madang*. Consequently it is possible that “they laugh at the performers from their own viewpoints, but each also shares in the laughter of the people on the other side.” With “multiple perspectives,” the performer and the audience enjoy reacting to each other as a unified group (Lee Y.M. 1997b:50).

Kim Kwang Ok (1997:9) comments on the power of openness as follows: “By sharing a space on the same level, actors and the audience are united to destroy the demarcation lines between themselves, and to deconstruct the wall between the ordinary and the ‘extra’-ordinary world or that between normal and abnormal. ... The madanggük constructs a communal space in which all differentiation and heterogeneity cease to exist throughout the performance.”⁵³ In one word, it provides a space in which both share in the experience of creating a new world.

Creative Ability: Public dialogue through madanggük also devotes itself improving minjung’s creative cultural power. In the madanggük world, minjung is finally

⁵³ That is why even though it is not held outdoors, a performance can be considered as *madanggük* if the performance is held in an open atmosphere, and so a semicircular or fan-shaped performance area is acceptable, provided it is used like a circular space.

perceived as a creative person who has the faculty to produce popular culture fundamentally as well as a participant and the subject of dialogue. Madanggük itself functions as an opportunity to show off their creative ability while participating in collective writing and producing of madanggük works. One participates in madanggük not only to share a particular message, but also to project one's ideas onto the message. In this aspect, the participants both produce and receive what is generated by the drama.

Madanggük acknowledges minjung as participants in a performance, as subjects of public dialogue through the performing art, and further, as persons with a creative power in producing a dialogic play. It evokes a world of renewal and creativity. The most important point is the fact that this concern with minjung results in a change in the concept of minjung from a "stationary understanding" that considers minjung as the oppressed class to a "dynamic understanding" that regards minjung as the subject of history and a reformative being (Jung C.Y. 1984:157-158). In madanggük, the audience (who is mainly minjung including students and activists) is not only the object but also the subject of performance. The minjung-inclined public dialogue throughout madanggük strengthens the communal spirit and the participative spirit of "we are one," and goes beyond the demarcation paradigm of "subject and object."

4.4.2 Re-Creation of Traditional Folk Culture

The madanggük movement for public dialogue is a new starting point, as mentioned above, in that it acknowledges the function of art as a new method of communication accepting minjung as the subject of art and society. Popular directivity in the dimension of art means looking at the contemporary phenomenon squarely with minjung's eyes and putting oneself in minjung's place. Therefore, Lim Jin Taek (1990:14-16) asserts that "the culture that does not deal with minjung reality such as their suffering, joy and sorrow is difficult to call true culture." It means that the value of a performance depends not on the character of the dramatic piece itself, but on whether it deals with the reality

of minjung or not, and whether all minjung can accept and enjoy it or not.

Madanggük is of significance in that a new performing art for public dialogue was independently created on the basis “not of the foreign but of the Korean native” when the Korean culture had reached an extreme point in the extinction of traditional culture through the reckless import of Western culture and the government’s restoration of traditional culture. In a word, madanggük is a product of a reflection on the transplantation and imitation of Western drama. At the same time, with the subjective consciousness of art, it has the character of positively developing Korean traditional performing art that had been undervalued since the colonial period (Lee Y.M. 2001:70).

Madanggük used traditional Korean culture such as *p’ungmul*, *t’alch’um* including traditional peasant musical instruments like the drum, *changgo* and folk song to develop public discourse by minjung and for minjung. These had been invented by the minjung themselves and they had enjoyed them without the special instructions of professionals. Therefore, on the premise that the minjung of today can also create and enjoy them just as the minjung of the past did, madanggük used the patterns of traditional culture. As already mentioned, college students who participated in the madanggük movement discovered a space to achieve the re-creation of national culture and the restoration of minjung-directivity in “Korean folk culture.” In the place of folk culture, they intended to combine the two tasks of nation and minjung, and then to stir up zeal for national consciousness and minjung consciousness (Chae 1982:195). Many modern-day playwrights have experimented with applying traditional aspects to their own plays. However, Lee Yong Mi (1997b:58) states: “Unfortunately, these modern-day plays have only applied the superficial aspects of traditional performing arts such as dances and scene, characters and events, texture, and musical and artistic elements. Only madanggük has fully accepted and applied the deep, overall principles of Korea’s traditional performance arts.”

