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*Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in
Postauthoritarian South Korea* by Jiyeon Kang (review)

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argues, gives the North Korean people “the agency, self-determination, and knowledge to write their own future and destiny as a nation” (p. 217). Baek informs readers that they too can become involved with organizations that send information into North Korea, which may include “researching best practices from comparative situations, finding and/or creating technologies for dissemination purposes, creating and editing original digital content, fundraising, and more” (p. 225).

Readers may ponder whether foreign media has actually created a “hidden revolution” in North Korea, as Baek’s title states. Baek could have unpacked the notion of a *revolution* more explicitly. Indeed, illegal, hidden, and outside information may very well be *sowing the seeds* for a revolution. These are issues that Baek and her readers should continue to explore, both intellectually and pragmatically.

Baek’s *North Korea’s Hidden Revolution* is a valuable examination of the transformative power of media and information. The text makes a vital contribution to our understanding of North and South Korea, and is a must read for those invested in Korean studies and human rights. The timing of Baek’s work is opportune as “now, more than ever, North Korean people are taking extraordinary risks to learn more about the world that exists outside of their universe” (p. 256).

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Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in Postauthoritarian South Korea, by Jiyeon Kang. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016. 248 pages. \$68.00 hardcover.

In early December 2016, Gwanghwamun Square, the center of Seoul, drew more than a million people. Outraged and stunned by President Park Geun Hye’s corruption scandal, ordinary citizens held candles and demanded her immediate resignation. The candlelight protests had been held every Saturday evening for months, and eventually succeeded in helping to oust President Park. These protests were extraordinary in many ways: Not only were they peaceful, festive, and family-friendly, but these protests also became a site of diverse cultural activities that expressed their anger against Park with innovative and creative signs and slogans, political parodies, and music performances. This historic

moment in South Korea served to raise questions about the origins and sources of movement power.

In describing the trajectory of candlelight protests between 2002 and 2013, Jiyeon Kang's book *Igniting the Internet: Youth and Activism in Postauthoritarian South Korea* helps us answer these important questions—how this unique form of protest came about and how it has evolved since the early 2000s. Mainly focusing on the 2002 and 2008 candlelight protests, considered to be key events, the chapters are structured in a chronological order. Throughout the book, Kang argues that it emerged from online communities, which provided a new social space where Internet users disseminated information, shared and expressed their opinions, forged alliances, and facilitated offline actions. Drawing on data from online discussion boards, mainstream newspapers, and in-depth interviews, Kang demonstrates how internet-born, youth-driven protests have become established as a vital part of the activist repertoire in Korea. As one of the first comprehensive studies of South Korean activism during the post-authoritarian, post-economic crisis era, Kang's book paints a broad picture of new forms of Korean activism.

Those familiar with Korean activism in the 1980s will remember violent scenes of student and labor protest, with tear gas, riot police, Molotov cocktails, and stone throwing. Massive protests were often centrally organized by movement organizations from the top down. Protesters then were more ideologically committed, and ran a high risk of getting arrested, being tortured, and spending years in jail. *Igniting the Internet* shows how the Internet and new communication technology have transformed the nature of political participation and social movements through the *politics of captivity*. By “enabling scattered users to express similar opinions, forge temporary alliances, and make judgments without any social pressure to conform to established political discourse” (p. 154), the politics of captivity creates new political subjects and new patterns of protests—more decentralized, contingent, and less ideological with heterogeneous voices and festive gatherings. The book powerfully shows the *dialectical* relationship between Internet activism and mainstream politics. The Internet did not merely mobilize disgruntled youths in virtual spaces; instead, young users growing up familiar with the logic of online culture contributed to reshaping politics in the real world, often using techniques of parody and subversion when criticizing state authority.

