



Revisiting the Five Principles for Solving the Gwangju Problem: Focusing on Forgiveness and Reconciliation

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Introduction

In early 2023, we experienced two significant events in succession that cannot be overlooked in the history of the democratization movement in South Korea and the commemoration of the May 18 Democratization Movement. One was the 'Joint Declaration Ceremony to the Nation' held on February 19 by the May 18 Memorial injured and People of Merit Association and the ROK Special Forces Comrades Association. The other was the visit to Gwangju and apology by Chun Woo-won, the grandson of former President Chun Doo-hwn, on May 31. The May 18 Memorial Injured and People of Merit Association and the Special Forces Comrades Association, transcending the binary scheme of victim-perpetrator, recognized that even special forces soldiers who participated in the martial law as part of the military force were victims in connection with the May 18 incident. They paid their respects together at both the National Cemetery and the May 18th National Cemetery, declaring their continuous cooperation under the title of 'Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Gratitude.' However, the the May 18 Bereaved Family Association took a passive stance on this declaration, while the May Mothers House and civic groups opposed it. The Gwangju Metropolitan Council also issued a statement expressing its inability to join. On the contrary, when Chun Woo-won paid his respects at the May 18th National Cemetery in Gwangju, criticized his grandfather's actions, and offered an apology on his behalf, the May Mothers House warmly received him and accepted his apology. Overall, a favorable atmosphere was created toward Chun Woo-won's visit and words, given that his behaviors cannot be simply regarded as the outcomes of family discord. Moreover, his apology had significance as the first apology made by a member of former President Chun Doo-hwan's family despite his position as a grandson.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to guiding citizens in making wise decisions in the ongoing debates on forgiveness and reconciliation. To this end, it introduces the establishment process and key elements of the Five Principles for Solving the Gwangju Problem (hereinafter the Five Principles for Gwangju), consisting of 'Truth, Responsibility, Honor Resotration, Compensation, and Commemoration,' analyzes their current relevance and related issues in light of recent situations, and reviews discussions



regarding a relationship among apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation.¹

Democratization and the Five Principles for Gwangju

The Five Principles for Gwangju has served as a distinctive milestone in the history of South Korea's past liquidation as well as the guiding compass for subsequent transitional justice projects. These principles were the interim results of the May Movement, which was conducted for approximately 10 years from 1980, and the outcomes of responses to practical politics. However, at that time, only a few recognized them as universal principles for transitional justice. The Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement, also known as the Special Act on Gwangju, was enacted in 1995 in alignment with these principles to provide the legal foundation for imposing strict judgments on those responsible for state violence during the period ranging from the Coup d'état of December Twelfth to the May 18 Democratization Movement. It also established an ideal framework for the subsequent implementation of transitional justice projects, which began in earnest in 2000.

The book 『The History of the May 18 Democratization Movement』 was meticulously edited by Gwangju Metropolitan City, serving as a commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the May 18 Democratization Movement. This comprehensive work, encompassing the ideas of the time regarding the May 18 Democratization Movement and the May Movement, includes a section titled 『The May Movement for Liquidation and Restoration』, where I discussed the establishment process and relevant contents of the Five Principles for Gwangju. As outlined in this section, the core of the Five Principles for Gwangju places a higher priority on the punishment of responsible individuals over the restoration of honor, compensation, or reparation. Furthermore, it is essential to focus not only on the meanings and contents of each principle but also on the relationships and priorities among them. The investigation of the truth stand as the primary and foundational principle. However, in reality, compensation was provided in exchange for the Merge of the Three Parties in 1990 instead of the implementation of the prioritized goal. In August 1990, the Gwangju Compensation Act, formally known as the Act on Compensation and Other Provisions for the Pensions Involved in the Gwangju Pro-democracy Movement, was enacted. In response to these circumstances, local communities in Gwangju and South Korea's former president Kim Dae-jung adhered to the principles for solving the Gwangju issue. The awareness of such issues was crystallized following President Kim Young-sam's May 13 Declaration in 1993, leading to the establishment of the Five Principles for Gwangju.

