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HANGUKINRON: THE SHAPE OF KOREAN NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

BY

MICHAEL WILLIAM HURT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL SATISFACTION OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
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COMMITTEE IN CHARGE:

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DEDICATION:

I would like to thank all those who offered their moral support while the dissertation writing process lagged due to my investment of time and energy in other worthy endeavors and ways of exploring Korea. Special thanks must go to Mama Hurt – Hyunsup Song Hurt, who never flagged in her mental and material support of this present, scholarly Endeavor, even as many around me were becoming more sure that I was destined to forever be a “professional student.” Thanks are also due to those friends who lent their ears and eyes towards the honing of many ideas and words into this dissertation. Steven Lee, Yong Ha Jeong, Donna Kwon, Ann Kwon, and Albert Lee and Albert Hahn were part of many conversations about myriad issues I’ve been working out over the years and deserve thanks for sticking around as friends. Special thanks are also in order to Grace Kim, who has kept it and me intellectually real for years now. In additions, Jason and Juliann Ryan were extremely helpful in the final stretch towards the finish line as I tried to wrangle this manuscript, the first I’ve ever handled of this size. Rijeong Hyun and Yoojeong Lee, both former undergraduate students of mine, stood by their former professor and helped in the trenches during the final hours to find any remaining typos and formatting errors I had time to fix, along with Yong Ha. Still, in the end, all responsibility for errors of any kind are completely my own. And finally, a thanks to those who supported the supporters, especially those around Mom, who could not have stuck by me alone.
A note on Korean romanization:

With the exception of certain proper names and conventional/traditional spellings of some Korean proper nouns, words from Korean are romanized according to the 2000 Revised Romanization of Korean (국어의 로마자 표기법) system, which is the official one in use by Korean government bodies and makes Korean words easier for non-speakers of Korean to both pronounce and remember. Those not familiar with Korean pronunciation should note that singular romanized vowels are long, rendering a pronunciation of minjok as “Min Joke” or Hanguk as “Han Gook.” Other romanized Korean vowels should be pronounced in the following way:

- eo = “uh” as in the English word “ton”
- eu = “oo” as in the English word “wood”

Accordingly, hujinguk would be pronounced “hoo-jin-gook.” I rarely use dashes or separate the Korean into separate words except as where it seems necessary for the sake of clarity or pronunciation.

Use of the McCune-Reischauer system, which is officially outdated in terms of policy and political regimes, not to mention downright confusing with its use of diacritical marks and special symbols, would be as confusing to the non-specialist, non-Korean-speaking reader as it would be an exercise in self-serving, esoteric exotification. Not using McCune-Reischauer also eliminates myriad font/typography problems between writer-printer-reader. And readers already familiar with the Korean language, who will make up the vast majority of the few people on Earth who will actually read this work in its entirety, will know what the revised romanization means, anyway.
In my dissertation, entitled “Hangukinron: The Shape of Korean National Ideology,” I identify the key socio-historical factors in the formation of a particular, phenomenological form in modern Korean national ideology, outlining the character and mechanics of a specific type of ideological production that typifies the Korean national mode of thought, which peaked in South Korea between the years 1987-1997, from the time right before the 1988 Seoul Olympics and up to the near-collapse of the Korean economy in 1997. This period was the fullest flowering of an ideology called hangukinron: a popular discourse that posits a logical and obvious relationship between the purity of the Korean race/nation/culture (minjok) and that country’s high level of economic success, vestiges of which remain quite viable and visible in the present day.
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Introduction and Overview

In my dissertation, entitled “Hangukinron: The Shape of Korean National Ideology,” I identify the key historical factors in the formation of modern Korean national ideology, outlining the character and mechanics of a specific type of ideological production that typifies the Korean national mode of thought, which peaked in South Korea between the years 1987-1997, from the time right before the 1988 Seoul Olympics and up to the near-collapse of the Korean economy in 1997. This ten-year period was the fullest flowering of an ideology called hangukinron: a popular discourse that posits a logical and obvious relationship between the purity of the Korean race/nation/culture (minjok) and that country’s high level of economic success.

The first part of the dissertation explores the concept of hangukinron itself, explicating aspects of its ideological construction, discursive argumentation, and actual deployment on the Korean peninsula in the early years of Korean national identity before moving on to a case study of how the fruits of the hangukinron discourse dovetailed with an analogous, but markedly different discourse of multiculturalism amongst members of the Korean diaspora in the United States. In shifting the focus from the Korean peninsula to members of the Korean diaspora, I hope to place aspects of hangukinron into sharper relief by examining its features and functions outside of its original societal context.

Before moving into a definition of hangukinron, it is necessary to define how I construct and employ it here, as a borrowing from Japanese Studies and the concept of nihonjinron, which is most succinctly explained by Yoshio Sugimoto:

*It is important to be mindful of the way in which nihonjinron tends to use three concepts—nationality, ethnicity and culture—almost interchangeably. At the core of the nihonjinron discourse lies the notion of Japanese myths, a set of value orientations the Japanese are supposed to share. Nihonjinron advocates share the fundamental assumption that Japaneseness, which every single Japanese supposedly possesses, has existed indefinitely, that Japaneseness differs fundamentally from “Westernness”, namely Western orientations, and determines all aspects of Japanese ways of life (Morris–Suzuki, 1988; Mouer and Sugimoto, 1986). The nihonjinron discourse uses the notion of Japaneseness interchangeably with Japanese culture and rarely articulates its demographic basis...In this context, the nihonjinron cultural analysis can and does operate like a façade used to conceal nationalistic and/or racial doctrines that it embodies. Indeed, some observers justifiably argue that nihonjinron is based on prejudicial ideologies (Lummus, 1982) and harbors racist assumptions akin to those of some currents of German thought (Dale, 1986). Others demonstrated that, with Japanese culture presented as courteous and benign, it also serves as a “decorative bouquet” failing Japan's nationalist ideological agenda (Nishikawa, 1995).*

In short, like nihonjinron as a genre that is a “theory of Japaneseness,” hangukinron is a “theory of Koreanness” that is a similar mode of thinking and genre of

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Korean writing and other public discourses about being Korean. The reason such a concept can be easily borrowed from the Japanese lies in the fact that the mode of writing and knowledge production itself was borrowed from Japan by Korean intellectuals addressing societal concerns that had suddenly become quite cogent to Koreans living in the post-development 1980’s and 90’s who were then dealing with questions similar to those the Japanese had dealt with in the construction of their ideological rationale used in the parsing of knowledge related to the issues of tradition versus modernity, new versus old, East versus West. And Also, it is important to note that what has been called nihonjinron thinking was more than a mere facile tool for Koreans dealing with similar societal questions as their Japanese neighbor; there is the fact of the direct connection that existed between Korean and Japanese intellectuals before, during, and after the actual colonial occupation of Korea vis a vis the very notions of “nation,” “race,” “people,” and “culture,” as scholars such as Andre Schmid authoritatively and exhaustively described in his monumental work Korea Between Empires. In the exact same way as nihonjinron exists as not a mere genre of writing, but a veritable mode of thought for making sense of being Japanese, hanhukinron for Koreans is an ideological quilt masterpiece that is the weaving together of various discourses explaining who the Korean people are, how they got here, and what being Korean means in a modern world dizzy from encounters with new modes of living, material wealth, and other changes that Korean society never anticipated on the concrete level of the everyday. Hangukinron is an explanatory lens that make sense of it all, manifesting as the overarching genre of thought that unites such seemingly disparate things such as textbooks that posit the uniqueness and racial purity of the Korean people, films such as Sopyonje, which is about an obscure, increasingly irrelevant traditional singing form that became a surprise, runaway hit and sparked intense popular interest in Korean traditional pansori performance, and public intellectuals such as Lee Eo-ryeong who openly argued the innate superiority of the Korean race in a children’s book. Although the idea of hangukinron as a genre is not overtly referenced in Korea, the genre and mode of thought surely exists.

Koreanness and Its Constituent Global Parts

One of the most fascinating aspects of examining Korean contemporary culture, national identity, and it's construction lies in the fact that South Korea and its contemporary identity must be understood with knowledge that South Korea it has always been a country that was concerned with its image in the world and how other nations and races regarded it. Even from the times of the earliest stirrings of Korean national identity, the Korean nation has always seen itself in an international context. Indeed, the whims of several major nations would materially and crucially affect the fate of millions of Koreans on the peninsula. As Korean studies scholar Andre Schmid explored in his seminal work Korea Between Empires, the self-conception of Korea was always international in context. As much as Korean identity and even national pride was defined by what “Korea” was, one must also consider that "Korea" was also defined by what it was not. Andre Schmid describes this self-consciously international way of thinking in Korea during the 1890’s authoritatively and succinctly:

The new message was munmyeong gaehwa -- “civilization and enlightenment.” Although most exuberantly promoted with the newly
emerging newspaper presses, 1895 the message had become familiar. It had insinuated itself into speeches by the King, and even regulations listing changes in the curriculum that venerable Confucian Academy, the Songgyungwan, appealed to munmyeong gaehwa at the extreme opposite, advertisers, always quick to capitalize on the latest trends, flaunt their products—whether medicine or milk—as suited for a “civilized age” and fitting the discriminating taste of” civilized” consumers. Able to sell both reform and products, munmyeong gaehwa emerged as the vocabulary of the era… Today, although nationalism and globalization are often juxtaposed as oppositional or exclusive processes, in Korea at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the two were mutually constitutive: nationalism was the vehicle for accelerating the peninsula's inclusion in the global capitalist order, and these globalizing forces—in particular what we called the “new knowledge (sinhak)—stimulated a radical rethinking of the nation and its identity…Now the nation was seen by nature as just another member of the community of nations that stretched around the world, sharing a historical trajectory.²

It was also during this period of beginning to imagine a modernizing, modern nation into the future that Korea encountered the notion of Social Darwinism:

Munmyeong kaehwa was always linked with another complex set of ideas derived from the West, social Darwinism. Like munmyeong kaehwa, social Darwinism was considered spatially and temporally universal, but if munmyeong kaehwa was the result of the progressive lessons of history, then social Darwinism represented the inviolate laws of human society. It, too, had hierarchies of nations, car keys that neatly overlap with those of civilization. The civilized countries, after all, were usually the strongest countries.³

And Finally, rounding out this line of thinking, was the related concept of the minjok:

The term minjok was part of the new lexicon that accompanied the rise of nationalism in East Asia. Pronounced minjok in Korean, minzu in Chinese, and minzoku in Japanese, the two characters of this neologism have strong resonances with ancient terms for ethnic or racial groupings. The first character, min, appeared in the most age of ancient texts as a term for “people,” whereas is the second character, also present in classical texts, denoted the “clan,” “tribe,” or “family.” Both terms were separately combined with other characters to designate a variety of social groupings, variously translated in English as “ethnicity” or “race.” However, it seems that in none of the premodern writings of Korea, China, Japan or are these

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³ Ibid., 37
two characters regularly linked as a single compound to designate large collectivities. This very combination—two venerable characters traditionally used to denote various types of social groups—serve to blur the terms’ recent origins, suggesting an entomology that, like the claims being made for the nation, stretched into the distant past. Moreover, with its individual components given the term’s somewhat organic touch through its intimation of a popular (min) and familial (jok) derivation, it proved most useful for intellectuals writing about the nation as a natural entity.⁴

Indeed, modern Korea and its constituent parts have always been global in nature. Korea has always imagined itself as one nation and its related minjok as being in conflict and part of a natural, evolutionary struggle for dominance in the world environment. Furthermore, as recent and developing world history seems to be proving, some nations won and some lost, and unfortunately are subject to domination and colonization by others. From the very beginning, Korean intellectuals and reformers were spurred on to hasten their development, lest it be forcefully enacted on them by another more powerful nation. This was, quite simply, for better or worse, the way of the world, and seen as completely natural. The irony here, as Andre Schmid so eloquently points out, is that the very desire to spur on rapid development using the logic of social Darwinism (and other such ideologies) was that early Korean nationalists found themselves unwittingly setting the nation up for the advent of direct Japanese colonization in the not-too-distant future.

In addition to the unique origin of the modern notion of “Korea” in its particular, and peculiarly international context, when it comes to recent and modern identity politics in a multicultural world and a state of “multiculturalism,” Koreans and Korean national identity have been part of an important and ongoing conversation with diasporic members who happen to be physically placed in the one country and culture that has dominated it the most in recent decades as well as the country and culture that has come to both dominate and define the discourse around “multiculturalism” and all its trappings in the world—the United States. In this sense, Korea's experience with "multiculturalism" as a discourse in the present day places into sharp relief the prior experience with what many scholars have come to call Korea's “ethnic nationalism,” which I describe here a bit more narrowly as hangukinron. The discourse of hangukinron defines not just the sense of how Koreans are possessed of a type of nationalism that is articulated in an ethnic or racial sense, but also includes an understanding of the cultural and ideological logic that provides the fuel for ethnic nationalism performance.

In the latter chapters, the experience of Korean-Americans in America becomes a useful lens through which to more closely examine hangukinron as a logic of being Korean in what I will call the “post-development” period of the modern South Korean nation-state. Hangukinron, it is important to note, comes about as a way of thinking and a cultural logic in the time not of Korea's developmental dreaming and the inevitable tension that comes with wondering whether or not said dreams will come true, but is more a function of a nation increasingly cognizant of the fact that the developmental

⁴ Schmid, Andre. Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919, 173
dream had indeed come to full fruition and was presently busy rationalizing and explaining to itself how that happened.

**Preemptive Engagement**

This analysis does not rely upon an implicit comparison with the West. Nowhere in my argument do I reference the culturally and historically specific political, social, or cultural state of affairs in the West in my critical engagement of Korean national ideology. Although my training is grounded in the United States, and has been informed by a Western academic approach, I consciously strived to keep the main points of theoretical analysis as devoid of reference to theoretical concepts rooted in analyses of Western national development. My project is largely descriptive, using various sources spanning a defined amount of time to describe a pattern I assert exists. The approach is historical to the extent that I weigh sources and facts in certain ways, but it would be difficult to argue that this approach is 1) particularly Western, and 2) is very theoretical in the way that one might apply the more culturally-specific academic tools employed in the fields of literary criticism, cultural anthropology, or social psychology to describe Korean social and ideological formations.

All of the so-called "developed" nation-states in Asia lay claim to and actively work with a clearly defined notion of History; the ways in which this very western notion came to be nearly universal is an interesting historiographical story, but not one immediately relevant to the present argument. Suffice it to say that the notion of History and its importance to the Nation are well-established concepts in both the Korean and Japanese cases and need little explication. Additionally, despite the fact that much of the body of work to define and critique processes of national ideology began in Western academia, one should not be confused into thinking that such critiques of national ideological construction are inherently western. Therefore, I dismiss the notion that a critical engagement with Korean national ideology as a Western scholar is somehow inherently "ethnocentric." In fact, this very accusation is as dangerous as it is sometimes valid; although it would be quite easy to mount an ethnocentric critique of ideology and culture of Korea from a western framework, it is also equally easy to prematurely dismiss as “ethnocentric” valid critiques that consider dangerous ideological processes on their own terms.

The central assumption of my argument lies in the simple assertion that there exist problematic and potentially dangerous aspects of Korean national ideology, most specifically, as they have to do with notions of “race”; for this reason alone, it is valid to mount a critique of it and examine specific cases of it against a critical analytical framework. My training as a graduate student came in the interdisciplinary field of Ethnic Studies; the very existence of the department itself exists within a project of identifying and critically engaging the problem of structural inequality. Of course, this field is homegrown out of very American concerns, and is shot through with American-based models and modes of theoretical understanding, but the questions posed by dangerous ideologies and their constitution is surely not solely an American problem. I critique Korean national ideology for the exact same reason as I do that of the United States, and I consider it a crucial and necessary task for the same reasons as I consider it necessary in my home culture: justifications for present and future social inequities are enabled by ideology, an entity that has historically describable origins. In order to see the problems
for what they are, such ideologies must be critically examined.

The question of "positionality" and "ethnocentrism" continues to vex many scholars who engage in broadside critiques of national ideology. However, as a scholar, I reject the notion that one must engage in confessional questioning of one’s personal motivations in relation to one’s academic arguments. To the extent that much of the suspicion of a particular scholar's "motives" for engaging in a particular area of work are, upon close inspection, rooted in superficial and essentialist identity politics, I preemptively dismiss any critique of my "positionality" as being problematically rooted in the West. Such a knee-jerk critique is in itself often unexaminedly and inherently ethnocentric, and most justifications for my interest in Korean history and culture – ones that most people accept as “legitimate” when I offer them in private conversation – are actually, upon closer inspection, functioning to shield me from “suspicion” only on the levels of blood (race) and superficial affectional affiliations. Such concerns are outside the realm of relevant academic discourse, and I hope that the arguments presented below are judged on their own merit, rather than as part of a reactionary nationalist indignation, or alternatively legitimated as part of a calculus of the degree to which some people are seen to have “legitimate” affective interests in Korea.

At this point in world history, now that nation-states outside of the "West" have actively and self-consciously joined the global community that defines itself with catch-phrases "internationalization" and the word "modern," it is a useless and dangerous exercise to define the "East" and "West" in separate terms. The making of such a distinction is not only an exercise in futility, but actually dangerous. One need only compare the ideological conditions surrounding the writings of histories in pre and post-war Japan and Germany to see this; both were relatively new nation-states that developed volatile ideologies that enabled individuals to be callous and horribly cruel in a way that added up to the creation of immense structures of death. As Ian Buruma eloquently described in his passionately argued work The Wages of Guilt in 1994, after the war, Germany (for a whole litany of historically specific and different reasons that are not the same as the Japanese case) was forced to deal with and denounce its former ideologies. In the Japanese case, many aspects of racial and national beliefs about the Japanese self were allowed to remain intact and uncriticized by the very same occupier, the United States, as John Dower described in his 1999 work Embracing Defeat. Even as Japan (generally defined) continues to have problems with deep-rooted racial and ethnic discrimination in its society, and continues to raise hackles throughout Asia in the way that it officially remembers its own history and responsibility for wartime acts, it is still possible to hide from, and deflect, critique under the cry of ethnocentrism or "Japan-bashing." Although there are surely reasons to be academically sensitive about the way critiques of a culture that are not one's own are undertaken, to call the effort to do so inherently biased, or even worse, racist -- constitutes a grave error. So-called "Western" academics should not be so hamstrung by the requisite collective guilt over the legacy of undeniably ethnocentric and at times even racist practices in Western academia that it blinds one's ability to be critical about things in dire need of being engaged with at the level and degree that academic research and writing promote. Of course, Korean scholars engage in this critique, but this should not mean that outside scholars should refrain from joining the fray. In fact, with the relative advantages and additional perspectives that outsiders may bring, it is surprising that they are not more welcomed. Alex de
Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1831) would not have been so biting and unrestrained had he not been French, an outsider. Although I do not proclaim to be a de Tocqueville, I do hope to benefit from the same clarity of observation that allowed him to create a socially useful and worthy addition to a great body of knowledge; on a smaller scale, I hope that my contribution to the relatively small body of work done by Korean Studies scholars outside of Korea will somehow offer itself as a useful tool to build for those concerned -- Korean or not -- about leaving this world a better place than one found it.

**Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter 1: “Hangukinron: The Shape of Korean National Ideology”

The first chapter lays out the basic concept of *hangukinron* and its *nihonjinron* origins while also providing a basic orientation to this very useful concept from Japan and Japan Studies. It also contains some concrete examples of *hangukinron* to better explicate the concept for the reader who is unfamiliar with it. This chapter contains one of the best examples of *hangukinron* thinking from Won Bok Rhie’s book *Korea Unmasked*, which graphically illustrates this way of thinking in popular, easy-to-digest form.

Chapter 2: “Framing the Collective Self”

The second chapter lays out a framework for understanding the basic concept of the nation as it has to do with South Korea, especially beginning with the concept of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community” and how that can be parsed through other theoretical concepts such as Kosaku Yoshino’s idea of “primary” and “secondary” nationalisms. It will also explore how specific public discourses and concepts within South Korea inform and shape the instruction of identity there. I also introduce some key analytical frameworks that help outline specific shape of Korean identity, including "exemplarism," a historical framework drawn from with the American Puritans and the idea that it is possible to Otherize without the actual presence of an Other.

Chapter 3: “School, Ethics, and Identity”

The third chapter is an analysis of official state nationalism through a look at its most concrete and unadulterated form, the *dodeok* ("Morals/Ethics") textbook that is used in the subject of the same name. *Dodeok* is a unique subject in both the Korean national curriculum and as a subject in schools around the world. It is one of the most direct expressions of official state ideology as it has to do with proper forms of national identity masquerading as a curriculum about ethics or morality in general, while in most obviously concerns itself with the specifics of being a good national subject, to the point where one might even call the textbook and the subject "a handbook on being Korean."

Chapter 4: “Parsing the Official View: Public Intellectuals as Cultural Intermediaries”

The fourth chapter examines how official state ideology gets parsed through popular intellectual figures and cultural products, following the writings and assertions of
several figures who were key sources of information about what it meant to be Korean during the heyday of *hangukinron* thinking during the 19080’s and 1990’s. One of the most famous public intellectuals of the period was Song Byeong-nak, whose writings in newspapers and books certainly greatly influenced public thinking on this issue. The chapter will also discuss one of his contemporaries, former culture minister and architect of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games ceremonies, named literary critic Lee O-ryeong. The chapter will be rounded out by a look at the 1992 film *Sopyonje*, which was a force unto itself that made a powerful aesthetic and emotional argument about the nature of proper Korean identity, which was understood to be quickly fading from public consciousness, thereby causing a social phenomenon dubbed "Sopyonje Fever."

Chapter 5: “Transmitting the ‘Monumental Style’: Transnational Korean American Identity”

After having defined both official state ideology and its means of propagation through public intellectuals into popular consciousness, the fifth chapter will examine how *hangukinron* notions of identity formed on the Korean peninsula find purchase in a receptive diasporic community in the United States. Here, an ethnographic study of a Korean American drumming group explicates how American notions of "iconic multiculturalism" combined quite readily with ideas and cultural practices that have been partially created and encouraged through *hangukinron* discourse from across the Pacific.

Chapter 6: The Triumph of the “Global Fetish” and Consumption

The sixth and final chapter rounds out the argument in discussing how the existential questions of identity in South Korea seem to have found their answer in the capitalist consumer culture. The chapter discusses the commodification of culture especially as South Korea has been successful in achieving its much dreamed and sought-after goal of international recognition. Along the way, I take a close look at some relevant social issues such as prostitution and how women themselves become unconsciously interpellated as objects of a “fetishized femininity” that both creates and rationalizes a system that has always treated Korean female bodies that exist in the service of capital.
Chapter 1: *Hangukinron*: The Shape of Korean National Ideology

*Hangukinron* is a particular formation of modern Korean national ideology, outlining the character and mechanics of a specific type of ideological production and that typifies the Korean national mode of thought. It peaked between the years 1987-1997, from the time right before the 1988 Seoul Olympics and up to the near-collapse of the Korean economy in 1997. This ten-year period was the fullest flowering of an ideology called *hangukinron*, a popular discourse that posits a logical and obvious relationship between the purity of the Korean race/nation/culture (*minjok*) and the country’s high level of economic success. After examining the historical circumstances of *hangukinron*’s initial formation, my argument will shift to look at official state nationalism during the period that is the focus of this paper, especially as it is written in the *Doduk* (a morals/ethics manual used in public school education) and Korean history textbooks, as well as the guidelines found in the seven education plans created by the Ministry of Education. Thereafter will follow a comparison of these official representations of proper nationhood to the ways public intellectuals readily and eagerly reproduce the dominant ideological representations of the state as “cultural intermediaries” between productive and consumptive nationalisms. The final portion of the analysis will describe how popular notions of race, gender, and culture—as part of an ongoing struggle to define an overarching notion of Korean identity, especially as it is popularly consumed in newspapers and entertainment media—are manifested in popular culture. It is only by including a consumptive analysis of culture, in addition to the traditional top-down analysis of the productive organs of ideology, that one can usefully consider how nations as holistic entities simultaneously define, promulgate, and consume dominant notions of the perceived national self.

In a general sense, this dissertation is an attempt to talk about postcolonial cases outside of the former European empires and their colonies’ context, as defined in such works as Irene Rima Makaryk's *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Such is the tendency in the study of postcolonial cases: to see the postcolonial only in the places where former empires of Europe once reigned. Our

In this way, Korea is a peculiarly interesting example for study because of its experience as the object of a non-Western colonialism, unprecedented rapid economic development, and a more recent post-colonial hypermodernity. From its very beginning as a modern nation-state in the late nineteenth century, the development project has set the terms by which the nation defines itself, and by virtue of having extended its power so deeply into all spheres of society. For example, setting the very terms by which individuals have come to define themselves.

Crucially, much of the impetus and modeling for reform and development as a modern nation – and this includes the period before overt colonization by the Japanese – came from the outside. During the 1910-1945 period of Japan’s overt occupation, the terms defining the state were largely not set by Koreans, and even after “Liberation” in 1945 and after the Korean War that followed closely on its heels, Korea was developed under the wing of its most fiscally and militarily generous benefactor – the United States. Even after the industrial and economic boom that created so much wealth in South Korea,

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buzzwords in the popular lexicon, ones that indicate a still-extant way of thinking among everyday people here, included words that speak to the uncritical belief in the modern teleology of an all-liberating notion of progress: hujinguk (undeveloped country), sungjinguk (developed country), segyehwa (globalization), gukjehwahaha (internationalization), gaebal (development), chal/mot sanneun nara (a country living well/poorly), etc.

This mode of thinking about the nation inherently pre-disposes cognition to be comparative and finds its origins in Social Darwinism which was the dominant mode of thinking for early Korean nationalists and historians at the turn of the century. Korea's sense of imagined self has always been global in scope and context, even before the nation became “global” in any real sense. All developmental dreaming was done in the “big picture” and abstractly, but was a very real mode of thought. Korean nationalist thinking itself was born in the crucible of Social Darwinism and the idea that the Korean nation was in the midst of a greater, worldwide battle between nations for progress and dominance over one another.

The idea of history, as well as all other endeavors of art and cultivation, in the employ of nationalism has always been a part of Korean thinking, with the idea that the education system itself should exist as a way to define and cultivate Korean values persisting all the way through to the present day.

Korea's sense of its imagined national self has always been global in scope and context, even before the nation was imagined as truly “global.” All developmental dreaming was done in the big picture and in terms of foreign thinking in this sense. The “same nation” that believed in itself as an “elect nation,” an imagined community of chosen people as argued in terms of racist Social Darwinism, which had a particularly strong but only to the logic of “development” even in premodern, precolonial Korea. With the all-encompassing, totalizing discourse of the Park Chung Hee era, in which thinking would only become more acute only about specific things such as economic markers and other concrete indices.

I have found that the easiest way to convey the warp and woof of Koreanness and Korean national identity to non-Koreans and non-Korean specialists, to allow those who have never been on the inside a way to understand its feel and taste, as well as get a sense of its totality and pervasiveness in society is by using an historical analogy. The best non-Korean historical example I have ever encountered in terms of a society that successfully marshaled the forces of belief and ideology towards a common social goal was that of the American Puritans. Of course, the specific content of puritanical belief based on a Calvinist yearning to know whether one was saved or damned was very different from the South Korean nationalist yearning to move both the self and the nation ahead by any means necessary. However, the form that these beliefs took was not so categorically different, and an extended comparison between the two ideologies can be quite illustrative.

It may be useful to understand Korean national identity as a “civic religion” – one that is totalizing in scope and operates as a futurist discourse; a ‘religion’ that gives meaning to life, from the personal to the national levels, and is puritanical in form, but not necessarily in content. A variety of evidence and social narratives provided the impetus for belief in the "elect" status of the Korean people, variously argued through racial and national notions of fitness as passed down through the rationalizing doctrine of
Social Darwinism that entered Korea early on in the process of constructing Korean nationalism and was part of its idea-DNA that the Korean nation was part of an international struggle to advance itself as defined by modernity markers. Unlike actual Calvinist doctrine, evidence of the nation’s sanctification as a country that could and would exceed as a powerful nation in the world could be discerned and tangibly seen and even measured. These concrete markers were worldly evidence of sanctification -- such corporeal evidence is what the old-school Calvinist Puritans would have pointed to as "justification" as of actual spiritual sanctification. In this sense, racial, ethnic, and national “sanctification” and “justification” provide and justification the very lens through which to define and give him meaning to reality itself. The concrete markers of the nation’s struggle and apparent success, which at one time were just lofty goals and distant hopes, but which quickly became reality in ways far beyond what any of the ideology’s architects could have ever imagined, quite veritably justified the logic and all specific assertions that the nation’s success was linked to racial and cultural purity, and to the innate superiority of the Korean people. In this sense, as the higher the hyper-vigilantly monitored GDP rose in South Korea, and the more international attention became focused on the nation through events such as the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the more evidence there was for the fervently believed in sanctification of the Korean people. If markers of racial, and by extension, national fitness were more plainly and frequently evident this empowered and entrenched belief in the seminal postulate that Korea was indeed a special and elect nation.

**The Nation as Exemplar**

In late 1997, as the Asian financial crisis deepened and jumped across borders into South Korea, causing the value of the Korean won to plummet from around 800 won to the dollar, halving itself in the 1600 won range, and by December, halving itself again to reach past the 2400 mark, marking the beginning of a new era, which Koreans would call “the IMF period,” named after the harsh reforms placed as stipulations for a financial aid bailout package by that international body, giving birth to a new social hero: the loyal Korean housewife. She was both myth and reality, a product of the news media as much as from these wives’ real love of their country that caused them to materialize.

Both in Korea, and internationally, the image of the loyal Korean housewife gathering all her family's precious items made of gold and cheerfully donating them to be melted down to help offset the nation’s debt problem became ubiquitous across the world.

The material body is becoming more alien and western, as yet the soul has been assumed to remain unchanged. It is no coincidence that in 1992, so-called “Sopyonje fever” became a national affliction, amidst popular concern for the apparent loss of what had come to be defined as inherently Korean aesthetics, arts, and essence.

For use in the present analysis, I would like to posit a new usage of the term “post-development” as a kind of conceptual short-hand with which to describe the state of the Korean nation that will be most useful to advance my points. Before going any further, it is important to mention Wolfgang Sachs' definition of “post-development theory” as a criticism of the development project for which Korea is a rare and almost singular case of resounding success. My particular and special utilization of the term refers not to any accepted specific markers such as gross national product, changes in the
import and export rates of key industrial goods, voter participation rates, or any other conceivable measures that might be used in the fields of economics, political science, or material histories. What I posit is a definition of “post-development” as a psychological sense of completion, rather than an assertion of fiscal, concrete “fact.” Overlooked in most of the myriad studies of the Korean economic “miracle” is a deep analysis of what ramifications this had for not only the national economy itself, but also for the ideological economy as well, as a complex system of interconnected ideas that are inextricably linked to material changes in society. One can easily argue that one of the most important changes for the Korean people – shifts in the landscape of Korean identity that accompanied the changing state of the structure – has been overlooked in the academic excitement surrounding the so-called economic “miracle” of the South Korean economy. This is in itself curious, given the fact that massive amounts of economic aid from the United States and Japan were provided as grants and loans, along with the additional benefit that the United States guaranteed the security of the South Korean state, all of which inherently brought massive changes although indeed related to the rapid growth of the Korean economy, not the Korean economy itself. Indeed, given the massive amounts of economic and military protection of just the United States alone, it would have been a miracle (not to mention a crying shame) if the economy had not taken off to a significant and successful degree. When the Korea case is compared to those of Nigeria or any other developing nation (as it often is, especially in Korean and Nigerian development circles), the glaring fact of the Korean case’s irreproducible, historically specific exceptionality is negligently deliberately omitted in an effort to construct the fantasy that a “miracle” has actually taken place. This is despite the fact that the circumstances of Korea’s rise to economic power are quite easy to understand and explain. But the “miracle” lies in the fact that Korea is pretty much the only case in which the West's development theory and project actually worked.

There has been a great deal of structural change in Korean society. It is an easy story to tell with economic and political change as the easiest entity with which to embellish haughty academic terms, construct fancy theoretical models, and undertake with concrete fiscal and material measurements. But such terms, models, and measurements do not define the world in which people actually view themselves. In that People do, however, describe the inevitable and important changes in thinking that take place in response to huge political and economic flux. One of the direct concerns of my dissertation’s analysis are the socio-psychological changes that have taken place in the realm of the thoughts that influence and express how people define themselves in relation to the nation, how the nation itself is defined, and how changing notions of blood, race, and national identity cause people to think about Korea’s changing relationship to the rest of the world. Of course, this all necessarily takes place in the shadow of the formal economy, but I see structural changes as only defining the beginning of the analysis, since the concrete is far easier to map out than the architecture of a way of thought.

Such is the sense in which I utilize the concept of “post-development” – as a marker of significant ideological and psychological change in the way people consider both the individual and national “selves.” It is the acknowledgement, from the realm of the personal to the public, that the fruits of “development” are, to some extent, already here, and that Korea is beginning to take on the psychological and ideological attributes of a “developed” nation. Any watchers of Korean television or cinema, readers of
newspapers or best-selling books, or followers of current events in relation to either the 2002 World Cup or the mass anti-American protests regarding the negligent homicide acquittal of two American servicemen in the accidental deaths of two American middle school girls – these observers would likely attest to the sea of change in thinking about Korea’s conception of national “self” and its place in the world, as compared to even 15 years ago. Such changes are crucial to analyze and understand, and not simply in terms of the usual suspects of economics, political science, and dry, Whiggish history. It is only by delving into the realm of ideology and its modes of propagation amongst the populace and paid intellectuals that one can hope to truly comprehend the entirety of just what kind of new nation Korea has become.

Justifying the Nation

When dealing with something as abstract as a notion of “civic culture,” while attempting to identify and academically demonstrate the existence of discernible patterns within it, the task can seem quite daunting. Especially in a culture where you are a foreign observer, such patterns and peculiar characteristics can be quite easy to see, which is the advantage inherent to the position of the outside observer; but that very fact of being an outsider can mean that making sense of those patterns – in terms of the culture itself, and not in ethnocentric or historically non-specific ways – can be quite difficult. After thinking about, and researching this topic over the space of several years, I was increasingly struck by startling similarities between the writings and rhetorical style of another group of ideological purists who had been inspired and conflicted by the prospects of their spiritual and material success – the early American “Puritans.” Even their name belies how the degree to which they took Protestantism was considered extreme. Before continuing the present analysis, I want to make clear that I am not asserting a causal or explanatory relationship between Korean Christianity and national development. Nor am I interested in historicizing a Korean version of a “Protestant work ethic” in my greater discussion of the role that the economy plays in the formation of hangukiniron national ideology. If such a relationship is thought to exist, as one might plausibly argue it might, I leave this to other scholars to explore. I want it to be perfectly clear that I am using the example of Puritanical justification in a purely metaphorical way, as a consciously-chosen heuristic device, as I draw a historical and ideological parallel between these two societies, even given their vast separation in time, culture, and geographical distance. Of course there are critical differences between the two societies, so I use the Puritans as a metaphorical device only to the extent that it illustrates my discussion of the Korean case. One should not think that I am arguing that the two societies are somehow parallel in religious character, socio-economic circumstances, historically and culturally specific influences, formative forces, or any other aspect that is incomparable. But there are enough interesting parallels to provide this analysis with intellectually and rhetorically relevant tools with which to more compellingly construct an analysis of modern Korean national ideology. The twin beliefs in Korea's elect status in terms of racial and national sanctification and justification connect quite nicely with the futurist nature of the ideological discourse in all that that endeavors, from the personal and self-interested to those done in service to the nation, it would all eventually result in a concrete and visible reward.
It is at this point that one might be tempted to school or a possible link between the success of actual Korean capitalism and the well-known vigor of Korean Protestantism and its role in many successful financial ventures in modern Korean history. However, this analysis does not posit an actual causal relationship between any Christian belief or resultant philosophies of life, i.e. a kind of Korean style “Protestant work ethic.” Such a link was always a problem for even the first thinker to postulate a relationship between economic success and the religious culture that possibly nurtured it. Here, it is useful to invoke the work of Jean-Paul Baldacchino, who has already performed a much better study of Protestant Christianity’s place in Korean development in his “Markets of Piety and pious markets: the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Korean capitalism.” Here, he quotes Max Weber's attempt to define "elective affinities" between concrete social structures and forms of economic organization:

> We can generalize about the degree of elective affinity between concrete structures of social action and concrete forms of economic organization; that means, we can state in general terms whether they further impede or exclude one another—whether they are 'adequate' or 'inadequate' in relation to one another.⁶⁵

Baldacchino explains that “the concept clearly transcends the casuistry of mechanical causality, posing a healthy and necessary counterpoint to positivist epistemology… Weber was trying to uncover the definitive elective affinities between certain forms of [the Reformation's] religious faith and its work ethic."… In highlighting the elective affinities between the working ethos of capitalism and a theological framework of Korean Protestantism, webs of meaningful social action are selectively sutured. The market piety with which I started this paper represents a key example of how the logic of the market and Puritanism in Korea exists in elective affinity." Here, I want to reiterate that while Baldacchino is actually trying to draw a relationship-as-electorive affinity" between concrete social action and social phenomena such as Korean Protestantism without arguing the relationship to be a causal or overly concrete one, the reason I mention him here is to merely posit that an analogous relationship between the case of the American Protestant work ethic as a product of a totalizing belief system can be a good a framework for understanding the same in South Korea.

As anyone who has ever closely read the writings of these Puritans might know, the psyches of the first and subsequent generations of the early colonists living in the unstable and threatened “city set upon a hill” were filled with intractable fear regarding the state of not only their individual spiritual “sanctification,” but with that of their nascent nation’s as well. They were wracked with anguish over the spiritual ramifications of their individual and collective deeds as interpreted through the lens of an extreme Christian doctrine, which they believed concretely and directly determined the collective material fate of the nation. With a closer look at the character and concerns expressed both on and between the lines of official and popular discourse in this developing nation, the similarities to the Korean case is striking. In the universes of both the American

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religious and Korean secular “Puritans,” the transplanted English of the 17th century and the modern Koreans who are the focus of this study, respectively, the apparent intangible “justification” of the nation was, and is, defined in quite material and concrete terms.

It is here that the words of Perry Miller, in his seminal work *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, can be extremely helpful. Although he was speaking of a different elect group in history, the American Puritans, the same words are quite informative in understanding the will to success possessed of Koreans living in the developmental mind--and nation--state:

“While the city was building upon itself, citizens would have to live. This, of course, would be but a means to an end; whatever prosperity they achieved would serve to persuade opponents that their civil and ecclesiastical governments were good. But on the other hand, no activity could be in itself so meaningless as to serve merely as a means to an end. A man was doing the will of God when farming or trading as much as when preaching; none could give himself to commerce under the convenient rationalization that he was licensed to concentrate his whole soul upon that pursuit in order to strengthen the national economy—even a whole economy. All things are temptations: a man must labor in his calling as though all depends on his exertions, but must remember that reward is given by God. Every citizen we have to make the wilderness supply food and clothing, make up little, but he must exert himself not in order to vindicate prepositions to which the society was dedicated, but as a consequence of his personal and prior dedication to the... In other words, economic prosperity would be not a cause but a result of piety. Yet anyone who knew the history of Europe tickled in the last two centuries, knew that men were processed transpose cause and effect. Experience shows that they might comment perceptibly imperceptibly to derive satisfaction lasts from their piety and from the wealth which was its visible symbol.”

As an ideological analysis, “taking the liberty of treating the whole literature as though it were the product of a single intelligence” is definitely problematic. However, as fraught with flaws as such an approach may seem when applied to the Korean case, it is a fact that there has been a fairly singular national project, if not only expressed through the fact that a single man was the main architect of Korean economic growth, one who set societal goals and plans into action based on his singular will alone through two full decades of Korean development history.