Critics often expect youth activism to produce “a new generation of activists,” but Kang sees this view as simplistic. Portraying the divergent individual trajectories of the youths who have participated in candlelight

protests, Kang emphasizes how heterogeneous identities have emerged from protest experiences. The ways in which the participants remember and interpret the protests are various, and shape individual paths in different ways. Yet the protests have had a long-term effect as a sort of political socialization—individuals have developed “their own ethical and aesthetic judgments about how to respond to perceived injustice” (p. 151). Through vivid individual narratives, Kang suggests that young Koreans’ experiences in both Internet and street politics can evolve into diverse forms of politics. While not unified under one voice in a particular format, the past experience of protests has become an important currency that will continue to shape democratic sensibilities, popular politics, and social movements in the future.

While I agree that the Internet and social media provide new spaces where youths share new information, discuss political matters, and come up with unconventional ways of engaging with real world politics, particular social contexts and conditions should be mediated for the emergence and maturation of new forms of protests, and in my opinion, *Igniting the Internet* falls a bit short. New forms of activism are not simply caused by the internet per se: the strength of civil society and civic association networks, organizational skills and techniques, and political culture all affect the ways in which social actors mobilize themselves and make their voices heard. Internet connection has not brought about a similar pattern of activism in other countries with different historical and social contexts. In that sense, the historical experiences of the 1980s Korean student and labor movements serve as a resource for current social movements. Though the current internet-driven youth activism has new, distinctive features (as the author indicates), the past experience of anti-government, pro-democracy movements continuously shapes current political discourse and sets the terms of political action. In particular, historical legacies are important in providing a good learning opportunity for participants to utilize skills and techniques to mobilize people, organize protests, and make political alliances. The book almost ignores the role of civic associations and networks in organizing the unorganized dissatisfactions and angers of offline society—yet it would be difficult to explain vibrant activism without taking account of the crucial role of civic organizations and their alliances with young Koreans.

Another question left unanswered is the direction of Internet activism. As the author rightly points out, it could go in both progressive and reactionary ways. While the Internet provides a new space for democratic practices by foregrounding unrepresented issues in mainstream politics, cyberspace can be also used as a tool for extremists to propagate ultranationalism, homo-xenophobic ideas, and misogyny. Thus, particular

social and historical conditions and domestic political configurations will affect the patterns of Internet activism.

Overall, *Igniting the Internet* provides an interesting and insightful perspective on the emergence and development of youth activism in Korea over the last ten years. Scholars interested in collective action and social movements, new media, and Korean politics will find this book a valuable addition to the field.

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Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim Iryöp, by Jin Y. Park. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017. 262 pages. \$65.00 hardcover.

Jin Y. Park's book presents new horizons for the study of women and Buddhism through the life and thoughts of a Korean Zen Buddhist nun, Kim Iryöp (1896–1971). Women's role and participation in Buddhism have been subjected to biases and distortions in society, with the move to religion often being labeled as failure or escapism. The Buddhist community and scholarship have also neglected women as the agents of history. This skewed perception has been partly corrected by recent studies of Buddhist nuns, but nuns' pre-monastic lives in society are still seen as holding little value. Against this backdrop, Park transforms the dissonances between women and Buddhism into strings of resonance, interaction, and synergy. It is her philosophical perspective that explores "how and why women engage with Buddhism" (pp. 1 and 184) and highlights how their meaningful interactions open up new modes of philosophy termed as "a narrative philosophy and a philosophy of life" (p. 15). Her effort shifts women and Buddhism from the margin to center stage, ultimately challenging the male/Western-dominated academic philosophy.

It is no coincidence that Park adopts a format of biography, instead of the usual abstract and theory-based framework of philosophy, as the best way to explore the distinctiveness of Kim Iryöp's life- and narrative philosophies. The first half of her book pays attention to Kim's early life as a writer and activist for the women's liberation movement, whereas the second half delves into Kim's late Buddhist thought and practice as a Korean Zen Buddhist nun. Although her discussion is divided into two parts, this does not mean separation and opposition between Kim's early