1) This work is an extension of my previous research, including <A Critical Review of May Movement of 40 Years: between Past Liquidation and Transitional Justice> (2020), a study conducted in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the May 18 Democratization Movement, <Systematic Purge of State Violence in South Korea and Culture of Memory> in <Vergangenheitsbewältigung und Erinnerungskultur in Korea - In Bezug auf Abbitte und Vergebung>(2022), a book where I contributed to the examination of issues related to the apology of South Korea's former president Chun Doo-hwan and the exhibition of a statue representing him being captured, and <Transitional Justice, Truth, and Reconciliation: Reviewing the Five Principles for Gwangju>, an oral presentation that I delivered at the May 18 Institute Chonnam National University in 2022.



The inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung government in 1998 and the Roh Moo-hyun government in 2003 were considered significant political indicators representing the smooth nationwide expansion of the democratization movement and the spirit of the May 18 Democratization Movement. These governments carried out projects on inheriting the spirit of the May 18 Democratization Movement, such as designating the May 18th National Cemetery as the National Cemetery and the date of the May 18 Democratization Movement as a national memorial day. These efforts aimed to uphold the principle of executing memorial projects to inherit the spirit of the May 18 Democratization Movement, as outlined in the Five Principles for Gwangju. In 2000, President Kim Dae-jung enacted the Special Act on Discovering the Truth on the Jeju April 3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims and launched the Commission for Investigating the Truth of Suspicious Deaths and the Commission for Democratization Movement Activists' Honor Restoration and Compensation to initiate transitional justice projects. In 2001, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea and Korea Democracy Foundation were established. President Roh Moo-hyun passed the Special Act on Finding the Truth of Anti-National Acts under the Colonial Rule of Japanese Imperialism in 2004 and the Framework Act on Settling the Past for Truth and Reconciliation in 2005 beyond the impeachment proposal introduced by the conservative party. Unlike the Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement, these projects concentrated on excluding the punishment of responsible individuals and restoring the honor of victims and providing compensation. In other words, they were implemented based on restorative justice rather than retributive justice. As reflected in the name of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is obvious that the Framework Act on Settling the Past for Truth and Reconciliation was influenced by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite these efforts, there has been little progress in terms of the perpetrators' conscientious confession, exemption from punishment, and reconciliation. What are the causes of such failures?

Since South Korea's transitional justice initiatives were generally initiated by liberal governments and terminated by conservative ones, they did not conclude successfully as initially planned. Most of these projects aimed to achieve a balance between the president and the National Assembly, as well as between the ruling and opposition parties², thereby leading to significant internal conflicts. Apart from this political factor, a cultural factor related to Koreans' unfamiliarity with apology and forgiveness would contributed to the mentioned failures. However, only few empirical studies have been conducted concerning this issue.

Furthermore, the situation became more complex around 2005 with the emergence of a group of "young cyber conservatives" called the New Right and the beginning of their denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement. This denigration was mainly rooted in discrimination and hatred oriented toward regionalism, and the scope of the group's activities gradually expanded. With the launch of the Lee Myung-bak government in 2008, disputes arose over the rendition of a song called 'Marching for Our

2) The approach to practicing transitional justice varies depending on countries. In the case of South Korea, it established and operated special commissions as temporary organizations rather than permanent ones. As the composition of these commissions reflected the principles of the separation of powers, commission members were recommended by each of the president, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court or each of the president and the National Assembly. However, since recommendations from the National Assembly always maintain an equal balance between the ruling and opposition parties, it is difficult to prevent partisanship.



Beloved' during the commemorative ceremony for the May 18 Democratization Movement. Some argued that this song intended to praise the North Korean government, while others insisted that the cemetery of North Korean soldiers dispatched to Gwangju during the May 18 Democratization Movement was located in North Korea. There were also claims that the citizen soldiers were special agents dispatched from North Korea. With the Park Geun-hye government coming into power in 2013, the distortion of the May 18 Democratization Movement worsened. Even conservative politicians actively joined this trend, repeatedly making distorted and hateful statements about the event. The denial and distortion of the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement were reiterated in *The Memoirs of Chun Doo-hwan*, a book published in 2017. In this book, Chun Doo-hwan referred to the May 18 Democratization Movement as a riot, as he did in 1980. Regarding the argument of the late Catholic Priest Cho Pius that Chun ordered helicopter gunship attacks on civilians, he dismissed it as a lie.