It is the fervor of this totalizing discourse that is of interest here, one characterized by a futurist vision that clearly defines the goals of the nation, as well as everyone who calls oneself a part of it. In both cases of American and Korean ideological puritans, there exist other, additional discourses focused around a fear of an invading other, as well as a phantom menace from within; in the end, both societies will come to be haunted by the complications that follow the success of their respective social and material projects, which will also be marked by the inevitable process of losing one’s “religion,” expressed

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here in both the literal and metaphorical senses. Moreover, since the Puritans had such a vivid, amply described, and much-worried over ideological life, one that has been the focus of much analysis, both in History and other disciplines, concepts relevant to that kind of historical analysis are doubly useful as rhetorical tools here, in terms of the superficial similarities and parallels between the two societies that I describe. Both societies developed and nurtured totalizing, all-rationalizing discourses that would come to define the “national religion.” In the Korean case, this was the all-pervasive logic explaining and giving meaning to official campaigns and other projects of the moment. As the nation would evolve and require changes to aspects of its rationalizing, official ideologies, other questions related to some of them, including those having to do with identity, culture, and related notions of "authenticity" and its apparent loss, evolved to occupy space in this national religion-as-Zeitgeist.

To continue applying this metaphor, the Korean view of race, blood, and national character in relation to the nation – understood in a Social Darwinism-steeped concern over the potential fortune or failure of the Korean nation in an international context – was possessed of nearly Puritanical unity and fervor.

Justification and the Exemplary Nation

Korea has set itself up to be “the exemplary nation”: success in the material world is a sign of original sanctification – its proof. One’s sanctification cannot be directly verified – only God (or the unknowable future of Fate) can be cognizant of this. In the Korean case, there is no omniscient force, but rather the uncertainty of whether Fate will look favorably upon the peninsula in terms of the Social Darwinian competition among developing and developed nations. But after the fact, when the justification of the nation is apparent and undeniable, when the material rewards of sanctification are manifest, it is easy to look back with cocky assurance and figuratively say, “We knew it all along.”

The question of the “sanctification” of the Korean nation-state was always posed in relation to the question of how well the nation would fare in “developing” itself. In the period that is the main focus of this paper, I suggest that the trepidation before the fact of visible national success becomes refigured in its representation after the fact; the discourse around Korea’s apparent “sanctification” changes completely once the fact of “justification” becomes apparent.

In this refigured sense of national pride -- the state of visible sanctification -- Korea achieves the status of exemplar, as expressed in official lines of dogma, reproduced by public intellectuals, and reflected in the popular conversation taking place in the public realm of movie theaters, best-selling novels, newspapers, as well as in the minds and on the tongues of many Korean people. Moreover, Korea becomes known as one of the “tiger countries” of Asia, whose economic growth earns it the right to transform the plaudits originally given to Germany into the term “Han River miracle.” Indeed, in the way the domestic economic growth story is often represented, the material fact of Korean success is nothing short of divinely ordained. This “miracle” finds increasing representation, especially during the late 1980s and early 1990s, as a done deal – retroactively viewed as inevitable, an outcome guaranteed by the racial and cultural purity of the Korean people, as realized through a strong work ethic, a willingness to
sacrifice for the greater good, and any other positive attributes of the Korean “national character” that were standard fare for school textbooks and proud, nationalist intellectuals. This “miracle” becomes a part of a clearly-defined racial and cultural nationalism, a nationalist ideology based on assumptions of inherent racial or cultural fitness, and even outright superiority. It is part of the justification of Korea’s original sanctification. Instead of being viewed in the sense of there having been potentially less satisfactory outcomes in regards to how Korea fared, one that assigned the Korean people as historical actors a certain degree of agency, or critically examining the historical and material specifics that could actually explain the seemingly inexplicable explosion of the Korean economy, the story starts being represented as one that was (divinely) scripted from the very beginning. It is told in a style of racial and cultural teleology, with the “rise of the Korean economy” as the climax, one that refashions Korea into the figure of capitalist exemplar to the world.

A new formulation of a discourse that comes partially from a way of thinking about race and nation that has lain dormant ever since certain concrete and problematic notions of race and nation were beginning to form around the end of the 19th century in Korea, and began to take concrete shape via the indirect, intellectual influence China and mostly Japan, as well as during the nominal domination of the Korean peninsula during the occupation period.

When the fruits of the Korean collective’s hard labor began to ripen in the late 1980s, the long-awaited promise began to be fulfilled. The ideological machine that had been pushing the nation forward through its development plan, along with the actual beliefs of the people who were at least partially working under some of its ideological terms, were in need of a complete reworking. Now, the big question was being answered, and hints of a selective memory about the character of national identity, especially as argued in the pages of history, began to surface. Suddenly, all the unresolved plot points, the uncertainty, the elements of the story that no longer made for a neat ideological fit in a nation that had “known all along” that its material fate was to be a rosy one – all began to disappear. The drama of the collective fear and trepidation over the unfinished, uncertain, and unscripted ending now became presented as a exemplarist parable, a story of South Korea’s triumphalism. Indeed, it was a fairy tale to be told to other young, developing nations. Even more recently, after the significant hiccup of the 1997 economic crash and recovery, as Korea makes the switch from a subordinate, satellite nation to the US, after being “released” from its bondage as a vassal state to Imperial Japan, the material and ideological effects of this dependence have begun to become quite de-emphasized.

_Hangukinron Unmasked_

The popular manifestation of _hangukinron_ logic can be found in the popular history and culture book _Korea Unmasked_. It is the last in a series of comic strip explanations of different nations and cultures of other foreign (non-Korean) nations and cultures written in 2002. Notably, the historically specific elements in the plot of the economic development story are completely gone; no mention whatsoever is made of the following significant items: billions of dollars in American and Japanese grant and loan packages, the fiscal and military protection offered by the United States to the Korean
economy and state, profits gained from the dispatch of Korean combat units to Vietnam and the disproportionately high numbers of war crimes committed by Korean soldiers there, exploitation of domestic (especially female) labor, or the inordinately large role that women’s sex work assumed in the early growth of the Korean economy—the stark absence of these major events and facts in the final draft cannot be overlooked. In other words, all the messy specifics of Cold War politics and cold-blooded capitalism simply do not fit into the fairy tale, which for all intents and purposes, the Korean development story has essentially become – at least in either all official or most public venues.8

Figure 1 - Modern Korean history, hangukinron-style. Three pages of Rhie’s Korea Unmasked
The Koreans, however, did not give up. They buckled up and worked hard and saved up their hard-earned money. For a better tomorrow, the Koreans worked at a blistering pace to get the economy going.

The Korean economy started its spectacular economic growth in the 1960s. Using the justification 'dictatorship, for the sake of development,' the military government put democracy on hold and pushed forward with the implementation of aggressive economic development policies.

The Koreans worked hard... so hard, in an effort to break free from the chains of poverty. By 1969, South Korea caught up with the North Korean economy. And in 1977, South Korea's per capita GNI reached US$1,000.

In less than another 20 years, South Korea's per capita GNI skyrocketed to US$10,000! Although South Korea's per capita GNI did drop below $10,000 during the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the overall development of the Korean economy can only be described as 'a miracle.'
By the 1980s, when the success of the economy starts becoming concretely and unmistakably clear, discussions of race begin to take on a new shape, and the fact of Korea’s place in the world. The takeoff of the nation’s economy, expressed in terms of its
startlingly rapid growth rate, is the visible sign of the Korean nation’s true sanctified state, a visible sign of its sanctified state and a result gained by dint of the Korean people’s sacrifice and hard work; this is a narrative most non-Koreans will come to know immediately after arriving in Korea. The peculiar charm of the hangukinron argument lies in the fact that it does not deal in lies or falsehoods, but rather relies on a strategy of misrepresentation by omission. Proud nationalists have bought wholesale into the willful misunderstanding of the historical realities of South Korea by the West’s notion of there having been a Korean “miracle.” The idea of the miraculous rise of the South Korean economy implies an inexplicable, incredible kind of divine intervention from outside of the worldly realm, obviating the need for any reasonable or rational explanation. Yi’s narrative (from Korea Unmasked) is the perfect example of this kind of thinking, especially since he relies on visuals as much as textual explication. If one truly wanted to understand the admittedly amazing and impressive story of the economy, as I once witnessed a Nigerian graduate student point out in a lecture at the Korean Development Institute on this very subject, surely some mention of the obviously pertinent factors such as billions of dollars in American and Japanese loan-aid packages as providing the raw capital for rapid industrial growth should be in order? True to and typical of the hangukinron form, the lecturer acknowledged this concern with a patronizing smile and proceeded to finish the lecture, likely moving on thereafter to not alter any future presentations not one iota. Surely this fundamental and obvious problem with the “miracle” narrative would not go completely unnoticed by a prominent economist invited to talk to an audience of graduate students from developing countries, most of whom had come specifically to Korea to study its economy? While this is highly doubtful, these kinds of blatant omissions are common when it comes to describing Korea’s apparently miraculous modern history.

For the Puritans, this was a constant source of individual anguish, for indeed, if one’s spiritual fate was indeed predestined – if one’s place in either Heaven or Hell had always been decided – living in a state of ignorance, but without the power to affect one’s own fate, was surely a torturous experience in itself. The only hints as to whether one’s soul was indeed sanctified were visible as a manifestation of this state in the material world. Importantly, for the early American Puritans still on the true Calvinist program, the performing of good works on earth was indeed not the cause of sanctification at all. Material success, the attainment of wealth, the gaining of a respected reputation in the community – all were mere signs of one’s possible sanctification, not its guarantors. Extended to the fate of the nation – the question of the collective sanctification of the people as a whole – there was a clear basis for a relationship between spiritual sanctification and events in the real world that reflected whether or not the thoughts and collective actions of the community met with God’s favor. Storms, floods, bad harvests, et cetera were all meaningful events in this tautological system of belief. In the Korean case, for the generators of Korean ideology, as well as for members of the polity who shared the same hope in receiving the rewards that “progress” and “development” would surely bring, the “God” who could offer assurance as to the sanctity of the collective was not an omnipotent deity, but rather the hard numbers and visible evidence of material economic success that was also understood within a Social Darwinian framework of competition.
Exemplarist Historiography

An “exemplarist historiography” had already been set into motion by the Korean nationalist movement from even before the Japanese occupation. Korea was represented in key ideological spaces as “the society of the example” in which “history [was] invoked to displace historicism,” to quote Mitchell Breitweiser, from whom I have borrowed this especially useful theoretical framework, which he applied to the culture of early American Puritans. As temporally and spatially removed as the two cases may seem at first glance, his analytical tools are immensely helpful in understanding the newly-formed Korean nation-state-culture, one that had been characterized by a radical, nearly puritanical obsession with maintaining the fact of Korean cultural distinctiveness while maintaining hope in the regaining of national sovereignty; combined with the sudden realization of what had been increasingly unimaginable as only a fading pipe dream – national liberation – after 1945 and the ensuing Korean War, former radicals and freedom fighters saw their roles change into that of administrators and politicians. In any event, the task of building a national culture was dauntingly different and much more immediately real than the dream of liberation just a decade earlier which had seemed nothing more than a pipe dream. The Puritans entering the second generation and beyond in this “experiment in the wilderness” were not, in certain important ways, altogether different in terms of their major concerns. Here I will let Breitweiser speak for himself:

Exemplification . . . was Puritanism’s focal project (rather than simply an ingrained way of seeing), pervading not only the consortium of the intelligentsia but even the lower social levels, and concerning itself with the moral significance of activities from the most vast, such as war, to the most trivial. Exemplification is a collective scrutiny of the whole of collective experience, a group work that staves off and regulates the anomalies of the real, strenuously lifting the bewilderments and dissonances of actual historicity toward the certitude of readily recognizable abstractions that clarified at the same time that they coerced and legitimated – that were able to legitimize precisely because they could deliver the boon of clarity.9

Such was the content of many aspects of official representation of a newly constructed – perhaps one might say “repackaged” – version of both civic and “traditional” culture, as well as history. While too numerous to detail at this point in the dissertation, Korean civic culture, for most of its existence from the Park regime onwards has been explicit in its display of this kind of representation; one might even say positively pregnant with a certain kind of confident assertion of Koreans’ racial, cultural, and spiritual unity, as well as homogeneity, spread back across the “5,000 years of Korean history” that can still be heard in mantra-like repetition in nearly any public venue, or in mostly any private conversation about things Korean. This singular view of

Koreanness is, with little question, ideologically obstinate, to say the least. Here, I will extend the metaphor again through Breitweiser’s words:

Rather than being one way of thinking among others in the seventeenth-century English repertoire, exemplarism and typology are assaults on other ways of thinking, tools for negating the autonomy of other paradigms and practices in order to claim that they should be enjoyed in purged versions as vestibules or avenues to the pure. Puritan theory is thus by design a hermeneutic violence directed against Puritanism’s others, and assertion that would not be in the least shocking to the major Puritan thinkers, who believed that holy aggression was needed to clean the good of the various accretions that had come to encumber it, accretions that were unworthy of notice save in their power to interfere with or obscure that to which they affixed themselves.\(^{10}\) [Italics are Breitwieser’s.]

Indeed, in the Korean case, whether it be the eradication of Communist infiltrators in their midst, defending the ideologically pure nation from its antithesis: heathen invasion of a barbarian Other, or even more abstractly the need to define and believe in a singular, all-encompassing notion of Korean “culture” or “history” – one can easily argue that, for all the differences that individuals and interest groups bring to the table, civic culture in South Korea after the Korean War has been pregnant with ideological purpose. Considering the state of a society living on the veritable brink of war, right abreast its self-declared mortal enemy, absolutely dependent on economic, military, and cultural aid from a generous (albeit self-interested) American patron, but still living in the shadow of its former colonial oppressor cum investor – Japan – Korea’s concern with both the eradication of Communism from within its borders and the construction of a concrete and “pure” Korean culture should be easy to logically understand, even if difficult to holistically comprehend.

Considering all of the variables at play in Korea at this time, this is true in terms of historiographical approach and the general rhetorical style in the writing of Korean history as well. Here, Breitweiser’s discussion of “exemplaristic typology” regarding the Puritans’ manner of understanding events in their world, and representing them to one another, holds a striking relevance to the case of Korean historiography as well:

. . . American Puritan studies have for some time now recognized the central importance of exemplaristic typology, the exercise of perceiving persons and events not in terms of their singularity but as specimens of abstract spiritual types recurring through history.\(^{11}\)

This “exemplaristic typology” relates directly to both the scholastic and popular modes of describing and understanding the character of Korean society. Influential writers of Korean history, such as the national historian Shin Chae Ho, who is also widely (and appropriately) known as the father of modern Korean history, as well as progenitor of a particular mode and style of writing Korean history, employed it to great effect. His work lionized the achievements of the “historical exemplars” who defined

\(^{10}\) Breitwieser, American Puritanism, 25

\(^{11}\) Breitwieser, 23
Korean history and the “national character” [minjoksung] – and still do to this day. According to Michael Robinson, “his biographies of the Koguryo General Ulchimundok Admiral Yi Sunsin (1545-98), and Ch’oe Yong (1816-88) were written to provide role models exemplifying the best qualities in the Korean national spirit.” Of course, heroes in history fulfill the function of parable in most national histories, but in the Korean case, they are not a mere convention or device, but a marker of the “exemplary” mode itself, as a smaller part of a much larger project to instil – or as was the case when Shin Chae Ho took to this style of historical writing – a national spirit that had allegedly long lay dormant.

Heroes in history textbooks represent ideal types of Korean people, as well as desirable characteristics found in both the individual and the nation. “National character” (minjoksung) is a real conceptual tool of understanding in the morals and ethics curriculum of the public schools and is defined in comparisons with the American “frontier spirit,” the benefits of French frugality, and even the questionable lauding of the Germans’ alleged love of order and discipline; the same logic applies to the Koreans’ quintessentially industrious and self-sacrificing nature, at least in the minds of many.

Ideologies are not merely innocuous belief systems, devoid of history in relation to the needs of the people and the state, and its material conditions and exigencies. They provide purpose, and the processes of their formation tells a fascinating story, just as surely as the content itself does as well. Those familiar with the Korean case, especially during the tumult of the 1980s and the comfortable “settling in” of society and the economy of the early 1990s, certainly instinctively know that there was a large pattern of sweeping change during that time, but one difficult to characterize, let alone define in demanding terms of academic argumentation. The main goal of this chapter is to describe this very process, The historical parallels with the Puritans is compelling enough to warrant deeper consideration here. Both societies were searching for -- and this is implied in their very basest ideological assumptions – that “justification” for the nation would manifest itself concretely as evidence of having been true to the gospel that gave their lives meaning. But in both cases, the material benefit – the sign of sanctification – of being justified in the world of either God Almighty, or as in the Korean case the god of national prosperity, for Koreans materialization of sanctification became the end in and of itself to the detriment of the ideals that ostensibly led to the success of the community in the first place. This is the inherent conflict that becomes the source of spiritual crisis. For the Puritans, it is literal anguish over the state of the communal soul; for the Korean nation as puritanical agent, this anguish starts finding expression especially in the early 1990s, when the fruits of the nation’s collective labor are accepted as ripe and the fact of the subtle shift from working to accomplish a goal to working for the end itself becomes apparent. After this transition, the question begins to be asked, “At what price?” What happens to an ideology so intent on fulfilling this purpose that it itself comes to define reality and creates its own self-defined, and perhaps rather self-perpetuating, reality once that purpose has been accomplished? What happens to an all-encompassing, all-rationalizing ideology once its goal has become fulfilled?

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For all the relative recent attention it has been given, the Japanese nihonjinron discourse can be generally characterized as a worldview having taken root in the fields of anxiety sown by rapid development and social change in postwar Japan; more specifically, one can easily argue that nihonjinron arguments are informed by dormant discourses of colonialism, racism, and notions of racial purity, remnants of Imperial ideology that lay dormant but found new life. In a Japan still foundering in the ashes of complete and utter defeat, elements of an ideology of superiority and ultranationalism find could find little purchase; not only were such ideas incompatible with the conditions of unconditional physical and psychic surrender, they are simply irrelevant notions in a nation that can display no evidence of superiority or subjugating power. Imperial ideology simply had no place in a country in which the worldly evidence of Japanese superiority had been either dismantled or destroyed. As the goal of this paper is not to go into detail about the politics of occupied Japan, the concerted efforts on the part of the MacArthur to protect Emperor Hirohito from the onus of wartime responsibility, or the American occupation government’s failure to de-Imperialize Japan, it should be sufficient to simply assert that Japan was never made to publicly face and symbolically denounce its Imperial ideology; it had simply been rendered meaningless by virtue of the fact that Japan presently lay in a sudden position of complete and utter defeat.\(^{13}\)

However, Japan regained its status as a powerful country relatively quickly, and by the 1970s the political and economic structure could not be fairly described as one resembling pre-1945 Japan, when it had been entertaining Imperial ambitions. But with the growth of the economy, rapid new development along “Western” lines, and the inevitable internationalization of the culture, there were new concerns; and some of them were conveniently addressed by the old patterns of thinking that had never died out, and had in fact found genesis, before the war, in dealing with the very same vexing question of developing in the shadow of an encroaching West. In such a cultural context, the development of something resembling the present nihonjinron discourse becomes not only possible, but inevitable. So what can we make of a so-called hangukinron? How is such a term possibly applicable to Korea, which is not only a different country and culture, but Japan’s former colonial subject?

The use of the term hangukinron is not meant to imply that the historically and culturally specific patterns that informed the development of nihonjinron can tell us anything about Korea, or the concept’s applicability to the Korean case. Notions of Japanese racial and cultural superiority pre-existed the its new incarnation of nihonjinron discourse, and as were cultural remnants given new ideological life, fueled by new national desires and cultural tensions that were not specific to Korea. However, there are enough similarities between the two cases to merit borrowing and altering the term, albeit with significant qualifications.

Clearly, Korea possessed no Imperial ideology of its own, for most intellectuals and political leaders never had the chance to seriously entertain notions of an empire, nor

\(^{13}\) For the arguments that I summarize here, see John Dower’s *Dower, John W. Embracing Defeat : Japan in the Wake of World War II. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999.*
had it any conceivable opportunity to develop any real ideology of superiority. Indeed, the racial fitness or superiority of the Korean “race” was not the main concern for Korean nationalists living in the 1920s and 1930s, when the nationalist movement found its full stride. Liberation of the nation was obviously the agenda of the day, and any assertions of superiority vis a vis the need to promulgate a national pride were fairly meaningless, albeit fiery assertions of race-based, nationalist pride.

Still, a partly-developed Korea in the late 1980s found itself vexed with the same nagging questions that Japan began dealing with in the late 1960’s. Rapid industrialization and urbanization had literally changed the face of Korea in the less than thirty years that had passed since the near utter devastation of the Korean War. One might argue this cultural vertigo was even more acute in Korea, since the country’s only experience with modernity was the partial and uneven development of the infrastructure and economy as it was beneficial to Japan; but even this the Korean War had effectively laid to waste. Regardless of whatever arguments might be made about the extent that remnants of Japanese development helped post-1953 Korean development, it is safe to say that the war left the Korean people starting from a psychological zero; surely, in terms of popular thinking about how far Korea had come, the end of the Korean War is a symbolically significant beginning point. As Korea surveyed itself in the late 1980’s, during the advent of rising income levels, widespread consumerism, and relatively higher levels of national self-esteem as symbolized in celebrations such as the 1980 Seoul Olympics. The literal and cultural landscapes were as different as night and day. In both Korean popular and intellectual discourse, derivatives of the question of “Who are we?” began to become as common as the equally vexing question of “Where are we going?”

As a result hangukjinron resembles its Japanese counterpart a great deal, especially in terms of the need for the discourse itself, the result of the rapid expansion of the economy and all the social tensions that came with it. Still, the specific assumptions and problematic notions about “nation,” “culture,” and “race” take place within the culturally and historically specific matrix of Korean nationalism, although one informed by the direct connections to Japan from the painful colonial period, a national economy that developed in the shadow of that country, which partially creates an underlying national inferiority complex that is difficult to shake, but nevertheless defines the character of hangukjinron as something as different from nihonjinron as kimipap is from sushi. To use the same colorful, albeit flawed and reifying metaphors popular among hangukjinron writers: the two dishes look the same, but have different ingredients, different uses. The delicacy of the Japanese is natively constituted, strictly defined, and highly priced to the average Japanese, while the Korean colonial culinary leftover can be a hodgepodge of ingredients -- from hot dogs and fake crab meat to American cheese and Spam -- and cheap to the point that it is considered a finger food, a daytime snack. In this sense, the dish in the present is unmistakably Korean, even if its pedigree is "unpure." In this stilted, yet useful way, it is important to establish that I make a clear distinction between the hangukjinron and nihonjinron, although I do assert that they have undeniable and obvious links between them, and share similar socio-structural environments for their formation. Although it would be easy to make the mistake of applying nihonjinron theory to the Korean case wholesale, the oddly-shaped, prickly facts of historical and cultural

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specificity prevent me from simply taking this Japan-formed theoretical peg and placing it roughly place it into a Korean hole. I have made efforts to make sure this analysis does not, in places, fall into this theoretical trap.

The *hangukinron* discourse can be somewhat characterized by summarizing several clearly-identifiable patterns in its expression, mostly the function of obvious social tensions specific to the time. (roots in the terms set by the nationalist movement)

**A Short Primer on Race in Korea**

A clear and simple genealogy of the central kernel of pure race ideas and how it fits into the construction of national ideologies in the mid-20th century and its place in *hangukinron* thinking is useful here. Yoshino [in Dikoetter’s *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*] says that in Japan – and by extension, Korea – race is commonly understood in terms of blood, not genes. It should be emphasized here how the understanding of race differs in East Asia, for example, how character (or personality type) is associated with blood type, and expressions of concern over the national blood stock, etc. For Westerners, race is understood through the genes whereas for Koreans it is about blood.

A simple and clear line of Social Darwinist thought and even elements of pure race thinking go all the way back to the construction of history itself, to the putative father of the discipline, Leopold von Ranke. One of his graduate students and proteges, Ludwig Riess, was called upon by the Japanese government to be a foreign advisor to its intellectuals and scholars, and worked in a capacity as a professor at Tokyo Imperial University from 1887 until 1901. One of his most apt pupils was Shiratori Kurakichi, who became a leading and influential scholar researching the historical and anthropological roots of ancient Korea as a way of establishing the prehistory of Japan. He was a leading proponent of Toyoshi (“Eastern history”). 15 He was also widely quoted and published in Korean nationalist newspapers, with his theories and ideas being pushed to support imperialist plans on the ground through Japanese journals and newspapers published in Korea, many of which were translated into Korean and the subject of heated debates, since Kurakichi criticized Korea's weakness as a nation that slavishly worshiped the Chinese tradition while failing to develop itself as a powerful country. 16 It would share a lot of assumptions about the nature of Korea's failure to rest itself from Chinese cultural influence with Korea's most famous nationalist historian Shin Chae-Ho. Shin famously created a historiographical approach to Korean history that separated itself from Chinese influence and theorized a pure Korean race that extended back through time, for which the nation of Korea and its land was the natural home. Shin's mode of thinking was deeply influenced, as most of East Asia was at the end of the 19th century, by preeminent thinker and writer on the subject of race and nation, Liang Qichao. Liang's thinking about the fates of races and their nations in the world was representative of the heavy influence of Social Darwinist thinking that dominated not just European intellectual thought, but

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that in East Asia as well.\footnote{Tikhonov, V. M. Social Darwinism and Nationalism in Korea : The Beginnings (1880s-1910s) : "Survival" as an Ideology of Korean Modernity Brill's Korean Studies Library. Leiden ; (Boston: Brill, 2010), 13-14} By the time Korea is set to build its own nation and construct its ideological basis in 1945, influential writer and philosopher on racial subjects Yi Kwang-su was successful in laying out and popularizing the notion of the Korean people and nation\footnote{Pai, Hyung Il. Constructing "Korean" Origins : A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State-Formation Theories Harvard East Asian Monographs. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 259} being defined by a pure race ideology in which elements of Nationalist historians Shin and master metaphysician of Social Darwinism for East Asia Liang played prominent roles.

However, by the end of World War II in 1945 and as the sordid tales and histories of Germany's deeds that were coming to be called a "Holocaust" were rising to prominence in the 1950s; such master race and pure race ideologies were not greeted warmly by the West. After Korea had been split into North and South by the Korean War, the South adopted President Syngman Rhee's notion of ilminjuui (one people ideology) and later developed this into the popular notion and organizing principle of danilminjok (single-race people, pure race), while the North developed this into the putative ideology of Juche, which technically translates into the concept of “self-reliance,” but with a very recognizable emphasis on the importance of a singular, pure Korean race and people who need to define an economic and ideological system independent of those other nations and races. This is how scholar Myers described the North Koreans as building an overtly racial ideology arguing the existence and need for preservation of “the cleanest race.”

Later in this dissertation, I will focus on Myers’ argument a bit more closely and talk about how much the two racial ideologies, of both the North and the South, resemble one another in that a core assumption is that the nation exists for the sake of its natural master, a pure Korean race of people who are as tied to, and a function of, the homeland as a bird in the sky is or a fish in water.

The template set in the early part of the 20th century for specific aspects of Korean national identity were quite discernible after the 1945 Liberation from the Japanese. Indeed, the concept of “racial improvement,” very much along the lines of discourse begun by Korean nationalists in the early nationalist period just before overt Japanese colonization, was defined as an issue of prime concern by literary giant Yi Kwangsu as late as the 1960s. Indeed, this racist logic defined a common mode of thinking for the elite during this period. Even, and especially, Yi Pom Suk, Korea’s first prime minister and lionized Independence figure espoused blatantly racist ideas in his philosophy:

He urged a pan-national Korean solidarity based on racial purity: the Nation is the race and the race is the nation. Talk of “racial essence” and “blood-lines” (hyeoltong) runs throughout his work: this for him was the key characteristic defining Korea, and the essential element in its corporate and organic unity. As for the mind and spirit, he thought only the strongest national consciousness (minjok uisik) could save Korea from predatory great powers. He lived in the era of "the masses, “ he said, and therefore leaders must “understand and love” the masses, always be among them and never separate from them.
One race, one blood, one nation, one state, and inseparable unity between leaders and led would create a great family that would endure.”

As Hyung-Il Pai explains, Yi believed, as many Koreans still do, in the purity and common origin of the Korea “race” as expressed in the term tanil minjok (single race). Relying on Old World, European classifications of racial hierarchy, along with gold old-fashioned Social Darwinism, Yi linked the success of the nation to the quality of essentially-defined racial characteristics. National development did not take place in a vacuum, but was indeed the result of the survival of the racially fittest. Indeed, as I explain in some detail later in this paper, the prominent public intellectual Yi Oh Ryong publicly shares many of these assumptions through the 1980’s until the present day.

A last feature of the Hangukinron discourse can be found in the way it is marked by the ideological centering of minjok as an organizing concept of the nation, marked by the sea change from a traditional Confucian historiography that left little room for a particularistic Korean history to a minjok-centered way of writing about and understanding the nation that anachronistically projects the modern notion of the minjok back throughout Korean history. The concept of minjok still dominates the discourse of Korean national identity to this day. Andre Schmid traced the first public use of the term minjok, with the first regular use of the term having been Japan, to 1900, when even the term itself had acquired no agreed-upon, concrete meaning in Korea. The only thing that it did seem to have use for was the positioning of the minjok against the increasing threat of the (primarily white) races of the West. Indeed, according to Schmid,

The minjok, so entrenched in the specific milieu of the early twentieth century, was paradoxically presented as an ahistorical entity. The context of its conceptual formation – the intellectual trends of nationalists throughout East Asia, the urge to decenter earlier Confucian history and decenter the “Middle Kingdom,” the resistance to Japanese colonial history, all occurring in an age when the peninsula had been incorporated into the global capitalist order with its universalizing, modern ideologies . . .

This resembles the historical roots of nihonjinron thinking that Michael Weiner describes as the “naturalization of culture” that took place in the early stages of the invention of Japanese national identity; albeit a slightly different case, it is reflective of a similar ideological process:

The language and imagery of nationalism, in erecting a set of new symbolic boundaries around Japan, also suggested that the nation was a naturally occurring or primordial community of which the citizenry had always been a part.

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21 Ibid., 198
The ideological sleight of hand in both cases, whether it is the invention of a common “race” or an ancient “nation,” the fact that such concepts are actually quite novel never becomes part of the public discourse. Whether it is the categorization of racial groups in the States, the Korean concept of the minjok, or Japanese notions of the “nation,” the concepts are never themselves historicized.

A Futurist Discourse

Excitement about the seemingly inexorable move “forward” into the future defines Korean modernity, even as there is an increasing apprehension about tearing away from a shared Korean “past.” In Korean popular discourse throughout the period, which is the focus of this analysis, there is an easily discernible futurist discourse which is the result of a desire to reach the goal of full development that is spurred on by the ever-increasing evidence of the possibility of reaching this goal, or having in some ways already achieved it.

Indeed, Laura C. Nelson illuminates how futurist discourse contributes to the formation of the imagined community of the nation:

*Despite the widespread academic interest in the way time as history works in constructing national community, few scholars have examined futuristic discourses as elements in the formation of national identity. The idea of the future shares with the idea of the past the potential to join people into an imagined community; the past situates this in experience and authenticity, while the future bonds people in hope and hopeful action.*

In the case of nations such as Japan and South Korea, futurist discourses were, and are, crucial parts of national identity in a way that is difficult to imagine in fully “developed” countries such as the United States, France, or Germany. As already mentioned above, this is all the more true for a nation such as South Korea, whose time of independent and rapid development has been amazingly short and successful. For anyone familiar with the history of development in South Korea, the character of everyday life under the kingdom of Park Chung Hee, and the optimistic, nationalist slogans such as hamyeon dwaenda (roughly translated as “to do without thinking or questioning”) Nelson’s line of thinking should be crystal clear, as she adds that “the envisioned future . . . authorizes national action in a way history cannot; this is because the future must be achieved” and yet in the South Korea that has already achieved its goal, such developmental hoping has become a reality brimming over with the self-satisfaction of obvious material justification. Thus, a sanctified hangukiron faith finds justification through the visible world of material success, just as the American Puritans’ intense angst over their individual and collective futures in the city of God drove their particular Earthly “errand in the wilderness” in the material realm.

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24 [http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111winthrop.html](http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111winthrop.html) “A Model of Christian of Charity”
Discourse of Loss

But the futurist discourse seems to be coupled with a commensurate level of anxiety about the perceived loss and a wrenching away of an imagined, essential, and purely Korean cultural past. One can understand this discourse as being the flip-side of a futurist discourse that has already changed the physical and spiritual landscape of the nation, causing an inevitable questioning about what changes were perhaps not for the better, despite the obvious benefits of accelerated development. [the symbolic importance of defining a “past” as the country “sees” itself moving “forward” – see Tangherlini’s book and the article about the Olympics.]

And it is in the very process of expressing this anxiety itself that hangukinron writings concretize, quantify, and indeed define the matter of cultural loss as a problem itself. In other words, the more people seem to express worry about it, the more people seem to begin thinking it is something worth worrying about. Using sociologist Kosaku Yoshino’s words about the popularity in Japan of the catchphrase “internationalization”, as the popular term is bandied about with equal abandon in Korea:

Unlike nationalism, “internationalization” is a catchword that appeals favourably to many sections of Japanese society. Ironically, nationalism – in the sense of raising national consciousness, cultivating national identity, and stressing Japan’s culture and tradition – is promoted in the name of the internationalization of Japan.25

The very act of defining the need to foster “cross-cultural” understanding by strategizing ways to bridge cultural difference necessitates the essentialization and concretization of the “cultures” themselves. One does not even need to look at the cross-cultural business manuals that Yoshino uses as his main example. One need only take a look at a 1995 copy of a Korean first-year middle school Doduk (morals) textbook to see this phenomenon.

According to the text, Korea is endeavoring to prevent a loss of what is essentially Korean, even as it enters into the club of “developed” nations. For Korea, becoming developed cannot mean a loss of cultural distinctiveness. Even though the argument is not as unrefined as an elementary school reading textbook I once came across which asserted that “Americans do not eat fish”, the very act of placing Korea into an international context inherently involves constructing the subject as a concrete and bounded entity. Without questioning their fundamental assumptions, it is quite difficult to move outside of such neatly constructed, artificially elegant arguments that the secret to other national successes was French frugality, Americans intrepidness, and the refined nature of the English. To a Korean middle school student who could benefit from a differently presented explanation as to why “group consciousness” might be a desirable trait of the Korean people, but cannot be expected to know why arguing that such a trait in terms of the history of Germany without even so much as a nod to the experience with Nazism is problematic, such essentialist and historically dangerous explanations of cultural traits can make all the sense in the world.

By making explicit comparisons to the “national character” of other countries, the textbook defines the traits most worthy for a fast-developing country like Korea to emulate. Reading like a laundry list, Americans are exemplars of “the Frontier Spirit,” while France is laudable for its freedom, equality, and philanthropy. Most notable is the French people's frugality, according to the textbook. Even though France is the world capital of fashion, the average French person doesn't live a life of chic excess. England is the country whose citizens enjoy the most degree of personal freedom in the world, and the people also treat each other with kindness and politeness. As a fine citizenry, the English people exemplify the principles of the refined “gentleman.” Interestingly (and uncomfortably) enough, the country that comes out on top in the Korean reckoning of national character traits is Germany. From the German people's powerful sense of “group consciousness,” they were “able to lift themselves up from the ashes of WWII and create a startling amount of economic growth now called the “Rhine river miracle.” What the text fails to mention, however, are the pitfalls of “group consciousness” that got Germany, along with many of its inhabitants, reduced to lumps of ash in the first place. Underneath this whole section is a pair of pictures depicting on the left, German consumers frugally going through a fruit market, and on the right, the towering apparatus of what appears to be a chemical plant. This is the “Rhine river miracle” that is an obvious point of comparison with the “Han River miracle” right here at home.

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26 Seoul National Education University, Doduk 1 (Morals, Middle School Book 1). (Seoul: Korean Ministry of Education, 1995), 163-164
27 Ibid., 165
28 Ibid.
Chapter 2: Framing the Collective Self

Kosaku Yoshino offers a set of useful concepts, as he theorizes about the promulgation of Japanese nationalism – which I argue shares some key common points with that of Korea –, in terms of "primary" and "secondary" nationalisms. Typically, academic treatments of nationalism tend to consider the propagation of nationalist ideals, mostly in terms of the way elites produce the nationalism that the masses are understood to subsequently absorb. This "productivist" point of view is usually the way theorists on the subject generally describe initial national formation, along the lines of Benedict Anderson’s landmark work *Imagined Communities*. However, such analyses are usually top-heavy and do not answer the question of why these ideologies find ready acceptance in the first place, as well as what mechanisms keep the production of national belief fresh and palatable. To address the more complex concerns of younger nations such as Korea – whose accelerated national development might have been a case study in Benedictian theory in the early Nationalist period of the 20th century, but by the 1960s and 1970s had constructed a well-oiled ideological machine taken from largely Japanese parts – a consumption-based theory can theorize how the particular socio/cultural needs of the people on the receiving end of heavy-handed and unsubtle ideologies in the 1980s came to line up with a state agenda. The consumptivist approach theorizes why many people can accept the state agenda (even if much of the populace does not agree with the draconian methods of enforcing its completion, as in the case of the Park/Chun regimes), rather than providing simpler productivist explanations that only outline the state's methods of promulgating it. As theorists of nationalism, we need to understand something more about the specific workings of ideological reception, as opposed to modeling only the mechanisms of its propagation.

It is at this point that our analysis must move away from the idea of Koreans as members of Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" of the nation and identify the crucial shift that has occurred to Koreans considering themselves as part of an "imagined community" of consumers participating in various overlapping communities of identification that can include the formal nation, transnational brands, or other identities. The trick here is to identify how one when Korean culture self-consciously and overtly told its citizens--consumers to derive meaning and purpose through consumption, this having become a way to define one's identity in a way more primary and important than as merely a member of the nation. It is here that the seminal work of Russell Belk and his notion of possessions as defining the “extended self” becomes important. As Koreans increasingly participate in the predefined community of the nation, it is apparent that the primary means of interaction and participation in that community has increasingly become defined within the realm of consumption, as consumers, especially as Korea has increasingly elevated the importance of the “cultural export” industry.

Russell Belk quotes the observations of Georg Simmel as he says “material property is, so to speak, an extension of the ego, and anti-interference or property is, for this reason, felt to be a violation of the person.” This is Belk's theory that explains how consumption leads individuals to consider material objects as part of the “extended self.” If the 1990s in Korea marked a time of existential angst felt over a perceived loss of

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29 Yoshino, *Consuming Ethnicity*, 8-9
connection with Korean tradition, it is arguable that this angst was a harbinger of the waning of the *hangukinron* paradigm. In South Korea that had only very recently started coming to terms with the change in ways and thinking brought about by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and a more comfortable way of living that was often mistaken for mere “westernization,” this sense of loss makes sense and was marked by the sudden obsession with traditional Korean arts and their preservation on the popular level. On the ground, and down to the person, this was felt as a personal obligation to with a sense of Korean "tradition." This is a logical kind of angst to experience, especially in a national community that had been defined by a set of concrete markers of Koreanness that was overly concerned with traditional dress, dance, and much revered customs. However, as everyday life dictated participation in the national community on the level of consumption, as Korean traditional culture, as argued and understood through said traditional dress, dance, and customs, began to be something that could be bought and consumed outright. Inevitably, the idea or sense of identity as a singular, communal “extended self” began to be understood through material possessions as connections to Korean identity. So any sense of incompleteness as a Korean could be solved and fulfilled in the market. Good Koreanness now became linked to being a good consumer of Korean things as opposed to a mere purveyor of “tradition” in a prior sense.

Indeed, Larissa Hjorth’s important work on consumption practices in Korea cites Beng Huat as she noticed this very phenomenon:

> The boom in 'consuming Korea' is part of a growing phenomenon he dubs “communities of consumers” (2006). A revising of Benedict Anderson's (1991) notion of 'imagined community' to describe the associations and perceptions surrounding identifying with a nationstate, Chua’s geo-political imaginary demonstrates that the region is constituted by identification and affiliations through commodities rather than through nation-states.⁴³⁰

Korea has become an imagined community of consumers whose primary identity as Koreans has been supplanted by a new identity of Koreans-as-consumers. Even the language itself—which is always the locus and focus of nationalist to preserve culture—has undergone fundamental shifts that have yielded new grammar forms that have come about as the result of consumptive practices and expectations in the growing service sector in South Korea. One might note how a new form of honorific speech, which can be referred to as “object honorifics” now exists in the language. In traditional Korean honorific speech (*nopim-mal*), an honorific marker (*shi*) is added in the conjugation of the verb, or alternatively, another verb form is used altogether to honorize the subject and person being spoken about. For example, a simple sentence such as “he goes to the store” [Kuh-nun ka-geh-ro gamnida] would be placed into the honorific form by saying [Kuh-nun ka-geh-ro gaSHImnida]. This has long been understood to be the proper grammatical structure for the honorific, and linguistic preservation has long been considered to be within the realm of what nationalists do. One might expect that within the mindset of the *hangukinron* nationalist paradigm, linguistic integrity would be a central societal concern.