Indeed, the internal formalizing theory and unique characteristics of madanggük are

nothing other than the basic principles of Korea's traditional performing arts. The key aspects of madanggŭk such as the *p'an* (context, field), its utilization of time and space, the relationship between the performers and the audience, the play's unique and artistic characteristics, and its attitude toward the common people and the world have all been directly inherited from traditional Korean performing arts.

For instance, madanggŭk's script does not flow as smoothly or as inevitably as the well-crafted contemporary scripts of other theatre. The flow between episodes and details may be presented in an omnibus style, and a certain level of suspense may occur as in a folktale. The appearance of different characters and topics in each episode is typical of traditional mask-dance theatre. By contrast, a coherent story and a degree of suspense as in a folktale are typical of *p'ansori*. Moreover, the spectators' response to the drama also follows a traditional cultural pattern. Spectators who are also participants are expected to properly understand the direction of the story and to participate appropriately in the drama with the basic knowledge to appreciate traditional popular culture. They know how to give the proper responses at various stages during the performance process. Participants take any seat they choose and they eat homely foods such as *p'ajon* (spring onion pancake) and *ttok* (steamed rice cake) with *makkolli* (peasant rice liquor). Immersing themselves in peasant fare, they abandon their refined table manners, partaking of peasant traditions and singing and dancing in a rather rustic way.

Popular Aesthetic Sense: Various social, cultural and religious organizations took considerable interest in folk culture such as *nong-ak* (peasant music), *p'ansori*, and *t'alch'um* which had been treated contemptuously as being vulgar and thoughtless, and *gut* which had even been condemned as a superstition. Why is folk cultural heritage widely regarded as irrational and vulgar in the academic and religious realms? It is because of "the minjung-inclination toward the folk culture," which is closely related to the life of the populace.

Folk culture is the expression of an activity and struggle for production by minjung with their body and language. The minjung-directivity, minjung aesthetic sense and minjung's acting power in folk culture coincided with the line madanggük activists took in cultural consciousness and action policy (Park I.B. 1987:147; Chae 1982:168-170). At madanggük performances such as traditional mask dance drama, the humble and secular objects, which are cultural elements in particular traditional performances, are mobilized and organically intertwined in order to weave the entire story. Performers wear dirty and shabby peasant clothes, and use coarse and vulgar language. Their gestures and body language are often obscene and they are given to impromptu expressions of unbridled emotion as might be witnessed in the everyday milieu of the common people.

Madanggük emphasizes the importance of the body. The performers' movements are the most important tools in the performance, because those who work physically for their living are more prominent than those who make their living by using their intelligence and education. So the actions of the main characters carry more weight and importance than their lines in madanggük. Madanggük introduces quite a few key characters from the lower social classes. The main characters often do not rely on intellectual knowledge, but use wisdom gained from life experience. They usually have minor character flaws, but the play deals with these characters optimistically and humorously. These characters display individuality, but the performance group itself often appears as "collective hero" in the performance. In addition, the madanggük plays use colloquial language in vulgar expressions and gestures, while other modern and contemporary Korean plays sometimes use literary expressions that render conversation somewhat stilted and awkward. For troupes performing in rural areas, the appropriate use of the particular region's dialect and unique vernacular can be crucial to the play's success. As in Korea's traditional performances, madanggük likewise frequently uses comic dialogue and wordplay as well as impromptu conversation among the performers and between the performers and the audiences. Rather than beauty or sublimation, madanggük highlights the ugly and the vulgar, the sorrows of

the lower classes rather than heroic tragedy, and satirical, humorous beauty rather than the tragic beauty.

Although it takes its artistic mode from traditional folk, madanggük does, however, transform it creatively. The adaptation of traditional culture in madanggük performances is a “creative or reformative” inheritance effectively revealing the popular reality and minjung features in both style and content through traditional culture appropriate to the dynamic expression of popular life (National Theatre Institute 1988:336).