What are the essential causes of distortion and denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement? There have been few intensive analyses regarding this question. However, some researchers argue that the amnesty for former President Chun Doo-hwan, granted immediately after the presidential election in 1997, contributed to the distortion and denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement. This is due to the background of the amnesty, where Chun was pardoned without admitting to the state violence he imposed during the May 18 Democratization Movement and without offering a sincere apology for it. This perspective suggests that we may have approached the issue of responsibility, indicated in the Five Principles for Gwangju, with an excessive emphasis on punitive measures. Disputes over the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement fueled full-scale research on the song 'Marching for Our Beloved' and systematic criticism against the argument regarding the participation of North Korean soldiers in the May 18 Democratization Movement. At the same time, the voice of people demanding an apology from former President Chun Doo-hwan grew louder as legal proceedings for the defamation of the late Catholic Priest Cho Pius were ongoing. The distortion of the May 18 Democratization Movement called into question the truth behind the May 18 Democratization Movement. What is the truth and how is it established?

The Special Act on Investigating the Truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement, enacted in 2019, reconfirmed the primary and foundational principle of truth investigation among the Five Principles for Gwangju. Article 1 of this act states: "The purpose of this Act is to ascertain distorted or covered-up truths by investigating human rights abuses, violence, massacre, secret burials, etc., caused by anti-democratic or anti-humane acts committed by state power at the time in relation to the May 18 Democratization Movement in 1980, thereby contributing to the unity of the people." As indicated in this article, it is evident that this act was designed as a legal response to the distortion and concealment of the May 18 Democratization Movement. Article 3 of this act specifies the scope of truth investigation by enumerating specific issues related to the May 18 Democratization Movement, such as human rights violations, details of the military shooting and persons to be held responsible therefor, military helicopter shooting, the secret burial of victims, and the involvement of the North Korean forces and fabricated invasion by the North Korean forces. In 2020, during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the May 18 Democratization



Movement, I examined the achievements of the May Movement by considering each of the Five Principles for Gwangju in my study 'A Critical Review of May Movement of 40 Years: between Past Liquidation and Transitional Justice'. In particular, I paid attention to the context in which the significance of truth investigation, the first principle of the Five Principles for Gwangju, was inevitably re-emphasized in light of the ongoing distortion and denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement.

Truth held a formally appropriate status as the first principle of the Five Principles for Gwangju in the context of resolving the Gwangju issue, but the concreteness of its contents was not established. When the first principle of the Five Principles for Gwangju was established in 1993, truth mainly referred to admitting state violence committed and damage caused by such violence. For this reason, individuals who led the May 18 Democratization Movement had a clear understanding of the truth. However, the intent of state violence and the specific details of its execution remained ambiguous with its social recognition being incomplete as well. It was believed that the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement was documented in 'Gwangju Diary: Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age', a book published in 1985, and 'The Complete Collection of Historical Records on the May Gwangju Uprising', a book including oral records of participants in the May 18 Democratization Movement, and revealed during a National Assembly hearing in 1988. However, the truth investigation process proved to be insufficient, as demonstrated by the distortion and denigration incidents of the May 18 Democratization Movement that became prominent after 2005. The proposition that "truth already exists within us" became doubtful, and it became evident that it was refined through the process of critiquing opposing propositions. The process of critiquing opposing propositions should include the act of responding to long-standing questions regarding firing orders, secret burials, and similar issues, as well as absurd questions about the involvement of North Korean special agents and more. Accordingly, people began to perceive that this process was ultimately socially constructed. Along with this perception, it became obvious that the second principle related to responsibility of the Five Principles for Gwangju required the punishment of responsible individuals, as well as seeking apologies from them. People increasingly stressed that the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement would be complete only when it is socially recognized, and when those responsible for state violence during the incident admit their crimes and make apologies for their actions by themselves.

As a result, the distortion and denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement necessitated the re-establishment of the first principle, truth, and the second principle, responsibility, within the Five Principles for Gwangju. Furthermore, individuals have recognized that truth involved responding to questions and actively criticizing denial, while responsibility encompassed both negative elements like punishment and positive elements such as acknowledgment and apology. The denial of the truth regarding the May 18 Democratization Movement and the avoidance of corresponding responsibility, occurring after decisions on punishment and amnesty, underscored the necessity for discussions on both punishment and apology. Furthermore, the death of Chun Doo-hwan without offering an apology raised another question: "How is forgiveness possible in the absence of an apology at the end?"