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However, it has become common practice to use unnecessary and previously nonexistent honorifics in reference to nonhuman subjects that have a relation to an honored guest or client in the service sector. In this way, it has become possible -- and nearly expected as a matter of course and politeness to consumers -- to hear sentences such as "The bathroom is to your right" [Hwajang-shil-un oreun-jjok-eh-issuyo.] finding expression as "The honorable bathroom is to your right." [Hwajang-shil-un oreun-jjok-eh-issu-SEH-yo."

This new grammar form is quite common in the service sector-based consumer society, despite much consternation from linguistic authorities and even those with minimal ties to the service sector, like one medical doctors trade newspaper which decried the practice as something respectable places had a special responsibility to resist.31

**New Buzzwords and Cognitive Frameworks**

Crucially, much of the impetus and modeling for reform and development as a modern nation – and this includes the period before overt colonization by the Japanese – came from the outside. During the the period of Japan’s overt occupation from 1910-1945, the terms defining the state were largely not set by Koreans, and even after ‘liberation’ in 1945 and after the Korean War that followed closely on its heels, Korea was developed under the wing of its most fiscally and militarily generous benefactor – the United States. And even after the industrial/economic boom that created so much wealth in South Korea, buzzwords in the popular lexicon, ones that indicate a still-extant way of thinking among everyday people here, include words that speak to the uncritical belief in the modern teleology of an all-liberating notion of Progress: hujinguk (undeveloped country), sungjinguk (developed country), segyehwa (globalization), gukjejehwa (internationalization), gaebal (development), chal/mot sanneun nara (a country living well/poorly), etc.

Mode of thinking about the nation inherently pre-disposes thinking to be inherently comparative and finds its origins in Social Darwinism, which was the dominant mode of thinking for early Korean nationalists and historians at the turn of the century. Korean nationalist thinking itself finds itself born in the crucible of Social Darwinism and the idea that the Korean nation was in the midst of a greater, worldwide battle between nations for progress and dominance over one another.

The character of a “post-development” Korea is important because the period beginning roughly around right before the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games running up to the 1997 economic crash is the crucible in which a new kind of ideological formation takes shape; put another way, this period is the nadir of the development of a particular strain of thinking about the Korean people and their relationship to the nation, one which can be clearly traced all the way back to the turn of the century. The 1988 Seoul Olympics is the “Korean dream” come true – the culmination of more than a century of developmental dreaming, definable as a futurist discourse centered on the economy as an objective marker of success The Olympics and the “IMF” crisis are crucial symbolic bookmarks between which to construct a meaningful and concrete analysis of this long-running ideological pattern. Neither mark the beginning nor the end of this pattern of thinking.

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31 Lee, 인은빈 (Eunbin. "혈액검사 있으십니까?" 사물존칭 이제 그만 (‘You Have an Honorable Blood Test’ Let's Stop Using Object Honorifics)." 의협신문 (The Doctors’ News), 2013.08.16 2013.
nor is the Olympics a significant causal factor in creating it. The first of the two critical moments mentioned above, taking place around the time of making concrete preparations for Korea’s grand “coming out” party that were the 1988 Seoul Olympics, was notably concurrent with the birth of true democracy on the Korean peninsula, and occurred amidst a sudden explosion of consumerism and conspicuous consumption the likes of which the world had never seen. Whatever way one looks at it, the late 1980s—punctuated by the Olympics—heralded the beginning of an almost completely new mode of life for South Koreans.

I arbitrarily mark the “IMF” period as the end point of the culmination of this ideological pattern, not only because the economic crash signaled the refiguring of the most important ideological underpinning of “post-development” thinking – the runaway success of the national economy that defines South Korea as an exemplar – both to itself and the outside world – but also because the recognizable features of this new way of thinking had already begun to assume their final form. Myriad notions of race, national identity, and lines of historical argument had become focused and solidified into a recognizable style of ideological belief that was much more complex and finished than the 1960’s, Park Chung Hee-era, defiant, top-down ideological optimism that one can easily locate in official textbooks, public awareness campaigns, and other forms of overt government propaganda. “Post-development” hangukinron discourse can be characterized as a much more mature and confident nationalism, an almost “born-again” kind of belief in the national “self” that was possessed of a fervor only possible with the actual manifestation of Korea’s undeniable status as exemplar, something the “nation” had been coveting for decades and “justified” with the flourishing of the national economy.

The task of drawing an academic description of something as large and abstract as a national ideology is not an easy one. Using the standard academic approach of identifying phenomenons easily identifiable parts, drawing an outline of the shape and characteristics of national ideology in terms of patterns of expression and manifestation should not be difficult to do. Also, grounding this picture in a historical context is a necessary step in the process. However, filling in the details and colors to the point of providing an accurate description that can convey that very feeling and provide an emotional logic to how the ideology works a something that is very difficult to do. It is akin to describing a great painting or other artistic masterwork in mere words. The individual elements contained within an image such as the Mona Lisa can be broken down, discussed, and rationalized to the point that an intellectual understanding of how the parts work together organically can shed a lot more light on the image than mere appreciation without interpretation. But even the most nuanced and detailed discussion of the how the elements of such a work go together can almost never convey the feel of the work as a whole. Therefore, this analysis incorporates a consideration of aesthetic elements into the structure of the argument, since this helps convey the warp and woof of the greater the phenomenon thereby, in addition to the fact that aspects of the ideology being described are itself are actually argued on the level of aesthetics themselves. Here, as an explanatory tool, I draw from the historical example of the American Puritans, who also built a community in a new world organized around singular ideological principles that not only served to keep its members in line and motivated, but which constructed and offered meaning to the endeavor of building a prosperous new
society upon the foundations of an older world within a vision of a new one that had
never been realized in that particular way before. In the same way that early American
Puritans felt the goal of the larger community in a deeply personal way, but as expressed
in a larger, overarching ideology, individuals in modern South Korea find both meaning
and motivation is expressed in and focused down from official state ideology and larger
notions of Korean national and cultural identity. American Puritan and modern South
Korean ideology are structurally similar in their totalizing pervasiveness and ability to
make individual motivations and goals lineup in lockstep to those of the greater
community. Indeed, even in times of political turmoil caused by resistance to state
projects, there has been little questioning of the fundamental popular assumptions about
the individual’s role in relation to the body politic, how the concept of “culture” is
constructed and deployed in discourse about national identity, and how notions of race,
blood, culture, ethnicity and nation become conflated into a notion of “purity.” The
totalizing discourse of *hangukinron* defines and explains reality, offers meaning to those
doing the actual productive work of the state, and sets the terms for judging the success
of the endeavor itself. Indeed, Internation where development for the sake of
development itself has become the national religion, its organizing ideology, individual
hard work and sacrifice for the sake of realizing that goal makes sense; in fact, the terms
of reality itself, as defined by objective markers such as the GDP, mean family income,
and other visible accoutrements of material culture in an unabashedly capitalist society do
not allow for anything else. Hangukinron offers an explanation as to why one works,
what the markers of success are, and how every other aspect of life has meaning in a
“bigger picture.” The sense of what that picture means is very much linked to the overall
success of the national economy, which is why a communal questioning of “who we are”
became part and parcel of the nation's preparations for the coming-out party that was the
1988 Seoul Olympics, which itself was an affirmation, akin to material “justification” of
the national “faith,” the terms of which had been determined far before. As far as race,
blood, and culture are concerned, the material success of the body politic came to be
argued as linked to their respective levels of “purity,” and often in a negatively
comparative fashion. The material evidence of racial and national justification manifested
from the late 1980s on, characterized by a sea change in the way Koreanness was
represented, and presumably perceived. People spoke openly of how the Korean use of
chopsticks was more developed and civilized than the Indian convention of eating with
the hands. The use of more refined tools in everyday life, combined with more exacting
motor skills and dexterity, is apparently what led to Korea's success in production. The
apparent fact of Korean cultural and national unity could be explained by other notions of
racial and blood purity, which all became laudable aspects of the “Han River miracle.”
This rash now found itself faced with difficulties by the end of 1997, as the Asian
economic crisis deepened and sent the Korean economy into a freefall. In addition, the
success of the national economy and material prosperity placed Koreans in the new
position of life awash with the evidence of the national project’s success. Adults coming
of age now were now largely unfamiliar with a Korea marked by uniformed American
servicemen patrolling the streets, rabidly anti-Communist curriculums, or life under
undemocratic regimes. Nor was a younger generation familiar with a Korea without hot
water faucets, or – as is true for an even younger generation of Koreans, few could even
recall a nation that did not boast high-speed Internet connections. Hangukinron suddenly
found itself in the position of being less relevant a post-economic crash Korean society, just as Puritan faith and asceticism came to be seen as quaintly irrelevant Puritanism’s inheritors, who had never lived during the time or under the conditions that that created the ideology in the first place, or in which it made any significant sense.

As a new “Korean Pride” him and him manifested itself in both popular and intellectual circles, a discernible pattern begins to emerge that is difficult to ignore, and even more difficult to concretely describe. As one focuses on certain problematic aspects of discourse that are apparent in this pattern, it also becomes difficult to chalk them up to the idiosyncratic and unrepresentative expressions of a few individuals. Especially when dealing with popular representations of the Korean race, racial and national otherness, and how this relationship is generally talked about in both private and public spheres, the question of how to consider the question of race – in a country that does not have a significant historical experience with racial otherness – becomes a burning one, but remains all the more difficult to attempt to answer.

Although I have claimed that Korea is a prime example of an ideological process of otherizing without an other, this is not meant to imply that there have not been foreigners and/or non-Koreans present in some numbers in some significant numbers over the last few decades, but generally that any groups of non-Koreans were not large enough to make a palpable impact on how Korean society sees itself in public and private discourse. This is also not to say that Korea has not long lived in the shadow of powerful national “others” such as the China, Japan, and the United States, or, as it has been generally understood, “the West.” But in terms of a racial discourse that comes from domestic issues or conflicts, Korea’s experience with race can be considered to be, as it has often been too simplistically described, homogenous. These racial notions are as written into the blood, nation, and culture just as strongly as any other country that can be called racially, ethnically, or culturally “heterogenous”, which calls into question the relatively simplistic idea that countries without significant experiences with a marginalized other cannot, by extension, create and maintain problematic and potentially dangerous collective notions of national and racial “self.”

Otherizing Without an Other

What is interesting in the Korean case is the fact that in the process of “otherizing without an other,” a fairly specific popular understanding of the Korean “race” exists, even without the fact of a racial/ethnic minority or otherwise marginalized group around which to engage in the construction of such clear ideas and myths around race and the ethnic nation. The nature of its constitution, the relationship of the Korean “race” to other “races”, and what meaning that gives to Korea in terms of its relative place in the world – all have important meaning, even without the physical presence of minority peoples. By contrast, western nations such as the United States and Germany, or even Asian states such as China and Japan, all have significant experiences with dealing with racial others as modern nation-state. These experiences are unique in that they are the results of historically specific circumstances, ones often related to the interests of capital and a perceived threat to the ethnic center; but they are all inherent parts of the formative processes of other modern nations’ sense of “self.” As will be outlined in great detail later, Korea has had a particularly powerful and deep relationship with Japan, which has
helped inform the process that has created what can be defined as a Korean discourse of race and nation.

A compelling point of parallelism between the distressingly real ideological struggles that both early Puritan and post-Liberation Korean society go through centers around the internally-driven natures of the conflict. Of course, in both cases, there were very real pressures threatening the spiritual and material sanctity of the community. The reality of perceived spiritual decay and the presence of Native Americans were such concerns in the case of the Puritans, while in the Korean case an easy parallel to draw might be the lingering cultural influence of its former colonizer, Japan, and the looming threat from its Northern enemy. But in terms of ideological construction as it related to the inner collective self, even with the reality of real material threats, the ideological anguish inherent to “reformers [who] find themselves in the position of sociopolitical administrators rather than dissident radicals” was actually quite internally-motivated.

This parallels recent Puritan scholars’ criticisms of Perry Miller’s analysis of the ideological world of “the New England Mind” as having been loudly silent about the question of Puritans’ attitudes towards racial otherness, especially in light of such issues as war against Native peoples and racialized slavery with the glaring silence that still exists around the question of race in Korean society. Indeed, such internally-centered questions about “who” the Korean people “are”, its history, and its ethnic/cultural constitution, the general effect of a racial/cultural ideology built upon a bed of problematic concepts and shaky assumptions about race, biology, and national character should be easy to identify as possessing the potential to have negative influences on its “others”, in either the Breitweiserian or the Lacanian sense. The “introverted agony of the New England mind discarding obsolete commitments” is what Breitweiser describes as the necessity of administrators in a new power structure to expurgate the radical elements from its ideology, as a nationalism of the administrator and not of the freedom fighter. This new sense of nation eschews and buries its more embarrassing roots. Indeed, as Korean national identity is largely informed by and understood through the aggrieved status at the hands of external forces, but so much attention to the origins of Korean national identity in the colonial experience, not much attention has been given to the base attitudes and assumptions shared with its colonizer in order to consolidate itself as a hermetically and hemeneutically-sealed mode of thought:

If, then, as a generation of American studies scholars suggested, Miller largely ignored the question the Puritan attitudes towards the frontier, and if, as a subsequent generation is beginning to argue, Miller failed to discuss the violence of Puritan racism and misogyny, these lapses result not from simple blindness, indifference, or approval, but rather from his sole focus on the issue that burned at the heart of his thinking, the introverted agony of the New England mind discarding obsolete commitments rather than the agony caused others by the torturous construction of the New England mind.32

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32 Breitwieser, American Puritanism. 29
Indeed, strong and specific notions of race are latent in so-called “homogenous” Korea, but have only found expression when discourse develops to the particular place where it finds useful and ideologically pleasing purchase. In Korea’s case, ideological producers suddenly found themselves with the power to claim certain kinds of “bragging rights”, these expressions start coming in waves. (list examples of public intellectuals here, with brief, phrase-length descriptions). And as has been stressed above, these new assertions of racial fitness and pride do not fall out of the sky, but were part of the fabric of Korean nationalist rhetoric from the beginning of the Republic’s earliest conceptions, well before the period of Japanese occupation. Modern Korea’s “place in the sun” has always been marginal, as nationalists even before the Occupation worked under the shifting shadows of several other global powers, namely China, Russia, Japan, and the United States. In this sense, national development, nationalism, and even the bases upon which a sense of collective “self” was defined has always been inherently global.

A More Confident Nationalism

Laurel Kendall speaks of “a more confident nationalism” in her critical essay about the Korean National Folklore Museum, outlining the way the inevitability of Korean success has been refuegured from not merely a culmination of development efforts after Liberation but has been extended back in time as far as recognizable Koreanness can be said to extend. With the oft-used mantra of “5,000 years of Korean history” and the fact that even the mannequins used for displaying royal garb in the museum exhibits resemble the cosmetically-altered, Western-influence notions of beauty that dominate contemporary Korean media and everyday life, much more than they reflect what people actually looked like when people actually wore the clothes in question, the matter of “recognizable Koreanness” is quite open to liberal interpretation.

The official story of modern economic development, reproduced from the realms from official textbooks to popular texts such as Korea Unmasked, is glaringly devoid of any mention of certain basic facts of Korean development that one might think were simply unomittable in that they are so patently and obviously relevant to understanding it.

Japan’s program of forced modernization and industrialization during the Occupation that undeniably played some role in the ability of the Korean economy to take off, the importance of both American and Japanese economic aid packages after Liberation, the importance of both the sex industry and the Vietnam War to the early economy, and the continued military and economic protection offered by the United States to protect the “export-driven” economy of its most apt pupil and encourage its rapid economic growth – these parts of the story are all glaringly absent in the origin story of Korea’s blockbuster economic success.

The point here is not that if emphasizing the foreign contributions to Korea’s economic success, or downplaying the domestic Korean role in it, in the terms with which it is usually defined, i.e. the hard work and sacrifices of millions of individuals for the sake of the nation. It is simply to ask point out that there are many holes in the story, places of consistent absence and silence that are necessary to the very exigencies of the modern Korean national and racial ideology that is the focus of the present analysis. The story of “The Rise of the Korean Economy,” as byused as the title of his book, after being
all but officially stamped and sealed in wax with the advent of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, can be described as having metamorphasized from an optimistic hope looking towards the “balgun mirae” (bright future) of countless Korean slogans into the inevitable certainty of memory that now looks back on the past selectively, with the a clear interest in making it seem as though “we knew it all along.”
Chapter 3: Official Ideology: School, Ethics, and Identity

Figure 2 -- "As I stand proudly before the national flag, I pledge with my whole heart loyalty to strive for the honor of my homeland and race."

국기에 대한 맹세
나는 자랑스런 태극기 앞에
조국과 민족의 무궁한 영광을 위하여
몸과 마음을 바쳐 충성을 다할 것을
곧게 다짐합니다.
“If the ISAs ‘function’ massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of ‘the ruling class’. Given the fact that the ‘ruling class’ in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatus, we can accept the fact that this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology, which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions. Of course, it is a quite different thing to act by laws and decrees in the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to ‘act’ through the intermediary of the ruling ideology in the Ideological State Apparatuses. We must go into the details of this difference – but it cannot mask the reality of a profound identity. To my knowledge, no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses.”

Through this argument, one has to account for belief. This is the place where the metaphysics of the exemplary, elect nation are elaborated upon an transmitted down the the person. So the governement wants to promulgate this view, but what makes you think people believe it? Like civic religion, people believe in it because if offers a rationalization for behavior and even a whole way of life, as well as something that defines the parameters of idneitity itself. Imprtantly, like religion, it offers a way to make sense of the struggle of life itself, ihn the Korean case, of the headlong rush to become a sungjinguk by any means neccessary. If people don’t buy it, the state doesn’t work, people don’t sacrifice, workers go on strike, riots break out – all of which in fact happened. To what extent were people buying what the state was selling?

Contrary to the conventional wisdom of recent years, sometimes a concept as abstract as identity can be defined and distilled easily into its constituent parts. South Korea does this by formally instilling its ideological principles in the classroom setting. As a discipline completely separate and distinct from history or social studies (both of which are regular parts of the Korean middle school curriculum and are analogous to the their American namesakes) doduk (literally “morals/ethics”) is a fully-realized discipline formally taught in the classroom and is a both symbol and cipher for understanding how national identity was defined by the state, in that its state-funded author, the Korea Educational Development Institute (KEDI) lieterally wrote the book on how to be Korean. If hangukinron is the civic religion, then the doduk curriculum is its Bible. Encompassing topics from proper behavior in specific social situations, Korean national heroes, to the portrayal of the Korean national character as a crucial cultural factor in explaining national growth, what distinguishes doduk as a peculiar epistemology apart

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from the other more traditional ones is its undisguised nationalist agenda formalized as a discipline of knowledge. The doctrine is not subtle, nor is it in any way tentative about the claims it makes. It not only poses moral questions - it gives the answers.

The ideological agenda is far more specific than a mere abstract “moral” education; it consciously defines Korean social norms and role expectations, and the proper citizen's role in the Korean state. The relationships between individuals in Korean society are complex and crucial to the proper functioning of the society as a whole. *Doduk* is essential to a society in which the “good person” is defined by one's ability to adhere to a myriad of strict social norms. These norms are clearly outlined and reinforced in Korean *doduk* textbooks, and crucially, are often juxtaposed against different foreign cultural norms and traditions. In *doduk*, Korea is not evaluated solely on “neutral” terms, i.e., in terms of Korean norms themselves; rather, *doduk* outlines the idea of Korea, Korean culture, and the ideal citizen in relation to that which they are not. It is in this way that *doduk* undertakes its project of constructing the proper citizen in a Korean cultural context.

Most importantly, however, is that *doduk* is the official forum through which the state reinforces the dominant ideology of the Korean nation. *Doduk* is anything and everything that is part of dominant ideology, but the crucial difference is that it is not just norms of behavior that are constructed as moral behavior - *norms of belief* gain a moral meaning as well. In much the same way that religion is not just a code of conduct, but a mode of belief, *doduk* takes on a new meaning as it relates the self to a set of proper beliefs about one's role as a member of three main group affiliations - the family, the school, and the nation-state. In the discourse of *doduk* in Korea, this is just one of several key conceptual relationships through which one must look in order to understand one's role in society. In this respect, the influence of Confucian teachings have had the most significant impact on the Korean moral tradition.

**Ideology**

A well-known adage states that “you can't judge a book by its cover.” However, even a cursory glance at the *doduk* textbook reveals some fairly telling clues into its agenda. Splashed across the front cover is a color picture of several pink and white *mugunghwa*, the national flower of Korea. This flower is an oft-used metaphor for the “blossoming” of the Korean republic, the symbolic significance of this image is not lost on anyone. Indeed, the 1993 Korean bestseller *The Mugunghwa Has Bloomed* invokes this association in its title. The story deals with the reunification of the erstwhile divided Koreas waging war against a US/Japan alliance and culminates in a Korean nuclear strike against Japan. Its title was unapologetically nationalistic, and its thinly-veiled symbolic meaning – the nuclear cloud “blossoming” over a Japanese city - clear to the Korean people.

Opening the cover of the *Doduk* textbook, the Korean flag stands out prominently, under which follows the text of the oath usually recited during the playing of the national anthem: “Standing in front of the proud national flag of Korea, for the fatherland and the eternal glory of our people, by dedicating my body and heart, I firmly pledge my loyalty.”34 From the very beginning of the book, the student knows what is expected of
him or her; there is no hidden agenda. On the second page of the glossy section, there is a picture of the rising sun peeking out from behind clouds that veritably jumps out of the page. The caption reads: “The hope of a new morning.” Taken alone, this is fairly innocuous, but in the context of the next few pictures and captions, the shape of the greater Doduk project becomes more distinct. On the next page, showing in full color glory Korea's technological coming of age is an aerial shot of the 1993 Taejon Expo, followed by pictures matching the following captions: “The development of the chemical industry,” “Computer dairy farming prepares us for internationalization,” and “One of our fishing ships parts the seas.” This short section concludes with (significantly) a picture of women in traditional dress performing a Korean folk dance. Even without a close reading of the text, the themes to be outlined in the book are clear: the importance of economic development and the preservation of traditional Korean culture. Moreover, for the middle school student reading the text, the color section is over, and the bulk of the reading is about to begin, in black and white, printed on cheap, recycled paper. The serious lessons for the student are about to begin, and they will hold authority and truth for the reader. It is these themes that we will presently explore.

From the introduction, the arguments of the book are clearly outlined. Acknowledging that the student has to some extent already learned most societal norms, the textbook adds that it will assist the student in considering more deeply one's everyday thoughts and actions, especially, it adds, “as a Korean.” The book, the reader is told, will be divided into the following parts: “I: Life and Ethics,” “Family and School Life Etiquette,” “Society and Ethics,” and finally “Country and People.” The reader is told at the end of the foreword: “However, it isn't enough to simply know the norms and beliefs of ethical behavior.” They have to become second-nature, one has to perform them in practice without a second thought, as a natural part of one's own standards of behavior. The textbook begins this process on the small scale, moving towards the large; beginning with one's role as an individual in a small group, the scope expands continually until the canvas becomes one upon which the student sees him or herself against the backdrop of the entire society. All the while, the book emphasizes the analogous nature of the various groups and bodies to which the individual belongs. The subtext to the main one is that non-conformity to one group implies a lack of allegiance to all. In the family, school, the factory, and the nation, the roles vary, but the duties and obligations remain strikingly similar. The agenda is to define the student as a “fine” or “good” person— or more importantly, as a useful social being.

The first chapter, “Human life and ethics,” the book asks the student to consider the “life worth living.” It asks the question of whether the student is a mere “nan saram” or a “dwaen saram.” Though difficult to translate into English, the nan saram is a person who simply possesses a name and is only a person by virtue of the fact that others have defined him or her as such. This person can “either occupy a high position in society or have property and participate in many of societal activities.” However, beyond this, a dwaen saram (a “developed person”) is “a person of high character and full of refinement and taste, a humanely mature person.” This is a concept that will be defined

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34 Doduk, 1
36 In Korea, these terms ("hyulunghan," and "chakhan," respectively) are very commonly used to describe a person laudable as a person with refined manners and behavior)
37 Doduk, 5

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in more detail later – the cultivation required in order to form the desired, mature social and personal identity. However, what is important to understand at this point is the fact that the Korean definition of a “good” social individual entails far more than the construction of the useful subject in the strict Marxist sense, for state interests related to capital and control. The textbook will, of course deal with this aspect of “good” citizenship,” but what makes doduk and (Korean nationalism in general) so interesting are other state interests that are not economic, and therefore not explicable in strictly Marxist, reductionist terms.

Ringing of classical Chinese precepts which will be explored later, the first chapter tells the reader:

> For us, that which lights the path on the way to becoming a “daen saram” is doduk. While doduk gives us the judgment standards for good and evil, right and wrong, from related situations it becomes the underlying principle for our thoughts and actions.\(^\text{38}\)

In answering the question “What makes a moral person?” the book draws explicitly on the classical Chinese philosophical tradition, making reference to the four main fundamental aspects of a stable, well-functioning social being: “in,” “eui,” “ye”, and “ji.” In is a Chinese character whose literal meaning is “humanness.” From this, every person feels some sense of obligation to fellow human beings. This is what motivates us to save a drowning stranger from a pond, while eui is our sense of “justice,” which is the literal translation of that character. The example given in the textbook is one of a taxi driver returning a lost briefcase containing a great deal of money to the police station. The subtext here is a one of “law and order,” the morality specifically based on proper behavior towards others as social beings. In order to be an honest citizen, one must possess a “righteous heart.” The difference between in and eui is subtle, but the examples given in the text makes clear the distinction between obligations to others as human versus social beings. The third crucial concept, ye, literally means “propriety.” Every person should have “a spirit of restraint and concession” in relations with others, as this is “a basic rule for the maintenance of societal order.” Quoting the “golden rule” almost verbatim, the textbook admonishes that “one should treat others as you would want to be treated.”\(^\text{39}\) Interestingly enough, the textbook characterizes this concept of “yangshim” (the aforementioned “yielding spirit”) as an “Eastern” one, the first of many instances in which the text characterizes itself in distinction from the West.\(^\text{40}\) Using the textbook’s metaphor, one can understand the relationship between the three in as a root, and eui as blossoming flower, ye is the literal “fruit.” Finally comes ji, meaning “knowledge.”\(^\text{41}\) Through intellectual pursuits, one can uncover the underlying principles of the world, indeed, even come to understand the preceding three principles. The world needs those who have come to this point via the three others; this is the “life worth living.”

Outlining a range of examples of ethical behavior ranging from cutting in line at the bank, giving up one's seat on the bus, or helping out an old man with a heavy load,

\(^{38}\) Doduk, 6
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 9-10
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 11
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 11
the second chapter defines the doduk concepts of “knowledge, belief, and practice” concretely. A person who can “harmonize” these concepts by not only knowing just behavior in a given situation, not only believing they should be carried out, but by actually reflecting this in one's behavior, can be called an in gyuk ja, a “man of character.” Mentioning examples from other cultures, the text places this concept in a universal tradition, sharing the same category with other eastern countries' “man of virtue,” or the concept of the “gentleman” in the West. In a fascinating comparison, the text ends the chapter with the “favorite maxims” of Ben Franklin (e.g. “Waste not, want not.”) with those of one of Korea's most revered scholars, Toegye, characterizing them both as “concrete examples of moral principles put into practice.” The textbook clearly sets up its moral principles in a Korean ethical framework, while not hesitating to find a place for itself in the Western tradition. There is no hostility to exposing students to foreign concepts and ways of thought in the objective sense. However, the text does later define the desirable limits of outside influence.

At this point, the text diverges from its traditional philosophizing to offer the readers the meaning of youth and middle school life. In its efforts to establish the principles that make up the ethical person, the text stresses the importance of this time to one's greater personal development. The student's physical, mental and social maturation are crucial to the development of a healthy societal member. Referring to a French philosopher, the text talks of “the second birth” of youth. The first birth produces life itself, while second birth produces people capable of living. The student is told that this is the time he or she develops an interest in the opposite sex, begins to form an identity, and starts to see a future for him or herself. The text underneath a picture of girl students talking to a male teacher tells us “Youth is the most beautiful and precious time of our lives,” while a pair of pictures, one showing a row of boys working with electronics equipment, the other showing a female scientist looking up inquisitively into a beaker, has as a caption: “Youth is a time of many opportunities and possibilities.” It is interesting that the beauty of youth is characterized by a picture from school, while even more significant that life's possibilities are defined in terms of science and industry.

Youth is also the time of confusion. According to the text, even as middle schoolers begin to develop a sense of their desires in life, they begin to develop a desire to be perceived well by others. So one begins to form a concept of self, a social self-awareness that begins to define specific goals and desires. When individuals' desires begin to clash with others', conflict occurs. According to the text, “This is the role of social rules.” The proper learning of social rules in this period of youth is emphasized as crucial to one's proper development: A straight-raised sapling grows into a straight tree; a crooked sapling becomes a crooked tree. The textbook continues after the third chapter into the second section of the book with the title “Proper Behavior at Home and School.” Here the text begins to strictly

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42 Doduk, 34
43 Ibid., 40
44 Ibid., 43
45 Ibid., 45
46 Ibid., 46-48
47 Ibid., 52-53
48 Doduk, 54-55
49 Ibid., 69
define the social relationships and responsibilities of the student as a student, as a son or daughter, and then as a citizen, outlining the conceptual framework of society. After two pages outlining the growth of Korea into an industrialized society with a nuclear family structure (from an agrarian, extended-family system), and all its concomitant changes, the text makes the first clear connection between societal structures, those of family and school: “As the family is called the 'nest of love,' the school is 'the locus of education.'”

The text goes on to assert that family is essential for learning basic human relations, but school is equally essential for the proper learning of the deep social relations required to function well in society.

\[50\] Doduk, 74
As harmonious family relations are essential for the continued functioning of the family, the text explores the specifics of proper etiquette within the household. 1) Family members must understand and yield to one another, 2) everyone must act according to their roles and responsibilities, 3) there must be adherence to modicum of manners and
etiquette, 4) there must be effective communication between all members of the family. If any one member neglects his or her responsibilities, there can be no harmony in the family. Interestingly enough, the text goes into detail in commenting on the responsibility of parents to understand their children – “if the parents cannot understand their children, and the children cannot fathom the meaning of their parents, how can there be harmony?” It hints at the necessity of a democratic understanding between family members, slightly different from the traditional Confucian doctrine that places the father, teacher, and King in the same category, as unconditional rulers over their respective domains. Assuming that the family is a model for the proper functioning of society, the importance of this “social contract”-like relationship becomes desirable, even as it does not interfere with the traditional hierarchy of the Korean family/society. The section ends by explicitly stating that society is simply a huge, extended family.

Next comes an extended section outlining the essential elements of proper behavior in relation to those outside of the immediate family; this includes extended relatives, friends, neighbors, and strangers. Not staying on the phone for longer than it takes to relay necessary information, especially on public phones, proper bowing procedures to people of different social statuses, proper table manners (including not eating loudly), and appropriate attire (i.e. not too modish or risqué clothing) – these examples struck me as particularly interesting, as they seem to be sites of rapid change and contention in Korean society. Although at first glance these examples seem clearly grounded in what might be called Korean “common sense,” at the same time, it does not seem merely coincidental that one occasionally reads in the newspaper about a person being stabbed because he/she was taking too long on the phone, or that older Koreans often complain about the erosion of traditional values, often surprised by the raciness of youth culture and dress. As a foreigner often reminded by Koreans that it was natural in Korea to noisily slurp one's soup, it is somewhat surprising to see this defined as bad etiquette. All these examples seem responses to a definite awareness of rapid changes in Korean society, where the prescription of clear remedies might be seen as potentially useful by the Ministry of Education. Responsible for the people as a controlling body, the crucial concept for which the text sets up the reader is that of “hyo.” The importance of this concept rounds out this section of the textbook, and figures prominently as one of the most important uniting concepts presented thus far.

Hyo (孝) is a concept difficult to translate into one word, yet it is easy to understand. A narrow translation might yield “filial piety,” while a more open translation might simply read “duty.” Duty to one’s parents and elders begins the text's investigation of the concept, but the text makes clear that the most important aspect of hyo does not lie in behaving according to its precepts, but in being sincere about doing so. The book, quoting Confucius, asks:

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51 Doduk, 77
52 Interestingly, there is a picture of a two young girls bowing to their grandparents as all adults sit looking on approvingly, smiling magnanimously. All are in traditional dress.
53 Doduk, 78
54 Ibid., 90-94
When most people say the word “hyo,” they know about supporting their parents only by feeding and clothing them, but how is that different from raising a dog or a horse?\textsuperscript{55}

The crucial factor here is sincerity. The writers of the text pose a question of their own to help illustrate this point:

\begin{quote}
When you were an elementary school student and you showed your father and mother a picture you drew of them, or when you hung a poorly-made carnation from art class on your parents' chest, how happy do you remember they were? Why do you think they were so happy? ... It was because it was something made out of sincere love and respect for them that they were deeply touched. The spirit of keeping your parents happy and pleased is honest hyo.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

Quoting Mencius, another Chinese philosopher, the book makes the crucial point that the concept of hyo extends not only to parents, but to other people's parents as well, and by extension, to all elders in society. However, the writers argue, with the onset of modernization and the dominance of the nuclear family structure, “our people's” old values are changing; however, it is critical that Koreans maintain the values that undergird Korean society.\textsuperscript{57}

The argument extends to the school as well. “Even as the parents in the family give children their love and attention, the teacher in the school does the same. In the same way that parents in the family influence us the most, the teacher in the school gives us out most important lessons.”\textsuperscript{58} Here, the text presents the appreciation of Helen Keller for her teacher, as her amazing success in life would not have been possible without the help of her one determined teacher. The book asks the question, “Then in the spirit of always being thankful to our teachers, in our life as students, what are the basic methods and manners that we must possess?”\textsuperscript{59} The answer is fairly simple; what follows is an explanation of the proper way to behave in school and around teachers, as well as the proper way to ask a question, which is with a sense of gong son (恭遜), which translates roughly as “humility and politeness.”

In order to demonstrate the importance of subtle semantics and the subtle assumptions that are inextricably woven into the structure of language itself, an exercise in semantic analysis would prove useful. In unpacking the word from which I am translating, I think it crucial to break down the meaning of gong son to its constituent elements. Since the doduk text analogizes each element of its society in a steady progression outward, the manner in students are told to question deserves critical analysis, as the subtext here is very much tied up in the language itself. From a small

\textsuperscript{55} Doduk, 107
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 109-110
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 113
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 113
character dictionary made for foreigners studying Korean, a search for the meaning for the character gong (恭) yielded "respect." Interestingly enough, there was no listing of the character son in this smaller dictionary, which listed all the 1800 characters taught up to the secondary level of school in Korea. A quick check with the Myung Moon New Chinese Character Dictionary defined son (遜) as meaning “sa yang,” in Korean, which translates roughly into “restraint,” or “to refrain from.” The meanings here are conflated into this concept of “gong son,” and the two separate concepts bound up into one word seem to complement each other in an unconscious, yet insidious way. A sense of restraint is linked to the idea of respect. The message in the text seems to imply that even in questioning, there are boundaries. This is not necessarily a radical or repressive concept in and of itself, as even in the “individualistic,” and/or “irreverent” West, there are certain modicums of behavior and simple respect for teachers' authority. However, in my experience teaching in Korea, there always seemed to be much less separation between simple questioning and/or challenging of material and the questioning/challenging of the authority of the teacher. As the book goes on to stress the importance of adherence to hierarchical social structures within the school itself, the meaning of the concept of “questioning” becomes more important.

In all schools, within the student body itself, there is a formal social structure created and reinforced by the students to which all students must adhere. First-years have certain social responsibilities to those senior (older) than themselves. This is usually determined by year. The sunbae/hoobae (senior/junior) relationship is a crucial part of any and every school system, including the university. Numerous times I have heard students complain about the difficulty the juniors have questioning their seniors; even disagreeing with the opinion of a senior is tantamount to disrespect, so students generally seem to avoid doing so. This is also true of the teacher/student relationship. Questioning the assumptions of the teacher means doubting his or her credibility. Inherent in deference to authority is the notion of yielding to it; this is a problematic characteristic in any education system. This is something with which Korean society is presently coming to terms.

The example that springs to mind is a situation relayed to me by a Korean-American friend working for an engineering department in Samsung. One of the most frustrating things about being a young hotshot in the company was the fact that the working group always had to try out the ideas of the most senior among them first, despite the fact that other ideas seemed a little more promising. According to my friend, it reduced efficiency and raised frustrations in general. How much can traditional values fit into a modern world? This is the question which the textbook occupies itself in section III: “Society and Ethics.”

The third section of the textbook attempts to contextualize young people into society as both individuals and subjects, while balancing between ancient and modern traditions. According to the text, unlike the West, the Korean people have, “from ancient days on, enjoyed a traditional culture that emphasized morality and proper behavior.” However, recently Korea finds itself faced with a moral crisis, one created by the exigencies of a new industrialized society. In an effort to characterize the nature of

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61 Doduk, 138
Korea's present-day existence, the text looks to first define the traditional culture of the past. These are not simply the old traditions passed down by habit, but precious ones seen by the ancestors as one crucial towards defining the Korean identity. The text asks the question, “What is the reason for criticizing traditional culture?” The problem is that traditional doduk and modern-day changes do not mix well in many cases. The goal, therefore, must be adapted: “In passing down the proper traditional values, we must apply the ones that are right for the present-day, and it is our responsibility to always encourage [societal and economic] development.”62 This is not a new concept in Korea. Indeed, Marx concluded that Confucianism in the East was a hindrance to development. According to his analysis, Korea's Neo-Confucian aristocratic elite opposed economic and social reform on the basis of traditional philosophical precepts.63 The elite of the time considered fundamental societal change harmful to the welfare of a healthy Korean social body. This is the same issue which preoccupies Korea today, even though Korea has already fully committed to the pursuit of economic development as a goal unto itself. The management of the undesirable side effects of “progress” is Korea's sticky issue. What is the element that will act as the fulcrum that will keep the delicate balance between progress and preservation of tradition? What will keep an industrializing Korea – a Korea that is losing the need for many of its traditional values – distinctly Korean? What is an irreducible element of Korean culture? The text brings offers a story allegedly told by a foreigner who had been living in Korea for over 20 years:

I've already lived in Korea for about 20 years now. Anyone can see that in that period, Korean has achieved much economic development. However, the continually-erecting buildings and apartments makes one get the dreary feeling that Korea is beginning to look like any other city in the world. However, if one looks a little bit harder, this feeling immediately fades away and one can get the comfortable feeling that “Despite this, people do indeed live here!” When one sees, in crowded buses and subways, sitting passengers cheerfully taking the heavy loads and bags of standees and hold them in their laps, or the faces of people loudly shouting greetings to each other across busy streets, I too feel jung. (Outside of Korea, this is something that can rarely be found.)64

A crucial element is jung (情), along with its sister concept of han (恨), which find no easy translation in English. a crucial central concept in the Korean language and culture, which finds no easy translation into English. Jung can be defined as many thing as once: a feeling, an emotion, and/or intimacy with another person – most importantly, it denotes an emotional connection with another person. It is significant that the textbook use a foreigner's “point of view” to characterize the jung that permeates and defines Korean society. Some concrete examples of jung are useful at this point, and I will use my experience in the manner that the doduk textbook

62 Doduk, 146
63 Eckert, Carter J., and Ki-baek Yi. Korea, Old and New: A History. (Seoul, Korea, Cambridge, Mass.: Published for the Korea Institute, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1990), 410
64 Doduk, 147
utilizes specific examples to illustrate a point as much as possible in explaining the concept of *jung*.