The reception of traditional culture has been realized in both concepts of “creative t'alch'um” or “madanggük.” Lim Jin Taek (1990:45) claims that “while creative t'alch'um is an orthodox inheritance of traditional folk culture, madanggük is a modern inheritance.” To start with, the madanggük movement adhered to an original form of traditional t'alch'um, but gradually recomposed the t'alch'um script based on the Bible and reality. After the experience of the workplace, madanggük began to make great reforms by either ignoring t'alch'um or changing it. Advancing a step further, the modernization of tradition not only revived the spirit of social criticism found in t'alch'um, but also utilized the episodic unfolding of story and music or masks, certain dance gestures, and even the concept of performance in any possible empty space. In this manner, by accepting the expressive actions of traditional folk performance art that takes on an extrovert and open mood in a *madang*, madanggük more easily reached the minjung who had not previously been able to accept it due to difficult dance motions and language of t'alch'um (Lee G.R. 1995:30-31; Lee Y.M. 2001:47).⁵⁴

However, public dialogue through madanggük needs to go beyond the limits of traditional style or creative tradition. To search for more effective ways of “mutual communication,” it attempted to mobilize all sorts of traditional cultures and mass communication media, for instance, the tape recorder, slides, film, narratives, pictures,

⁵⁴ *Chinogui* is the first work of “creative” inheritance of tradition.

cartoons, poems, popular songs, singing the rewritten words of folk songs or popular songs, monodrama, short drama, life drama, field drama, role-play, rhythmic gymnastics etc., including various folk cultures such as folk play, folk story, folk song, *p'ungmul*, *p'ansori*, *gut* and so forth. The forms of madanggük are many and varied, that is, the form of *gut* getting rid of a bitter feeling, the form of a court drama, the satirical drama form, the narrative drama form and an impromptu little dramatic performance. It conveyed its message through narrative and atmosphere rather than through individual gestures.

Collective Spirit: The use of the traditional aspects, especially *p'ungmul* and songs, gave rise to directives and strong group emotions and a festive quality, which are in danger of extinction in modern theatre, but distinctive to madanggük. It caused the group spirit called *shinmyong* in Korean which is a decisive factor in demonstrating the power of the community and which gave rise more effectively and voluntarily to a sense of enthusiasm for the organization and collectivization of public dialogue (Lee Y.M. 1997a:282-284). With the group spirit of *shinmyong* and the feeling of freedom produced by the open structure of madanggük, minjung could develop their consciousness more strongly and oppose the distorted establishment (Park I.B. 1985:429).

The experience of *shinmyong* and the popular aesthetics such as humor and sorrow are the essence of our human heritage. Madanggük reminds us of the ultimate beauty and virtue of that heritage, and it rediscovers the popularity and importance of the workers. Due to these minjung-oriented and minjung-representative characteristics, madanggük gained popularity.

Therefore, the concern of traditional culture in madanggük performances is not merely “a manifestation of the consciousness of nationalism, but rather a promotion of the consciousness of democracy and of the populace-directivity” (Chae 1982:193-194) with the group spirit and the minjung initiative. Such a positively creative adaptation of

traditional culture helped to prevent the cultural movement from becoming immersed in mannerism, and instead, encouraged it to approach the populace easily and to promote *minjung* so that it became the subject of art and history.

4.4.3 Their Own Story and Realism

As discussed above, *madanggük* borrowed heavily for its setting and structure from traditional folk culture of the past, especially *t'alch'um*. However, it was always intensely interested in the present and realism. Opposing the existing drama that fails to concern social reality, *madanggük* is the result of a new theatrical experiment in the form of a modernized traditional performance with the aim of critical dialogue about the present distorted social reality. Therefore, according to Chae Hee Wan (1982:195,210), *madanggük* is to become “life-art” pursuing “the aggregation of life” through the group spirit called *shinmyong* in a play-*madang*, and attempting “the return of play to daily life.” Thus, as *t'alch'um*⁵⁵ deals with a common understanding of *minjung*'s routine affairs, including social issues, so *madanggük* contains the problems of all sorts of people from all walks of life: that is, the problems of farming villages, factories, labor disputes, local areas and suburbs, religion and historical consciousness.

These are *minjung*'s own stories and matters of common interest, in which the viewpoint of the populace, especially the angle of working people, is reflected. That is why the content of *madanggük* is generally narratives revealing *minjung* realities and not fiction. The *minjung*'s own stories help the populace to re-recognize the reality and struggle against unfair oppressive elements, and finally lead the festival to eulogize the victory of the *minjung* community in the *madanggük* performance. Therefore, *madanggük* is a path to the present-recognition and its expression, and a process of

⁵⁵ The content of *t'alch'um* deals with *minjung*'s common affairs: various conflicts of status and various confrontations of *minjung* <Yangban (the Aristocratic class) Episode>, the falsehood of formal morality and ideology <An Apostate Monk Episode>, questions of family system, the phenomenon of disintegration of peasants, and the death of *minjung* <An Old Woman called Miyal Episode>, and the questions of lives of the alienated class such as low people <A Leper or A Deformed Person Episode>.

sharing this reality-recognition.