The principles of transitional justice vary across countries. Considering South Korea's experience,



transitional justice is a product of the victim community's response to perpetrators and the state power's approach to the historical truth of state violence. At the same time, it is a product of the interaction between the government and the victim community. Notably, transitional justice projects are often initiated by liberal governments and terminated by conservative ones, leading to deviations from the original plans. This phenomenon can be attributed to conservative governments' reluctance to hold accountability for past wrongdoings or their sensitivity to vote-winning strategies or financial burdens.

In reality, the term 'transition period' has several problems due to the difficulty in specifying the exact duration period and the existence of complex transition beyond single phase. In South Korea, transitional justice was institutionalized through three waves in 2000, 2005, and 2020. Moreover, two different concepts of justice exist: retributive justice, achieved through one-sided punishment, and restorative justice, achieved through re-confirming values and agreements shared between two entities. A paradigm shift from retributive justice to restorative justice is not only applied in the field of criminal psychology (Wenzel, 2008) but also in the social and political aspects of transitional justice projects. Song (2020) emphasized the need to broaden the meaning of compensation in transitional justice and develop concepts based on this expanded meaning. She analyzed that compensation in transitional justice extends beyond the concepts of legal and correctional justice toward individual victims, adopting characteristics as a political project that pursues broader aspects of justice such as social recognition, trust, and solidarity.

Broadening the Meaning of the Principle of Responsibility: Apology and Forgiveness

Since President Kim Dae-jung's inauguration in 1998, the Gwangju community has suffered from political pressure proclaiming, "It is time for forgiveness and reconciliation." Each time, Gwangju's response has been, "We would like to do the same, but there must be an apology from those responsible." In particular, there was a strong demand for an apology from former President Chun Doo-hwan, who was granted amnesty without an apology by his denial of the truth in his autobiography and, notably, he made insulting remarks about the late Catholic Priest Cho Pius concerning the helicopter incident. The call for an apology from Chun peaked during a defamation lawsuit related to this case. The situation became intense, and a virtual statue of Chun, making an apology on his knees behind bars, was displayed at Gwanghwamun on December 12, 2019. In April 2020, it was moved to Gwangju for exhibition. Accordingly, citizens participated in events that virtually held him accountable³.

When the May 18 Democratization Movement Truth Commission was established, I considered its primary mission to be eliciting a genuine apology from former President Chun Doo-hwan. He was known as the ringleader who led the Coup d'état of December Twelfth and suppressed the May 18 Democratization Movement, despite the importance of investigating matters related to controversial issues at that time, even reflected in established laws. While Chun Doo-hwan faced defamation charges against the late

3) For detailed explanations, refer to Jung (2022).



Catholic Priest Cho Pius and an ongoing lawsuit at the Gwangju District Court, he did not apologize despite numerous demands from victims. Citizens' anger, provoked by his unapologetic stance, resulted in the display of the statue of Chun Doo-hwan tied with rope in Seoul and Gwangju, symbolizing him as a subject of public ridicule. Chun passed away in November 2021 without offering an apology. As a consequence, his funeral became a source of embarrassment, as a proper ceremony for it was not completed.