When I arrived in America for the first time in two years, I was a mere 260 frequent flyer miles short of a domestic round trip ticket, which I begged the phone ticket agent to overlook. She said she could not, because of airline policy, and would not do so. Frustrated and disappointed, I remember knowing, absolutely *knowing* that a Korean ticket agent would have helped me out, given the right amount of begging and gentle coercion. I knew my chances were almost certain if I were to beg in person. Indeed, the more the agent saw me as a person, the greater my chances would be. This is a significant choice of wording on my part. In my time teaching, anytime I would threaten to do something particularly odious to the possessions of a student seized during class, the student would beg and plead in Korean, “Look at me!” While losing a lot in the translation, the meaning remains clear. Look past the rules and the roles, and look at *me*, make a connection with *me*. Being the pushover American teacher I did, and often overlooked small infractions that other teachers might not have. So for the students with whom I had established some rapport, their appeals to my sense of *jung* usually worked.

*Jung* exists on more significant levels in Korean society. I have listened to many female teachers in the lounge complain about their lazy, inconsiderate husbands whom they claim not to really love, but with whom they have developed a great deal of *jung*; they cannot help but feel affection for their husbands. Young women ready to shed their boyfriends cite the buildup of too much *jung* between them as the reason for their inability to cut the rope. Indeed, a recent popular song entitled “Jung” related the story of a girl who “stood by her man,” regardless of his desire to break up with her, for whatever reason - even stating the desire to wait for him if he decided to date another girl. This is a situation which many Westerners would probably find difficult to understand, simply by virtue of the fact that it is a concept that has no clear linguistic analogue in contemporary Western culture.

*Jung* is a clearly-defined basis for social relationships that by definition often ask the social actors to violate accepted social norms in a given situation. Some would even argue that it is the maintenance of traditional *jung*-based social connections that is responsible for what the West would call corruption. “You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours” is the way Americans might characterize favors that create obligations. Many Koreans might just call it *jung*. In the above example with the middle school students, I might have been accused of playing favorites, as I was being soft on students with whom I had developed a closer, personal relationship. However, this relationship is seen as a desirable one to cultivate between people, and is a defining concept in Korean interpersonal relations. But as a social glue, the textbook goes on to ask, how effective and desirable is it?

The textbook places Korean societal development into an inevitable scheme of forward progress. What characterized the Industrial Revolution, according to the text, was the process in which the citizens of small social groups began to cease to see each other in terms of *jung* relationships, and only in terms of personal gain and loss. The growth of a “mercenary lifestyle” accompanied the development of industry and urbanization. The habit of calculating the worth of others in the cold terms of gain and loss made all citizens see each other as competitors. 65 What the text is referring to is the

65 *Doduk*, 159
creation of societal rules only to protect citizens' and the state's narrow interests. Marx would agree, but he is, not surprisingly, not mentioned in this quite appropriate section, not is mention made of Korea's own experience with seeing its workers "only in terms of loss and gain." A glaring omission, but nevertheless unsurprising, given the extreme anti-Communism that has characterized South Korea.

So is this simply a search for new ethics in an industrial society? The textbook writers would answer with a resounding "no." The other key event in the West that now holds import for the East was the "citizen revolution," specifically the French Revolution. Here the reader is shown a picture of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, next to a painting of angry citizens storming the Bastille. It was a time when society found as its new basis the freedom and equality of its citizenry; the Reformation is also mentioned as a result of this new movement towards equality. However, the book makes no mention of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, but quotes Calvin at length, the text establishing God's "justification" (in the Biblical sense) for capitalism. No longer is the accumulation of property and material goods a sin, but rather a sign of God's grace, the manifestation of one's hard work, thrift, and *justification*; for only one enjoying the God's grace – holy salvation – could enjoy material benefit. According to the text, this thinking, the result of the various Revolutions working in tandem, changed the social relationships and the nature of citizenship in the particular way that best facilitated the growth of capitalism. Without referring explicitly to the "Protestant work ethic," as this might entail mention of the *M*-word, the book chronicles the birth of capitalism, devoid of moral judgment.

This would seem a strange segue for a book professing to deal with "morality," but it serves the interest of the state in characterizing itself in a morally positive way while justifying its mode of existence. By making explicit comparisons to the "national character" of other countries, the textbook defines the traits most worthy for a fast-developing country like Korea to emulate. Reading like a laundry list, Americans are exemplars of "the Frontier Spirit," while France is laudable for its freedom, equality, and philanthropy. Most notable is the French people's frugality, according to the textbook. Even though France is the world capital of fashion, the average French person doesn't live a life of chic excess. England is the country whose citizens enjoy the most degree of personal freedom in the world, and the people also treat each other with kindness and politeness. As a fine citizenry, the English people exemplify the principles of the refined "gentleman." Interestingly (and uncomfortably) enough, the country that comes out on top in the Korean reckoning of national character traits is Germany. From the German people's powerful sense of "group consciousness," they were "able to lift themselves up from the ashes of WWII and create a startling amount of economic growth now called the "Rhine river miracle." What the text fails to mention, however, are the pitfalls of "group consciousness" that got Germany reduced to "a lump of ash" in the first place. Underneath this whole section is a pair of pictures depicting on the left, German consumers frugally going through a fruit market, and on the right, the towering apparatus of what appears to be a chemical plant. This is the "Rhine river miracle." But the text

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66 Doduk, 161-162
67 Marx!
68 Doduk, 163-164
69 Ibid., 165
70 Doduk, 165
goes on to define what it does not desire from the West, despite the myriad benefits of Western culture. What Korea is endeavoring to prevent is a loss of what is essentially Korean, even as it enters into the club of “developed” nations. For Korea, becoming developed cannot mean a loss of cultural distinctness.

Finally, towards the end of the book, the writers get around to talking explicitly about race and ethnicity, to defining clearly who the Korean people are. The text perpetuates the untruth that the Korean minjok is as natural and essential a group and alliance as the family unit, the gajok. Here, knowledge of the constituent Chinese characters is crucial. Jok, meaning “family,” is combined with the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character ga (家), which means “house,” to constitutes the Korean word for “family,” gajok (家族). The Korean root word for the Chinese character for “people” is min, and combined with jok (族), becomes the Korean word for “people,” or alternatively, “people” or even “race” as minjok (民族). The constructed nature of the concept is never presented, nor the fact that the word never found any recorded use before the Korean nationalist newspaper Hwangseong Shinmun started using it in 1898; or very recently, by the standards of Korea’s often-mentioned “5,000 years of history.” However, students would be very surprised to learn that the constructed concept of minjok, while imagined to be as old as the people/culture it describes, is no older than the sense of allegiance to the young nation it describes.71 However, not only is the concept of the minjok

71 Andre Schmid has the best and clearest discussion of this in Korea Between Empires.
continuously dehistoricized, it is presented in the text as a category as natural as the family unit. This minjok section of the text insidiously feigns an equal respect for other cultures/races/peoples, but reinforces the idea of Korea's uniqueness by arguing for its purity and the need for preservation. This way of overtly asserting the uniqueness and purity of the Korean people/race in terms of reference to the readily apparent fact of there being many race/peoples in the world goes back to the influence of Social Darwinism on the peninsula, which postulated a world filled with many nations and their respective, connected minjok in inevitable competition with one another and whose national successes are linked to the fitness of the minjok who help their states through the process of natural selection. This made a logical kind of sense to Koreans, who were caught between several more powerful nations and would come to be dominated by the very nation that had beaten the odds and learned to play the modernization game as well as the West, namely Japan. Indeed, B.R. Meyers notes in his landmark work *The Cleanest Race* just how much North Korean ideology has and still is one of pure race superiority that is the actual ideological glue keeping that nation together and has actually turned international action against it into a proof of the nations of the world being in (unfair) competition with and cahoots against North Korea. Under Japanese colonial rule:

“The dominant slogan of the day was naïsen ittai or ‘Interior [i.e. Japan] and Korea as one body.’ While intent on undermining their subjects’ sense of a distinct nationhood, the authorities emphasized that naïsen ittai did not mean the end of Koreanness, and even posed as champions of a culture that had languished too long in China’s shadow. Koreans were encouraged to cherish their ‘region’ and its ‘dialect,’ even its yin-yang flag (which was printed in school maps and atlases right up to liberation), as long as they remembered that the peninsula was but one part of a greater Japanese whole.”

It is here that V.M. Tikhonov’s work *Social Darwinism and nationalism in Korea: the beginnings (1880s-1910s): "Survival" as an Ideology of Korean Modernity* most usefully adds to Schmid’s explication of Social Darwinism on the peninsula, cited above. Tikhonov brings us a bit more up to date:

*An Hosang* (1902–1999), one of the best-known intellectuals in power in the late 1940s and early 1950s in South Korea, was, for example, promoting his ‘One People’ (Ilmin) ideology. It stressed Koreans’ ‘national homogeneity,’ their ‘single bloodline,’ and the necessity of ‘full unity under the leadership of our only national Leader, President Yi Su’ngman’ as the only way to overcome the predations of both ‘communist imperialism’ and ‘cruel Euro-American capitalism.’ An was a Jena-educated Hegelian philosopher whom Americans understood to have been an ‘open admirer of Hitler during World War II.’ They summarized his line of work during his tenure as South Korea’s first Minister of Education (August 1948 to May 1950) as...
an attempt ‘to install German authoritarian educational principles in Republic of Korea schools.’ While An’s ideology, viewed with grave suspicion by South Korea’s American backers, was largely discarded after 1953, the discourse of ‘national survival’ based upon ‘self-sacrificial consciousness’ and an ‘ethics of loyalty to one’s state and nation’ resurfaced again under the Pak Cho’ng-hui (Park Chung Hee) dictatorship from 1961–1979. Pak’s favourite topic already in the early 1960s was ‘the development of national consciousness and national loyalty’ as the only way for ‘national salvation,’ the only guarantee for the ‘eternal well-being of the nation’ and its ‘victory’ in the process of reconstruction. ‘Rendering one’s service to the state’ was proclaimed ‘the most beautiful deed in the world,’ and Israel, together with post-war Germany, were taken as examples of ‘national success’ in ‘survival and reconstruction.’ At this point, of course, ‘survival’ meant primarily victory in the ‘competition of systems’ being waged with North Korea, this ‘competition’ being a perfect justification for turning South Korea into a virtual barrack state in the late 1960s.\footnote{Tikhonov, Social Darwinism, 220-221}

Myers’ simple but compelling assertion is that so-called North Korea “experts” completely misunderstand the menagerie of ideologies that supposedly motivate and animate the North Korean society. Plainly put, North Korea possesses an ideology of pure blood, pure lineage superiority that is the primary cognitive-affective framework for understanding international politics and North Korea’s place in the world, while also offering a meta-explanation of how the North Korean people relate to one another as members of the same super-extended family and race, a notion that extends back much further than national division, but which the North Koreans took from the Patriotic Enlightenment times of the turn of the 20th century and took to its logical extreme as the binding societal glue that really holds the state together through thick and thin, peacetime and war, feast and famine, a fact that the West simply doesn’t get, distracted as it is by chimeras such as “Stalinism” or “Communism,” which some aspects of North Korean society resembles, but only superficially so. The South, meanwhile, is possessed of the same legacy of pure race thinking, but has subsumed it into the hangukinron genre of thinking and is simply one socio-ideological rationale among many that keeps society and the status quo running smoothly. In the official middle school textbook form of this thinking, the fact of Korea’s pure race superiority is downplayed as a rational for comparing other nations and minjok to itself in the negative, but the fact of being one people, one culture, on nation, unique in the as others in the world are unique unto themselves is never questioned. In fact, as recent encounters with otherness in South Korean society have forced a softening and backpedaling on the idea of pure race ideology, the extent of the North and South’s departure from each other on the subject brings into sharp relief just how closely similar the two once were on that talking point. Again, Meyers conveys this best:

*In May 2006 North and South Korean generals met to discuss a realignment of the maritime border between the two states. In preliminary small talk the*
South’s delegation leader mentioned that farmers in his half of the peninsula had taken to marrying women from other countries. His counterpart made no effort to hide his displeasure. “Our nation has always considered its pure lineage to be of great importance,” he said. “I am concerned that our singularity will disappear.” The South Korean, dismissing such marriages as a mere “drop of ink in the Han River,” responded that the mainstream would suffice to preserve the nation’s identity. More concerned with racial purity than cultural identity, the DPRK general replied, “Since ancient times our land has been one of abundant natural beauty. Not even one drop of ink must be allowed.”

The two had come to resemble two estranged, old lovers who had grown apart despite having shared so much unspoken common ground in times past. And it had been the North Koreans who had kept the faith, so to speak.

Although South Koreans are glad that they compromised their nationalist principles for wealth and modernity, many of them feel a nagging sense of moral inferiority to their more orthodox brethren. They may disapprove of the North’s actions, but rarely with indignation, often blaming America or Japan for having provoked them. Eager to assuage their guilt about not wanting reunification, they prefer to see in the DPRK’s lack of democracy and human rights only a benign difference in stages of development.

As South Korea became modern and was then rewarded with all the fruits of its labors, along with the trappings of a new, consumer culture-driven hypermodernity, hangukinron thinking was inevitably pushed aside a bit or altered for the sake of new exigencies and societal needs.

But it would be a mistake to think hangukinron logic is dead, even as the official new organizing concept for the nation has become one of dayeongmunhwa (“multiculturalism”). As Iain Watson pointed out as “Paradoxical multiculturalism” in South Korea, essentialist logic does not necessarily conflict with the presence of new peoples and culture now living in Korean society:

I argue that exclusivist racial and ethnic beliefs are paradoxically reinforced by the multicultural policies that are being adopted. Race, ethnicity, and culture as well as nationality and citizenship are indistinguishable for Koreans. In Korean society, “race is understood as a collectivity defined by innate and immutable phenotypic and genotype characteristics” and while ethnicity is usually defined as culture, “Koreans have not historically differentiated between the two” (Shin, 2006, p. 4). From this perspective, race and ethnicity inextricably influence beliefs about Korean culture. Yet the South Korean government has institutionally and conceptually separated these terms by focusing on the issue of culture and multiculturalism…By separating culture from beliefs in race and

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74 Myers, The Cleanest Race, 55
75 Ibid., 45
ethnicity, the underlying assumptions of Korean exclusiveness are obscured even as they continue to influence that culture.\textsuperscript{76}

At this point the writers juxtapose Western *yulli* (another term for “ethics/morality”) and Korean *doduk* as opposing elements in Korean society to be balanced against one another, Western *yulli* being held in appropriate check. On page 173, the reader is presented with an actual picture of a scale, balancing “Our traditional culture” against “Western citizen ethics,” the main difference between the two lying in the idea of “yielding” and *jung*.\textsuperscript{77} The goal is one of taking the strong points from Western culture and integrating them “harmoniously” with Korean traditional culture: “In this way, our society can become, more than any other one, the world's leading society in terms of *doduk* and ethical values.”\textsuperscript{78}

![Figure 5 - Balancing Eastern morals and western ethics](image)

**The Chinese Tradition**

\textsuperscript{77} *Doduk*, 173
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
The intellectual and educational traditions in Korea before the modern period, owe much to the influence of China, especially to philosophers such as Confucius. The concept of education itself rests on a very specific conceptual scheme. Confucius' formulation of the role of education in society is constructed as a linkage of three crucial concepts, each of which in succession rests on the previous: *sung* (性) - which is a person's “nature,” *do* (度) - which is “the way,” and *gyo* (敎) - which, translated roughly, means “teaching.”

There are obvious similarities to the philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that so influenced Western thought, especially as they relate to education: “Everything is good when it leaves the hand of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man.”

In the Confucian framework, the *sung* is characterized by *sun* (善), which translates as “good,” in the Manichean sense of good and evil. This is the innate goodness that Rousseau believes to be the common element of human nature.

*Do* is the “way,” in the literal sense of the word in English. The translation gleaned from Korean is “the road which must be followed.” This is a pronunciation familiar to many Americans as “tao.” Although the entry into American intellectual thought has been via such popular texts as *The Tao of Pooh* and *The Tao of Motorcycle Repair*, the concept is taken far more seriously in Asia, and is one of the philosophical foundations of several Asian societies, and this is certainly true with Korea. In this conceptual framework, the “way,” or the path one must take, is illuminated by the light of the aforementioned *gyo*, which is education. Similarly, Rousseau places great importance on not only the cultivation of the mind and the necessity of education in forming the “complete person,” and bringing that person to adulthood, but the mode in which this enlightenment takes place. Specifically, formal education is a desirable means of showing this “way.” In Chinese, the language in which Confucius was writing and which influenced so many other languages (over 50% of Korean words are phonetic derivations from Chinese characters) the word for adult is *sung* in (成人), whose meaning is literally “complete person.” In the same way, the concept of childhood itself is defined as *mi sung nyun* (未成年), whose literal translation is “not yet complete in years.” Every person must traverse this path to adulthood, but must engage in this struggle in their own particular way. Quoting Rousseau, the similarity between Chinese (and hence Korean) conceptualizations of childhood and its relationship to education is obvious: “The way in which ideas are formed is what gives character to the human mind...The attitude, more or less great, of comparing ideas, and of finding a rapport and relationship is that which gives more or less character to the mind of man.”

Not only education itself, but the tone which it takes, the pitch of the “pitch,” is vitally important to the production of good people and good citizens. At this point Rousseau's and Confucius's thought would likely diverge, as it relates to the place of the individual in the state, for Korean culture, deeply grounded in the Chinese philosophical tradition, concerns itself a great deal with the cultivation of its children into proper, right-thinking people.

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80 Lee, Dong Hwan. *Thoughts on the Nature of Life (Shin Myung Shin Bo Gam)*. (Seoul: Korea National University National Culture Research Institute, 1996), 23
81 using the Korean pronunciation
82 Emile, in *The Great Thoughts*, 357
citizens, in sync with state conceptions of ideal citizenship. This is the point at which to begin an exploration of Korean education itself.

But Marxist analysis offers another informative take on the relationship between individual and society, one of considerable importance when attempting to evaluate the role of nationalist ideology in constructing the citizen/subject. Louis Althusser used the term “educational state apparatus” to describe the main societal organ on which the “dominant ideological State apparatus” of a nation rests, a place it uses to promulgate itself throughout the body of the republic. Viewed as the child prodigy of industrial development and capitalist economic growth in the East, the case of Korea is a model example in many respects. However, the case of Korea does not lend itself to neat Marxist explanations relating ideology to the dominant class's need to “manufacture consent” from the masses. While a major part of the doduk agenda revolves around the necessary construction of a national ideology that justifies and reproduces the productive forces and relations of society, I will later contend that the scope of the project is much larger, having very much to do with not only the desire to reconstruct the Korean nationality into one useful to the state, but is informed by a perceived threat to the cultural survival of Korea itself. But before beginning any analysis of the politics and concerns of the Korean identity, an exploration of the former question - that of the relationship between state interests and education - we must take a closer look at the processes which brought about the development of education in Korean as a “state apparatus.”

Korean nationalism finds its origins as a reactionary conservatism, a conscious effort to push out the perceived negative cultural influences of foreign powers. In the last half of the 1800s, Korea found itself concerned with Western imperialist encroachment, religious conversion in the form of Catholic missionaries, the Russians, the legacy of suzerain-subject relations with the Chinese, and finally, the invasion of the Japanese, who eventually drove out the other powers. Anti-foreign sentiments began to form the core around which a sense of nation began to take shape. This was especially true during the Japanese colonial period, and was the most important process for the formation of Korean nationalism during the 36-year period of occupation. United against a common enemy, stripped of their nominal sovereignty, the Korean people could not help but see itself in a completely new light, against which the dark spectre of Japanese domination of their society and culture cast the darkest shadow.

Unlike other former colonized states, Korea was not colonized by a Western power, so Western influence did not hold exactly the same negative post-colonial connotations that other post-colonial nations held of the West. In fact, Westerners, especially some missionaries in Korea, had been viewed by some as sources of liberalism and progressive

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84 Borrowing a term from Noam Chomsky, of course.
86 Ibid.
thinking. In contrast to countries that had been oppressed by the West, Korea had been “liberated” by it.\(^8\)

Nationalism would evolve from a rallying point around which to rally for the regaining of sovereignty back from the Japanese to an ideal which would work towards the reunification of the peninsula. According to Sung Chul Wang, who quoted Sohn: “…unification, modernization, and democratization…[are]…the major tasks of the present Korean nationalism.”\(^8\) However, I would disagree on the last point. While the concerns of present-day South Korean nationalism come largely from concerns about the changes brought about by the advent of modernization, the ability of the doduk curriculum to instill egalitarian, democratic values remains questionable. One of the things it reinforces are certain hierarchical relationships seen as “traditional” Korean ones; the doduk textbook’s emphasis of the importance of maintaining certain social relationships that construct society as a type of family, where everyone occupies a certain place and role. Stressed, of course, are the vertical relationships of power that define one’s identity - teacher/student, junior/senior, eldest/youngest. The traditional social divisions that defined Korean society are reinforced and strengthened by the doduk curriculum, even if only by virtue of the fact the doctrines are focused via a standard curriculum. Many of the ideals of the hangukinron thinking are decidedly undemocratic and problematic for the realization of some stated state goals. In general, hangukinron and minjok-based thinking fit into a Gramscian model of hegemonic control in which preserving the legitimacy of the present power structure is necessary to ensure that the socio-political fabric of society remains strong and the norms, mores, and values of society are reproduced; and if they do not already exist in accordance with the goals of the state, then the “instrumentalist” education system is the ideal tool with which to rework them.

However, this speaks to a mechanical, rational actor view of the state, which still doesn’t account for the way Koreans desire Koreans to be as a functioning, strong nation state accomplishing its goals. Hangukinron does not have to be in conflict with the rational goals of society and its stated ideologies. In fact, The Korean state rolls readily forward, driven by other official national frameworks of belief. Much as the dictates of physics recognizes that a rolling stone gathering no moss is still slowed by contact with a non-perfect, non-uniform surface (which factor in such realities into the equation as the inevitable coefficient of kinetic friction), so does Korean society seem to be ready to pay a sort of ideological indulgence tax to keep itself recognizably – and comfortably – Korean. Therein lies the seeming paradox – and hidden power – of what Iain Watson described as “paradoxical Korean multiculturalism.” Much like North Korea pundits who place too much stock in North Korea’s chimerical “Juche” ideology of “self-reliance” even as it contorts itself into all sorts of positions to keep the flow foreign aid coming, those who place too much stock into what South Korea says about what it believes to be socially and ideologically valid and what it believes bound to be chagrined, or at least seriously confused. In this way, Korean official state ideology needs to be understood in terms of not only how the “Text” (as B.R. Myers refers to official North Korean state ideology) most obviously and publicly defines society, but in terms of subtextual and other hidden clues not really meant for international consumption.

\(^8\) Ibid., 467

\(^8\) Ibid., 470
Such was the assumption of the Korean Dodeok textbook writers, who would have thought, back during the early 1990’s, that they could safely assume that no non-Korean would ever read such an obscure piece of official South Korean state ideology, and also that there would scarcely be any possibility of there being a time when pure race/one people/minjok ideology would become potentially embarrassing in a new Korea operating under a new set of buzzwords that had to make sense of the South Korean nation-state and its people in a truly international and multicultural context. As a piece of ideology designed to be utilized in an instrumentalist way, Dodeok was seeming to do its job perfectly well. According to Kim Shinil, professor in the education department at Seoul National University and one of the few writers on the subject of Korean education in the English language, Korea’s greatest problem in education is that it exists as nothing more than an organ for the state, an Althusserian ideological state apparatus that serves to reinforce state ideologies about division: “...education has been utilized more thoroughly than any other sociocultural sphere of the [sic] national life as an instrument of the cold war after the division occurred at the conclusion of World War II as if it were a sacrifice needed for the stabilization of the half-peace state.”

The problem of “instrumentalist education” is something that is the legacy of Imperial Japan, and gained real odiousness in Korea in the 1960s. The reason is simple to deduce. As we ask the question of how and why a nation could reapply the former tool of an oppressor onto itself, we find that the answer lies in the fact that the ideological agenda of a newly-industrializing Korea in the 1960s had taken on the same shape as that of Meiji Japan. When considered historically, the veracity of this historical analogy is difficult to refute. Of course, the ideological agendas of former Imperial Japan and South Korea were vastly different in certain respects, as Korea possessed no formal ideology of racial/cultural superiority, nor the belief in the “Manifest Destiny” of the Japanese people to expand throughout Asia. However, Korea eventually came to utilize the same means towards the accomplishment of state goals, even if the ends for which they were applied were completely different.

For South Korea in the 1960s, the goals of rapid industrialization and modernization, anti-Communism, as well as the maintenance of state power and authority, were the underpinnings of South Korea’s entire nationalist consciousness. Indeed, it is difficult to even conceive of a Korean identity not significantly shaped by these aspects of national ideology.

When thinking about the purposes of the 1911 Korean Education Law, administered immediately after formal annexation into the Japanese empire in 1910, its ideological utility even well after national liberation and under the administration of Korea’s most ruthless and determined, Japanese military trained dictator should be quite clear:

1. Convert Korean into faithful subjects of the Japanese Emperor,
2. Annihilate Korean culture through the imposition of the Japanese language and culture,
3. Administer a practical education to Koreans for a smooth operation of their colonial policy. It goes without saying that in this process Korean education was most grievously repressed and distorted.²⁹⁹

The Japanese viewed the equal education of girls as very important for the proper development of the colony. From the report of a colonial administrator in Korea involved with education policy, the reason for viewing the conversion of women as crucial lay in their belief that women made better converts because once converted, they remained that way. They would remain helpful allies in the greater effort to convert all of society, namely the men.

The Private School Law (1908) outlawed the education institutes which were hotbeds of Korean nationalist education. This was a threat to all of the objectives of the colonial state. Many of these schools simply changed into night schools or study centers. The Japanese took little time to respond.

Up to 1961 the old colonial practice of the Regulation for private study centers “was practiced verbatim.” Regulation for Private Study Centers addressed this problem. Village study halls were also forums for the Korean nationalist agenda, and were suppressed with the Village Study Hall Regulation.

The prioritizing of state interests in relation to educational curriculum was the defining aspect of education under the Japanese. As part of the ongoing efforts to Japanize the Korean people, the Ministry of Education was made to set up a censoring system for textbooks used in Korean schools. The conventional wisdom was that “Acquisition of learning for which there is no use is a sure way to make a person rebellious.” The not-so-subtle subtext here is the meaning attached to “...learning for which there is no use,” as each of the nine “deploring deviant” elements to be eliminated from the curriculum were critical, political attitudes that questioned the Japanese legitimacy to occupy Korea. Here was the exemplification of the state’s efforts to “manufacture consent”.

However, in South Korea after World War II, this prioritizing of state interests in relation to education was an inevitable result of the dire conditions in which the newly-divided Koreas found themselves. Under Syngman Rhee, the government followed a very pragmatic ideology. “One skill for one man” was the spirit of the day, and made sense, given the need to reconstruct the economy and rebuild a country ravaged by war. After 1960, this pragmatic tendency became even more focused, as education became a tool for modernization and development. The Ministry of Education, in an effort to “modernize the fatherland”, reformed the curriculum via educational policies embodied in slogans like “education for economic development” and “education that contributes to modernization.”

It was in this way that Pak Chung Hee recognized the utility of developmental education in cultivating “the second economy” that would be necessary to support the “first economy.” This “second economy” was the one of belief, value systems, and attitudes, the first being the fiscal economy. In Pak’s view, the first could not exist without the second, and if the second economy did not develop commensurate with the first, the success of the first economy would be in jeopardy. To this end, the New Village Movement, the saemaul undong, was launched, as part of the economic program.

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90 Kim, Shinil. "Korean Education: Past and Present.", 8
91 Ibid., 13
92 Kim, "Korean Education: Past and Present.", 13
The 1970s saw the complete fusion of doctrines of development and the education system. According to Kim, “Education that produces” was a slogan to be found in any public school at the time. After the Yushin Declaration that strengthened Pak’s dictatorial rule in 1972, totalitarian ideology dominated the curriculum, and it was during this time that many books were rewritten, and the specific goals of the developmental agenda were able to be put into action. Also, Pak must have known that to undertake developmental education in the fullest sense, the state must have a great deal of power.

Allocation of human resources according to the needs of the states was the next logical step for a country interested in using the school as the ultimate extension of state ideological control. Education was not valued for education’s sake, but rather for its ability to construct compliant citizens for the economic and developmental interests of the state. In both cases, these were situations when the state had free reign over the development of power over its own citizenry, but chose a form of education that was nothing more than ideological indoctrination coupled with the necessary knowledge demanded for developing a “useful” unit of production.

The true tragedy is the fact that the education students receive was lacking:

After Liberation, we ought to have had the self-reflective and self-analytical power to throw away the instrumentalist educational philosophy. We ought to have endeavored to find out what the real, intrinsic value of education would be when education stopped being a mere instrument. The value of education lies in its ability to raise the intellectual and moral maturity of and the act of education promotes this intellectual and moral maturation discarding the elements the elements that hinder this process. The value of education, therefore, stands, of necessity, in opposition with the economic value sought after by the educational theory that trains man as a faithful productive machine...93

Developmental education theory views education only as a means to amass greater human capital towards the purpose of furthering economic and developmental progress. What is problematic about this conceptualization is the that this tends to simply increase economic inequities and gloss over other socio-economic inequalities. Everything is done in the interests of the people at the top, while creating a more pliant and and less questioning work force. Quite literally, the citizen is being reconstructed as a state subject in economic and ideological terms.94

This did not differ much from the ideological goals of the Japanese during the Korean colonial period, when colonial education benefited only the colonial masters. Although the agenda at the time was the eradication of the Korean identity, along with the creation of faithful subjects to the Emperor, Even today, in many South Korean schools, even electives do not exist, at least in the American sense of the word. A more appropriate way of thinking about a subject such as French or German might be as a mere “extra” subject that the entire school is forced to study. The structure of the school being what it is, there would be at most one teacher responsible for teaching the entire subject, for the entire school. Hence, the high school students receive no more than one or two hours of instruction per week in the given subject. Additionally, since the subject has no relevance at all to what is most important - the college entrance exam - minimal mental

93 Kim, Shinil. "Korean Education: Past and Present”, 13
94 Ibid., 15
energy is given to that subject, simply by virtue of the fact that it does not increase one’s of entering the university.

The same is true with the choice of major in college. Not designed for students’ real intellectual development, but rather for the good of the state. If one wants to change majors, they must retake the entrance exam. An “unqualified” switch into a department is undesirable, as well as a possible numerical imbalance according to the popularity of certain majors. In the end, it all goes back to values of production.

Two Different Instruments, Same Tune

The territorial division pits two opposing models of nationalism against one another, and each is fervently attempting to prove the other wrong. This is another factor that helps maintain the shape and boundaries of the Korean national character.

During the first year of middle school, the bulk of the project to construct the model Korean citizen/subject begins. For the student, this time entails a marked change and a significant transition from child to young adult. An analysis of the intellectual nature of doduk cannot take place without understanding the psychological shifts in thinking that the structure of the middle school engenders. As a middle school teacher in Korea, it was apparent to me that the change in life is stark and disruptive to some extent. This is not to imply that the experience is necessarily traumatic, only that it is a significant change in lifestyle that elementary school students can dread, but also a rite of passage to look forward to as a sign of maturity. Here it is interesting to note that much of the structure of the Korean education system comes from outside cultural influences, but have been adopted as acceptable, even desirable aspects of a decidedly Korean system.

Korea under Japanese occupation underwent massive and permanent changes, one of the most far-reaching taking place in the education system. Korea was deeply affected by Japan's occupation from 1910 to 1945, absorbing many of its “nationalistic and militaristic educational and cultural values,” and these influences did not simply disappear with liberation in 1945.95 One legacy of the Japanese-style school system is the physical organization and structure of the school itself, which will be discussed in more detail later. The United States, in its role of liberator/occupier/superintendent of Korea after liberation in 1945, also heavily influenced the Korean education system.

Whereas the Americans emphasized the promotion of democratic educational philosophy and practices, the Korean leaders in the Ministry of Education and other government organizations emphasized the need to eradicate colonial residues in education and culture while recognizing the importance of democratic education....efforts made by the American military government brought about the rapid increase in the number of schools.96

95 Nahm, Andrew C. Korea: Tradition and Transformation . (New Jersey: Hollym, 1988), 497
96 Nahm. Korea: Tradition and Transformation , 498
One effect of American influence is apparent in that the school system is completely analogous to the American kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels. After the establishment of a Korean government in 1948, the Ministry of Education officially adopted the principle of (弘益人間) hong ik in gan, which “stressed the development of national spirit,” and the concept of (일민) il-min, meaning “one people.” The continued existence of the doduk textbook itself stems from these two doctrines of thought.

For Korea, the 36-year experience of colonialism had more immediate import than did the superficial structural changes to Korean education which took place during occupation by the United States. The prolonged and harsh occupation left a lingering legacy in Korean that would not quickly disappear along with their former Japanese overlords.

Japan

Precious are my parents that gave me birth,  
So that I might serve His Majesty.  
-Poem by Sakura Azumao,  
frequently quoted by the  
Japanese Thought Control Bureau

Such was the rhetoric used in Imperial Japan - the direction of the loyalty of the citizen/subject to one of central authority. Even after the war, however, it is important to understand that the relationship between state and education changed scarcely at all. When Ienaga Saburo, an accomplished Japanese historian, was commissioned by the government to write New History of Japan, a history textbook for high schools in 1952, he performed his job too well. His was dangerous history. The problem was that he covered subjects such as “the Rape of Nanking, germ warfare experiments on prisoners of war, and the conscription of Korean and Chinese women ‘as comfort girls’” in the narrative. Reflecting a major shift in public perception of Japan’s relationship with nuclear weapons and war victimhood in the mid 1950s, the Ministry of Education began to demand that Ienaga delete all sections on wartime atrocities. He refused, and after long struggle with the Ministry, began his suit against the government in 1964 for infringement of his right to freedom of expression. On March 16, 1993, the Supreme Court finally ruled that “the government had the right to decide educational content.” The right of the government to exert ideological control over the populace superseded Ienaga’s claim that “the ministry’s review procedure violated his constitutional right to freedom of expression and denied students the freedom of education.” Ienaga’s history was counter to the interests of the state.

97 Nahm. Korea: Tradition and Transformation, 498
What Ian Buruma, who wrote a book entitled *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, claims many Japanese nationalists are defending is not a return to the military state of Imperial Japan, but rather the integrity of Japanese traditional culture from contamination from the West. The “culture” in question is the concept of the family state, whose traditional values have been passed down for hundreds of unbroken generations.  

The Imperial period, then, is not a source of shame for nationalists, but a time when Japan was in best form, resisting Western imperialism and trying to make an Asia for Asians (under Japanese rule). The attack on Pearl Harbor was not “treachery” from an Imperial/nationalist point of view, but unavoidable in light of the fact that the United States had cut off Japan’s flow of precious mineral goods and was trying to starve Japan out. Japan was fighting a war of liberation for the good of Asia.

Ienaga was undermining the Ministry of education’s efforts to instill these ideals in the nation’s youth.

*His zeal to make people reflect on the past...has strayed a long way from the proper aims of teaching Japanese history, which are to acknowledge the historical achievements of our ancestors, to raise our awareness of being Japanese, and to foster a rich feeling of love for our people.*

This is the crux of the issue, and its usefulness to a study of the situation of Korea is clear at this point. Ienaga’s interests in writing his *New History of Japan* was at odds with those of the state, so the government asserted and maintained the right to decide towards what end and in the ideological circumstances in which education should take place.

This kind of ideological strains of thought is an only-slightly diluted version of the old-school Imperial party line - the preservation of traditional Japanese culture from being too caught up with the west, while at the same time fostering a sense of national unity. Although possessing a different emphasis from that of Japan during its most Imperial period, the state’s ideological agenda in Korea is preserved via the same control over educational content. Even though there was some degree of emulation of the Western educational tradition, the Meiji government’s stated purpose was the construction of an education system grounded in the Japanese tradition. South Korea in the 1960s was little different from those stated in The *Principles of Education in 1879 Japan* - the Korean government was trying to reconstruct a distinctly Korean education system while promoting the specific state agenda of industrialization and modernization.

*The core of education lies in the clear teaching of benevolence, responsibility, loyalty, fidelity and in mastering knowledge and the arts so that one can serve the people. This is the basic principle given by our ancestors and national literature which is commonly accepted for the instruction of all, high or low...Although the advantages of Western culture were adopted and resulted in spectacular effects for the moment, once it leads to a tendency to neglect benevolence, responsibility, loyalty, and fidelity and becomes merely a competition to introduce Western manners,*

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101 Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 199
102 Ibid., 199-200
there is a fear that in the future no one will know responsibility between the Emperor and his subjects.\(^{103}\)

A similar fear is expressed countless times in the doduk textbook. Even though the Korean education system places itself squarely alongside the West, as the agenda in Korea is primarily one of development and modernization, there is felt a distinct need to preserve an essential Korean center.

The military elite in Japan had taken control of societal reins, and strove to construct a militarized society based on an Emperor leading the nation as naturally as a father does his children. This took place outside of the realm of education as well, as the adults of the nations were not indoctrinated under the Imperial education system. In The Pacific War, Ienaga minces no words about this. “The Meiji political systems gagged and blindfolded the populace.” Political repression and censorship became the norm as the government continued in its program to reform every citizen into an extension of the state.\(^{104}\)

It was the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, however, that “dressed Confucian moral precepts in the garb of modern nationalism.”\(^ {105}\) The family-state model of society was promulgated with the intent of redirecting local loyalties towards the central government, symbolized by the Emperor. Each person would be “bound personally and directly to the Japanese government,” as loyalty to one’s parents, teachers, commander, and especially Emperor all took on the same moral/ethical import. One could no more disobey the desires of a superior officer, for example, than one could a one’s father, or the Emperor himself.\(^ {106}\) The morals curriculum began to take on particular importance in the new education system. More and more the vessel of Imperial ideology, the discipline defined the good subject in no uncertain terms. Fundamental to the smooth working of society, the morals curriculum stressed the “natural morality of family life,” which emphasizes which duty played in familial relationships, friendships, and love. The Emperor was regarded as the “ideal patriarchal model for the people,” and it was to him one pledged undying loyalty, and in his name wars would be fought. The Prime Minister at the time, Yamagata Aritomo, said that "education, just like the military, ought to possess an imperial mandate." In times of national need, all Japanese were taught to offer themselves "courageously" to the state, and "thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne."\(^ {107}\)

\begin{quote}
At least since the Imperial Revolution on Education of 1890, Japanese education had been an exercise in imperial propaganda. The Prime Minister at the time, Yamagata Aritomo, said that “education, just like the military, ought to possess an imperial mandate.” He said that in national crises, all Japanese should be taught to offer themselves “courageously” to
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\(^{106}\) Lummis, C. Douglas. A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword . (Tokyo: Shihaksha, 1982), 73

\(^{107}\) Buruma, Wages of Guilt, 191
the state, and “thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne.”

It was no coincidence that during this period, Imperial Japan began putting into motion its designs on dominating Asia. Indeed, it was out of fear that this “organ” would once again lead to the disease of Japan's rabid nationalism that ethics (doduk) as a discipline of study was abolished in Japan, as well as government control over educational materials, especially textbooks. To characterize the importance of ethics education in Japan during the colonial period, I quote at length from Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*:

Ethical studies were given extreme importance. This is how such national values as self-sacrifice, military discipline, ancestor worship, and the imperial cult were bred. And as was true in most countries in the first half of the century, military heroes were held up as the cardinal models to follow. Kimigayo, a prayer for the everlasting imperial reign, was sung as the national anthem, and the Rising Sun flag hoisted all over Asia. It was the duty of all Japanese to spring to attention at the very mention of the divine emperor. Every Japanese school had a shrine with the emperor's portrait. A speck of dust on the picture and careless hanging were reasons for severe punishment.

Behind the Army, the education system was looked upon as the most important concern of the government. As the Army protected the physical boundaries of the nation, the Ministry of Education defined and preserved the ideological ones. Moreover, the link between military service and the school was crucial to the continued smooth functioning of the Japanese war machine. The education system created pliant subjects, while actual military training turned them into soldiers. The loyalty instilled in the soldiers ran high. Suicide missions and captured Japanese soldiers taking their own lives shocked American sensibilities, as this kind of unlimited dedication was difficult to understand without an idea of the historical context in which such attitudes came to be.