Familiarity: No matter which stories madanggük deals with from political or current issues, historical events, the life stories of individuals, the fate of a particular group of people, or classical novels, the stories are so “familiar” to the spectators that they can share a prior knowledge and anticipate how the story will be developed. Instead of wondering at the outcome of the performances, the audience of madanggük revels in the expectation of how the familiar story will be presented. Just as a fascinating fairy tale is exciting no matter how many times it is told, or an annual traditional theatrical performance is a delight each year, so madanggük performance that has shared experiences and common interests as its main content is always entertaining.

Counterculture: It is obvious that madanggük conveys political messages with no serious consideration of aesthetics. For this reason, there have been hot debates centering on the question of whether madanggük is a new form of art or merely the cultural instrument of political movements. First of all, madanggük was regarded as an experimental attempt to create a new form of art as a challenge to the dominant one, which was based on Western traditions. In this sense, it might still be seen as an alternative offering to aesthetics. On the other hand, it was a dissembled form of resistance offering an ideal mechanism for the public discourse denied at every other level. Thus it can be said that madanggük is a kind of “counterculture” in the sense that performers apparently ridiculed the elite culture, and attempted to secularize the sacred and privileged culture of the dominant class. They argue that the elite culture is artificial without a viable sense of reality and is, instead, steeped in a grotesque misunderstanding of reality. Therefore the challenge that the new art style presents to conventional ones reveals a confrontation between the power of the dominant and the resistance of the subordinate. Through the use of violent language and gestures, they stimulated a direct confrontation with the enemy and an eventual victory over that enemy. Therefore, madanggük as a public dialogue is a space to locate cathartic,

symbolic experiences of rebellion and rejuvenation.

To experience renewal with regard to the theme and structure of the theatre provides an opportunity to transform its art into a cultural mechanism for political discourse, through which people can construct their own world of resistance. The process by which this occurs is not confined to an experience of rejecting or negating reality, but it is rather a process of creating an alternative world by elevating humble everyday life to sacred revolutionary art.

Most madanggük aims at a new historical consciousness rather than a refinement of artistic quality. Themes are various, but they share an anti-establishment ideology and a criticism of government in relation to human rights, social justice, human emancipation, and legitimacy of power. More than that, they aim, in the name of the minjung, to bring into the public arena, the historical experiences of the common people who have been subdued, silenced or made peripheral through “official” definition. Madanggük stories all share the strong message that a powerful elite-centered national history should be replaced by a history of the experience and ideas of those who have been the powerless majority, minjung. An underlying theme of various forms of madanggük is about the exploited and dominated peasants who have sacrificed themselves in order to feed the whole nation, to protect the country from foreign invasions, and to maintain a national community. Meanwhile, powerful elites such as bureaucrats, military officers, businessmen, wealthy professionals are described as greedy and immoral exploiters, brokers and agents of foreign capital and power without any sense of responsibility toward their nation. Through participation in the madanggük performance, people, regardless of their actual social status and background, are identified as the exploited and oppressed populace. Because of this, producers and active participants of the madanggük, including audiences, have to some extent come under governmental suspicion for being antiestablishment activists or potential dissidents.

Humor and Satire: Although their reality is miserable and poverty stricken, this reality is expressed in the way, not of tragedy and seriousness, but of “humor and satire.” At madanggük performances, the tragedy of life is dissolved into the comic through self-objectification, which becomes the motive of life. All this is done in a rather festive mood (Chae 1982:204). “Laughter” is a driving force with which the spectators who participate in madanggük will overcome the difficulties of life, and which will change their reality. The finale of madanggük maximizes the effect of laughter. “*Twit-p’uri* (Ending Play)” is arranged at the ending part of madanggük so that all performers and spectators sing and dance together. Here, the world of madanggük goes through the process of reconciliation before it ultimately reaches a festival mood that is presented in the elements of traditional performance.

Dealing with the populace’s stories as a main theme, and taking the popular traditional culture as a main form, madanggük could rouse the group spirit called *shinmyong* and win public sympathy. The *shinmyong* and a festival mood are not individual-oriented but a way in which all spectators and performers express their desires for a better future with the sense of community.