On the contrary, the attitude of former President Roh Tae-woo's family is the opposite of that of former President Chun, who denied the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement. On August 23, 2019, prior to the creation of the statue of Chun Doo-hwan tied with rope, Roh Jae-heon, the son of Roh Tae-woo, offered incense and made an apology at the May 18th National Cemetery. On December 6, 2019, he also visited the May Mothers House in Gwangju without prior notice. Lowering his head in this place, he said: "I apologize on the behalf of my father. My father must have expressed his regret for the tragedy of Gwangju in person, but he is unable to do so due to his illness. On May 29, 2020, he paid his respects at the May 18th National Cemetery, laying condolence flowers based on his father's name and offering incense.⁴ Subsequently, he paid his respects at the May 18th National Cemetery on April 21, 2021. The Gwangju community initially responded positively when Roh Jae-heon paid respects at the May 18th National Cemetery for the first time. However, when the contents of <The Memoirs of Roh Tae-woo 1>, an autobiographical book published in 2011, were revealed, questions were raised about the authenticity of Roh Jae-heon's actions.⁵ The May 18 Memorial Foundation and the three statutory corporations for the May 18 Democratization Movement (i.e., the May 18 Bereaved Family Association, the May 18 Memorial Injured, and the May 18 People of Merit Association) demanded sincere apology and action. At the end, during the funeral of Roh Tae-woo in October 2021, his family conveyed his apology through his will. While Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media reviewed media reports on the death of Roh Tae-woo and his funeral, it observed differing reactions from media companies. Some emphasized forgiveness and reconciliation based on the apology of Roh Tae-woo in the form of a will, while other media companies criticized him for neither having offered a direct apology nor having revised his autobiographical book published in 2011. Groups related to the May 18 Democratization Movement, including the May 18 Memorial Foundation, issued a statement on Roh Tae-woo's death, indicating that "he will be recorded as a sinner until the end due to his failure to correct his own apology, revealed confessions and records on investigating the truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement, and distorted and manipulated memoirs."⁶

There is another case of apology. On August 19, 2020, Kim Chong-in, Head of the Emergency Committee of the United Future Party, knelt at the May 18th National Cemetery, making an apology for his previous participation in the Special Committee for National Security Measures and harsh words delivered by the United Future Party. Reflecting on the situation when emergency martial law was expanded nationwide on May 17, 1980, he criticized himself, stating: "I stayed silent and ignored the problem, although I knew of

4) Choi Gyeong-ho, JoongAng Sunday, July 18, 2020

5) With regard to the May 18 Democratization Movement, it is written here as follows: "Rumors are the real criminal. Citizens attacked an armory after listening to rumors that soldiers from Gyeongsang-do came to wipe out Gwangju citizens."

6) Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media, 2021.11.2.



it. I maintained passivity without active resistance against it. These actions are my significant faults. My previous behaviors are guilty acts in the court of history.” He also added: “History shows that reconciliation can be achieved the most ideally through profound reflection and confession of perpetrators. Given the circumstances where one cannot simply expect sincere introspection from those in power, I knelt.”⁷ His apology was the most advanced among the relevant apologies in terms of content. However, as it was regarded as a strategy adopted in the political context, its effects were insignificant.

The aforementioned cases indicate that the subject, the context, and authenticity serve as critical elements in leading apology to forgiveness. Furthermore, they reveal the strong presence of the notion of conditional forgiveness, which states that forgiveness comes only after an apology..

Possibilities and Limitations of Reconciliation

Achieving justice and reconciliation has long been a desire of the citizens in South Korea. This desire reflects the aspiration to end the structured political splits and longstanding politics of grudge, that originated from the events of 1980. The issues of apology and forgiveness lead to another challenge, which is the matter of reconciliation. Unfortunately, these issues are not automatically connected in a chain. The Gwangju issue, arising from the May 18 Democratization Movement, extends to the matter of justice represented by the Five Principles for Gwangju. It highlights the importance of reconciliation between the victims and the state authorities or perpetrators, as well as reconciliation among the victims, the perpetrators, and the general public, who may have differing perspectives from those of victims. Former President Kim Dae-jung recognized such a need and proposed his plan to establish a national unity government during the 1992 presidential election. He eventually secured victory in the 1997 presidential election through a coalition.

The concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation have emerged as significant ideas in transitional justice due to the influence of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, advocacy by experts in educational and social psychology, and criticism over retributive justice in critical legal studies. However, the issues of reconciliation and forgiveness are not only sociopolitical but also deeply intertwined with religious aspects. In Jungian analytical psychology, which fundamentally defines humans as “religious beings”, the issues of reconciliation and forgiveness are explained at the intersection of psychology and religion (Youn, 2018).