The Japanese were almost blindly obedient. The arbiters of authority were the “petty emperors” who received their orders from their superiors. In this kind of hierarchical structure, decision-making processes were removed from the subordinate, and the societal system was one that necessitated nothing more than the enforcement of a superior’s decisions. It required an adequate system of control. “Actions were judged according to their conformity to external norms, rather than in terms of individual motivation or conscience.” The only responsibilities and obligations to others were defined in terms of the hierarchical relationship to them. The main social expectation became to do as one was told, especially in the military atmosphere of Imperial Japan at war. “As a result of this lack of personal responsibility, the average Japanese was blindly

108 Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 191
109 Ibid., 191
obedient to persons in authority.”¹¹¹ This was the ideal taught in school. In a ritual before
the beginning of instruction each day, students were required to swear this oath of
allegiance:

One, I will be loyal to the Emperor and dutiful to my parents, and I will
become a sincere subject of Japan. Two, I will discipline my mind and train
my body, and I will become a powerful member of strong imperial Japan.
Three, I will follow the teachings, make efforts in my studies, and make our
tombstone shine brightly.”¹¹²

The subjects in which the bulk of formal ideological training took place were
history and morals. Students were specifically instilled with ideology and propaganda to
make them better soldiers, and the elimination of creative or individual thinking was
crucial to this process. According to historian Toshio Iritani,

Fanatical patriotism and an emotional attachment to achieving the objects
of war were encouraged in school texts. Children were told stories of
laudable wartime events by their parents and teachers who would often shed
ears of emotion in the telling. Teaching materials produced by the army
were used to train students mentally and physically.¹¹³

Ienaga Saburo remembers his own experiences as a child growing up under this system:

I was in elementary school during the most liberal years of the prewar
period. Yet through middle school I soaked up jingoistic ideas and never
questioned them. When the Manchurian Incident occurred shortly after I
entered high school, I was incapable of understanding its real nature. I was
shocked to discover classmates who rejected the orthodox views and
ideology I had accepted as gospel truth....The latter part of 1932 was the
turning point in my own intellectual and spiritual growth. To escape the
nares of my “education,” I rejected most of what I had been taught in the
public schools. It took another twenty years to overcome the handicap of
that early indoctrination and be able to grapple with fundamental
questions.¹¹⁴

Imperial policy instilled in youth the doctrine of Japanese supremacy to not only defend
its claims to hegemony, but to instill hatred and loathing towards the people against
whom the country was waging war. Ienaga Saburo cites teaching materials which not
only exhorted children to “guard and maintain the prosperity of the Imperial throne,” but
instilled in a foundation upon which to build a hatred of them as well. In an elementary
school ethics class, children were shown pictures which “described in exciting detail how
our loyal and brave officers and soldiers drive the pig-tailed Chinks to P’yongyang, keep

¹¹² Ibid., 164-165
¹¹³ Ibid., p. 161
¹¹⁴ Ienaga, The Pacific War, 31

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hammering away at them and finally capture the vile enemy’s positions.” An example of a “war report” was placed on a bulletin board described an average day’s activities:


A Japanese schoolchild in the 1930s who was squeamish about dissecting a frog was sharply admonished: “Why are you crying about one lousy frog? When You grow up you’ll have to kill a hundred, two hundred Chinks.”

It was no different when Japan’s power elite began to prepare the Japanese public for war against the United States. Having had more time to evolve, and having been continuously built upon through the first three decade of the century, Japanese ideology, though essentially the same as it was when it began to take form in the 1890s, was much more highly refined by the time *The Way of the Subject* was published in August 1941, five months before the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan.

*The Way of the Subject* was a malleable chunk of ideology, reworkable into diverse situations, and it was the set of defining principles for which the Japanese people were fighting. It was passed out to every member of the military, and was a reference work on the ideology for which they were expected to die. Additionally, it was issued to all schools as a guideline for determining curriculum. It was “a chronicle of the destructive values, exploitative practices, and brutal wars” of the West, an unrelenting polemic proving the West’s inferiority. Early in the war, it offered the quick victories and many successes against the American military as evidence of the weak temperament of Western society; as things turned for the worst for Japan towards the end of the war, it became proof of the brutal and amoral nature of the West, especially after the United States began the practice of mass city bombing.

With the increasing militarization of society into strict social relations constructed to seem as natural as familial ties, coupled with ideologies of racial and cultural superiority, Japanese society was reconstructing itself as no other nation had done before in all of history – as a country ready, capable, and eager to expand not only its economic and industrial base, but its territory and people as well. It was via such strict educational and social controls that Japan created not only faithful and unquestioning citizens, but ones righteous and patriotic enough to perform suicide runs in the Emperor’s name, or take pleasure in gang-raping and then disemboweling, from vagina to chin, Chinese women in Nanjing.

In the broader picture, according to Iritani, “*Gleichschaltung*” is necessary for mobilization of the people behind a national agenda. This belief in an ideology of “similar thought” was essential in order to “overcome the deadlock in the Japanese domestic economy through the use of military force and to secure her *Lebensraum* through the domination of world markets in her occupied territories. At the time, the majority of Japanese people were convinced of the rightness of these objectives.”

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115 Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, 23
116 Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, 173
author’s use of that particular German term is apropos, as this was one area where Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan shared a common ideology and expansionist objective.

There are powerful historical lessons to be learned from the German state as well. However, before beginning an analysis that includes Nazi Germany as a case study, it may be useful to offer the disclaimer that this argument, by comparing Korea’s system with the educational models of two relatively sinister political regimes, does not assert that the Korean state shares the other negative aspects of either Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan. However, in terms of a system which uses the educational system as a direct means of ideological control and maintenance of state power, there is little difference in means. Although the school was a vessel for state ideology, it is vital to remember that Korea’s particular ideology differs a great deal from that of Nazi Germany’s or Imperial Japan’s.  

As much as Germany is often used as a model study of state ideological control, the magnitude of that former Nazi regime’s ideological hold on its populace pales in comparison to that possessed by Imperial Japan. Many of Japan’s economic and educational reforms were informed by Prussian (Hozumi Yatsuka, one of the most influential creators of the “family state ideology” during the 1880s and 1890s, had been educated in Germany) models, but Japan was an apprentice who possessed the ability to surpass its master.

Even the Japanese national anthem, the kimigayo, was deeply influenced by the Prussian military tradition. Although influenced by a Western tradition in form, the anthem was still Japanese in content and meaning. Originally composed in 1880 by Hiromori Hayashi from an old collection of Japanese poems, a German composer working at the Japanese Ministry of Navy added a certain militaristic pomp and circumstance that would characterize much of Japanese war songs. Sung as marching troops pass in review, with the Japanese national flag raised high, while huge crowds yell “Banzai!” (10,000 years) – this was typical fascist pomp and circumstance aimed at creating a feeling of unity and fervent pride in the nation. Superficially, this is exactly the sort of grandiose, nationalistic ritual practiced by the Germans - troops passing in review, raising their arms in the Nazi salute, yelling “Sieg, Heil! Heil, Hitler!” – but the different strains of ideology are clear. While the new Third Reich was alleged to have a life-span of 5,000 years, Nazi soldiers pledged their allegiance to Hitler, the man. In fact, it is unclear what the Third Reich would have been without Hitler at the reins. This sort of thinking is most likely what led to two assassination attempts on Hitler’s life – the Third Reich being his vision, without him, it would likely crumble. However, the shout “Banzai,” means “Ten Thousand Years!” of long life to the Empire, via allegiance to the Emperor. Swearing allegiance to the empire meant allegiance to the state. Emperors were but the representation of the state. The man would change, but the state would endure.

In Germany, like Japan, there was a reconsolidation of authority from the Führer on down, a redistribution of loyalties towards the state, via Hitler. However, under the Meiji Constitution, since the Emperor was reconstructed as both the secular and religious symbol of authority, at the same time a divine figure descended from the founder the

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118 With the exception of the fact that I do argue that early Meiji Japan and Korea after the 1960s shared common self-stated goals of industrialization and modernization.  
119 Lummis, *New Look at the Chrysanthemum*, 72  
120 Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 167-168
Japanese people, Emperor Jimmu, and the leader of the state, he was the “Sovereign Leader,” and anyone and everyone in the power structure under him possessed the mandate of heaven. The other major difference the extent to which each was a proactive leader; in the case of the Emperor, he was more of a state justification of authority rather than an actual architect of state policy.

Hitler’s influence as the controlling political figure in the Nazi state was great, and Germany’s systems of indoctrination and the extent of the German state’s ideological control were considerable, but they were not boundless. Nationalist youth organizations wielded control over the undeveloped mind throughout childhood. However, this control was never absolute, nor permanently established. Indeed, just as the ideological control of Hitler’s regime even began to gain momentum, the Nazi state was already deeply engaged in war, without having had the considerable time with which to fundamentally reconstruct the social relations in society, as Japan had. Helmut Kohl made reference to the “blessing of being born late.”

The crucial difference between Japan and Germany was that the Hitler Youth and other similar bodies existed outside of the influence of the school, which remained separate and distinct from Hitler’s totalitarian control. The 1936 Law on the Hitler Youth contained the proviso that Hitler’s control did not extend “without prejudice to the parental home and the schools.” Of course, the school system did not stand inviolate against Hitler’s powerful influence, but it not recreated into the complete arm of state control that was the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Some significant changes, however, took place during Hitler’s attempt to “reorganize” the school system according to its designs:

Corporal punishment was reintroduced; parent and pupil participation was abolished; the introduction of the ‘Führer’ principle bolstered the power of head teachers at the expense of the rest; and much time was wasted with a politicized morning assembly and in observing the regime’s self-celebratory calendar. Inevitably, some teachers patrolled the school corridors in Party uniform, harassing anyone who was not quick enough with their ‘Heil Hitler,’ and generally taking it upon themselves to disseminate the ‘spirit of National Socialism’ in the school concerned.

Here, the similarity with the Japanese system of strict ideological and physical control is overwhelming, and this despite the fact that the countries were not actively emulating one another; they simply shared similar state interests and goals, and the practice and ideologies developed accordingly. As Hitler consolidated his power against that of Reich Minister for Education and Science Bernard Rust’s, who “succeeded in curtailing the influence of the Hitler Youth within schools,” structurally, the school increasingly resembled the Japanese model. Head teachers and Hitler Youth leaders used corporal punishment and intimidation to enforce ideological correctness, rituals designed

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121 Buruma, Wages of Guilt, 2
123 Ibid., 210
to increase nationalistic pride and loyalty to the state became the norm, and the concept of *Führer* (leader) began to take on new meaning outside of the persona of Hitler.

Be that as it may, the German state had neither the time nor power to consolidate itself completely over the minds of its youth. Although the Germans have often been used in historical examples to demonstrate the excesses of state ideological power over institutions, in fact, the German state never came close to Japan’s ability to instill state ideology so unequivocally and completely into the minds of the people. Working in tandem with other state organs, the Japanese Ministry of Education was able to increase its efficacy to the fullest extent possible. Even though “racism replaced the Weimar Republic’s imperfect experiment in political pluralism,” Hitler simply had neither sufficient time, nor the support, to completely establish an “ideology of the elect nation”\(^{124}\) in such a complete way as did the Japanese.

Japan’s military elite, from the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, however, created a program of indoctrination and control which sharpened and tightened its hold over the minds of generations of people, and the authority of the Ministry of Education was complete. In contrast, the German equivalent was inconsistent in its ideologies and curriculum, and constantly competed for Hitler’s favor against other political suitors. The Japanese, over time, completely restructured the relationship between the subject and the state, and had complete institutional control of this process. Unlike Japan, Nazi Germany had neither the time nor such effective mechanisms with which to carry out its agenda.

As stated earlier, the Japanese model of the state linked the Emperor and subject together in a direct, natural link, as natural as the bond between mother and daughter, father and son. More than just this, this particular father figure had even more significance as not only the religious head of state, but as a direct descendant of the progenitor of the Japanese people itself. The Emperor being another descendant in the “unbroken line” stemming from the first, Emperor Jimmu, the Emperor was constructed as the corporeal embodiment of Japan and the Japanese people.\(^{125}\)

This “family state” model of society is crucial to understand in order to grasp the meaning and scope of Imperial ideology’s claim of right to rule over all of Asia. The analogy used to describe the Emperor as the holy father for the people extended far beyond the realm of Japan. This ideology was a central foundation for the Japanese people’s sense of entitlement and even duty to rule over the rest of Asia, and was also a myth central to the Japanese belief in their innate superiority, by virtue of both their divine origin and racial purity.

Although the belief in the superiority of the Japanese people was as insidious and dangerous as Nazi Germany’s, the foundations for this ideology was also deeply based in the myth of a common origin and common destiny. Imperial conceptions of the “new order” of the world are vividly outlines in a 6-volume document bearing a completion date of July 1, 1943 called *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus*. 3,127 pages long, the document neatly summarizes the goal of Imperial policy and Japan’s relationship with Asia. Most valuable to historians is the document’s conveyance of a clear conception of the origins and meaning of Japanese racist ideology.

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\(^{125}\) Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 228
John Dower’s treatment of the document in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* is probably the best available in the English language, and is one of the most valuable contributions to the present analysis. Dower aptly identifies the “assumptions of permanent hierarchy and inequality among peoples and nations that lay at the heart of what the Japanese really meant by slogans such as ‘Pan-Asianism’ and ‘co-prosperity.’” In other words, Japan would fight on behalf of its Asian compatriots against the ravenous, capitalist West, in the hopes of making a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” but the race at the top of a hierarchical relationship between the Asian races would be the Japanese, by virtue of their divine origin and destiny as a chosen people. Dower identifies a clear relationship between Nazi ideology and Japanese racial thought, but he does not conclude that one influenced the other. In order to best convey the complexity of Dower’s analysis, I quote him at length:

The overlap between borrowed ideas and indigenous attitudes in Japanese racism can be illustrated by two popular phrases in the ministry report: “blood and soil” and “proper place,” the first a transparently alien expression and the second, on the surface, almost quintessentially “Oriental.” The blood-and-soil rhetoric reflected indebtedness to Nazi sloganeering (the words, in fact, were almost always placed in quotation marks); and the impression of a general affinity with Nazi thought is reinforced by other aspects of the report, such as demands for “living space,” affirmations of a “family-centered” morality transcending bourgeois law, and an emphasis on “organic” relationships, especially in the form of a racially bonded organic community or “Volk.” [The Japanese concept of minzoku is similar.- MH] The fact that the government’s researchers were obviously familiar with Nazi doctrine and sympathetic to it, however, does not necessarily mean that they were decisively influenced by it. They did not, for instance, carry their racial prejudices to formal policies of genocide as their Nazi allies did. Moreover, for concepts such as the family system or the organic community, they were not really beholden to the Nazis at all. Here it is more accurate to speak of conceptual affinities rather than influences.126

Like Germany, Japan’s educational system was strict, harsh, and conformist. The Korean school of today resemble those of the Imperial Japan model in terms of both ideology and structure; as most of Korean education during the occupation was structured after the Japanese model, the influences of the Japanese are undeniable.

As much as there was a drive on the part of the people and government to rid themselves of the influence and reminders of Japanese colonial rule, it is interesting to note that the physical organization and structure of the Korean school system itself remains to the present-day almost unchanged since occupation. This was a source of puzzlement for me as I taught in Korean schools patterned after Japanese ones, even as anti-Japanese sentiment still runs high in the country. A most surreal experience was listening to my students half-jokingly (half-not) proclaim that they hoped Japan would

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126 Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 265-266
sink into the sea, even as they stood in the organizational structure that the Japanese had built. However, when considering Japanese policy for Koreans placed in schools under the Japanese, the apparent contradiction disappears. With the goal of erasing Korean culture and identity from society, the Japanese used not only the Althusserian “repressive state apparatus” of military and police force, but recognized the supreme importance of school as an “ideological educational apparatus” to reinforce the legitimacy of its rule:

_The colonial government issued an ordinance in August 1911, which stated that the purpose of education in Korea was to produce “loyal and obedient” and useful subjects of the Japanese emperor. It adopted a system of four-year primary education, a four-year secondary school program for boys and a three-year secondary curriculum for girls...The ordinance made the study of the Japanese language compulsory at all approved schools and banned instruction in Korean history and geography._

Before 1945, Japan's project to erase the culture of Korea would escalate from the discouragement of teaching the Korean language to an outright ban on speaking it in all public schools. Recitation of the imperial Japanese “Pledge of the Imperial Subjects” was mandatory at all “political, religious, educational, or social” gatherings. The picture of the Japanese emperor hung at the front of each classroom, and students the ritual of bowing in the direction of Tokyo was required during school functions. The similarity of the “Pledge of the Imperial Subjects” to the ideology in _The Way of the Subject_ is clear. It was an ideology to create citizens loyal to the state, as embodied in the Emperor. Koreans’ peculiar status as Imperial subjects (albeit second-class ones) created a situation in which Japanese ideology was repackaged and adapted for consumption in Korea, designed to eliminate the Korean identity and replace it with a new one. It easy to see why such memories loomed large in the minds of a formerly subjugated people immediately after liberation, and remain burned into the psyche of the Korean national consciousness to this day.

The Korean government after liberation was indeed eager to dismantle the state apparatuses that were the legacy of the Japanese, but not disposed to indiscriminately dismantle all vestiges of colonial influence – specifically the structures, whether physical or psychological, were still of some utility to the new nation. For example, some historical interpretations recognize that despite the odiousness of Japanese invasion and occupation, the colonial government established some structures which were of benefit to Korea's development. Although the forced industrialization and urbanization of Korea were initiated “to service the empire,” on an objective level, the rate of development was abnormally rapid. Even though most of industry's physical structure was destroyed through the country's civil war, some important structures, including the railway system and the textile industry “remained as a framework for reconstruction in the 1950s and for rapid export-led growth in the 1960s.” In a similar way, there were many elements in the education system that remained as a useful “framework for reconstruction” that were still of utility to even a stable, independent Korea.

127 Dower, _War Without Mercy_, 250
128 Ibid., 255-256
129 Eckert and Yi, _Korea, Old and New_, 390-391
The ideological educational apparatus used by the Japanese was as much in place in the Korean psyche as were the vestigial physical structures still on the peninsula, education being a necessary tool for reinforcing ideological hegemony over the minds of its populace. Partially as a result of the colonial experience, and as a national identity forged in the fires of resistance – both an external and internal struggle began to take shape in the collective mind of the Korean people. As mentioned above, the nationalistic doctrines of hong ik in gan and il-min became the defining aspects of Korean nationality. It had always been one of the main organs of the Japanese societal body.

In the Korean classroom, the physical vestiges of culture under Japanese occupation remain. In the center of every classroom is a picture of the Korean flag, to which all students salute with hand over heart, reciting a oath of loyalty to the Korean republic much like the oath of allegiance to a picture of the Emperor Korean students were made to recite during occupation. Physically, the students are homogenized to the greatest extent possible, in the manner that Japanese students were; uniforms and close-cropped hair for boys, short bobs at the ears for girls were and still are the norm. Uniformity is strictly enforced in the middle school. Typical infractions for which students receive severe scolding or corporal punishment range from the wearing of brightly-colored shoelaces to having hair longer than regulation. Corporal punishment for failure to complete homework or getting low test scores is common, as is corporal punishment for transgressions of almost any kind. Another legacy of the traditional Japanese school system is the teachers' room. Teachers have their desks and materials in one central room, and take what they need with them to the classroom scheduled for that hour. Students remain in a particular classroom all day, with a student “class leader” responsible for them. Because of the strict nature of most of the teachers, students generally fear treading into the teachers' room. At best, it is a place where students are forced to bow and humble themselves to multiple teachers at a time; at worst, it is a place of punishment and humiliation (not to mention the haunt of the vice-principal, whom the teachers also often fear). Recent educational reform is aimed at changing the environment of the school to a more student-oriented, comfortable one, but, as I argue, both the physical and mental structures of the Korean system are difficult to break down, and there is little motivation to do so, as these structures serve their purposes well.

Despite the fact that many parents nowadays find corporal punishment of their own children loathsome, tradition dies hard. In the high school of another foreign teacher working in the southern part of the peninsula, a student died as a direct result of a teacher's extended physical punishment; the school quietly encouraged the early retirement of the teacher and the incident was forgotten. This is an extreme example, of course, but one begins able to comprehend the power of the teacher in Korean society. I once witnessed a teacher slap a student in front of his mother – at which point the mother hastily apologized for the student's behavior. This too, although not an everyday occurrence, does make clear the high status and social power that the teacher, along with the school system in general, holds in society.

Middle school is a place where social relationships are clearly and unmistakably defined, and deviation from the norm is harshly punished. It is like a microcosm of society, where everyone fits into a hierarchical structure, surrounded by a strict set of rules that defines one's place in it. Even within the student body, hierarchical social rules are more strictly enforced, and there is no room for those who will not abide by them. It
is significant that these rules are also outlined in the first-year *doduk* textbook. Taken as a whole, middle school is where one begins to “know one's place,” as a citizen and as a person. *Doduk* makes no pretense of subtlety in this respect. Indeed, frankness in dealing with the meaning of nationality is the very nature of the discipline itself.

This analysis will examine in detail the tenets of Korean ideology as expressed in a present-day *doduk* textbook. However, there are certain limits to the claims that can be made based solely on the information gleaned from a reading in text itself. There are limits to ideology, and there are problems in relying on the source of state doctrine alone, given the fact that even with the most efficient means of social control, reality tends to not completely reflect the ideal. So to look to the *doduk* textbook as something representative of the beliefs and desires of everyday people would be to err. However, it is important as a representation of the ideal which the state holds for itself, as well as in terms of the fact that the set of ideals in such texts do hold influence over the people by virtue of the fact that exposure happens on a mass scale; in many ways, the ideals set forth in the book do reflect reality, but only because it reconstructs it anew for every reader, for every student. This is the power of education, especially in a state in which the bounds to its power extend so far and wide. Any attempt to understand the relationship between state power and ideology must realize the extent to which the state completely controls education, and to that extent (and that extent alone), controls the minds of its people. *Doduk* as a definition of who and what is Korean, as a way of defining the interests of the state, and as an epistemology in itself is one that finds quarter among most people, for better or for worse.

According to Douglas C. Lummis, who reinterpreted Ruth Benedict’s book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Benedict’s famous analysis of Japanese society suffers from a fundamental flaw, as she doesn’t see that “To a very large degree, what [she] extracted out of Japanese society was what the Meiji planners and ideologues put into it...It was an orderly and consistent pattern of values because it had been carefully made that way by its fabricators.” Her distinctions between the Japanese “shame culture” and Western “guilt culture” are now infamous, and endlessly assailed. The traditional culture that both she and many Japanese people saw, is arguably no more than a modern reconstruction, a purposeful redefinition and refocusing of previous aspects of Japanese culture that were of use to the new regime.\(^{130}\)

In this analysis, it is vital to remember the critical difference between the ideology of Korea and the one of its former oppressor, Japan. In Korea, although ethical studies is used as a state tool in the same way it was used in Germany and Japan, Korean nationalism takes place in a spirit of reconstruction and reassertion of national pride, and will not likely result in wars of expansion, plans for world domination, or justification for acts of genocide. The defining characteristic of Korean nationalism is defined in its birthing moments, by the ways in which Korean identity itself existed as a form of resistance and a strategy for survival. In the present day, the state’s desire to define Korean identity concretely, by laying out a Korean *way to be*, is not necessarily reactionary, nor does it have to legitimize a Korean cultural identity by delegitimizing others.

\(^{130}\) Lummis, *New Look at the Chrysanthemum*, 75
The expansionist drive of Japan or the cruel and rapacious nature of its soldiers cannot not be ascribed to simply an inherent flaw in Japanese culture, but as the result of the power of nationalist ideology and state control. Nationalist ideologies were eagerly and uncritically consumed, then expressed in thought and action by great number of people in Japan; in this way, reality did indeed reflect the ideals promulgated by the state. But an informed understanding of the processes in which this “reality” is formed is the key point to understand; the distinction between inherent aspects of culture and constructions of state ideology is one that cannot be forgotten. When reading a text such as Doduk, it is vital to remember that concepts such as “tradition” or “Korean culture”, as they are presented in the texts, are inherently problematic. The way in which cultural identity is reconstructed is the fascinating process I will attempt to cogently analyze and convey; these are the motivations for my critical dissection of Korean ideology. That this analysis might offer insight into the ways in which “reality” is constructed in other countries and contexts is the hope of the present writer.

**Korea and the World**

It is at this point that the fourth and final section of the textbook (“Country and People”) begins its attempt to define the Korean people as an entity itself. Before undertaking this final section, I preface my coming analysis by asserting that the Korean people are unabashedly ethnocentric, and this is reflected/reinforced by the doctrines found especially in the last part of the textbook. However, I use the word “ethnocentric” with a slightly different shade of meaning from the one usually found in American multicultural discourse.

Korea is engaged in an on-going project to define itself as a nation, a culture, and a people. Although the West once called Korea “the hermit kingdom,” South Korea now finds itself dubbed one of the “tiger countries” of Asia, and steadily vies for power and prestige as a major player in the world economy. A country having undergone rapid industrialization and development, the necessity of Korea's renegotiation of its national ideology in order to complement a substantial structural change in society is obvious. However, the case of Korea is not so easily reduced to the exigencies of politico-economic change. It is complex in an unexpected way.

Starting with the heavy cultural influence of China, periodically invaded from every direction for most of its history, subjugated as a colony of Japan from 1905 until liberation 40 years later, and being subjected to Japan and the West's influence via media and money, Korea has been forced to be preoccupied with the question of its cultural identity as it copes with the influences of the outside, as well as the changes it finds itself undergoing as a rapidly developing international country. What is at stake is the nation's cultural identity in a way that is not simply a response to socio-economic factors.

I define Korean ethnocentrism as reactionary. When I use this term “reactionary,” I do not mean to characterize the Korean national identity as desperate, knee-jerk parries to each attacker's hurried thrust. This would falsely characterize the Koreans as hopelessly besieged defenders, helpless to shape their own discourse with the outside - thrust, parry, thrust, parry. When I use the metaphor of force and counterforce, I do so in
a way that is more suggestive of Korea's ongoing renegotiation with the outside - an analogy that comes to mind is that of a lone cell floating in a current of rapid flux and change. Korean ethnocentrism, like the force that maintains the life and shape of a cell, is that internal pressure which keeps the walls from collapsing in on themselves, despite the raging swirls and eddies outside. Even as a cell is fluid, with no definite shape, it is no less a definable body, a real, solid mass. Even as these cell walls shield, and by their very existence, define the cell from the outside, it is permeable, breathing through a process of osmosis. It allows exchange with the outside and responds to a slowly-changing environment or can accommodate a rough-and-tumble world in flux.

With this in mind, let's examine the question the textbook asks the reader: “What is a people?” The word used in Korean for “people” is minjok, literally meaning “people type/brethren.” It has one meaning in Korean, but translated into English, minjok can mean people, ethnicity, or race. The concept of the Korean people is very deeply rooted in the idea of common origin, of sharing a common blood. Indeed, the quote that “Blood is thicker than water” is well-placed in the beginning of this section of the textbook. The concept of “us” is defined not only in terms of blood, but in time, as pointed out in the oft-cited fact that Korea has endured for 5,000 years of history:

A people share the same lineage, utilize a common language, and as they live through the same history and culture, form a group based on the concept of “us,” made from a shared sense of unity.

A people is nothing more than “a big family,” and in the same way, even if a member finds oneself far away, one cannot simply cease to be a part of it. It is in this way of thinking that Korean-Americans find themselves in when they visit Korea. No matter what nationality one holds, one is always Korean; if one cannot speak the language or function as a member of Korean society, then something is wrong. The standard is always consistent, always Korean; a certain Korean-American is never an American who has gotten pretty good at speaking some of the “old tongue.” He or she is a Korean who speaks the mother tongue badly. This is the kind of thinking that goes on in Korea, and is reflected in the text; it hardly needs to be reinforced – once a Korean, always a Korean.

Indeed, the concept of “us” is reflected in everyday speech in Korea. More than hinting at the “group consciousness” of the Korean people, “we” is the word of choice when describing even those things that Westerners would consider “mine.” In the common language, no one ever says “my school.” People say “our school,” “our house,” and “our country.” As bizarre as it may seem to Westerners, the linguistic usage of “our wife” or “our husband” is standard in everyday speech. When Koreans refer to their country in English in such ways, the ring is uncomfortably nationalistic: “In our country...” It is not a simple linguistic accident, nor do I think this feeling is imagined; the words “our country” are said, even in Korean, with a real sense of pride in the nation and the culture.

According to the textbook, the accomplishments of the Korean people are many. Not only is the Korean written alphabet always shown off as an example of Korean intellectual accomplishment (the Korean alphabet has been cited by many linguists as the

132 Doduk, p. 205
133 Ibid., 206
most efficient, well-designed in the world), the metal printing press was, according to the
text, invented in Korea, in 1234, over 200 years before Gutenburg was even learning to
write. The Koreans invented the rain gauge also 200 years before the West, as well as
using armored ships with which to soundly thrash the invading Japanese well before the
West. Indeed, the book tells the student that “Our people inherit a proud culture.”  

The text also sets up Korean culture as one particularly suited to development and
advancement. From ancient times, “Our people’s cultural excellence is the peculiar
characteristic that allows us, by combining old culture with new, outside influences, to
make a completely original culture, expressed in a Korean way.”  

This is not just a
reflection of Korean culture's ability to absorb new types of ceramic pottery into the
culture, which is the context in which the previous quote appeared, but the doduk
textbook stresses the importance of this trait to the cultural survival of the Korean people:
“If we lose our Korean traditional culture, not only would our living existence become
impossible, but it would even be difficult to find the meaning of life.”  

The text
characterizes assimilation is as a most horrid fate for the Korean people, and the student
is told that he or she must actively promote Korean culture, and preserve it as not only a
connection to the past, but as a bridge to the future.  

While extolling the virtues of Korean culture in comparison to others (the word
“excellence” in Korean can also connote “superiority”), the book makes clear that it is
not practicing an “ultranationalism” in the sense that Etienne Balibar would define. Korea
definitely draws on the “‘ideology of the elect nation,’” indeed, in Korea, this “ideal
entity” is the “imaginary core of the nation,” involving a sense of purity; this “entity”
comes “long before the nation and goes far beyond it in space and time.”  

This the core
around which doduk clearly constructs its nationalism. However, even as he claims that
“...the building of the nation-state...is closely associated with class domination,” the
analysis must go deeper than an economically reductionist one would allow. Letting the
text fend for itself, it states:

*However, the inheritance of a people's cultural traditions does not mean an
intolerant ultranationalism or exclusionism. In the same way that we think
of our own culture as precious, so must we preserve an attitude that
recognizes the preciousness of other cultures as well.*

So Korean ethnocentrism (in theory) does not come at the cost of a diminished respect for
other cultures; on the contrary, it comes as the result of the desire of the Korean people to
preserve what is deems as its most precious defining elements. There is nothing wrong
with the influence of outside culture; the only important thing not to forget is the
importance and value of Korean culture itself.

When talking about taking in outside influences, the text reminds the reader that
as long as this is done in a “creative, generative spirit,” in which the good aspects of other
cultures are added in useful ways to one's own, there is no problem with cultural

134 Doduk, 217
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 220
137 Ibid., 221
138 Ibid., 203
139 Ibid., 22
synceritism. However, if this is done at the expense of Korean culture, in a way that degrades it and makes it seem inferior, then, the textbook asserts, it becomes a problematic issue:

However, recently, there have been some people who degrade our traditional culture as inferior, or even assert that we have no traditional culture at all. With that, there are some youth who seem forgetful of the preciousness of our culture, and there is the influence of the West which they blindly imitate and follow. While many youth know nothing of our native pan so-ri [a traditional form of Korean singing/performance] or traditional folk songs, they act as if the songs sung by foreign singers, whose meanings they do not understand, are the best in the world, and follow blindly.\footnote{\textit{Doduk}, 223}

But the problem is that it centers and privileges Korean this as the essential core, with everything else existing to enhance the Korean center. This is still the way present-day Korean “multiculturalism” operates. It isn't a "melting pot" but a [insert new food metaphor] that makes other cultures secondary, and by their very nature, inferior. It's pretty much another way of articulating dongdo, seogi. I am reminded of the times I sat in the movie theater and watched the preview for a upcoming Korean movie. Sometimes with abysmally low production values and “homegrown” actors, some (not all) Korean movies do indeed seem laughable when compared to the movie everyone came to see, or the other previews of the (usually American) movies people often want to see, usually American, big-budget fare. The lines blur in many places, as distinctly American musical styles are Koreanized and become massively popular, but somehow, to the American ear, have gained something that separates it from the genre from which it came, while to a traditional Korean ear, the same music sounds distinctly and gratingly foreign. It is clearly a matter of who is doing the defining, and for what purpose. Many of my middle school students argued that a popular music group, \textit{Seo Taiji and the Boys} was distinctly, unmistakably Korean, while I listened to the musical styles clearly sampled and lifted wholesale from American musical groups. However, both sides were partially right; even as the style was ostensibly “gangster rap,” the message urged runaway kids to “Come Back Home” to their parents and take advantage of the bright future we all possess by virtue of youth, a likely bizarre theme to the American rap group whose style was being copied – \textit{Cypress Hill}. The 75 year-old grandfather of one of these students would likely hear the same music and just think, “bizarre.”

Cultural syncretism takes place in many loci in Korean society; it would be difficult to define the proper way to engage foreign influences in every instance, but \textit{doduk} simply endeavors to define the spirit in which the encounter takes place. If Koreans go forward intent on forgetting their collective past, then Korea will lose its meaning as Korea, as a national culture distinct from any found in the West.

Korea holds the same capitalist precepts as most of the developed countries in the world, but fervently holds onto its belief that there is something more to existence than the accumulation of capital alone. Through state organs such as the Ministry of Education, the ideological hold on the populace via projects like \textit{doduk} remains
unbreakable. Standing in a stadium full of elementary and middle school students chanting “Tokdo nun oo-ri ddang!” (“The Dokdo Islands are our land!” – a nationalistic song created out of an ongoing territory dispute with Japan), it occurred to me to be disturbed by the shameless jingoistic display going on around me. However, that thought found no quarter in my mind and quickly turned into the realization that as narrow and simplistic as the Korean worldview may often be, the essence of Korean nationalism and national pride is not rooted in ideologies of inherent superiority or the necessary degradation of other cultures in order to elevate one’s own. It is very much rooted in a need to assert itself in the Hegelian sense of gaining “recognition” – for different reasons, gaining recognition in the eyes of North Korea, its economic and ideological competitor, in the eyes of Japan, its former oppressor, and in the eyes of the world, as a powerful nation commanding international respect in the global market, in the sense of being a truly “global” project come to fruition.

Forged in the fire of subjugation, occupation, and war, Korean nationalism is like a rugged survivor, made strong by the forces which would have destroyed it. This is the defining characteristic of Korean nationalism that sets it apart from the “dangerous” nationalisms that have wreaked havoc on our planet in the last century – the fascisms, racisms, and ideological fundamentalisms that have come and gone, some of which we can still find today. What is different about the Korean strain of national pride is that it is benign and regenerative for the Korean people in much the same way that a Korean puts on a hanbok (traditional Korean attire). It is a reminder of not only what you were, but what you no longer are. The hanbok celebrates a traditional Korean aesthetic, even as it sometimes seems dissonant with present, modern reality. But significantly, for the Korean people, the wearing of the hanbok has also been an act of resistance. No longer is it kept literally under wraps, nor worn in secrecy; now the infamously loud colors of the hanbok, simple and bright, stand out as a glaring assertion of pride in the Korean culture and nation.

Still, these official ideologies did not find purchase merely because the government printed textbooks. And also, this is not to say that students took their lessons and textbooks at face value. Doduk, as a subject, is a subject that is pretty roundly despised and draws much scorn in the memories of contemporary Koreans especially as other recent discourses based his older, more conservative ideology into some degree of sharp relief against more recent, liberal worldviews. Suddenly after recent discourses such as found in the visit of biracial Korean American sports star Hines Ward, limits of pure race/culture ideologies became quite obvious, as did the rustic nature of “frog in the well” worldviews.
Chapter 4: Parsing the Official View: Public Intellectual and Pop Culture Intermediaries

“The present is bound to the singular imprint of the past.”

“The only good Indian is a dead Indian!” – popular American saying

I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of ten are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely about the case of the tenth.” – Theodore Roosevelt

No cultural product exists apart from the forces of history and social structure, nor the ideologies which tend to perpetuate and sustain themselves. Works of art have always stood as the cultural signposts of their times, and this is just as true, perhaps even more so, for products of popular culture. For example, the first widely-released film *The Birth of a Nation; Or the Klansman* (1915) both reflected and refocused white Americans’ deep racial animosity towards blacks, in the same way *Godzilla* stood as a living, fire-breathing symbol of a Japan living in nuclear terror after the 1954 Lucky Dragon incident. The fictional narratives we create – the heroes we choose to represent us, or the monsters we perceive as a threat – reflect deeper, underlying elements in our culture which, when unpacked, tell much about our history, ideology, and the way in which we conceptualize our identity as a nation.

Lee O-ryeong Starts with the Children

A telling example of the way “us” is constructed during this period is encapsulated in the writings of Lee Oh Ryung, prominent Korean literary critic, prolific writer, planner of the 1988 Seoul Olympics opening ceremonies, and oft-heard from social commentator during the period that is the subject of the present discussion. In a chapter of a children’s book he wrote entitled *Mommy, I'm Korean, Aren't I?*, he ambitiously attempts to describe not only the social and biological factors explaining Asians’ and Koreans’ inevitable rise to prominence, he presumes to offer the socio-biological reasons behind the different fates of the races themselves. An academic reader finds his narrative a historical mess, and even the most casual reader would likely easily identify fundamental flaws in his logic and line of argument. From the point of view of a historian, the most problematic aspects of Lee’s essay revolves around his deep-seated notions of essentialism and a commitment to a teleology of progress and development that makes the American ideology of Manifest Destiny seem mild in comparison. Not only this, Lee invents and constructs Africa in a specific, derogatory way, which is

141 Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 41
grossly ethnocentric on the one hand, while apologetic for this very same tendency on the other. As he attempts to shroud his message under an affected veneer of scientific detachment, with assumptions largely based on discredited pseudo-scientific theories about race, a young or impressionable reader would be unable to see anything dangerous about the picture Lee constructs.

Far from being a progressive children’s text meant for enhancing Korean children’s understanding of other races and cultures, in keeping with the country’s generally forward-thinking policy of segyehwa (“internationalization”), Lee’s “history” represents some of the most harmful strains of Korean ethnocentrism in Korean society. Instead of a work that might help to foster more positive ways of thinking about other races and cultures, the inevitable and unfortunate effect of Lee’s text is that it will actually tend to deepen and solidify prevalent negative Korean notions of race and nationalism.

From the beginning of the chapter describing world history and the origins of the so-called races, Lee relies upon the standard outdated, tripartite, anthropological construction of race that outlines a problematic system of relationships between the three races, placing "yellow" between the diametrically opposed opposites of "black" and "white." His agenda is clear from the start, as he begins by emphasizing Ghengis Khan’s symbolic role to Asians. Referring to the martial opposition between eastern and western civilizations, Lee poses the following question regarding Ghengis Khan’s legacy to the child reader: "Doesn't this make you proud?"

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Figure 6 - Teaching the 3 Racial Groups and Their Hierarchical Relations

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142 Yi, O-ryong. 엄마, 나 한국인 맞아? (이어링석학교수의 생각에 날개를 달자 3) [Mommy, I'm Korean, Right?]. Vol. 3, Seoul: Woongjin, 1997, 139
Lee goes on to assert that it is natural for every race to be ethnocentric, thinking of themselves as "the best." Having said this, and with this line of thinking clearly implied to the reader, Lee tells us what he believes to be "a funny story," one which many of the children reading his book would have likely heard before. He is merely repeating an oft-told tale of the creation of humankind, one which finds echoes in tales that seem to have emanated from the cultural direction of China. According to the tale, in the beginning, God set out to create human beings, but made a mistake in his first attempt. After molding the first man-cookie into the proper shape, He put him in the oven, but left the man inside for too long, burning him a dark, undesirable color; this He did not discard – it became the “black” man. The second time around, God overcompensated, and the result came out underdone – pale and undesirable. This became the “white” man. Of course, from the previous two mistakes, God made good on His third and final attempt – the man who came out just right was baked a perfectly crisp, desirable yellow.