4.4.4 Field Directivity outside the Theatrical World

Public dialogue through madanggük is based on a dynamic outlook on culture; that is, culture is not only a result of the system and structure of society, but also a force to reform the system and structure of society, namely a power for “praxis.” The power to reform is actualized as the general value only through practical participation in a concrete productive field of society based on community.⁵⁶ In fact, the creative inheritance of tradition in madanggük means not an ideological insistence, but is related to practical action. Madanggük begins with the premise that tradition is not

⁵⁶ For this, some suggest the reform of a style of life culture, productive community movement, and community-culture with community movement (Hwang S.J. 1983:384; Park I.B. 1985:423).

isolated from the reality of today; rather, it should be used as a source to arouse the power of life of the populace.

Change of Distribution Structure: Therefore, public dialogue in madanggük, recognizing the populace as the subject of art and history, planned a change of “distribution structure” as well as a change of content to realism. So, it started its activities outside the theatrical world. From the beginning, considering not only the change of each theatric work, but also the structural change of the whole performance culture, including popular culture, the madanggük movement fulfilled various minjung-oriented activities outside the theatrical world (Lee Y.M. 1997a:61-64).

What is the reason for madanggük’s persistence outside the theatrical world? Because minjung-oriented madanggük pursued the place related to minjung (Lee Y.M. 1997a:44; 2001:71),⁵⁷ it placed the center of activities not in a theatre, but in the minjung life field. On the other hand, this is because the established theatre was only for a small number of intellectuals, so even though a progressive play was performed, if it were in the theatre, the drama could give meaning only to a handful of spectators. In contrast, the leaders of the madanggük movement always insisted that art is not a special genre for the privileged nor should it be confined to a particular space set apart from everyday life. In addition, contrary to documentary literature and objects of art, performing art disappeared after the performance in a specific space and time.

For these reasons, madanggük reached a conclusion that a mere change in the content and the style of a drama was not enough to reform the theatrical culture fundamentally, and furthermore, could not contribute to social reforms. According to the necessity for change in the whole distribution structure of performance as well as the content and style, madanggük enters the field of the minjung’s life where the people can meet, directly in the field of college students and intellectuals’ political movements,

⁵⁷ The minjung-directivity is a ground for madanggük to become active outside the existing theatre circle centering on the intellectual audience, but on the other hand, it causes madanggük to become alienated from the current system of cultural heritage.

labor movements and agricultural movements (Lee Y.M. 1997a:37,59). The main performing and acting space is moved to 'outside a stage' called *madang* which means not only open ground, but also implies the broader meaning of "the field of life" of the common people, to come into direct and close contact with them. That is why madanggük was performed at prayer meetings for the poor, at college festivals, corporate establishment day celebrations, labor union demonstration sites, village parties, and events for environmental causes.

Social Movement-Directivity: Considering that most national literature and national fine art generally placed importance on the activities "in" the literary world or "in" an exhibition hall, the outward approach of madanggük is unfamiliar. This very outward angle led to a realization of the fact that dramatic art and its spectators could exist even "outside" the theatrical world, and the people outside the theatre had to be the major audience of performance. As a result, madanggük spread the activities of the movement for the propagation of madanggük (Lee Y.M. 1997a:37) to the movement for a progressive drama which takes an important part in the domain of social movement. In other words, by functioning as a place for social and political discourse, it could go beyond the limits of reaction and ultra-nationalism of traditional art or a simple art movement, and advance toward the whole minjung cultural movement outside the theatrical world.

As such, the entry into the life field of minjung and social movement is a major premise of madanggük and its participation in society. As a result, madanggük is regarded in general as a progressive drama guaranteeing the directivity of social movement and injecting the truth of the minjung's reality into the theatre to the highest degree.

Meanwhile, its aspect as a progressive theatre movement outside the theatrical world incurred the criticism of both government and art purists. The government regarded madanggük as unorthodox and an anti-aesthetic act, damaging the original form of t'alch'um. Government-initiated cultural heritage strives only to preserve the original

form, and it is neither a modern inheritance nor a creative modification. On the other hand, madanggŭk has been accused of having a “single-minded ideological inclination,” of being a “tool for reactionary propaganda,” a “politically designed frame” for viewing the world, a physical space for an “uncontrolled expression of desire,” the “political instrumentalization of art” and much more. Moreover, the social movement-oriented characteristics incurred the criticism of art critics who said that madanggŭk was not refined enough to be a genre of art. Some called it a part of a dilettantish guerilla movement aimed at the destruction of conventional art criteria (Kim K.O. 1997:7-8; Lee Y.M. 2001:72).