Behind apology and forgiveness lie the virtues of reconciliation and integration. At present, three different scales of reconciliation issues have become prominent in South Korean society. The first issue is reconciliation in Korean politics, where politics of grudges have been constantly repeated and strengthened. With the exception of Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, most former South Korean presidents faced hardship either during or after retirement. Such torment may be attributed to their own excessive desires or mistakes, but it may also be due to the winner-takes-all logic resulting

⁷) KBS August 19, 2020



from the presidential system and the practical two-party system, along with the prevailing culture of political revenge. Moreover, it is observed that memories of a certain president's death strongly influence subsequent presidential elections. The more strongly a president is remembered in people's hearts, the more unfortunate his or her life would have been. This phenomenon may have been affected by the dominance of politics based on splits rather than politics based on integration. That is why people have evaluated South Korea's former presidents in extremely different ways and why politics of grudges are still observed.

Despite the horizontal transfer of power in 1998, former President Kim Young-sam did not face political retaliation from his political rival and successor, President Kim Dae-jung. The absence of political revenge at this time likely resulted from the coalition nature of Kim Dae-jung's government and his philosophy of reconciliation. However, apart from this case, politically retaliatory measures were generally implemented during the transitions of power between conservative and progressive political forces. This pattern continues to exist today. To end the politics of grudges, respect and consideration for the vanquished by the victors and recognition and cooperation by the vanquished towards the victors are required. However, South Korea's political culture find these conditions considerably unfamiliar. Therefore, the philosophy of political compromise and coexistence should take precedence over punitive legal measures. To this end, Gwangju, which has played a leading role in South Korea's democratization for over 40 years, should take the lead.

The second issue is an issue of reconciliation between South and North Korea. There are ongoing risk factors that may put a relationship between South and North Korea into tensions and conflicts, such as assigning blame for the outbreak of the Korean War and addressing compensation for war victims. Despite these factors, pivotal events in the history of reconciliation, including the adoption of the 1992 South-North Joint Declaration, the 2000 South-North Korean Summit, and the 2007 South-North Korean Summit, took place. Kim (2019) attempted to theoretically examine conditions, procedures, or processes that can facilitate reconciliation by taking into account the problem of why reconciliation is not progressing on the Korean Peninsula but going round in circles. He considered that core elements, such as mutual recognition of victimhood, apology, mourning, truth acknowledgment, compensation, and forgiveness, are required for reconciliation. According to his argument, it is more desirable to achieve reconciliation through a series of procedures and processes. However, the space where reconciliation takes place is paradoxical and dynamic. Reconciliation between South and North Korea progressed through summits, but it is currently completely blocked. Furthermore, even the basic procedures regarding the legacy of past wars have not yet begun.

The third issue is reconciliation associated with historical issues, particularly including Japan's earnest apology and forgiveness for its colonial rule. regarding the management of issues related to Japan's colonial rule, the primary reconciliation was achieved by the normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan in 1965, and the second reconciliation by the reflections on Japan's colonial rule by Japanese politicians and South Korea's response in the 1990s. The primary reconciliation was forced to



some extent due to the necessity of the Cold War division system in East Asia. In contrast, the secondary reconciliation was conducted in a more voluntary manner, influenced by the global atmosphere of post-Cold War. However, subsequent issues, such as Japan's revisionism and differences in historical perception toward the issues of compulsory mobilization and comfort women between South Korea and Japan, have deepened, aggravating political conflicts between the two countries and within Korean society.

Kymlicka and Bashir theoretically examine reconciliation in a book edited by them. Van Antwerpen (2008) categorizes types of reconciliation into two dimensions: religious and secular types, as well as individual and collective types. He highlights tolerance in individual reconciliation and civic trust and amnesty in collective and secular reconciliation. Bashir (2008) connects the politics of reconciliation to deliberative democracy, emphasizing the integration of diverse voices rather than simple majority rule. He defines reconciliation as an intergroup process embedded in power relations and states that it requires the following three procedures: enabling people to talk about collective memory and excluded history; publicly recognizing historical injustice; and accepting responsibility and making apologies.

It should be noted that there are perspectives that negatively evaluate discourses on reconciliation and forgiveness. For example, Saunders (2011) argues that one should not consider forgiveness intuitively good or equivalent to reconciliation. He explains that the suppression of victims' anger using forgiveness can lead to their significant psychological and emotional distress. Evans (2018) raises questions about the promotion of reconciliation in the context of transitional justice. He points out the existence of few cases of pure reconciliation, indicating that an excessive emphasis on reconciliation may lead to a failure to achieve practical social changes or, at best, result in the preservation of the current conditions. It is essential to underline that empirical grounds on apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation have not been accumulated despite their significance as crucial tasks. Hazan (2006) presents the necessity of empirical research on the practical effects of public apology as well as those of main measures for transitional justice.