His narrative is a historiographical mess. Far from being the progressive children’s text meant for enhancing Korean children’s understanding of other races and cultures that is in keeping with the country’s foward-thinking policy of segyehwa ("internationalization"), Lee’s “history” stands as one of the worst examples of Korean ethnocentric, hangukinron thinking ever published. Far from being a work which might possibly foster more positive ways of thinking about other races and cultures, Lee’s text will actually work to deepen and harden Korean people’s pre-existing notions about Africa and dark-skinned peoples, while bolstering growing notions of racial and cultural superiority as defined by a nation state increasingly concerned with the definition of its identity. But even these examples seem almost innocuous compared to other hangukinron writers, who assert their arguments under the auspices of academic, learned authority.

**Song Byeong-nak’s Racial Take on the Economy**

Even more harmful reductionist notions of race and culture are dangerously obvious in the writings of Song Byung Nak, a respected professor of economics at Seoul National University, who wrote a book in Korean entitled *The Economy and the Mythology of the Koreans*. In the chapter entitled “The Korean People are Racially Superior” (glaringly absent in the English translated version) Song begins a long argument about the differences between the racial stock of the Koreans and Japanese, and how it led to the perceived differentials in height in Japan. The argument later wends into other reductionist explanations for the allegedly inherent cultural differences between the two nations, biological and otherwise. What is important to note is the way Song grounds the essay in unapologetic, racially essentialist logic. According to Song, even as the Japanese are mainly descended from the “southern Asian race,” the descendants of the “northern Asian race” came to inhabit the Korean peninsula. He argues that “although


144 Yi, O-ryong. *Mommy, I'm Korean, Right?*, 138-139
there are small, dwarfish people in Korea, these people can be seen as descendants of the ‘southern Asian race.’”

His text answers the existential question of "Who are we?" in a rapidly-industrialized Korea. In his text, Song explicitly states that Korea’s cultural and worldly success is directly correlated to the high degree of Korea’s racial and cultural purity. He even goes so far as to say that Korea will inevitably surpass Japan economically because of Korea’s superior racial pedigree. Indeed, according to Song, the Japanese downplay the heterogeneity of their origins, as they have glossed over the racial/ethnic admixture that does not jive with an image of a pure "Yamato race." Song plays on this sensitive spot, a weak point in Japanese racial dogma:

*Out of all the countries with a population of over 60,000,000, Korea is the nation with the most homogeneous race in the world. Although Japan too calls itself a [racially] homogeneous nation, it is actually a race with blood that is a mixture of the native islanders and Ainu, as well as northern and southern Asian races.*

Song here is simply touting Koreans as more pure – and hence, racially fit – than the Japanese. This is the kind of arrogant optimism that characterizes much Korean writing that is now so often a rosy projection for the future of the Korean nation and people, especially as it has to do with the subject of race, ethnicity, and culture during this period. Although this kind of writing may be on the more extreme end of typical, it would not be a stretch to characterize it as emblematic of a certain kind of racialist thinking common during this period.

This major rhetorical style and mode in *hangukinron* is something I call “reified representation,” in which the attributes of physical objects or other specific things are used to characterize large, abstract concepts such as entire cultures or ways of thinking, usually assigned to national or ethnic groups, such as found in Song and others’ favorite tropes in popular *hangukinron* writings.

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146 Ibid., 65
One prominent example is that of characterizing Koreans as peaceful "people of the brush" who love education and learning more than fighting and strife, while the Japanese are "people of the sword", and accordingly have an affinity for making war. Given as the only real historical examples in the analysis is the apparent fact of the Japanese placing the warrior class of the samurai into societies revered, while the Koreans similarly revered teachers and scholars above all else. A convenient and seemingly academically informed shorthand for general readers who are already possessed of largely negative opinions of the Japanese, these stereotypes—on steroids make a certain kind of common sense. This example was one of the most common I heard used to describe the differences between the Japanese and Korean people when I was in Korea in the 1990s. By extension, one might easily understand Americans as "people of the gun" in the way that American foreign-policy seems to deal with other nations, from a Korean point of view. However, these objects are simply stand-ins for stereotypical characteristics of the peoples they represent and obviate any more nuanced and socio-historically informed explanations that prominent scholars and public intellectuals might be expected to give. What makes the reified representation mode of hangukinron products popular is their simplicity that fosters conceptual facility and the veneer of informed, academic grounding, created as they are by respected public intellectuals. What becomes compelling to the uninformed is how easily digestible, highly repeatable objects, catchphrases, and conceptual totems. Therein lies both their inherent charm and danger.
Essentialism is the mode of thinking here. Racial, national, and ethnic essentialisms get wrapped together here freely and easily, with the Japanese being a warlike people in their nature, and not because of any particular history or set of circumstances; and certainly, the way Japaese people are cannot be the result of any processes of socialization or any conscious construction. An explanatory framework that deconstructed or actually explained the way things are in a grounded, historical way would beg the explanation be applied to the Korean case. A close look at the details of history or systems of control and coercion is the last thing the Korean state wants to emphasize in a system built during a time of undemocratic, dictatorial rule.

Sopyonje engages in this kind of representation in that the traditional pansori singing form becomes the metonym for tradition and true Koreaness, a state only achievable or even comprehensible through the lived experience of han. And this is where hangukinron intellectuals hand off the ideological work to one another to help create a veritable vortex of overlapping, compatible, reinforcing hangukinron that becomes commonsense knowledge about what it means to be Korean. As Sopyonje was monumentalizing Koreaness and han into a tidal wave of national sentimentality over apparent lost Koreaness, Lee Oryong was weighing in on the othe uniquely Korean emotion, jeong, with his book of popular essays, one of the most prominent of which was “The Culture of Jeong and Moonlight” in his 1994 book The New Korean (Shinhangukin).

It’s All about Jeong

The trick to the concept of jeong in Korean culture lies in its vagueness and difficulty to define amidst a circularly self-referential collection of essentialist concepts that are not possessed of concrete meaning. There is simply no anchor point to the concept besides just knowing what it means and arguing from example. Koreans can often be heard to say that the term and concept are untranslatable. It has been my experience that the real problem lies in the fact that it is difficult to clearly describe even in Korean, but Koreans seldom try, because they all just know what it means. The problem isn’t the word. It is simply not clearly defined amongst the natives, either. However, it is possible. The best explication of the concept I have come across is in English, from the field of psychology. It may be the case that the clearest explanation is in English, where there is less chance for the existence of the assumption of insider knowledge and must be explained as if the listener has never heard the word:

The manifestation of jeong in a social structure and in social values is primarily through loyalty and commitment without validation, logic, or reason. This can be compared to the concept of amae in Japanese, which is an expectation of behaviors without validation. It is very interesting to see that interactions in Korean culture, whether formal or private, often carry the assumption of commitment. In Western culture, commitment is often contractual and defined, such as in a marriage, instead of being implicit. When commitments are made based upon contextual significance, for example, because of “jeong-related” affairs rather than logical interpretations of content, individuals easily become members of a cohesive
group at home or work, bonded by jeong or perhaps even held in bondage by jeong. Interdependency and collectivism are highly valued, rather than autonomy, independency, privacy, and individualism.

Of course, there is a positive side to jeong. Warm, rich interpersonal relationships, nurturing, and caring seem common in the culture of jeong. Korean-Americans will often say that their lives in America are dry because of jeong deficiency. Bonded by jeong, collective efforts toward a common goal, overcoming crises, and survival are relatively frequent scenes among Koreans or Asians.

However, there are also negative aspects to jeong. The phenomenon of the “in-crowd versus out-crowd” seems ubiquitous in Korean culture. Academic, political, and geographic divisions prevail in the culture of jeong. The leaders of a group protect those within the circle of the in-group and discriminate against outsiders. Many corrupt behaviors may surface, as I will mention in the next slide, when greater value and significance are placed in maintaining jeong and the loyalty in its relationships than in logic, reason, and the law. The expression “jeong-shil” is translated as “private circumstances; special and personal connections,” which can lead to actions that directly oppose “fairness and justice.” For example, promotions, entrance to colleges, and business contracts can occur out of these private circumstances or personal connections. This becomes a very serious social dilemma.147

In the Korean language and in the field of Korean literary analysis, writer Yi O-Ryeong is nearly the final word on many subjects related to the question of any and all things Korean. A former Minister of Culture and the main architect of the 1988 Seoul Olympic ceremonies, when Lee expounds on a subject, whether in print or in person, people offer their rapt attention. One of Lee’s most famous essays, which were serially published in major newspapers before being digested into books and presented on a myriad of television appearances, is called “The Culture of Jeong and Moonlight.” Lee’s main strength lies in his sterling professional pedigree and his evocative, erudite prose that is the result of his virtuosic mastery of the Korean language. His argumentation in that essay is wildly essentialist, and thereby simple. “Like a powerful magnet and pieces of iron, there is a force that brings a people together to form a powerful minjok.” Lee explains that for the Chinese, it is belief in the divine, the power of Heaven, while for the Japanese, it is common goals and the benefits begotten by self-interest. Before he argues himself into a corner, Lee starts with the example of Japanese conglomerates working together for profit, capitalizing on the existing Korean notion of the Japanese as being bereft of jeong and slaves to formality, rules, and customs. He starts with what his

Korean readers already “know.” For the Koreans, that special glue is *jeong*. It is the unique trait that only Korean people have in any significant way. It is what makes Korean people warm, kind, humane. It is why, Lee explains, people do not really want a clear, precisely made, exact mirror in which to see their reflections, but rather something perhaps more rustically made, with an image clear enough to use, but muddy enough to hide our imperfections. Such is the kind of clear, modern mirror that show each and every speck and mote of dust, bright and readily visible, as if being seen in the clear sunlight. An old, traditional mirror, viewed in just enough moonlight to see what needs to be seen – that is *jeong*. He ends his lengthy essay with a poem from Lee Kyu-bo, which is worth my inevitably adequate attempt at translation:

> It’s becoming cold.  
> Everyone come in closer!  
> If we don’t cover one another  
> With our body heat  
> So shall we enter a difficult age in which to live.

> With the intent to eradicate want for material things  
> Let us open our hearts to those lacking *jeong*.  
> And also the time has come  
> For we Koreans who have lived with *jeong*  
> To prove ourselves. 

Indeed, Lee’s writings helped define a time when Korea had been officially thrust out onto the world stage and was having a loud conversation with itself about what it meant to be Korean in a world in which the nation was being asked to take on a role as an equal, in the 1986 Asian Games, when Lee’s *The New Korean* was published, and in preparation for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, when all eyes would be on Korea, for better or worse.

Such are only two examples of several more I intend to outline in the course of this section of the dissertation. Indeed, notions of "fitness" as a race and culture run strong in Korean ideology. In certain lines of the *hangukinron* argument, Korea has been heavily engaged in the process of constructing itself as an “elect” nation, something akin to the Puritans’ struggle to define the spiritual “elect” amongst them. Considering the way *jungtong munhwa* ("traditional culture") has been constructed as a concrete concept, akin to a natural resource in danger of being squandered away, it almost literally is a fear of losing one’s “religion.”

**Existential Angst**

In recent years, the question of “Who are we?” began to occupy a more prominent place in the minds of many Koreans, in the same way as it did for the Japanese, as people

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149 Yi, Ö-ryŏng. *Shin Hangukin (the New Korean)*, 200
began comparing their constructed notions of *jungtong munhwa* with the picture of the society they saw before them. Sociologist Cho Hae-Joang, in her article entitled “Constructing and Deconstructing ‘Koreaness’”, describes the process of the utilitarian essentialization of culture that characterizes public discourses of Korean identity in the late 1980s and 1990s. Here, it is interesting to note the striking similarity of state and government interests in Korea to those Yoshino described in Japan. Cho describes a 1994 conference entitled “Korean Studies in Globalization: New Narratives on Tradition, Culture, and Internationalization” held at Yonsei University at which a rare convergence between western academics and Korean business people took place that exemplified a great rift in the understanding how to conceptualize and theoritize Korean culture. In response to critical academic treatments of the spurious nature of concretely defining tradition, Cho quotes the response of one businessman who commented that “There have been many studies of Korean culture, but they are too abstract. They do not make sense to us. If one can make a systematic theory of Korean culture, it will help us a great deal in doing business.” Indeed, a “systematic theory of Korean culture” is something that the government, via the Ministry of Education and the public education system, has been actively engaged in the production of utilitarian cultural essentialism, albeit for different purposes than the business sector.

In this case, Korean business interests resemble those of the Japanese – the construction of strategies for marketing “culture”, as well as the creation of clearly-defined cultural markers around which to create effective management guidelines for conducting international business. In the case of the Korean state, it is as simple (and complex) a matter of promulgating a consistent set of social values and standards of behavior, and the maintenance of social control.

This singular, existential question about the fate and future of the centralized, imagined community’s cultural soul has faded into irrelevance. But the cultural product where this question found clearest and most urgent articulation—as well as eloquent expression—was that of the immensely popular film *Sopyonje* in 1992.

*Sopyonje*

The “monumental style” is the aesthetic deployment of the *hangukinron* discourse. It quite literally, monumentalizes, after defining, and then essentializing, notions of what it truly means to be Korean, or what truly Korean things are. It defines the very mode in which to *be* Korean. This intent is not necessarily stated in the text, but defined aesthetically through implication and the representation of idealized forms.

Davis agrees that the monumental style is a mode employable in different national and cinematic contexts, and is for him a flexible form of stylistic argument – which is exactly why it is so hard to precisely define, although he does make a better effort than he gives himself credit for:

*A provisional definition of the monumental style is as follows: it is a pre-war cinema permeated by a hieratic, sacramental appropriation of a classical heritage in order to promote an apotheosis of Japanese identity.*

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150 See Cho, Hae-Jeang, "Constructing and Deconstructing 'Koreaness'" in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*. Ed. Dru C. Gladney, 75
No doubt this is cumbersome and overly abstract. Moreover, it fails to identify specific aesthetic features that constitute the appropriative and sacramental functions of the style. But, for the moment, an ostensive definition that delineates the family resemblances, or prototypes, of the monumental style is sufficient. The characteristic appropriation, sacredness of tradition, and contemporary nationalistic mission pragmatically outlines these resemblances.151 (p. 45)

Here, Davis is emphasizing the important fact of how “tradition” is both appropriated as an essential and elemental part of a national identity and then sacramentalized as a revered icon of that identity itself. (p.43) This speaks to a process of “inventing tradition” in the Hobsbawmian sense, but also to the stylistic process in which this tradition becomes a revered totem of the civic religion of national identity. In this way, the notion of han or jeong in the Korean case are reinvented into fetishized objects that contain the very meaning of being Korean, both in the greater popular culture and in films such as Sopyonje in much the same way, or as part of the same process, as how the Doduk textbook works to convey the argument that certain traits are essential, defining traits of Korean this; that they, in fact, are the constituent parts of Koreanness itself.

In a similar way, Korean historiographical practice has emphasized history written for the consumption of the nation, both in the sense it is imposed by the state, as well as in the way it reaches people through public intellectuals and other culture producers, and understood in terms of desired products of consumption. Koreans, one might argue, are as obsessed with history as they are with film.

The 1993 film Sopyonje is a perfect manifestation of "the monumental style" in Korean cinema and is a startlingly focused exposition of the masculinized, hierarchical form of Korean national identity that existed and functions as one of the ideological underpinnings of a unique kind of ethnocentrism, one marked a belief in difference between Koreans and every other race and nationality, channeled through the filmic form.

Still, Sopyonje is not a propaganda film. The “monumental style” denotes an aesthetic mode that conveys the values, terms, and the very meaning of what it means to be Korean, one that is monumentalized and privileged above all other imaginations of Koreanness. So, for the time it came out in, Sopyonje defined a monumental style of Korean identity in that it was an argument, set forth in line with many other overlapping messages that already came from around and above – from overt state propaganda to textbooks to the influential imaginings of public intellectuals constantly writing about the subject – that defined the ideal mode in which to be Korean, as well as the abstract values and concrete parameters of Korean identity.

Kosaku Yoshino theorizes the promulgation of Japanese nationalism in two ways, in terms of "primary" and "secondary" nationalisms.152 The first describes the typical way that academic treatments of nationalism tend to consider the propagation of nationalist ideals, that being in terms of elites producing the nationalism that the masses are understood to subsequently absorb. This defines a "productivist" point of view. The

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152 Yoshino, Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism, 8-9
"consumptivist" view emphasizes the particular needs of the people accepting certain ideologies. It establishes a theory for understanding why people accept them, rather than the simplistic productivist explanation that only explains the state's motives and methods for promulgating them in the first place.

Inevitably, Sopyonje was a piece of popular culture that reflected popular and dominant discourses already going on in society. It is telling that a film telling the story of a group of self-made outcasts from modern Korean culture and society, who were busy preserving-by-performing traditional music and culture that had nearly been forgotten by a society obsessed with moving forward, caught up in a “futurist discourse.”

Despite the widespread academic interest in the way time as history works in constructing national community, few scholars have examined futuristic discourses as elements in the formation of national identity. The idea of the future shares with the idea of the past the potential to join people into an imagined community; the past situates this in experience and authenticity, while the future bonds people in hope and hopeful action. For those who conceive of a linear passage of time, the future is, like the past, on an imaginative temporal continuum extending from “now” to “then.” Past and future are the poles of heritage and destiny. The envisioned future, however, authorizes national action in a way history cannot: this is because the future must be achieved.153

This discourse also actively denigrated the traditional as backwards. It is telling that a film such as Sopyonje, a runaway hit in 1992, which told the story of a group of self-made outcasts from modern Korean culture and society, who were busy preserving-by-performing traditional music and culture that had nearly been forgotten by a society obsessed with moving forward, were also living amidst a “futurist discourse” that actively denigrated the traditional as backwards, or just plain “country” or “corny” when referring to aesthetic forms – indeed, the word for this in Korean (chon-seureopda) is much like the English term “country”, but refers specifically to the “village” as a marker of being out-of-fashion or outright backwards. In a nation that urbanized, industrialized, and “modernized” in a historical blink of an eye, one might find this unusual. Thought about another way, associating an undesirable, outdated way of thinking with the “village” in a society that is barely even a generation from that now-imagined place requires the application of ideological force, as opposed to being a natural way of thinking that might occur in a culture in which living in a village or the “country” really is a marker of the far, far past. In a nation that had barely even developed past that stage, the mere creation of a “country” space in both the mind and vocabulary is in itself a fascinating development, since this works at the same time the interests of capital are focusing nationalist loyalties through the lens of consumptive desires.

Indeed, Laura C. Nelson describes this interesting consumptivist logicoperational during the 1990s:

The delay of gratification is bound up in such themes. Enduring present privations or troubles (ky{ndida or ch’amda) for future rewards is an elaborated ethos in South Korea. Not-consuming is part of investing materially and imaginatively in the national future. This link was explicit in government kwasobi ch’ubang materials, and it was picked up in some of the civic discourse as well. “Now is not the time to rest.” “Don’t pop the champagne cork too soon.” “If one person rests, forty million will be late.” The choice to celebrate the present was perceived as an abandonment of the future.154

Now that Korean identity, society, and the economy have shifted, and the tension between losing tradition and entering modernity has been largely forgotten, many people have simply forgotten about the question. It is not that there's been a simple shift to a new paradigm and new question for the Korean nation, but the very idea that a single question defines the identity of a lot of people has gone out of the window.

The monumental style, in the Japanese context from which the term is borrowed, comes from the very different cultural context of the Japanese imperial project and related concerns. But as Davis argues, the important thing to note about the concept is that “simply identifying provenance is not the same as providing a functional explanation” (p.8) in addition to the fact that merely identifying a convention’s use in one place or from one particular origin point does not mean that it cannot be used in another. Given that the monumental style found expression in the context of the Japanese imperial moment and in the cultural milieu of a particular kind of state nationalism, one can certainly still identify other ways this cinematic concept can develop in other places, especially given the common factors shared with the Korean situation in terms of a strong state nationalism, authoritarianism, and militarism. Also, given the point in Korean history at which the accumulated, material evidence of rapid development began to beg the question of what to do with changing (and more positive) notions of “traditional culture,” the background similarities between the Japanese and Korean cases become obvious.

In the end, the “monumental style” is a mode of cinematic argumentation that portrays an idealist way to be a national member, also, and most importantly, this is not argued in explicit terms. The beauty of the argument is that it is argued in the language of aesthetics-as-culture. One believes that there is no need to be told how to be Korean, since the monumental style gives the illusion that this is obvious to anyone who is truly part of the in-group. That is, the desirable way to be a good person, to be the respected father, or grateful son, or good soldier. Most importantly to understand is the point that the monumental style is not a mode of vulgar cinematic nationalism, a superficial message passed down, unmitigated, from state or government censors. Understood through the example of LENI Riefenstahl’s Triumph of the Will, it is not the fetishizing of National Socialism or outright Jew-hating content itself that makes the film ‘monumental,” but the style itself, in terms of the symbology Riefenstahl helped define for Nazism as both a philosophy and a way to be a good German. Put another way, mere propaganda films usually concern themselves with giving specific “marching orders” such as “good citizens conserve nylon” or “always be vigilant for spies,” whereas a film

that argues purely through the monumental style may engage in none of these practical matters or political concern him and so coo a sense of a desired way to be a good member of the group.

The “monumental style” itself is hard to define because it is, as Davis points out, a stylistic convention, one that has no singular, universal set of rules. Indeed, it depends on the context from which it comes, as much as the content of different state nationalisms might be as different as night and day, but the form of their presentation, propagation, and celebration might be strikingly similar. One only has to look at the radically different ideologies of the North and South Koreas as an example of this; the two sides sit on opposite sides of many imagined fences, but in the implementation of parades, “mass games,” and other gaudy nationalistic displays, significant differences are hard to discern.

The monumental style is a bit more complex, actually. As observed in the American film Saving Private Ryan, after the camera begins with an establishing shot of a sleepy farm in Iowa, depicted in the warm sepia tones of a Normal Rockwell painting, replete with red farmhouse, windmill, and winding road, we see a matronly arm setting an apple pie out on the windowsill to cool. “Mother” is plump, healthy, and happy, but we see her fall to the ground in shock when she sees a US Army car pull up to the house. This is a representation of an American mode of being in an idealized time, using a quintessentially American set of symbols, employed briefly in the film to establish where “we” are coming from, where Private Ryan came from, as well as who he is. He is all-American, good and wholesome, and he is “us.”

Although I do not argue here that Saving Private Ryan utilizes a monumental style in a significant way in the film, when setting the stage for the film, its brief utilization is useful because it defines an ideal central identity of “who” Americans are, along with true American values. In fact, the unlikely and illogical decision to even “save” Private Ryan is presented as a matter of common moral decency that “we” Americans, by definition, engage in. When the plan is presented to save the last remaining of four boys in the field in General George C. Marshall’s office, a craggly and grandfatherly Harve Presnell sits behind a desk with a large Bible, the Constitution in the background, and reads a quote from one of America’s gods himself, Abraham Lincoln. In this stylistic way, before the film moves into two hours of perfectly-reproduced and immaculately-depicted battles, filmed in a faux-documentary style for maximal visual and visceral impact, the heavy use of the monumental style tells us “Why We Fight” as clearly as Frank Capra’s War Department-funded propaganda film of the same name ever could.

If we are trying to understand how this complex process works across national, linguistic, and cultural lines, it becomes quite complex. This is one of the reasons I find the reading of Korean film so challenging. One needs a deep understanding of the specific symbols and meanings contained onscreen in the Korean context, as well as knowledge of the historical/cultural milieu within which the film finds itself.

Yoshimoto’s sociocritical approach is very much how texts are considered in history, often to the point of neglecting any attention to the "formal perspective" that is already the realm of film theory. In terms of identifying the way universalizing theory constructed around western cinema is inadequate in explaining Japanese forms, in this specific case, Japanese melodrama.
One might understand the key difference between Japanese, Korean, and US relationships with "modernity" as a function of the historically specific and radically different way in which subjects entered the modern state. For both Koreans and Japanese, it was compressed in time and informed by a relationship to danger from the outside. For Koreans, it was (and to a much larger extent than Japan) instituted by force.

Yoshimoto quotes Noel Burch as he described how "traditional values" are selectively preserved and – I would argue - put into service of modern concerns. This could be the reassertion of patriarchy within a call to resist the loss of an essential Korean self (Sopyonje), or the remnants of a "monumental style" that was created to define a Japanese self in a specific way, one that was actually quite unpopular as such as in pre-war and WWII Japan (Chushingura).

In the "sociocritical" sense, one can argue that the relative popularity of Sopyonje had very much to do with not only the concerns and tensions of society as they are expressed in single texts onscreen, but also with the particular visions of the collective and individual self that people want and need to consume as part of the process of self-definition. In this way, Korean society and people were ready and waiting for something like Sopyonje, whereas other "monumental style" films such as Genroku Chushingura during the 1930s and 1940s were actually quite unpopular in Japan at the time. Even in films that are strict historical tales, ones caught up in fetishistic accuracy in the way Saving Private Ryan was, the formal style has a lot to say about not only concerns/tensions in the present, but offers us a specific solution, or at least a rosy vision/memory of what an ideal answer might be. In this way, the "monumental style," broadly defined, is defined by the formal elements combined with the content of the film that is in conversation with a "national sense" that defines the conditions/concerns/exigencies of the present to the individual. The consumptivist pleasure comes with figuring out how this informs our individual understanding of self.

As these elements are recognizable and become key parts of Sopyeonje’s narrative elements, they eventually have a great resonance with an audience who had already recognized them as “real.” When stylistically presented with the skill employed in that film, such cultural fetish objects become a part of what becomes a beautiful aesthetic the likes of which the audience had never before known it had known, or had even “lost,” and hence comes to have great resonance with an audience already preoccupied with “rediscovery” or notions of a lost communal “self.”

Sopyeonje, as a film making an overt statement about the nature of Koreanness through the monumental style, also happened to perfectly both channel and reflect an important and fractured discourse bubbling over in Korean society, one very concerned with a public sense of identification as an increasingly modern nation, which necessarily made the perceived place for “tradition” more contested and problematic. Indeed, in a society that was not even a decade away from the public spectacle and declaration of development that was the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and after decades of futurist thinking and economic promises that could only be kept through the increasing dividends of an expanding economy, a rising GDP, and increasing amounts of disposable income, the promises of modernity and development were starting to become very real, materially true.

The film symbolized that tension not only through the superficial level of its own subject matter, i.e. the struggle to preserve a specific musical tradition in the face of a
modernizing society, but also on a deeper subtextual level as well. The plot itself connected with the popular zeitgeist, as did the monumental style it deployed so well. But in addition, on the purely subtextual level, the film’s symbolic structuring of the all-controlling father, resistant and ultimately failed prodigal son, in addition to the never-questioning and faithful daughter whose skills and ability as a vessel of traditional Korean culture were ultimately stowed upon her by both physical and emotional force – these all stand in as a cipher for the violent obsession with development and desire to move “forward” while denigrating the past and traditional parts of what was increasingly seen as “backwards” and a hindrance to progress in the ideology of post-war Korea, which itself was signified by the hostile and empty environment the film’s three main characters are increasingly forced to wander. For director Im, the harsh and austere Korean landscape in the film stands in for the cold, unforgiving reality of modern Korea, which itself is portrayed as a hollowed-out, forgotten version of its former self. It seems obvious that at least this much symbolism was overtly intended; however, Sopyonje’s textual and subtextual messages go far deeper than that, well past the immediate and obvious points about the conflict between old and modern, traditional versus new, that the director wanted to set forth.

The Importance of Han

Indeed, the father in the film symbolizes authority itself, on more levels than as a mere actual patriarch. He is the arch-patriarch, responsible for everything from not being able to bring in enough money to raise his children properly to mutilating his own daughter in order to artificially give her the required han (a resigned sense of peace that comes from years of real and lived pain, fermented and aged) that he thinks she needs to give her the proper emotional fuel – that of Korean han -- to truly become one with her singing, the pansori.

Since the 1970s in Korea, the notion of han has had a prominent place in academic and public discourse. Literary studies from the late ’40s, especially of such writers as Kim Sowol and Yi Kwangsu, have emphasized this sentiment as a central theme. There were two main stages in the development of discourse on han, relating to its main classifications: chônghan and wônhan. Chônghan indicates a mild, sentimental form of resentment, a bitter-sweet longing, while wônhan refers to a more forceful, repressed grudge that can explode for ill or well. This latter form of han was elaborated upon from the 1970s and the early rise of the labor and minjung movements. Ch’ôn I-du observes that the initial focus on han was literary critical and came from a consideration of the person and poems of Kim Sowol (1903-34), widely seen to epitomize the essential Korean aesthetic.[5] Here chônghan reflects the pain of separation, the ambivalent emotions evoked when betrayed by a lover. Sowol's Azaleas (1922) is a classic reference for this...Ch’ôn cites as the earliest influence the 1948 essay by Kim Tong-ni, "Ch'ongsan ūi kori--Kim Sowol [Blue Mountain Path--Kim Sowol]" in Munhak kwa ingan (Ch’ôn 54). Ch’ôn relates that Kim Tong-ni's emphasis on and utilization of han for his reading of Sowol
heightened awareness both of Sowŏl's work and the notion of han itself, but it was a decade later, in 1958, that Sŏ Chŏng-ju more fully developed this interpretive angle and laid the foundation for a consequent, wider focus on han in literary circles. See Sŏ, cited in Ch’ŏn (55). Chŏn's self-immolation brought this message home to those not already too busy preaching the good news of salvation by economic development. With such outcry from those not sharing in the official good-life begins the age of political discourse on han. It is from this point on that han emerges from the literary realm and comes to have a crucial social role; it is more closely linked to analysis of specific, contemporary social injustice and becomes integral to the philosophy of the opposition movement in society. As such, it is an important source of historical memory and contemporary discourse on identity, both personal and collective. What seems to be happening in this process of cultural representation, this symbolic enthronement of an existentially radical moment in popular discourse, is a restricted but crucial instance of the emergence of class consciousness which is given linguistic and cultural substance.

As developed and theorized by Kim Tongni and others who analyzed the works of Kim Soweol, the kind of interpersonal pain-of-longing produced on the individual level produces the aforementioned chŏnghan (jeonghan), which, as it later comes to be theorized in terms of the class-based bitterness of the Korean minjung (working class/people's) movement from the 1970's and on, is understood in terms of its aggregate form wŏnhan (weonhan), which starts to spread into popular consciousness as minjung historiography and even minjung theology find purchase in society, as minjung consciousness begins to come into popular favor and has defined a vertavle mode of thinking by the 1990's, when Sopyeonje was produced and found occurrence as a cultural event for South Korea. The key thing to understand about han is, as articulated by James Freda once more:

"While han has come to be widely identified as a national or racial essence in recent years, its public use has deteriorated to some extent into simple resentment, a pejorative describing the carping attitude of those who haven't kept pace with the rest of the economy... In this way, within Korean folk culture there exists a reservoir of genius for liberating han. Things like shaman ritual, mask dance drama, and p’ansori, a form of satiric folk opera, recount in cathartic manner the typical situations (discrimination, official corruption, or impoverishment) whereby han is accumulated. Central to these performative texts was a strong element of the carnivalesque--dancing and ribald humor, usually mocking the upper class. This humor and joy works to loosen and liberate accumulated feelings of resentment."

In this way, the self-inflicted poverty of the father on himself and his family keeps them squarely within the class status in which won-han thrives and lives, on top of the specific jung-han that comes from their fractured familial relations. It all becomes the modern, simplistic understanding and definition of "han" as mere generalized bitterness or resentment that defines the "Korean way" of being that is essentialized in the practice - and choice -- to preserve the artform of pansori in the body of a perfect model of filial female virtue, the daughter of a poor and increasingly irrelevant traditional singer. In the text of Sopyonje, han is rolled into class status and an afflicted traditional art form defending itself from the onslaught of modernity. Soon, han itself is defined as an essentially Korean aesthetic worth preserving, as the origin point of the ability to be Korean. It becomes defined as the linchpin emotional base of Koreanness itself.

Ironically, but also crucially, the father abuses his relations of authority such that the children under him suffer because of his singular, selfish obsession with his art, to the point that the nearly unthinkable happens – his eldest offspring, his first-born son, rebels against him, rebukes him, and abandons the family. Yet, the faithful favorite, his dutiful adopted daughter, is rewarded for her devotion by being poisoned by the father, both to give her a source of pain from having a crippling affliction, and also to make her even more materially (and perhaps sexually) dependent on him. She does not marry, she stays with the father to complete her artistic journey, and is satisfied with her lot. Importantly, at her father’s side at his deathbed, she admits that not only did she know her father was poisoning her, but that she is glad for the han it has enabled her to have, for the ability to achieve her art to perfection.

What do we glean from this? As much as the audience expressed connections with its own inner han, or guilt about neglecting tradition in favor of an empty promise of modernity, or even the ambivalence experienced in a population that on the one hand had been delivered to the promised land of the developed and modern through both ideological and military force, but had recently resisted it on the other, it is impossible to deny that the han itself, as portrayed in the film, is a complete construction. Even the preservation of the art form of pansori itself, in a world in which it is no longer necessary, is something that can only come from a nearly pathological obsession that only leads to emotional desolation and self-destruction.

In a very important way, the director is sending out a completely mixed message, one that could be read, on its more negative flip side, as portraying the emptiness of the artificial obsession with tradition, as opposed to the doomed endeavor to actually preserve it. One could easily take a lot from the fact that the daughter, our cultural hero and ultimate focus of sympathy in the narrative, is a double fraud: not only is her han an artificial creation, but she herself was complicit in the process, she herself knew that any han she experienced was actually self-inflicted. Indeed, it is one thing to sing the blues after a life of no fame or fortune, after decades of struggle and pain to achieve it; it would be quite another to be steeped in wealth and then reject it, thereafter living hand-to-mouth and singing about the pain that results in all parts of one’s life.

Sopyeonje is the cinematic expression of a developmental fatigue that had come to characterize the ambivalence of South Korea’s trying experience with rapid, compressed development. It channeled a zeitgeist during the early 1990’s that was concerned with the question of who the Korean people were, where the developmental journey had actually
led, and what was apparently being left behind. It is also one of the most effective and
emotionally evocative expressions of the hanginron discourse, a successful site of
transmission between ideological producers and their intended popular audience.
Chapter 5: Transmitting the Monumental Style: Transnational Korean American identity

My journey to South Korea began far earlier than my first arrival to Kimpo International Airport in 1994 for the first of two years I would spend working in a South Korean middle school on Jeju Island as a Fulbright English teaching assistant (ETA). I had become initially more interested in what I imagined to be Korean identity and Korean culture because the Korean mother who had left that land in 1970 and had yet to return, even for a short trip. While Korean things and aspects of culture such as food had always been familiar to me, I had never been to the peninsula and was unfamiliar with the lived language and culture of Korean society. From 1990, when I which created to college, I had developed a strong interest in defining myself as “multiracial” and became involved in the multiracial and biracial movement on campus, founding an organization known as the Brown Organization of Multiracial and Biracial Students (BOMBS). It wasn't long before I realized that many of my notions of culture and identity or quite productive and essentialist, with their pat generalizations and tendency to create empty categories of meaning offering little substance to my growing intellectual need to learn more about careers in specific and concrete ways. By dint of both need to find employment and a happenstance meeting that ended up with me in the campus Fellowship office, I found myself on a road to Korea that would place me into both the home stay and employment as a English teacher in a Korean middle school by August of that year. It did not take very long to come to the conclusion that many of my initial questions about what Korea meant to me were flawed and rested on flimsy assumptions. As I settled into everyday life and the concentric circles of life as a foreigner my homestay, middle school, and general society, I learned the language and social rules. I also started paying attention to the textbooks that my middle school students were reading, as I scan through them excessively as fodder for my Korean language studies and increasingly as a window into the intellectual world that was being thrust upon my students. Of particular interest to me was the dodeok (morals and ethics) curriculum that was discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. That particular subject fascinated me since it's extremely nationalistic nature seemed to resonate greatly with the nationalist narratives and attitude that seemed to permeate most Koreans interactions with non-Koreans at the time. By the time I had left Korea to begin graduate work at UC Berkeley in 1996, I had already taken several copies of the middle school dodeok textbook, from which I would begin my first graduate research paper, which now constitutes the third chapter of this dissertation, on the role that state and government institutions played in constructing what is now called Korean “ethnic nationalism.” In the late 1990s and early 2000s, not very much had been written specifically about Korean notions of national identity, race, and the Korean national project.

As with many endings, this chapter also finds its origins in the accidental results of managing ever-changing plans and multiple projects, both failed and realized. The work that begins this concluding chapter in the dissertation is the result of a photo documentary project conducted for a class in the Berkeley School of Journalism in which I began documenting the Korean Youth Cultural Center (hereafter referred to as KYCC) in terms of how its members both defined and performed aspects of Korean identity in a final ethnographic photo project that I entitled “Korean Spaces.” That work would allow
me to get to know the group and its members as a documentarian and would be the beginning point for the subsequent work of video at the graphic documentary that forms the body of ethnographic work for the present chapter. That work of ethnographic documentary was actually intended to be a practice “process documentary” that would be the concrete product and proof that I was able to carry out documentary production work for future grant applications in the arts. I chose to do what I would eventually realize was serious ethnographic work on KYCC because I had already done the hard part of making myself a participant–observer. However, it was not my intention to do ethnographic work for the sake of doing so, but was the logical extension of work I had done for other projects and purposes, which was putting into video form the photo project I had already completed. For the purposes of the present chapter, I will take selections from that photo documentary “Korean Spaces” as a way of introducing the group and some of its members. In the end, “Performing Korea” was an accidental work of ethnography-as-a documentary that was conceived and produced in 2001 but sat, forgotten, as a “side project” on a mini DV tape in storage for more than a decade before fate and circumstance would have me revisit and revive my doctoral dissertation project after more than a decade of non-activity, at which point I would look back and see my ethnography for what it was and decide to use it as a concluding point for the dissertation. KYCC was physically situated at the time of the study in 2001 in the Northern neighborhood of Oakland, California, just past the imaginary southern boundary of Berkeley. This was a part of Oakland undergoing the relentless process of Bay Area “gentrification,” in which parts of previously economically depressed Northern Oakland were increasingly being occupied by Berkeley students and upwardly mobile young professionals. In addition, that area of North Oakland, especially the parts directly connected to and through Berkeley by the main thoroughfare Telegraph Avenue, was being increasingly occupied by a growing number of Korean-owned businesses and services catering to Korean customers in what was being recognized at the time as a growing “Koreatown” along the lines of ethnic urbanization already seen in places such as the Koreatown of Los Angeles and along the Geary St. area of San Francisco. The existence of KYCC in the North Oakland area in the late 1990s and in 2001 was both typical and incongruous with the socioeconomic and demographic shifts going on at the time. While the cheaper rents of the area tended to make opening businesses for Korean immigrant entrepreneurs appealing in combination with the growing demographic of young Asian-American and Korean-American consumers in the area, and while the location of KYCC was surely influenced by this concern, KYCC as a Korean community and arts center was unusual in comparison to other establishments founded by or for Korean concerns in that KYCC itself was not a commercial enterprise overtly concerned with serving Korean clientele. Surely, the fact that just around the corner was a small mall complex of Korean restaurants and businesses, including a nonprofit community center serving the needs of the Korean immigrant population, at which several KYCC members actually worked or were closely affiliated -- this surely influenced the decision to found KYCC at its chosen site. In any case, the fact of KYCC being situated just south of 50th St. cross-section of Telegraph Avenue made a perfect kind of demographic and socioeconomic sense, given the fact that many similar Korean commercial, cultural, and other enterprises were appearing in the same area around the same time.
Despite the obviously Korean nature of KYCC, it is important to note that the organization’s immediate environs was and is heavily African American and Latino, in addition to there being a large presence of other Asian-American ethnicities, which includes a Chinese and Chinese-American and Southeast Asian ethnic population. This made for an extremely diverse and multicultural environment within that became the backdrop for the formation of particular new kind of Korean-American identity in the North Oakland/South Berkeley area. It is also important to note that a major source of membership for the group came from Berkeley undergraduate students, which informs both the specific history of the formation of the group as well as constitutes a major locus of interest in learning Korean traditional art forms specifically as well as interest in Korean culture in a more general sense.