Because of its characteristics of social participation in the field, madanggŭk could not gain any government support or industrial mass production; instead, it was reproduced and developed mainly by amateur college students and intellectuals from college drama societies and some theatrical troupes, and further the positive minjung class of the audience such as laborers and peasants. Despite these criticisms, however, it became increasingly popular among the populace. The minjung-directivity outside the government and the theatrical world evoked an intimacy with the populace, which was a decisive factor in the spread of madanggŭk to both progressive intellectuals and the common people.

Lim Jin Taek (1990:85) describes the nature of madanggŭk using the following four terms: “the situational truth,” “the collective *shinmyong*,” “the field-centered movement,” and “the minjung representativity.” Madanggŭk has the nature of “the situational truth” in that it made people face up to reality by disclosing the falseness and contradiction of society. The situational truth of reading reality evoked the collective *shinmyong* as the group spirit. Here, *shinmyong* is a driving force of the play which releases and gets rid of suffering and hardened *han* (a mixed feeling of sorrow and regret unique to Korean people) by calling together all the opposing factors, such as antagonistic relationships and conflicting opinion, into one place “*madang*.” Thirdly, the newly repetitive reading reality and the group spirit *shinmyong* induce “the field-centered movement” to allow

participation in social movements in the living field. Lastly, it shows “minjung representativity” in that minjung becomes an owner of the art and the subject of society through the artistic experience of minjung life. As Chae Hee Wan (1985b:5) asserts: “the madanggŭk movement is *the cultural movement* to unite and share the fight to live in the field of life, *the social movement* jointly to reveal and resolve the hidden reality, and *the life-community movement* to celebrate in advance the life of the Third World in national *shinmyong*.”

4.5 Meaning and Limitation of Madanggŭk Performance

4.5.1 Mutual Communication

Madanggŭk is a new attempt for public dialogue to respond to the context of both art and society through a mechanism of performing art-culture. In short, the representative characteristics of madanggŭk are summarized into four: *minjung-directivity*, *festivity/artistry*, *realism* and *praxis*, which are based on the principle of mutual communication with openness.

Firstly, public dialogue through madanggŭk accepted the marginalized people, *minjung*, as the main audience, that is, the subject which would form and reform art and society. The meaning of minjung-directivity in the sense of public dialogue is that it served to change the communication pattern of theatre from “one-way communication” in which the audience just watches the theatre on a stage, to “participative mutual-communication” in which they take part in the theatre as the subject of the artistic world.⁵⁸ Consequently, madanggŭk became “participative theatre” (Seo Y.H. 1997:122) based on mutual communication because the performance proceeded with participants’ active participation, and direct criticism and plain interference between

⁵⁸ The minjung-directivity, as already described, led to a change in the concept of minjung from the oppressed to the subject and the reformative being.

performers and spectators were permitted.

Secondly, through the creative adaptation of traditional Korean culture, especially the traditional mask dance which inspired the collective spirit, *shinmyong*, and minjung aesthetic senses, the cultural public dialogue fulfilled the function of social integration, because anyone who is Korean can sympathize with traditional art-culture in the performance of *madang*. It was not, however, confined to the style of traditional performance, but rather utilized diverse styles.

Thirdly, a more important point here is the fact that it neither hid in the other world with utopian illusions nor did it remain in the world of performing art-culture itself. On the contrary, by taking narratives of reality and biblical messages in the form of traditional performing art, the cultural public dialogue attempted to communicate between the past (tradition) and the present (reality of minjung and society). In fact, the content of *madanggük* not only “mirrors” the social contradictions, but also “produces” a solution.

The meaning of *madanggük* as a mutual communication is, lastly, that it showed the dimension of “Christ’s transformation of society and art-culture” by pursuing field-directivity and the social participative movement as well as dealing with reality. Public dialogue through *madanggük* accepted any “public space of life”⁵⁹ as a place for performance and social participation, beyond the narrow meaning of *madang* as “outdoors space.” Its very field-directivity meant entering into the life-field to take part in social movements, such as political, labor, and peasant movements. In such a praxis process, *madanggük* became a space in which the line of demarcation between social strata or between performers and spectators was ignored, and consequently, it fulfilled the function of dynamic mutual communication. Moreover, through the activities in the life field, *madanggük* tried to insure the dimension of “praxis” (in the minjung’s life-field) as well as “artistry” (based on tradition) and “realism” (in the content). The public dialogue through *madanggük* came to possess characteristics of dynamic mutual-

⁵⁹ Any place where people gather together is used as a space for *madanggük*.

communication in that it attempted a synthesis of artistic function (artistry) and social function (praxis) fundamentally on the grounds of the collective *shinmyong*, communality, and festivity that evoke the communal communication.