Conclusions

The spirit of the May 18 Democratization Movement, also known as the spirit of Gwangju, has guided South Korea's democratization movements, including the June Democracy Movement in 1987, over the past 40 years. It has also functioned as a fortress or breakwater preventing the retreat of democracy in South Korea. This spirit was specified and reflected in the Five Principles for Gwangju, established in accordance with the Act on Compensation, etc., for the Pensions Involved in the Gwangju Pro-democracy Movement, enacted immediately after the Merge of the Three Parties in 1990 and the May 13 statement delivered by President Kim Young-sam in 1993. Furthermore, it served as the source of political energy for establishing a transitional justice model for South Korea, exemplified by the driven enactment of the Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement, facilitating the punishment of responsible individuals. The first principle of the Five Principles for Gwangju advocates for a complete truth investigation, while the process



of solving the Gwangju issue unfolded in the order of compensation, commemoration, and the punishment of responsible individuals in the political reality. Ultimately, the May Movement concluded with an amnesty for top figures responsible for state violence, including Chun Doo-hwan. In line with this approach, South Korea's transitional justice projects were implemented on a full scale, such as the enactment of the Special Act on Discovering the Truth on the Jeju 4·3 Incident and the Restoration of Honor of Victims, in 2000. Additionally, ethnic and national reconciliation projects reflecting Gwangju's aspiration for achieving the slogan "From May to Unification" were initiated following the opening of the inter-Korean Summit.

However, around 2005, Koreans faced the denigration of the May 18 Democratization Movement initiated by the New Right group, distortion of the truth in the context of conservatization and democratic regression, and the denial of the truth by the top perpetrators of state violence who received amnesty. In response to these circumstances, groups related to the May 18 Democratization Movement and the Gwangju community found themselves compelled to take a new approach. The Gwangju community had no choice but to return to the principle of truth investigation, the primary and philosophically foundational principle among the Five Principles for Gwangju. The enactment of the Special Act on Investigating the Truth of the May 18 Democratization Movement in 2019 is the product of the Post May Movement, the second phase of the May Movement requiring responses to specific issues rather than abstract truth. The principle of investigating truth, whose progress was returned to the basics, internally encompasses the other principles. For this reason, there was a growing need to reflect on and enhance the second principle of punishing responsible individuals. The second principle related to responsibility focused on punishment in the first phase, while it accompanied the issues of apology and forgiveness in the second phase. A range of responsibility should be determined for the issue, while the status, range, and authenticity of apologies should be identified. The scope of responsibility and apology extends not only to state violence committed in 1980 but also to denigration and distortion that occurred after 2005.

The more crucial issue is to analyze a relationship between apology and forgiveness. Apology is considered a prerequisite for forgiveness, and it is widely believed that both can promote reconciliation and derive effects of social integration. However, specific grounds for this causal chain are unlikely to be found due to the lack of existing empirical research on this matter. The question of whether forgiveness should be conditional or unconditional carries a dilemma with existential religious elements, making it impossible to enforce and relying on individual decisions.

Finally, the social context and temporality of forgiveness should be considered. Forgiveness cannot be performed at any time. It is challenging to find the right balance between the judgment that true forgiveness should take place in challenging situations where it cannot be easily performed and the judgement that forgiveness should occur when both individual and collective decisions are made. I reckon that forgiveness can be achieved when there is a minimum level of social consensus and when collective decision-making can be performed.

The Gwangju community was divided between those with a more practical viewpoint and those with a more fundamental viewpoint after the May 18 Democratization Movement. It overcame the division issue



through social solidarity based on human dignity. After the termination of the May 18 Democratization Movement, it further expanded solidarity by incorporating a sense of unity between the deceased and the living, thereby creating a historical community. The historical and political sensibilities nurtured here have generated the wisdom to overcome societal conflicts through citizens' forums whenever such conflicts arise. I anticipate that opinions will converge in a more progressive direction on the issue of responsibility and forgiveness related to the May 18 Democratization Movement through the lively discussions of our society.

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