Also worthy of note is the fact that, in the early 2000’s, Korean-American play spaces—which I will refer to from here on as imagined “Korean spaces”, which was also the title of a photo essay I did as part of preparing the documentary on KYCC—were not frequented only by patrons of Korean descent, but were increasingly filled with persons of non-Korean backgrounds, especially as found in people of Southeast Asian and Chinese-American heritage. Interestingly enough, the Korean-American desire to play and socialize in a decidedly and distinctively continental Korean way—as precipitated and made possible by continental Korean culture’s own ongoing process of commodifying and packaging what was understood to be Korean traditional culture as part of a larger process of commercializing Korean culture for the easy consumption of modern, mainstream Koreans—had started to become a seemingly cooler and more sophisticated way of engaging with and claiming a kind of continental and authentic Asian identity, as lead by Korea and those in her diaspora. Specifically, being Korean and seen as still very connected to that culture was no longer something that Korean-Americans born after the first wave of Asian immigration in the late 1960s and early 1970s—those who came to constitute what has been referred to as “second-generation” Korean and other Asian Americans—strived to avoid. A connection to Asia in general or Korea specifically was no longer a stigma to be avoided, as embodied in the old phrase that many Korean-Americans of that generation loathed being called: namely, the moniker and slur “FOB” (“fresh off the boat”). This was surely a sign that the “Pacific century” was arriving. At least in the San Francisco Bay area of the early 2000’s, armed with products, tools, and ideas produced in the developed economies of Asia’s “tiger economies,” both second and third-generation Koreans and other Asian-Americans, as well as members of other non-Asian ethnic groups, began to populate the growing number of Korean style singing rooms (noraebang), beer and chicken houses (tongdak jip/hof), and Korean barbecue restaurants to eat increasingly well known and popular dishes such as bulgogi and galbi. Indeed, Korean-Americans in the San Francisco Bay area had started to define a sort of Korean-American “coolness” that had come to define the vanguard of a new kind of Asian-American identity, and could even be seen as the initial tremors preceding the indisputable earthquake of Korean cool that has in fact spread quickly and far outside of Korea’s borders more recently, as seen in the so-called “Korean wave” of cultural products that have come to dominate the media industries of Asian nations such as Japan, China, and Taiwan, and has indeed left indelible impressions on the cultural landscapes as far away as the United States and Western Europe.
The most important person to discuss for both the purposes of setting up the background of the organization KYCC as it was back in 2001, as well as to explain my particular point of entry into both the social group and the organization, is Ann Jieun Kwon. When I first looked to KYCC as a subject for a photo documentary for another project, Ann was already a prominent and active member of the group as a sort of human resources officer who did everything for the organization from set up its status as a nonprofit organization to helping to balance the books, and addition to her role as a full performing member of the Korean drumming aspect of their activities. Ann’s role as an organizer and manager within the organization echoed her role in outside life as a professional human resources manager in large corporate organizations. Ann, as a good personal friend of mine whom I met in 1996 as a volunteer for the San Francisco Asian American arts Festival, and who was introduced to me by a common Korean-American friend, was my main and initial point of contact with KYCC when I was searching for both a community and a subject for a photo documentary to help establish my credentials for a grant application for a documentary film I had planned to undertake at the time. That had been in about the year 2000, and by the time I was ready to undertake a video documentary to establish my credentials for possible future grant proposals, KYCC and its long series of preparations for their planned fall concert in September 2001 continue to offer itself as a perfect subject, given the fact that the organization and its members had already given permission for me to document them, and I had already established a good professional and social rapport with all members of the group, which would allow for a much higher level of intimacy and latitude as a documentarian.

Although the work I had been doing for that documentary — “Performing Korea”— was not something I had foreseen as fallen into the scope of this dissertation, I had, without consciously realizing it, gained access into what would normally have been a very small and tightly-knit, closed community and had already done much of the work required to make myself into an effective participant–observer. In fact, most of the socializing I did with members of the group at karaoke rooms, Korean restaurants, and Korean bars in the growing Oakland Koreatown was done with camera in hand and the full knowledge and consent of members of the group to my documenting nearly every aspect of their lives spent as members of the group. In addition to the fact that I have been vouched for by Ann, one of the most important, trusted, and well-liked members of the group, the fact that I spoke Korean from having lived in Korea from 1994–1996 and was already familiar with many of the customs and contemporary life of Korean society already lent me a sort of authenticity in terms of a key aspect of group dynamics, which was very Korean-American. Although I am not very sure of how much this was of importance to individual group members, the fact that my mother was of Korean descent was known to all members of the group, partially because Ann always mentioned this fact in introducing me to new members and new faces, and partially because I believe my connection to Korean culture and my reason for having lived in that country was assumed to be attributable to that part of my ethnic background. It is very likely that my known status as a Berkeley graduate student also increased my social capital within the group, especially since the group itself was so heavily connected with the Berkeley campus, as many of KYCC’s original founders and present members were either presently attending students or alumnas.
Introduction to KYCC and “Korean Spaces” (Photo Essay)

One of the main evening haunts of the group, this establishment at the edge of downtown Oakland, was the physical embodiment of the duality of a Korean-American identity without contradiction: in English, and by day this establishment was called “sunrise sandwiches” and was extensively a lunch counter establishment. By evening, and in Korean, it went by the moniker the "Ddo Hana" ("One more time") bar, where Korean foods served in Korean style bars were offered, along with an often used karaoke machine. Such a duality was not in the contradiction, but rather an adaptation to the actual social and cultural uses of the same space at different times of the day.
Performativity on multiple levels -- Singing Korean karaoke or noraebang was a continentally authentic act in the sense of cultural performativity, even as it was a naturally pleasurable outlet for a group of people who liked to perform in the literal sense, people who were quite literally performers of Korean cultural tradition as defined in the hangukinron discourse.
Figure 10 – Cooperatorive karaoke and bonding

Figure 11 – In Korean spaces, drinking is always done according to Koran custom.
“Reverse Acculturation”

When drinking with KYCC members, the Korean drinking convention of pouring for someone else, especially for senior members of the group, was strictly adhered to, no matter what an individual's level of Korean knowledge or cultural familiarity. It became a means and marker of gaining Korean cultural fluency and and was a kind of Korean cultural performativity that was an important means of bonding within the group for all members, whether Korean or not. KYCC was unknowingly defining a new kind of inclusive Koreanness that applied to anyone who showed they were willing to socialize and belong on Korean terms…. This simply becomes something that even a new member learns from socializing with the group, and has particular meaning as a Korean practice that marks it as different from cultural practices in the general culture.

This is a process that Younhee Kim and Sunghee Park have labeled “reverse acculturation” in their study of Korean-American wedding practices:

*The central idea of reverse acculturation is that an individual who has been fully acculturated introduces his or her heritage culture to the mainstream culture. Therefore, full acculturation is not the endpoint, but a new starting point for personal cultural development. For the society, cultural influence flows from a foreign culture to the mainstream culture.*

From the quite specific, more grandiose, *hangukinron*-informed act of “performing Korea” down to the smaller, but no less significant performance of smaller acts of Korean culture such as pouring alcoholic drinks according to continental Korean custom or addressing members of the group in familiar, familial forms, socialization with KYCC was an ongoing series of acts of reverse acculturation.

Given the strict anti-smoking ban that had at the time had recently gone into effect in the state of California by the late 1990’s, smoking openly and freely in a public place had come to be a rare privilege and marker of the fact that on the symbolic level at least, this space was no longer in California, or even America.

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Figure 12 - Smoking indoors is illegal in California.

Figure 13 - Korean spaces are defined by ignoring local law and custom.
Dansungsa by night.

The Dansungsa and Da-mo-a bars were both marked very clearly, by both their operators and patrons, as auspicious Korean spaces within which certain aspects of American culture were left at the front door.

To Korean nationals, both in Korea and in the United States, bars such as Dansungsa, which was another popular haunt for KYCC and its members, named after the famed movie theater in Seoul, are self-conscious nostalgia spaces that celebrate an older way of socializing that is perceived as more traditional and "real," as they evoke romantic images of "the good old days." An American might imagine a similar kind of nostalgia for the “simpler, better times” of the 1950s as they’re often represented and rosily remembered by some in the United States.
Figure 15 - Dansungsa exterior by day

Figure 16 - Dansungsa interior
At this time, Korean-style bars were becoming quite popular in the growing Koreatown in Oakland, with the key difference being that the American version was indeed not part of any actual street-based drinking culture of Korea in America. Indeed, the act of writing the word *pojangmacha* (street food bar) in Korean is purely symbolic and serving of the nostalgia function, since having an actual *pojangmacha* on the streets of Oakland would not only be culturally alien, but actually illegal. The main bar inside Dansungsa was styled to be reminiscent of a Korean *pojangmacha*, which is shaped in a rectangle and offers a uniquely Korean style of interaction amongst the customers. By fashioning such a bar, especially one adorned in the style of its 1960s or 1970s form, albeit inside closed doors as opposed to outside on the street, it offers the atmosphere of a more authentic Korean drinking experience, but without the discomfort of cold weather or rain or the other downsides of having such bars on the street. It is important to note that such bars were becoming popular in South Korea around this time, as more monied and comfort-seeking South Koreans nostalgiafied this older, increasingly quaint style of socialized consumption. The Oakland *pojangmacha* was more than a Korean-American adaptation to drinking Korean style, as bars such asDansungsa in Oakland were really exports from contemporary South Korean drinking and consumption culture, and as such, offered themselves as a point of authenticity and connection with a perceived "real" Korean experience. For South Koreans, similar bars on the peninsula are nostalgic areas, while for the Korean-American community, they define points of connection with Koreanness itself.

In Korean bars in Oakland’s Koreatown, drinking was done Korean style and with Korean liquors… The consumption of Korean liquor became the
focus/site/locus/object/vehicle/symbol/whatever for the symbolic consumption and performance of Korean culture. Indeed, the performance of Korean culture by diasporic members involved merely following cultural acts and practices of everyday life in present-day Korea, which itself was often formed around or in response to Western (American) cultural cues through postcolonial influence. Drinking Korean beer, which is actually not very different than what Americans would call” light beer,” is important both because of the beer's origins and because of the way it is drunk. The performativity of the act is what defined its authenticity, even more than any actual or essential difference. And in recent years with the meaning of globalizing American pop culture forms and Korean forms that could not just mimic them, but even find popularity in the culture that produced it, Korean cultural products even have the ability to bounce back into the very culture that produced the forms that became popular in Korea in the first place, gaining popularity through both virtuosic mimesis and by additional, inherent difference.

“Gangnam Style”

Such an eventuality may have seemed unlikely in the early 2000’s. However, given the sudden runaway success of Korea's ultimate cultural product and export “Gangnam Style” by Korean pop singer and performer PSY is evidence of the overwhelming success that South Korea has had honing and perfecting only certain industries as a result of not only the cultural export model of designing pop-culture products and industries, but also of overall societal processes that increasingly led the commercialization and global mass marketization of Korean popular culture as well as popular Korean modes of being. Regarding the recent phenomenon of “Gangnam Style,” I have written elsewhere:

Any explanation of Gangnam must start with the fact that it is not so much a place, as much as it is an aspirational concept for many South Koreans. It is a symbol for an entire lifestyle, a developmental dream come true for a country that was basically no different from Afghanistan today, when the Korean War ended in 1953. As part of his explanation of a very South Korean piece of culture for American audiences, PSY has called Gangnam "the Korean Beverly Hills," which is both a useful and inaccurate analogy. Koreans often describe the Korean dish bindaetteok, a savory, batter-fried patty filled with goodies from scallions to shrimp, as "Korean pizza." In one sense, this shorthand term for the non-Korean uninitiated is an apt description, but quite a bit is lost in the translation, since the foods are far from analogous across their respective cultural milieaux.

The fact is, that for Americans, Beverly Hills is simply a famous (or perhaps infamous), wealthy neighborhood in L.A., and not much more than a site of cultural spectacle. It is merely one of many cultural symbols of conspicuous consumption and a certain kind of wealth. But, one has to remember that, unlike the United States, South Korea is a recently developed country that, on the ground and for most people, isn’t more than a single generation

removed from the farm. In development-obsessed South Korea, this fact has been forgotten by many, and even for those who have not, it has become an inconvenient historical truth. Real old money and true power preexisted the explosion of wealth that happened below the Han River in the 1980s, and most of that was concentrated in a few old neighborhoods in northern Seoul around the presidential Blue House (the Korean "White House"). During the late 1980s and the rapid development of land below the Han River, traditional neighborhoods and the southernmost border of old Seoul, almost all of what is now called Gangnam (which literally means "south of the river", as "gang" means "river" and "nam" means "south"), was farmland and rice paddies. But, as the dictator-led economy and expansion-minded city of Seoul continued in their development plans, they hungrily eyed these expanses of "unused" land as a place to develop modern roads, skyscrapers and neighborhoods. Countless numbers of farmers had their land bought out, swelling the ranks of Korea's youngest societal group, that of newly-minted real-estate millionaires.

As with any nouveau riche, especially one born in a formerly feudalistic and impoverished country, it quickly dove into a pattern of unapologetic and very conspicuous consumption, which became a symbol of both national triumph and chagrin. South Korean people watched the antics of those living in Gangnam with a mix of envy, amusement and derision. One thing to understand about the Korean mindset in this regard is the popular quote and quip, "When a cousin buys a piece of land, one's stomach hurts." The Korean version of the universal emotion of jealousy includes a pretty hefty dose of personalized loathing.

Importantly, Gangnam is both the physical and cultural space through which many trends have entered Korea. For the entire country, Gangnam is the cultural "Ground Zero" for the new and novel, as well as the wonderfully weird, and exists as a point within several concentric circles of cultural and fiscal power. In this sense, Gangnam lies at the center of Seoul, which, itself, has always been the central part of the nation and culture. Trends often come into Gangnam first and are seen as the idiosyncratic pursuits of the very rich before they become mainstream things to do, such as attending health clubs, practicing yoga, or doing Pilates. For example, foreign (mostly European) cars were first seen as the playthings of the frivolously super-rich back when the everyday, working class, "good" Korean was busy being faithful to the nation by buying only domestically made cars from Daewoo or Hyundai. (It also helped that foreign cars were always slapped with import taxes that nearly doubled their sticker price above domestic cars.) Owning a Mercedes or BMW was a nearly impossible dream for the average Korean, and such cars were mostly visible on certain famous streets in Gangnam. Even the English loan word of "luxury" itself could be defined by certain items that were essentially "Gangnam," from a Volkswagen convertible to a Macintosh computer. It's interesting that to
note, that while for many Americans the formerly less practical Macintosh computer represented someone who was involved in artistic pursuits or were deeply involved in design, which was a functional stereotype that came from the Macintosh's early initial strengths in those markets. In Korea, however, a Macintosh computer was also initially a symbol of being a part of the artistic intelligentsia, but the heavy markup price also made it a symbol of wealth. A Macintosh computer was the very definition of foreign-branded "luxury."

So, it goes with the coffee shop culture, which happens to have a long and working class history as social spaces in which Koreans met outside the home, which is itself a very private space in Korean culture. But, in the early days when coffee shops were not much more than traditional tea rooms that had evolved into ones that included coffee on the menu, before the Korean coffee shop involved to the next level of the foreign-controlled Starbucks, coffee had not been a luxury item. Anthropologist Bak Sangmee, who studies Korean consumption patterns and identity, once CONCLUDED that it was the politics of conspicuous consumption that was responsible for Starbucks' eventual success in Korea, as opposed to love of high-quality coffee, since coffee in Korea to that point had always been something associated with coffee mixers in plastic tubes, as indeed, powdered coffee on the black market from G.I. ration boxes defined coffee to most Koreans in the 1950s. Another thing that marks the "Gangnam Style" way of thinking, is the fact that prices of Starbucks coffee in Korea are among the highest in the world, since it was found that Korean consumers actually bought less coffee when the prices were reduced.158

Indeed, continental Korean modes of conspicuous consumption defined the nature of identity formation for the Korean consumer, along with formal and structured attempts to turn Koreanness into digestible, purchasable, and re-sellable items of consumption for not only vague notions of the “culture industries,” but for the concrete and definable food, liquor, music, film, tourism, and leisure industries. To the extent that Korean-Americans were no longer required to consume what would be considered outdated or outmoded items of culture, such as found in the Korean music industry until the early 1990s, or the rustic and poorly made products that defined the Korean film industry until the late 1990s, engaging in Korean identity and performative “acts” of consuming Korean culture was no longer a marker of uncouth, ethnic rusticity or being part of a culture that would have difficulty finding acceptance in the United States.

**Iconic Multiculturalism**

As much as consumptivist notions of “traditional culture” in Korea evolved on the Korean peninsula, so too did consumptivist aspects of “iconic multiculturalism” find and hold purchase in the United States during the same time period, and in places such as

158 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-hurt/gangnam-style-fashion_b_1958634.html
KYCC, came together in consciously nostalgic zones of celebratory cultural “performance” in the Butlerian sense of the term.
To begin to explicitly define the idea of “iconic multiculturalism,” it is useful to reference Bryant Keith Alexander’s discussion of performative aspects of black male masculinity in his essay “Passing, Cultural Performance, and Individual Agency: Performative Reflections on Black Masculine Identity”:

Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s (1983) Imagined Communities, Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jiménez-Muñoz, and Lamash (1993)—in their essay, “Slips That Show and Tell: Fashioning Multicultural as a Problem of Representation”—suggest that cultural performance is a process of delineation using performative practices to mark membership and association. The delineation of membership depends on, for example, notions of territoriality and geographical claims, ethnocentricities, gender centering, sexual identities, age delineated subcultures, profession and class-specific forms of identifica-tion, and so on. Much of this delineation also depends on the privileging of one social marker, such as race, at the cost of another, such as sexuality. Whereas such categories are always social constructions, their persuasiveness derives from their seeming factuality and from the deep investments individuals and communities have in setting themselves off from the “Other,” who they must, then, simultaneously and imaginatively construct (Britzman et al., 1993, pp. 192-193)….

…The notion of passing can be extricated from this definition as both a means of maintaining cultural membership—by assuming the necessary and performative strategies that signal membership—and the conscious and unconscious choice to engage other performances. Cultural membership is thus maintained primarily through recognizable performative practices. Membership is contingent on the validation of those cultural performances. The accusation of passing is, therefore, an assessment of cultural performance.159

Indeed, KYCC members both literally “perform” their culture within the context of an American iconic multiculturalism that has also defined “authentic” ethnic membership in terms of a consumptivist notion of “culture” and become significant acts of reverse acculturation. In American identity politics of the 1980’s and 1990’s, such markers indicated membership to a group, which often defined “identity” as a "recognition of a collective hurt, followed by the mistaking of group position for a 'culture,' followed by the mistaking of a 'culture' for a 'politics' (pp. 147-48)." For Americans caught up in the struggle to define themselves as truly authentic ethnic members, it became easy to take the next step of defining membership to the group “culture,” and increasingly common to signify said group membership through

consumptive activity and totemic objects that marked oneself as a member. The elision of group position and “culture” become easy once ethnic members searching for objects of authenticity are able to acquire aspects of the authentic wholesale from the their “home” cultures.

Here, it is useful and necessary to talk about a specific kind of authenticity that speaks to the question of individual motivation towards achieving the imaginary authentic, one borrowed from tourism studies, largely because of the parallels between actual and cultural tourism in which members of ethnic groups participate partially to define the limits of group membership in the first place. Ning Wang points this out when she describes the “existential authenticity” of the cultural tourist:

*Here a big distinction arises. Unlike both objective and constructive (or symbolic) authenticities which involve whether and how the toured objects are authentic, existential experience involves personal or intersubjective feelings activated by the liminal process of tourist activities. In such a liminal experience, people feel they themselves are much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than in everyday life, not because they find the toured objects are authentic but simply because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily. Thus, analytically speaking, in addition to objective and constructive authenticities, the existential authenticity is a distinctive source of authentic experiences in tourism. Unlike the object-related case which is the attribute, or the projected attribute, of objects, existential authenticity is a potential existential state of Being which is to be activated by tourist activities. In this sense, the existential version can also be understood as a kind of what Brown (1996) calls an 'authentically good time.'*

For perceived insiders of the culture, this “authentically good time” is not taken to be that of an outsider-tourist, but as the pleasure of having achieved a level of the existential Authentic. In the specific case of KYCC, and its members, this is a process in which hangukinron-based cultural totems from Korea connect with a Korean American desire to achieve a level of existential authenticity as defined in an American culture busying itself with a notion of “culture” through not just concrete, commodified hangukinron-esque forms such as traditional dances and costume, but also through identification with perceived historical experience, which also used commodified totem objects to ground acts of reverse acculturation, which themselves came to constitute performative acts of culture. African-Americans during this period were focusing on cultural totem objects from other nations/cultures and constituting an oppositional identity utilizing said totem objects as markers of a constructed act of reverse acculturation. *Kwanzaa* is just one obvious example. For anyone participating in this discourse of “iconic multiculturalism” in perhaps the American 1980s and early 1990s, easily visible examples of stating personal-as-political alliance with certain group positions-as-culture, especially in the African-American community, were black teenagers following the trend of wearing Africa pendants, displaying red, black, and green colors of the UNIA flag, and

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other objects and practices marking the popular stance of "Afrocentrism" during that time.

Indeed, Korean Americans in KYCC were perfect examples of Korean American ethnic members trying to make sense of a Korean identity based on a shared lived experience in the United States, while trying to connect with the “real” sense of “true” ethnicity or authenticity is often elusive to other groups (especially African-Americans) but which the Korean processes of beopkochangshin\(^\text{162}\) ("preserving the old while creating the new"), which Nathan Hesselink identified as an ideological force in the cultural preservation/production process related to the classical, “traditional” Korean musical performance of samulnori) and hangukinron provide for this very well in the case of Korean America. In fact, the argument to KYCC became one of choosing which were the most authentic aspects of Koreanness with which to connect as the group chose certain things over possible others to define the range of acceptable social and cultural bonding activities. It is worth nothing that one can interpret KYCC cultural performance practices in terms of a hangukinron-oriented beopkochangshin or an American notion of “reverse acculturation”, depending on the framework one is working within.

Considering this, it is little surprise that rap music, popular as it had become during the zenith of “iconic multiculturalism" in the Zeitgeist, became so wildly popular amongst black youth that it burst the bonds of its subculture status and even found purchase amongst non-black ethnic members in the United States and has even recently found itself popular amongst youth in Korea, who nowadays mirror the oppositional positionality possessed of black youth for much of the history of popular music in the United States. Indeed, writing in 1993, Jeffrey Louis Decker noted in his essay "The State of Rap: Time and Place in Hip-Hop Nationalism":

> Members of the hip-hop nation form an “imagined community” that is based less on its realization through state formation than on the collective challenge to the consensus logic of U.S. nationalism. The language of nation is appropriated by the hip-hop community as a vehicle for contesting the changing discursive institutional structures of racism in America. For instance, the consensus discourses of cultural pluralism and the ethnic melting pot in the U.S. threatened the black community with a loss of collective identity.\(^\text{163}\)

In this way, for black Americans, proper and authentic membership in the black community came to mean perhaps wearing Africa pendants, displaying the red, black, and green, or celebrating Kwanzaa in lieu of Christmas. And the music that was the product of this rearticulation process -- Afrocentric rap music -- itself became the totem of authentic ethnic membership. It is easy to make the comparison between a black teenager playing loud rap music in his car or a Korean American performing Korean traditional dance and drumming as similar performative acts within the discourse of iconic multiculturalism. Rearticulated a bit further, it is no surprise that self-consciously


nationalistic Korean-Americans in the United States, viz “Korean Pride” or “K-pride”, also began to connect more with Korean popular music around this time (which is now commonly referred to with the moniker “K-POP” now), which itself quite un-coincidentally had come to increasingly resemble American popular music genres—especially, and unsurprisingly, rap music. Interestingly, this is where opposite ends of the political spectrum meet, united in the space occupied by Korean diasporic members:

"These phrases and sentiments are deeply rooted in South Korea, instantly conjuring up the rhetoric of the South Korean state and military, particularly at the time of his 1980s student activism. For young, then, these are the trappings of a right-wing nationalism, a composite of catchphrases and imagery unmistakable to any 1980s Korean pond jungle (antigovernment sympathizer). For young, this rhetoric also represented ongoing, albeit waning, South Korean consulate control of Koreatown, including quote many spies unquote and continued South Korean government indoctrination of Korean-Americans in Los Angeles. He prefers that Korean American spaces be you.S.minority spaces in hopes that through the riots Korean-Americans realized that “we are different from Korea,” and that “this [United States] is nobody to protest.”… “Korean power” —— the essence of national flags and anthems —— and “an American minority space” inhabit different ideological universes: South Korean rightist nationalism in the American civil rights movement.”

The fundamental contradiction between “Korean pride” and an appropriate Korean American subjectivity concerned with position within American society. And this untapped of the fact that this “rightist Korean nationalism” is often—actually mostly—quite ill-informed and simplistic. What defines “Korean pride” is usually defined in terms of iconic multiculturalism, but without its misguided liberal origins. “Korean pride” amongst Korean Americans is an essentialist discourse based mostly on superficial notions of ethnic pride within the context of iconic multiculturalism: it fetishizes markers of “authenticity” such as language proficiency, familiarity with pop-culture, holding rightist, “authentic” Korean political views such as an extreme dislike of the Japanese, racialized notions of Korean culture, as well as patriarchal, conservative views on gender norms.

By around the end of the time that is the central focus of this study, it became common to see in the San Francisco Bay area the loud music emanating from the lowered sports cars of Korean-Americans becoming that of Korean pop music, as opposed to homegrown art forms that were the totemic symbol of oppositional American ethnic identity, namely the so-called “gangsta rap” that found its origins in African-American culture. Now, one could hear so-called “gangster rap” from South Korea, spoken in Korean, although still operating within the genre conventions of its American progenitor. Korean rap music was different in this sense of possessing difference, but not

uncomfortably so, to the point of necessitating actual allegiance to the Korean state or an actual Korean way of thinking, as opposed to taking an oppositional stance within the realm of American identity politics. It was possessed enough of a Derridian sense of différance to invoke authenticity within the discourse of iconic multiculturalism, but not enough to force ejection from the fold of American identity altogether. At this point, one could behold an oppositional art form that was the product of black oppositional subjectivity in the United States travel across the Pacific and find purchase amongst Korean youth, with members of the Korean diaspora acting as the conduit for this cultural transmission.

After being successfully Koreanized, the Korean form of the genre could find easier consumption and utilization as a means of identity performance by Korean-Americans in that a given Korean gangsta rap song, originated as it was on the Korean Peninsula, was sufficiently authentic for those not trying to derive authenticity in terms of a hangukinron sense of Korean “tradition.” Such was a common dividing line between different cliques of Korean-Americans, some of whom derived a sense of continental Korean authenticity from mere pop cultural products made in South Korea, and some of whom acheived a sense of iconic multicultural authenticity and différance from attachment to Korean “tradition.” However, it is crucial to remember that both groups of Korean-Americans were drawing their notion of authenticity from différance vis-à-vis an actual nation outside of the United States, whereas African-Americans were pledging allegiance to a fictive, political “nation” outside of the American mainstream.

While more than a decade passed since coming to Korea to do research in late 2002, it took about this long to realize the nature of the ethnographic work I had conducted and completed before putting it in the box as I left the Oakland Bay Area in August 2002. I left Oakland, California, after putting my project into storage, headed for Korea and the research I need for my dissertation. During these years, of research and of, the small and ethnography remained out of sight and out of mind. Not until I was beginning to resume completing the dissertation did I begin to construct or employ certain key concepts as a way of talking about how Korean national identity has been constructed on the peninsula after the development period in Korean history. The concepts of the “monumental style” and what I call “manufactured homogeneity” did not exist in my head at the time I decided to conduct a photo and video documentary on the Korean Youth Cultural Center (KYCC) as part of preparing for a documentary on the Korean education system that I planned to conduct upon my arrival in Korea in 2002, but which never came to fruition. The KYCC documentary was to be a “practice project” as part of building a small body of work to demonstrate for potential funding purposes that I could carry out production work on a documentary myself, without the assistance of other parties. The practice documentary itself, in its original conception, had no real ethnographic intent, as it was designed to be a process documentary that would merely show what KYCC, who its members were, and what its functions were in the community as they prepared for their annual fall performance of Korean traditional drumming and arts. As part of demonstrating my mechanical proficiency in the construction of
documentary narrative, I went about establishing the characters in the group as part of explaining what the group was to the viewer.

Little could I know, upon beginning the documentary in the summer of 2001, what would transpire in September of that year, nor the effect that would have on the group and its members, as well as their conception of what it meant to be “Korean” in an American setting. Much to my surprise, this simple process documentary that had been the result of personal connections I had with members of the group—which also happened to afford me access and gain the trust of its members—quickly evolved into an exploration of the group and its members’ deep reconsideration of and referendum on what it meant to be Korean American in a time of national crisis, in the same way that the incident posed similar questions for everyone in the US at that time. The terrorist incidents of 9/11 forced Americans of all stripes to meditate on the question of who was inside and out as the urge to define a fictive “us”-as-victims of an imagined (and increasingly real) “them” who had not been even clearly and definitively defined at the time of the terrorist acts. Much to my surprise, the mechanical task of setting up the characters for the documentary so that audience members could be introduced to the culture of the group vis-à-vis the individual members being introduced on the screen took on a different meaning after the documentary changed course and became a document recording the reaction of the group's members to sudden pressures from Korean-American individuals and community organizations questioning their definition of Korean-American culture and by extension, identity. In the final edit of the film, this process becomes quickly apparent as the question of whether not to acquiesce to the requests of the older, first-generation Korean-Americans in the Bay Area that the fall performance be canceled out of perceived respect for the “mood of the nation” also called into question the KYCC’s raison d’être and quickly became a referendum for the group and all its members as to what being Korean-American and an ethnic member in the United States meant on a deeper, existential level. Asian-Americans, who had spent the 1960s and 70s distancing themselves from the outside, distant places that marked them as Other and outsider, were now, in an era dominated by iconic multiculturalism focused around a notion of culture authenticity, suddenly overflowing with the cultural currency required to define themselves as multicultural “real”, as a fully-realized and authentic multicultural member in the United States.

And therein lies the trick. Culturally essentialist notions of Korean “tradition” and authenticity were focused through the hangukinron discourse down into a finely tuned, perfectly honed piece of cultural authenticity. In the case of KYCC in particular, which was comprised of a group of people looking for that very holy Grail of Korean cultural authenticity in the American context, the practice of a truly authenticized, hangukinron-approved cultural practice perfectly met the culturally consumptivist needs of the group. As discussed above, the film Sopyonje, while making no overt nationalist argument, was making a culturalist one that played into prevailing nationalist discourses inherent in hangukinron thinking. The film tells the viewer exactly how and where to locate a pure and essential Koreaness. While speaking to the question of national identity, it allows nationalist discourse to proffer grand conclusions about Korean national identity, defined the boundaries of inside and out (albeit although the essentialist culturalist discourse does the heavy lifting of locating Koreaness in a specific kind of experience. This is a very experience that KYCC members were enjoying or hoping to have. If one's intention is to
connect with a truly authentic Korean experience as wrapped up in "tradition," then the learning of traditional Korean drumming and other performance forms that actually come from the core of hangukinron productions in the “monumental style” is the ultimate way to do this and makes sense as the central activity for members of the group “performing” identity, as well as Korean music, with the idea that there are certain kinds of cultural practices and tradition that defined the Korean authentic the range of the Korean authentic.

The 9/11 question had become a referendum on what it meant to be Korean, what Koreanness meant, and what it meant to be American. 9/11 was the source of pushback on generally unexamined notions of the "authentic" vis-à-vis the culture, the nature of traditions themselves, and a reconsideration of what the accoutrements of iconic multiculturalism meant as markers of ethnic identity in the United States. Suddenly, the group was forced to consider the nature of ethnic identity on a far deeper level than the identity politics of US-based “iconic multiculturalism” could account for, and in which KYCC itself, as a US-based group that came into existence in 198x, partially finds its origins. Interestingly, the terrorist attacks that would be the defining turning point in the documentary exploded directly at the point where Korean-constructed notions of “manufactured homogeneity,” as part of the workings of the hangukinron ideological machine, began to exert oppositional pressure against the very American identity politics of superficial trappings of ethnic identity existing within a rubric of celebration all and colorful festivals, ethnic food presentations, and ethnic dance festivals, along with their bright costumes and ethnic accoutrements that came to define ethnic otherness in the post-civil rights era of “iconic multiculturalism.” Along with the new terms that came with the discourse of “multiculturalism” in the 1980s and the hyphenated notions of identity they reified, such as the new emphasis on Kwanzaa, red, gold, and green Africa pendants, and ethnic food and dance festivals, the nature of hyphenated identity in the United States had become quite performative and caught up in the trappings of signs and symbols to become what I term “iconic multiculturalism.” Inevitably, KYCC had also participated in this discourse of ethnic identity in the US, have been especially been well known for its continued participation in the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, in which I also participated as part of bonding with and becoming an honorary member of the group. In the particular performance in which I had been involved in 1999, the place of the Korean drumming and traditional arts performance conducted by KYCC and its members was as merely one of a pantheon of similar performers from other ethnic backgrounds. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 would force the group to redefine itself outside of the notion of mere ethnic performance and refigure itself and the meaning of the art form they performed into a new notion of ethnic identity and American societal membership as defined in a time of crisis.

Considering the overt goal of defining an authentic Korean space within the multicultural milieu of Oakland, Korean Americans engaging in and performing an art form that itself had been undergoing a process of self-definition as it worked to redefine a space of authenticity within a Korean tradition also in the midst of reinventing itself makes perfect sense in terms of what Nathan Hesselink described through the Korean saying “preserving the old while creating the new” -- in reference to the creation of the very Korean traditional artforms that KYCC was practicing and reproducing, namely that of samulnori (Korean traditional instrumental ensemble) and pungmul (traditional Korean
Drumming). While for Korean artists and performers, these artforms required engaging in a process of focused nostalgia in the service of defining an aspect of authentic Korean artistic practice, for the Korean-Americans and others within KYCC, the performance of Korean traditional music became a way of engaging in and reproducing an artistic practice that defined authentic Koreanness itself, and everything that meant in the context of how Korean Americans would and should perform Korean identity in the Butlerian sense, while producing the cocomitant markers of ethnic American authenticity within and according to the demands of the iconic multiculturalism prevalent in the United States. For Koreans, the process of attaining and reviving musical “tradition” meant preserving and demarcating real Koreanness in the face of rapid societal modernization and other changes, just as for Korean-Americans such as those found in KYCC, doing pungmul meant a little bit more than simply performing archaic Korean musical forms. It was a performance and signifier of authentic Korean identity itself, especially as that is understood in the multicultural milieu of the United States. One might adapt Hesselink’s quote for the Korean-American context into that of “discovering and defining the authentic while inventing it for the self.”

I see as a convergence between consumerist notions of identity and culture in the Korea and the United States. In the case of the former, at an essentialized notion of Koreanness became increasingly palatable to a Korea that felt itself literally “losing its religion” from the late 1980s and early 1990s, at the same time that American notions of multiculturalism at that time began to turn to similarly problematic, essentialist notions of "culture." Here in the United States, as many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups began looking across oceans and over time to a rosy vision of an essential and true “home,” young Korean Americans searching for a concrete sense of self, on the same terms as other groups of ethnic Americans, found something particularly appealing in the newer culture of an “authentic” Korea, which was a notion actively supported by the ideological machine of the Korea state.

This is the key conceptual link between the preceding chapter on Korean gender politics and a discussion of the character of Korean American identity formation, from where which I begin this final chapter of the dissertation. I will outline the convergence between consumerist notions of identity and culture in Korea and the United States. In the case of the former, I argue that an essentialized notion of Koreanness became increasingly palatable to a Korea that felt itself figureatively “losing its religion”, at the same time that American notions of “iconic multiculturalism” in the 1980s and 1990s relied on similar notions of cultural essentialism to construct a new concept of “culture” that could be displayed and quite literally worn on one’s sleeve. Iconic multiculturalism had become the logical evolutionary end point and ultimate expression of a culture of "consumption," and a perfect convergence between both Korean and American notions of culture as commodity.

In this way, it is possible to construct an argument that links Korean Americans to a notion of essential, authentic "Korea" in terms of the peculiar needs of Americans of Korean descent attempting to identify an true essence of self in that country's identity politics. Although identity politics in this sense is linked to a different conception of nation in the United States, and occurs within a radically different socio-cultural milieu, it is still an form of cultural nationalism, one more acutely needed and felt by virtue of the
fact that it must be more arduously defined and defended against the perceived threat of cultural assimilation.

In this sense, the politics of Korean American identity are informed by not only the reductionist way in which minority identities are often defined in the United States, but also by the equally essentialist way that notions of "pure" Koreanness are increasingly defined in Korea. In the process of "looking back" to find a true, unadulterated, essentially Korean self (a need made acute by the perceived, very American fear of falling into the abyss of "assimilation"), Korean Americans latch even more fervently and wholeheartedly to a holistic version of produced Korean essentialism, in a way that Korean nationals who, as Yoshino would argue, generally accept only the parts of these ideologies that are most relevant and explanatory of immediate needs and concerns, might not be so wont to do.\(^{165}\) (Note: A possible point of consideration here might be the "cultural training" offered to the growing number of Korean adoptees who return to Korea to learn more about their "lost" self. This would be an informative look at the direct encounter between a "lost" Korean American groping with a central question of identity and the Korean authors of the text that represents a concrete answer. In this way, the encounter is less abstract than simply theorizing how Korean Americans connect with continental notions of Koreanness. Other concrete connections might include Korean schools in the States that are often set up as centers of linguistic and cultural preservation, modes of cultural representation offered by Korean consulates in the United States, which would presumably have some policy guidelines from Seoul.)

**Performing Korea**

The documentary begins with an introduction to the “cast” of characters who are introduced and become quite familiar to the viewer later in the documentary. I used still photographs from a previous photo essay I conducted on the group entitled “Korean Spaces,” which was a title highlighting the theme of KYCC being a performing arts group that also engaged in a particular kind of performance of identity vis a vis Korean culture, particularly in spaces that were delineated as spaces in which Korean continental culture was both consumed and performed. (consumption of Korean culture AS performance of it in the Butlerian sense? These are the spaces that enabled Korean *performativity*). The images in that photo essay documented the members of the group engaging in distinctly Korean activities that were significant as highly performative acts of culture that were also symbolically important markers of connections to aspects of “authentic” continental Korean culture. What had initially intrigued me about the group and its members was the apparently strong importance place on engaging in rituals and activities that members perceived to signify connection with or particular knowledge of authentically Korean things, spanning from relatively obscure traditional art forms to contemporary cultural acts such as drinking in Korean bars or regularly going to *noraebang* (Korean-style singing rooms/karaoke). My initial interest in KYCC came from the great importance members of the group placed on socializing in a markedly Korean way, and the great satisfaction and meaning the group found by engaging in this form of Korean–style socialization. I engaged and entered the group as both a member

\(^{165}\) Jun, “Contingent Nationalisms”: 18
and an outsider in that my mother is ethnically Korean but I am racially marked as different by the fact that my father is African-American. What makes KYCC such a unique ethnic space is the fact that its social space is so culturally homogenous --that is, Korean--even while its membership is quite open to non-Korean members. For KYCC members there were two main ways of defining the social space they occupied as authentically and unmistakably Korean. 1st and foremost, KYCC defined itself and its raison d'être in terms of its members commitment to learning and performing korean additional drumming. This is obviously the linchpin of the group's connection with Korean drumming, in the form of an authentic, continental Korean cultural practice, one that itself had recently been linked to the notions of a true and authentic Koreanness. And especially for a Korean cultural group based outside of Korea and comprised of so many Korean-American members, there are myriad other cultural practices that took on meaning as Korean cultural Acts, in the performative sense. These cultural acts, such as drinking Korean liquors in Korean bars or seen together in a Korean style noraebang, didn't have meetings unto themselves, but gained meaning outside of their natural, original, Korean context because they came to signify Korea or Korean culture itself, in the sense that unadulterated and unadapted foreign cultural acts marked the members of the group as generally non-American, and specifically Korean. KYCC members engaged in two kinds of “performance”: one of cultural acts that defined the social space of the group, while the other was that of the members members giving actual traditional Korean drumming performances. Whether it was singing Korean karaoke in Korean bars or joining a practice session for an actual pungmul performance, the social space of the group was always being heavily defined and reinforced as continentally and authentically Korean. A given cultural act such as drinking in local Oakland Koreatown bar and seen Korean songs at the Korean karaoke machine would serve the symbolic purpose of defining a shared commitment to learning more about Korea by doing Korean things and expressing that is a shared value of the group, while allowing for a more practical exchange of knowledge about either the Korean culture or language in that many members felt free to or were actually encouraged to speak Korean, especially given the presence of Korean nationals in the group whose first language was Korean. It is also important to note that Korean-American members of KYCC, like many members of the Korean diasporic community, enjoyed many of these Korean social spaces because such spaces often defined themselves as Korean by actively flouting state law in adhering to Korean social conventions regarding smoking in public places and even age requirements for consuming alcohol. The latter two factors seem to be responsible for the increasing popularity of these Korean spaces to non-Korean Asian-American patrons who also started populating them in the growing Oakland Koreatown at the time. However, the ability to engage in heavy smoking in public places or consume alcohol while under the age of 21 would presumably not have any bearing on a connection to a particular identity or to one’s sense of authentic Koreanness. I believe that even such minor acts has extreme significance 2 members of the group and their communal choice 2 rarely patronize non-Korean establishments, despite the fact that most of the members of KYCC were Korean-American and spoke English fluently, and did not seem to suffer from any significant difficulties fitting into greater American culture, as one might reasonably presume their first-generation parents might have. And this goes before even reminding the reader of the fact that several of the groups Main members were not of Korean
descent at all, but seemed to enjoy their full membership in the KYCC social group and apparent honorary membership as Koreans or, as it might be more politic to say, as privileged outsiders/friends-of Korea.