4.5.2 Mediating Structure

Madanggŭk implies a “mediating structure” (Berger & Neuhaus 1977)⁶⁰ which connects the individual in private life with the large system in public life, and finally reduces the estrangement and isolation from society and public order. In addition, it has the dimensions of an “artistic” mediating structure. Gibson Winter (1981:11) suggests that the fundamental metaphor for the future should change from a techno-scientific process to an artistic process. As a matter of fact, the art culture (expressive culture) such as symbol and language has fulfilled the function of an effective communication in church and society. The Scripture is also an expression through language and symbol, through which it conveys the real meaning of the Word, and furthermore, through which the Christian community can renew the culture (Niebuhr 1951).

Madanggŭk is obviously an artistic form through which the connection of value-culture with action-culture can be maintained through the mechanism of expression-culture (art-culture). In this process, it both integrates and renovates (or transforms) both culture and society. From the viewpoint of public dialogue, madanggŭk serves as the momentum to transcend the limitations of the public dialogue of the Korean church that was set in an extreme social resistance pattern. As a new pattern of public dialogue integrating art and social movement (artistry and praxis), madanggŭk can become a mediating structure to convert a resisting pattern of public dialogue into an art-cultural pattern. That is why this dissertation considers madanggŭk as a starting point for an alternative cultural public dialogue.

⁶⁰ Peter L. Berger emphasizes the importance of the four kinds of mediation structure; neighborhood, family, church, volunteer organization.

4.5.3 New Reading Reality and New Field Recognition

A question should be raised here as to whether madanggŭk can still serve as an artistic medium for public dialogue to combine value culture and action culture, and to overcome the resistance pattern of public dialogue in the same way as before. In order to answer this question, it is essential to describe the causes of the decline of madanggŭk.

Madanggŭk was at its peak from the 1980s to the early 1990s, but from 1992 its influence declined remarkably. The change to the regime into Kim Yong Sam stirred in the people a sense of stability derived from their escape from extreme dictatorship on the one hand, and a feeling of helplessness from the failure of popular political trials and a realization that this was not a perfect democratization on the other. These two complex feelings led to political apathy among the general public and weakened the cohesive power of the existing organizations. Under these circumstances and without the collective cohesive power of the people, madanggŭk was confronted with a crisis of public dialogue.

Public sentiments generally turned with the changes in the political situation. By the 1980s the works of madanggŭk were passionate rather than calm, emotional rather than rational, with obvious rather than delicate sensibilities, and straightforward rather than indirect. Because madanggŭk was a historical production from the times when the division between ally and enemy was as clear as day, it was unnecessary to ask what we should be counteracted and fought against. Therefore, the times called for “an indomitable will” that aroused indignation, courage and awareness of strife rather than “recognition” of the situation and struggle (Lee Y.M. 1997a:155-156).

As a result of the changing situation, the slogan “let’s fight!” no longer has meaning; instead, “*how to fight*” becomes a serious issue. The demand of the times is to progress to a new stage. The passion for popular meeting died down and the populace

prefers a rational attitude with an objective and realistic analysis to passionate attitude. The works based on this composure are more fashionable than those of agitated or vehement emotion, and a novel presenting the reality of the day is more acceptable than sharp poetry. A lyrical popular song in minor enjoys popularity more than a combative marching song.

In addition, in earlier days, no assembly or gathering was allowed under the Law on Assembly and Demonstration except on a small scale at “*madang*” of the factory, church, and farm village. Now the situation is different from what it used to be. In the present times, it is possible to assemble in an open space, even in a public square in front of the City Administration Building and the National Assembly Building. A meeting place grows too large to be called “*madang*,” social issues are much bigger on a nationwide scale, and the group becomes a *gesellschaft* rather than a community (*gemeinshaft*). This means that the value of “*madang*” has been lost.

If madanggük is performing art for public dialogue, it ought to communicate with the changing circumstances. The communication indicates a demand for a new reading of reality and a new field consciousness. However, madanggük has failed in public dialogue in the changing present times. As a result of this failure, madanggük is regarded as only one of many traditions, and as a passing fad once used in the expression culture of public dialogue. Some insist that the cause of the decline of madanggük lies in the “un-modernity and feudalism in its form and mode” (The Writing and Producing Department of Minjung Cultural Movement Alliance 1988; Theatrical Group ‘Hankang’ 1988:3). However, the root cause is to be found in the loss of a sense of reality. Lee Yong Mi (1991:451-452; 1997a:203-217) sets forth a counter-argument about the matter of mode, and insists as follows: “Madanggük is neither a simple inheritance of the t’alch’um mode nor a simple result of a national drama revival movement. So, consequently, the madanggük mode cannot be identified with the t’alch’um mode. Therefore, the stagnation of madanggük is not because of the feudalism of the mode itself, but because it did not invent a new trend of theatrical work

suitable to the changing circumstances.”

4.5.4 The Problem of Dual Opposition

Besides new readings of reality and new field-directivity, there are other problems to solve in public dialogue through art-culture. First of all, the public dialogue through madanggŭk obviously leaned towards a social movement. As described above, the reason madanggŭk became social movement-oriented at that time was that it, including creative t'alch'um, was the only form through which the reality of the situation could be expressed culturally. Therefore, Lim Jin Taek (1990:137-138) explains that if the social situation had moved in the direction of democracy, the cultural aspect of madanggŭk would have flourished. However, under the situation of oppressive dictatorship, the minjung could not help throwing themselves completely into the social movement itself. They could not afford simply to enjoy the artistic production. This is why madanggŭk took the direction of social movement rather than that of art-culture.

Secondly, as a result of a bias towards a social movement, the theme and content of madanggŭk also began to deal particularly with “social events” rather than “daily life.” In the days when madanggŭk flourished, as a matter of fact, social events meant the daily happenings of minjung, so it was out of the question to hold a bias to social events in madanggŭk performances. Later, however, the society changed and gained the freedom of speech, and could publicly express their opinions about social events. This meant that it became necessary to deal with their daily life apart from social events. However, madanggŭk did not respond to the changing times. The trouble was that madanggŭk did not secure the sphere of daily life. This is the second reason for madanggŭk disappearing without a trace.

However, madanggŭk of the past should not be devaluated by being judged according to the values of the present. Considering the time when it achieved success as public dialogue, madanggŭk played a valuable role in that context. It read the times, so it was

possible to create art-cultural public dialogue to communicate with society as well as with the individual and art. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation lies on the transformation of public dialogue through madanggük on a basis of analysis and criticism that is appropriate to the changing context of today. This thesis examines the possibility of “the performance on *madang*” as a pattern of art-cultural public dialogue. What does it mean that madanggük performance becomes public dialogue? The term “public dialogue” is a compound word. Therefore, the word implies two tasks: one is “to dialogue,” the other is that the dialogue is “public.” It indicates the need for mutual communication. The dialogue is an “open mutual dialogue” and “public dialogue” to end all kinds of antagonism, and goes beyond the closed and private dialogue only with congenial people.

Therefore, madanggük should fundamentally overcome the phenomenon of “binary opposition” that is the basic cause of its decline so that it can retrieve the meaning of communicability as art-cultural public dialogue. The binary opposition of madanggük is summarized into three. Firstly, madanggük was confined by the limits of binary opposition in the aspect of who the subject of the performing art is. It chose minjung art in the question of whether it should be the folk art for minjung or the pure art for the minority of intellectuals. Secondly, it showed binary opposition in the aspect of ideology. It inclined to social movement orientation in the choice between artistic function (artistry) and social movement. Thirdly, it revealed binary opposition in the content and theme by choosing social events rather than daily life.

From the beginning, the madanggük was antithetical. Ironically, it appeared to be a class-oriented movement in that it was a struggle against the partial purism of high culture or Western-oriented art, it was a channel of expression for the oppressed minjung, and its stories were mainly about the lives and the ideology of oppressed and impoverished peasants and workers. It was, as already mentioned, a contribution of madanggük to acknowledge the alienated minjung in the pure art world and society as the subject of art and society. On the other hand, because of this orientation, some

critics point out that madanggük did not aim at constructing a space for public discourse among people of different classes and cultural backgrounds. In addition, considering the fact that the failure of madanggük as public dialogue in the present resulted from the fact that madanggük was bound in the antithetical structure of binary opposition, the task of art-cultural public dialogue through madanggük performance lies in the restoration of “a participative and mutual communication” and “a communal space” with turn-taking interaction between the two separate realms, i.e. the binary opposition of social-directivity and artistic-directivity.