Given the fact that the overarching social norm and main basis of social bonding was around Koreanness itself, and given the social exclusivity of many similar Korean social groups, such as those often seen in Korean churches or ethnic campus organizations, it was actually quite unusual and surprising that the attitude towards open membership was so relatively liberal. KYCC was definitely surprising to me as an outside observer somewhat familiar with similar organizations who definitely were possessed of and unofficial requirement for membership. On the other hand, one of the other major values shared by group members had to do with the fact that understanding and performing Korean traditional drumming requires more of a philosophical commitment than an ethnic or racial prerequisite for membership. Indeed, I was able to gain a level of honorary membership in the social circle of the group, even though I never became an actual member of the performing group, something that requires actually being formally admitted to the group and pain membership dues. However, as I was most interested in documenting—namely photographing—aspects of group membership and the performance of Korean identity, honorary membership and photographic access was much more than I had ever hoped for initially. What actually accelerated the process of acceptance amongst the group members was the fact that I was very close friends with one of the groups most influential and socially powerful members, Ann Kwon, who would become president of KYCC by the time my video documenting that define the field work that informs the bulk of the present chapter would begin. In short, my friendship with Ann was my main point of entry and access to the group and single-handed enabled me to participate in its activities and form friendships with group members. It was a stroke of good luck and timing that and would become president of the group from just before the time I would begin filming and my time of closest interaction with aunt immersion into the group.

Another key member of KYCC, who was introduced early in the documentary film, was Donna Kwon. At the time, she was a doctoral candidate in the department of ethnomusicology and would later utilize some of her own experiences as a musician the group from which to base her own ethnographic work. Donna seem to position herself within the group as a dedicated and competent musician first, and ethnomusicologist and academic second. This is because she was a textbook example of the classic participant–Observer. She was deeply involved in the affairs of KYCC as an organization and had herself been previously president of the group. More than just a mere member, Donna was deed one of the key leaders of KYCC, especially in terms of music. She was one of two female senior members of the group who play the gaeng-gari, which is a small, brass gong that sets the tempo for the performers in the same sense of leadership that and orchestras conductor might. The gaeng-gari leaves little room for mistakes, since its piercing clang is arguably most honorable sound of all the percussive instruments being played by a Korean traditional drumming troupe, and has a sharp, incisive sound that Pierce is right through the deeper drumbeats of the other instruments that occupy the lower registers. The person playing this instrument is almost automatically the de facto leader and pacemaker of the group, and its wielder is required to have an exact and unswerving understanding of the entire piece, which includes not just musical
instruments, but also sets pace for the dancers as well. It made sense that Donna was one of the 2 senior members who most often lead the group in its practices and performances, censor understanding of the musical and dance forms was so deeply felt as both a musician and academic.

The other regular gaeng-gari player and senior member of the KYCC group was Hojung, who was a Korean national who had studied at UC Berkeley and graduated with a bachelors degree after her full 5 years at the University. She had been a full-time student as opposed to a Korean exchange student, who are generally not present for very long at the school or in the country and even more often not very invested in Korean traditional arts or performance. Hojung was a sort of link with Korean continental authentic identity for many of the Korean-Americans in the group, whose relationship with Korea proper was fraught or tenuous at best.

My time spent documenting KYCC’s performance of music, identity, and culture placed into sharp relief definitive aspects of an esentialized “Korean” identity in Korea from a process of monumentalization, reification, and fetishization of certain cultural practices and objects-as-totems within Korea. This laid the groundwork for me to follow this process to be down another path leading to a different ideological environment and every different set of needs for members of the fictive community of “Koreans” residing in the United States. For example, traditional arts symbolize a lost cultural heritage in need of revival or preservation within a society that has rapidly modernized and industrialized into the point that there rises a fear of “losing the [national/cultural] religion,” but in the American context in which it is seen as positive or even necessary for ethnic members (or “people of color”) to be aware of or appropriately “in touch” with one’s essentially “true” racial/ethnic roots and origins, an apparently ancient and venerable ethnic practice – no matter how constructed and actually quite modern – becomes a veritable basis and visible marker of true ethnic heritage and connection with the “true” ethnic self as this comes to be venerated in the mode of iconic multiculturalism that values difference from the mainstream in all its highly visible and obvious forms, especially in terms of ethnic foods, music, and dance. In this sense, the cultural totems of things such as “traditional” ethnic art forms take on a highly symbolic or even fetishized quality that is surely “performative” in the Butlerian sense, especially if they are cultural forms and practices-as-identity-markers that are actually, consciously performed in front of an audience as cultural markers.

**Releasing Han**

In the iconic multicultural discourse so popular in the United States, it is seen as desirable to connect or be connected with one's true heritage, and this discourse also appears in dealing with the issue of transnational and transracial adoption, especially with the advent of programs designed to teach adoptees of Korean descent how to connect with and know about their "true" heritage. This is the same birds and goal that drives many of those in KYCC to learn Korean drumming, so as to connect with the true aspects of real Korean this, as defined in the history, traditional arts, and connection with han. The dictates of iconic multiculturalism connect up very well with the South Korean government's project of defining and monetizing its so-called Korean "cultural industries." As the South Korean government has been working very hard to typify and
formalize what these cultural industries are, along with commercializing them for overseas and domestic consumption, especially in the way that traditional art forms and so-called “traditional culture” have been officially recognized and protected by the South Korean government and international bodies such as UNESCO, traditional art forms and practices have become far easier to commodify, consume and learn, especially as they are learned and promulgated by groups interested in channeling these art forms and passing them on to those with the proper genetic and blood connections, while also sitting into a discourse of authenticity within the rubric of iconic multiculturalism. The group KYCC sits at the nexus of these linked and overlapping goals.

Importantly, the constructed nature of han is not part of how members of the group deal with the concept when justifying the need for the fall performance. Han becomes, as it is for many Koreans, a real entity and an essential element of Korean identity and traditional drumming arts, something which needs to be confronted and released through the final performances shamanistic rituals. However, unlike the discourse within South Korea, this han is recognized as an essentially human emotion, one that Americans also feel as a result of the pain of 9/11. For members of KYCC, this notion of han becomes transformed into something that is inherently Korean in nature, since it is argued that han is an essential element of the art form of Korean drumming itself, but yet is an emotion that has built up for all Americans as a result of the painful experience with the terrorist attacks on September 11. Through the fall performance, KYCC justifies its desire to perform, since the art form itself is a release of han, although even non-Koreans are welcome and encouraged to release the han that they have experienced as a result of the pain incurred through the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In this way, KYCC fall performance becomes a way to offer Korean traditional Korean culture as a means to channel and release the han of all people, regardless of ethnic background. Thus, the fall performance becomes a universal space in which to release what has been broadened and redefined as a universal emotion. In the struggle to justify the place of Korean traditional arts as a legitimate form of grieving as a part of understanding "true" traditional Korean culture, KYCC unwittingly redefines han as a universal human emotion.

Interestingly, Korean traditional arts and drumming becomes the point through which this universal emotion can be channeled and released. Han is defined as both an integral element of Korean traditional culture and identity even as it is redefined as a universal human emotion. KYCC members masterfully deployed a standard, continentally Korean, constructed notion of han to solve their clearly American problem, and in the end succeed in throwing a certain notion of authenticity back into the face of the first-generation.

Hyunjung Lee, in her dissertation entitled Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea, talks about other acts of performative "global desire" in the productions of Nanta and the play The Last Empress, along with the "performing" of nationalism that went along with the 2002 World Cup.166

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Along the way, roundabout 1992, the transition into a truly "global" mode of thinking from a time of just talking about it was marked by an acute and specific existential angst vis a vis what it means to be Korean in the modern era, and what to make of all the changes that came with it. Indeed, What hath modernity wrought? and What's left of us? were the questions. And therein lay the rub.

But as the big payoff -- the success of the national economy, the ultimate proof-in-the-pudding of development identity's raison de etre, -- as the economy had the spit knocked out it in late 1997, South Korea was no more ready to change the fundamental assumptions underpinning the national project to develop, develop, develop than North Korea was ready to fold up its tent and scrap its national ideology just because its economy had stumbled.

But for South Korea, the party was over. The so-called "IMF era" had killed the mood, much like the police coming to turn off the music at a frat party -- it could and would continue, but in a much different mode and in need of a new way to be a party. So much of the discourse of Korean identity had quietly rested on the national economy, and as that economy shifted into consumer economy overdrive at the turn of the century, so did questions of national identity also get quietly answered. By the time the "IMF period" had ended and a new millennium began, Korean "traditional culture" had already been subjected to multiple processes and instances of being discussed, defined, and distilled into concrete, saleable objects for both domestic consumption as traditional beverages shik-hye and sujeonggwa being sold as "nostalgia drinks" in cans much like American Coca-Cola, while more abstract conceptions of tradition and Koreanness had found expression in shows such as Nanta, The Last Empress, or even as a whole genre such as that defined by the term hallyu ("Korean Wave"), and even in the chants, dances, and t-shirts that developed in recent outburst of sports national as Korean culture and society.

Korean culture is no longer defined by an abstract internal feeling, an abstract fact in need of help to express; in having been defined and distilled into specific forms, reified into objects and totems, it had become something to buy and sell. That was the whole point. Koreans are, in fact nothing more than modern people who dress up and playact tradition. The only difference is now they have credit cards.

**Consuming Tradition**

Consumer capitalism has answered the question for the time being. But much like the junk food that sometimes sates even the most ravenous hunger, it feels good for the moment, but is ultimately unsatisfying. And in using a food metaphor in the Korean context, one should consider the very Korean habit of following up a modern meal of beef or pork meat with the only thing that truly sates the Korean appetite: a full bowl of hearty and familiar bap. As is true in any cycle of revivals, the yearning, if deep and true enough, never really finds a satisfying salve. The cycles of yearning and revival movements continue to resonate, albeit with greater periods between them. "Tradition" is no longer part of one's spirit or being; it's a punchline.

In Korea, the consumer culture has appeared on the scene to answer this existential question, as possession of things stand as identity, as opposed to an external psychological appeal to "tradition." Indeed even the idea of "tradition" is now expressed
in terms of material things. If the self is to be understood in terms of the things attached to it, in any tradition comes to be defined as merely a set of things that constitute it. These things become windowdressing, mere add-ons to the extended self as part of an imagined community that includes it.

Korean-Americans in KYCC, much like Koreans on the home Peninsula working to preserve traditions by constructing new ways of making them relate to the exigencies of the present day, had their own set of identity-related, ideological needs. However, a sense of self as defined in iconic multiculturalism is defined through the journey, and hopefully, through the actual obtainment of what is considered to be the “authentic.” And herein lies the peculiar and particular success of KYCC and its members in its quest: this group of people seem to be quite successful and satisfied that elements of the authentic were able to be realized.

This very success of KYCC was what many other ethnic groups in the US searching for authenticity within the paradigm of iconic multiculturalism could not duplicate. For example, the “back to Africa” and Afrocentric movement amongst African-Americans during the height of the “culture wars” of the early 1990s were doomed to failure, at least in terms of the existential desire to find or “know thyself” in terms of the authentic culture external to the lived experience of those groups in the United States. Korean-Americans in the group studied here, for example, were able to benefit from the specific processes and resultant concrete trappings of an ideological and cultural project that defined and neatly packaged aspects of “tradition” in easily digestible, modern form, for modern usage. Samulnori, which was the ultimate successful product of Korean "beopkochangshin," was readily available, “hot off the presses” as it was out of the South Korean discursive, ideological machine that had already been in high gear to repack and "preserve the old while creating the new." Samulnori, as a genre and type of musical performance actually no older than that of American rap music in the United States, was quite modern and what it represented, even as the veneer of the ancient and traditional glowed even brighter and stronger. For KYCC, caught up in the struggle to define a basis for existentially authentic vis-à-vis personal and ethnic identity, the fact that they were “performing” a was a an authentic Koreanness that itself was the process of discursive creation spurred by tensions between the modern world and a desire to know one's "true" existential self. For a group of Korean Americans in the Bay Area performing both music and culture, samulnori and similar forms of modern-as-traditional culture were perfect fits for one another.

Korea has become an “imagined community” of consumers's primary identity as “Korean” has been supplanted by a new identity of Koreans–as–consumers. Even the language itself—which is always the locus and focus of nationalist who call for its preservation—has undergone fundamental shifts that have yielded new grammar forms. Take, for example, the advent of object honorifics), which was fond in the consumer-based service sector. In a similar way, the cultural grammar has changed to reflect new consumptive desires.

Indeed, KYCC, which was born within the American context of “iconic multiculturalism,” met a Korean consumptive form of identity designed to make Korean culture more patentable and easier to consume, in both the literal and existential senses of the word.
Chapter 6: The Triumph of the “Global Fetish” and Consumption

This final chapter of the dissertation is also the result of a failed project. In 2005, I was asked, as a non-Korean photographer and writer, to compile and write a collection of street photographs and essays under a pre-decided title within a series of works about the city of Seoul. Entitled “An Interesting Hell” [Jaemi Itneun Jiok], the book was to highlight, in both words and photographs, the peculiar and particular charm of the hustle and bustle of cramped city life, the crashing and knashing of old and new, traditional and modern, conservative and progressive forces in society and the city. While it seemed a worthy project in theory, and my photographic work a good fit for the project, in the end, the publishing company subscribed to a hangukinron-based view of Korean culture and tradition in being overly concerned with portraying a “negative image” of Korea and contributing to the “failure of the nation” [nara mangshin], a common concern of Koreans about Korea’s possible negative national image in the eyes of non-Koreans.

My work came to a different set of conclusions than those often overdetermined by structural analysis alone. Despite the age of formal hangukinron having come to a quiet end in terms of changes to public discourse about race when biracial Korean Dallas Cowboys quarterback Hines Ward caused a national conversation about racial discrimination in Korean society in 2004, the national doduk and other curriculums were changed to reflect an official national shift to new, popular towards the millennium’s new buzzword for Korea – “multiculturalism” – and in the wake of seemingly regular mini-scandals in the media involving stereotypical representations of other racial and ethnic groups. Especially as “Korea” had sucessfully defined, distilled, and commodified itself in the new millennium as cultural industries that would come to be considered constituent parts of the “Korean Wave” began finding purchase in overseas markets, an ideology designed to bolster the belief in Korea’s uniqueness and inherent superiority became not only no longer useful, but actually a bit embarrassing in a truly globalized Korea that no longer needed hangukinron as a spiritual/psychological crutch to get it to an imagined, abstractly-defined goal set in the far future. The future had arrived, it hadn’t come in a flash and fury of obvious harbingers and heralds to mark its arrival, and it came with Korean culture being bought and sold as a commodity.

The Golmok

As part of my work as a photographer and writer, I came to know the work of Korea popular towards and well-known street photographer, Kim Gi-chan, who photographed Seoul’s golmok (“back alleyways”), which he defined as the small “back alleys” of Seoul’s neighborhoods and the structural basis of the Korean mindset and character, much as one might – erroneously or not – locate the core of black American identity in the ghetto or Latino sensibilities in the barrio. Shortly before he died in 2006, I had a chance to interview him for SEOUL Magazine in 2003. In that interview, I asked Kim how he conceived of Korean identity. Kim replied that he believed Koreanness to be informed and constructed by the golmok. For him, as Seoul inccreasingly developed and modernized, the lifestyle of the golmok was quickly disappearing. This was eliminating the communal spirit, the close affective ties – the jeong to which Koreans had come to
describe, along with han, as one of the pillars of the uniquely Korean worldview and identity.\textsuperscript{167}

As I have described above, the ideological paradigm linked to such notions as jeong and han was that of hangukinron. Photographer Kim had characterized the space these abstract concepts as occupying as that of the golmok. And I share the idea that the primacy of this paradigm is fading as it become difficult to describe Korean identity as being spatially defined by the golmok. As the consumption of culture, the demand for “emotional labor” in the service of strangers\textsuperscript{168}, and even the consumption of human bodies becomes increasingly normalized, it becomes necessary to define and characterize how things have shifted.

\textsuperscript{168} Ronnie J. Steinberg, Deborah M. Figart Emotional Labor Since The Managed Heart The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science January 1999 (vol. 561 no. 1):8-26
The Noriteo

If hangukinron as the main constitutive part of an increasingly normalized, it becomes necessary to define and golmok no longer exists, but has been supplanted by a consumptive notion of identity, it becomes necessary to ask what the main defining, enabling space for consumptive acts would be. As a photographer/academic, I have come to the conclusion that the new defining space for Korean consumptive identity is that of the nori-teo, or playground. The golmok has been supplanted by the noriteo as the new spatial force defining Korean in the post-development hangukinron era. Especially as consumer capitalism and sheer consumption become the dictates of the day, society shifts the staging ground of social relations to this new, consumptive noriteo. That is the staging area for the material items that have become a part of Koreans’ “extended
selves,” to invoke Russell Belk\textsuperscript{169}. In the final analysis, Koreans have come to define themselves as an imagined community of consumers in a playground/marketplace of ideas and objects that have come to define Koreans as who they are.

At night, the streets and spaces of Seoul becomes quite a different kind of "playground" than during the day, one which remains comfortably out-of-sight and out-of-mind for many of this city's early sleepers. After night falls, and especially after around midnight, balloons go up, neon signs on portable trucks are lit, while men in dark suits with red faces stumble about laughing and joking loudly, streaming into places that cater to the darker, more elemental desires of the human psyche.
What *hangukinron* is hiding, from both the outside world and from Koreans themselves. It’s part of the Aristotelian “Royal Lie”\(^{170}\) that *hangukinron* keeps alive. Seoul nights are marked by drink, song, and the press of flesh for sale. For better or worse, Seoul – as is true with most urban areas of Korea – switches into a new economy driven mostly by the consumption of carnal desires. Some economists might call this a part of the "shadow economy" while a political scientist could call this a part of the "informal" economy or nodes of control. Some might even call them the "play spaces" of an older economy, one that many people would like to be rid of, preferably without having to look it in the eye, or confront the large role that this shadow lifestyle has taken in Korean life.

But there is another world, one harder to see, and much easier to want to ignore. What is perfectly obvious to the outsider – me, an American whose culture is relatively quite conservative about sex and liquor – is often something to which everyday Koreans are often completely, willingly oblivious. To ordinary Korean people who don't tend to walk around thinking about "Korea" all the time, these are the bars, night clubs, barber shops, room salons, "business" and mi-in [“beautiful girls”] clubs, and red light districts; there are also the connected businesses that support the main industries of the night, as seen in the many all-night restaurants, street stands, convenience stores, and the huge clusters of "love motels" that charge by the hour, often situated around any large university or other area where people are out at night.

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The carnality of Seoul night life is defined in the lack of limits, the basics of painting the town truly red, for better or worse. Put simply, there are always liquor, women, and places to play. In many of these places, there are also women whose express purpose is to provide the social lubricant needed to perform other social acts, especially in terms of the male bonding often considered to be a desired part of doing business in Korea.

Often, the kinds of service are not merely the traditional types of sexual services, but rather include all kinds of sexulized services, to the extent that they fill out a more intimate type of gendered emotional labor that are not considered to be socially and publically acceptable in many places outside Korea. In this way, the range of expected emotional labor, especially that demanded by men from women, is quite broad in Korea, and as a part of the playground space of consumptive identity in that culture, inevitably sets the terms for general relations between genders in Korea, especially since so much of service interactions are highly gendered, often performed by young women, regardless of job function. It is here we might consider the ubiquitous od the do-umi or
euphemistically translated term “narrator model,” whose presence is so ubiquitous at store openings and product promotional events that it has come to seem expected, whether the product being promoted is a new chain branch opening or selling shampoo in a big box store.
In this way, I argue that it is the extremely broad range of types of work in which women in Korea perform expected, “service-with-a-smile,” value-added emotional labor with a surprisingly diverse number of services (often not even aimed at heterosexual men) ranging from do-umi girls hawking wares in the department store to beauty salon assistants who regularly are made to wear revealing uniforms designed to look like high school girl uniforms, to even the skimpy outfits worn by female K-pop group members – which has even prompted an academic description of this phenomenon being tantamount to Korea becoming an “idol republic” with a major cultural export of overly sexualized young girl pop stars. Here, it is useful to quote Yeran Kim directly:

*In the context of Raymond Williams’ (1978) notion of ‘culture’ meaning ways of living, Koreans’ desire to leave behind the Confucian tradition (Kim 2003) and military dictatorship in favor of modernization and*
democratization has been constitutive of the ‘feeling of structure’ among Koreans. For Koreans, the ‘emergent culture’ (Williams 1978) of freely producing and consuming girls’ self-images is identified with the realization of libertarian democratization. Such historical changes in the social and technological mode of governing young femininity have, at least partly, created a ‘constitutive relationality’ in which the ‘ontology’ of girl bodies itself ‘becomes’ the idealized fantasy of the present times, that is, to be free, independent and hedonistic (Coleman 2008).

I would add that in the post-hangukinron era, which is possessed of an unabashed kind of consumptive desire and shot through with a feeling of structure,” and characterized by a development-era reationalizing logic of hamyeon-dwaenda in which all means are justified by a positive outcome, Korea has beecome criticized and highlighted as the world “capital of plastic surgery” by none other than CNN, the very embodiment of the international gaze upon Korea. It is doubtful that the the original architects of Korean national consciousness could have foreseen that some of Korea’s biggest exports would be the results of practices that come partially with the effect of commodifying Korean female bodies to the point that plastic surgery has become nearly de rigeur to the point that one in five Korean women is estimated to have had plastic surgery. I do not believe it to be merely coincidental that another major cultural export from post-development Korean society has also become prostitutes and the Korean style of state-fostered and –protected prostitution. It is already taken as a matter of course that prostitution is a major social problem in South Korea, with 330,000 prostitutes formally working in a population of just around 50 million, in a 24 trillion won ($22 billion USD) industry. Divided by roughly half between the two genders, then again into only the relativeley much more narrow slice of the population – between roughly eighteen years of age to forty – that becomes a number that places many everyday people into contact with prostitution on the ground, in the everyday. And given that Korean prostitution is a service industry relying on real interaction with everyday, average people, as opposed to say perhaps the United States, where it exists in either the underground of the extremely illegal and dangerous or the underground of the rich and the elite, Korean prostitution is a social space in which to conduct business, interact with clients, or meet old friends. It is a social lubricant characterized by its normality. Surely, in a society in which sexualized, young women’s bodies are the currency of KPOP-as-Korean-culture, and in which young women’s bodies are the vehicle through which attention is focused, via “narrator-models” who herald evrything from new product launches to the new bakery down the street, a culture conversant in a certain kind of fetishized feminity can’t be too allergic to prostitution. Or the unapologetic ubiquitousness of plastic surgery.

171 Yeran Kim, *Journal of Gender Studies* Vol. 20, No. 4, December 2011, p. 337
The fact that so much emphasis is placed upon appearance - especially for women - that plastic surgery has been reduced to a mundane economic decision as ethically meaningless as buying a new wardrobe or getting a new car is testament to the fact that women's main asset in this staunchly patriarchal society is her body. The only difference is the fact that now the body has become an object of consumption as well. Now, the normal female body has become pathologized as "faulty" - defined by a patriarchy living under the pull of consumerist desire. No place in modern Korean society has ever been given to the moral valence of such practical, functionalist decisions made for the sake of necessity and material benefit, so to expect such room to be given amongst Koreans in contemporary debates over the issue of plastic surgery seems unrealistic.

But in a culture - similar to that other, arguably even more fetishistic culture than Korea, Japan - in which male domination and the subjugation of Woman is understood to be endemic to the state of Koreanness itself, and in which Woman's role is constructed into a strict dichotomy of either sexual or maternal, the potential for fetishization of femininity itself becomes all the stronger. In nearly every realm of life in Korea, male life is valued over female life. Even if given individuals do not feel this way, the reality of societal norms makes this clear. Indeed, the idea that Korea, as a society and culture, has “sold its mother” to get ahead is something that public discourse hasn’t really concerned itself with since the days Sopyonje faded from public memory in the late 1990’s, when that film’s main actress transitioned from a paragon of Joseon-era beauty to a figure my female students snicker at when reminded of that particular fact.

The “Global Fetish” and the “Korean Wave” Ascendant

However, it is useful to characterize the way in which fetishized young female bodies as part of the commercialization and commodification of Korean culture and the desire to promote and export it abroad fits into Hyunjung Kim’s notion of a greater “global fetish.” I lifted this concept from Hyunjung Lee’s dissertation on Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea, in which she talks about how the notion of the “global” in South Korea having become so elevated that it has become its own rationale, one capable of explaining just about anything, or alternatively put, has become a rationalizing framework able to give meaning and worthiness to just about anything put into it, just because it promotes Korea or Korean culture in the global realm, or has worked to “globalize” South Korea. The two major examples she presented were those of Nanta and the musical production that told one of Korea's most tragic historical tales, The Last Empress. Any and all Korean cultural products and productions are seen to be worthy of representing Korea in the global arena and market. Indeed, in recent decades, the idea of the “global” has been raised to the level of fetish, as a rationalizing desire unto itself. When combined with another prevailing wind of the times, that of “identity consumerism,” which I have defined as an ongoing process and tendency for people in South Korea's runaway consumer capitalist culture to define existential questions at the macro level through consumptive behavior as individuals, the result is “the answer” to a certain kind of existential angst that was articulated especially loudly and clearly in the early 1990s in

174 Lee, Hyunjung. "Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea." PHD, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008
South Korean culture -- the question of “who are we?” and "where are we going?” became paramount once the material success of the nation became South Korean puritanical justification of the nation’s long-past articulation of sanctification, so the only question left remaining to ask is the most logical and inevitable ones, which would be, “what does this all mean?” And “was it all worth it?”

The inevitable answer might be “yes,” if one thinks about the advent of the “Korean Wave” and the discourse that has arisen around it since the term was coined back in 1999. Strangely and unexp’ectedly, hangukinron-based development dreams seem to have come true through this Korean Wave. Despite South Korea’s much-lauded success in shipping and steel production, and no matter how high the GDP rises, what hangukinron thinking has always yearned for was a spiritual, Hegelian kind of recognition. It hurts the hangukinron-minded to hear that Samsung is a globally-recognized company but yet nearly 60% of Americans think it to be Japanese, with a similar story being true for Korean conglomerate powerhouse Hyundai. Despite the bottom line being good for the Korean economy, this is still not as direct a form of recognition as a public, international talk of the quality of Korea’s cultural products with Korea being mentioned by name.\(^{175}\) It is not just coincidental that the term “Korean Wave” itself was coined outside Korea. As a form of “soft power,” the Wave has been quite successful in expanding Korean cultural influence in a way non thinkers could scarcely have imagined:

‘Korean Wave’ first began in the early 1990s in the film industry under the surveillance of the Korean government. It then spread throughout Asia’s rising middle-class in Asia as Internet technology penetrated the region. During the 2000s, ‘Korean Wave’ rose to become an economic phenomenon that contributes significantly to Korea’s national economy (Kim 2006). It has become both a national as well as transnational phenomenon (Ravina 2009). Here, Korean popular culture provides a form of pop nationalism that allows the nation-state to engage the forces of globalization in order to produce a transnational popular culture (Joo 2011). To the Korean government, ‘Korean Wave’ provides a form of soft power that enables the state to promote Korean culture by capitalizing on cultural themes that are popular among Asian consumers. In this way, ‘Korean Wave’ provides an effective mean of cultural diplomacy. For example, Korean-Malaysian relations have improved with the rise of ‘Korean Wave’ in Malaysia. Many Malaysians develop favourable views toward Korean society through their consumption of popular Korean television dramas (Cho 2010). The popularity of Korean celebrity also has contributed to closer ties between the Korean government and other Southeast Asian countries (Shim 2011).\(^{176}\)

K-pop is like a mutant cultural form that really doesn’t represent the culture it hails from. But it is a product of the society that produced it, in that it is an end-justifies-


the-means kind of organism, and is analagous to a cultural “cancer” that grows in the host, expanding unchecked past any internal controls that society can place upon it, and in the Korean case, is enabled by the will to power that defines the “global fetish,” possessed of an inexorable power to propagate that bursts past any attempt to curb its inexorable advance. Much like junk food fuels the obesity epidemic in industrialized nations through food markets driven by pure consumerism, K-pop resembles the aspects of other items within its conceptual category, but is certainly not art. It is something that resembles art that fulfills other carnal pleasures for the sake of doing so. Junk food is indeed something that one puts in the mouth and ingests, but it has no nutritional value; it is merely pleasant to eat and sates hunger. K-pop girl “idol groups,” replete as they are with teenaged girls in fetish clothing performing sexually suggestive dances, indeed sates the “hungry eye,” but there is little else of value other than simply encouraging catering to the basese and most vylgar of tastes while encouraging the ratcheting up of market competition in music in the singular dimension in which it is the most apt pupil – brazen sexual titillation. In this way, the social harm is done, albeit slowly, like the proverbial frog not in the well, but the stewpot, heating up so gradually that the frog never even realizes it is, indeed, cooked. But like everything in present-day South Korean culture, as long as someone’s buying, it’s going to be sold. Combined with the all-rationalizing power of the “global fetish,” such runaway cultural mutations become pushed by a culture industry intent on fulfilling hangukinron fantasies of Korean cultural dominance, albeit with a kind of cultural product that is no more Korean in form than the ever-popular Korean snack food the Choco Pie. Although made in Korea, and a product of Korean culture in the strictest sense of the definitin, it says absolutely nothing about the culture it came from in the greater sense that hangukinron thinkers seem to be using. What is peculiar about the K-pop idol group cancer is its ability to mask itself from the obvious fact of its non-Koreanness. It metastasizes even as it becomes more invisible and impervious to the obvious critique its existence begs for in South Korean culture that in the not-too-distant past was concerned with the encroachment of Western culture and habitually describes itself as “conservative.”. But it does its damage nonetheless. As Korea become a nation driven by “pop” or even “Lolita nationalism,” driven by the most crass kind of consumptive, carnal desires possible, it slowly loses the ability to check the very Frankenstein monster it created. Such unseen eventualities and realities will be the most ironic of all, given the ideological agenda hangukinron evolved from and the particular societal needs it was intended to meet. Indeed, Marx would agree:

“In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist.”

To extend this quote and line of reasoning, a consumer capitalist society with no qualms about sacrificing even (and especially) young girls for the sake of production begets "Lolita nationalism" as dancing girls on the screen, as well as a culture with a virtuosic ability to collectively turn a blind eye to the obviousness and pervasiveness of prostitution. In short, Marx might argue that the relations and interests of production might be cause for the most mercantile amongst a group to figuratively “sell their mothers,” (or daughters, as the case may be), in the case of actual or visual prostitution (Lolita idol groups). It is hangukinron thinking that becomes the enabling rationale to allow the latter to be possible. In one sense, it may be obvious to assert that no matter the actual needs of capital or the state, hangukinron thinking in terms of national pride would never allow for a public recognition of the role prostitutes in bolstering national goals (as footage of Korean government officials in the 1950’s awarding the work of Korean camptown prostitutes for their work in gathering capital for the nation from US soldiers suggested did briefly happen), but that self-same hangukinron that would allow for national interests to laud the work of KPOP artists violating every Korean Confucian norm of propriety in the international sphere, even if it did eventually force the expurgation of their prostitute sisters from the national pride-laden, globalization-boosterish, “cultural export” model that has come to be the catchphrase du jour in recent years.

As a most elegant proof of the wisdom of Marx’s words, the surprising decision by the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism announced the official retiring of the concept of han as a fundamental aspect of Korean culture and character, as part of the ten foundational concepts constituting Korean “cultural DNA.”

*The ministry finalized the ten attributes of Koreans in accordance to the value of sustainability for the future. They are: Heung, Perseverance, Sharing, Paradox, Fermentation, Propriety, Passion, Community Spirit, Togetherness, and Natural.*

*Koreans are born with a unique disposition of Heung, an excitable energy combined with all sorts of different emotions including joy, sorrow, hatred, and desire. Heung is combined with a dynamic, bright, and positive spirit and drives a passionate compassion. It is not a thing you can fake.*

Note the “unique” nature of Korean heung, an essentialized part of a new Koreanness. Importantly, this article published on Korea.net, a Ministry-controlled public relations outlet, prominently displayed a Spanish-language, full-sized newspaper spread with pictorial instructions as to how to do PSY’s signature horse dance. Of course, the government officialization of Korea’s noriteo culture of play is in line with the social

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178 Bureau, Online News. ““한국문화 유전자는 恨 아닌 興” (Korean Culture's Gene Is Not Han but Heung).” 서울경제(Seoul Economic Daily), 2012.09.18 2012.

relations that are a function of the consumer economy and would have likely been quite surprising to someone raised in the Korea of Kim Gi Chan’s golmok.

In a Korea defined by the social relations of heung, nurtured in the structural cradle of consumer capitalism, anything goes, as long s you’re having fun. And if the outside world is buying what you’re selling, anything goes.

The Exigencies of Excess

Figure 21 - Friends drinking in Hongdae

Perhaps this is the definition of “Hell” we must reach at this point, unlike the one originally postulated by my erstwhile publisher, but is one it became aware of after having been activated by my pictures, the peculiar kind of existential hell that someone
can only know after the fact of “selling one’s mother” and living with those terrible wages of sin, much like the fabled Judas Iscariot might have felt in a quiet moment while gazing upon his 30 pieces of silver.

This is one reason anthropologists are more effective outside of their own cultures and why, as I mentioned previously, they are encouraged to leave their own cultures to do their field work. In some ways, as an outsider, access to the inside is difficult; but in certain other, more important ways, access to the true, inner core of a culture, where the dirty secrets lie, is actually far easier.

The most problematic and perhaps deeply embarrassing parts of any culture are usually kept wrapped tightly beneath layers of social taboo and willful ignorance of that subject. This is one reason that in America, race is a favorite topic of comedians and movie comedies; many Americans are, deep inside, quite uncomfortable about the subject, so it is often as source of embarrassed laughter and shocked expressions when certain obvious things are pointed out that everyone thinks about, but which most people find too embarrassing to say aloud. Hangukinron thinking helps maintain a deafening silence on a variety of obvious social ills that would mead one to question the appearance of obvious cracks in the developmental dream.

**Sex Work**

The Korean media was abuzz with the issue of sex work from around 2004, when the Special Anti-Prostitution Law went into effect and Korean society was witness to the protests of sex workers in front of the National Assembly; it is only now that the noise of postured indignance and moralizing has settled back down into the normal, willful ignorance of the subject. It was just after that that the *Korea Herald* asked me to do a photo story on the aftereffects of the law; I was surprised at what I found, as well as surprised at how little Korean people actually knew about what one could argue is one of the key social problems of modern society, albeit a problem that masks itself very well. I think that the reason it flies under the radar of many Koreans in everyday life is not because it isn't there, but rather because it is so pervasive that one can't continue to be struck by it all the time. Humans are socially adaptive animals; the socially distasteful idea of sex work in society is like a bad smell you come across when stuck in a room you can't leave – you simply adapt and soon cease to notice the smell at all. It also does not easily fit into the narrative of hard work and success that dominates public discourse. Korea is, after all, a case of the “model minority” that has bought into its own myth. *Hangukinron* discourse enables and encourages this, while also offering itself as a convenient cloak under which to obscure facts of life and easily visible, lived reality that contradict dominant, rationalizing ideologies or are simply uncomfortable to those with more sheltered sensibilities.

This is not to say that most Korean people are not aware of the fact of sex work in Korean society, but rather that people tend to not want to recognize the social pervasiveness of what is undeniably a social institution, as well as a major part of the national economy. Both are undeniable facts, obvious to anyone who has been keeping up with the government's own conservative statistics, or who keeps an observant eye.

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opens when walking down just about any street in any town in Korea; from barber shop to room salon to business club to sauna to "sports massage" parlors to neighborhood hostess bars to outright red light districts, it is hard to find a street where women’s bodies aren’t the objects or conduits of consumptive desires. Indeed, it is hard to find spaces for heterosexual men in which sex itself, or value-added sexual services, are not being pushed in some form. But even if one is able to deal with the reality and enormity of the industry, most people are still in denial that a lot of men and women are involved in a thriving, economy with the sale of sex and other vices as major parts of the economy.

Figure 22 - In Korean advertising, women, liquor, and cigarettes are often semiotically linked items.

The three common "vices" go great together. Most people, understandably, find it hard to personalize the stories they see in the newspapers or on television, and do not want to consider the fact that it is may be their daughter or sister, or perhaps their mother, aunt, or even grandmother might have been involved in this industry at one time in their lives. What makes this fact obvious is the way sex workers are treated by the Korean media: we generally only hear about the extreme cases, in which women are hapless victims, who don't resemble "anyone I know." They are simply "pitiful" or alternatively fallen women, in need of help and sympathy in the former case, or derision and contempt on the other. These extreme representations avoid the fact that many of these women are largely somewhere in between the tragic cases, and that many of the women are motivated by the same emotions and material concerns that any drive you, me, or anyone else.

These are women making a living, and in the views of every single woman interviewed for the photo essay I originally published in the Korea Herald, they don't think of their work as fundamentally different from the way you or I makes money to put
food on the table or pay their bills. That is one common view that all women spoken to in relation to this piece made, which they claimed was echoed by everyone else they know. One common reaction I received was one of great hostility and suspicion, especially when I introduced myself as a "reporter" for a newspaper; they were largely quite angry with the way the Korean media has dealt with this issue, which made my initial interviews quite hard to carry out, and this story nearly impossible to photograph.

There are so many different kinds of sex work, and accordingly, various kinds of sex workers, in Korean society. My first and most useful informant was, surprisingly, a woman who owns a bar in Itaewon's infamous "hooker hill," which would be the easy and expected place for the foreign photographer such as myself to start a story such as this. Ms. X, as I shall call her, was helpful because she had the most perspective on the issue, both in terms of the fact that she was in her late 20's, as well as because there were specific reasons why she did not want to enter the much larger and more lucrative Korean-oriented sex industry.

Figure 23 - Ms. X at work.

Ms. X described sex work in Korea as being of two main types: that having to do with "entertainment," with sex as an option for the girl to make extra money (most bars or hostess positions), or as a straight sex-for-money relationship, such as is found in a typical red-light district. Ms. X had worked in the American-style "entertainment" end as a "juicy girl" for most of her 20's, earning money from customers by making 50% on every 20,000 won drink a male customer bought her. "Juicy" bars are generally only found in places such as Itaewon, which caters to foreigners.
The Korean-style "entertainment" establishment that is not to Ms. X's liking generally involves drinking prodigious amounts of alcohol with male customers who tend to come in large groups. In most room salons, "mi-in clubs," business clubs, etc., the women don't have a choice as to which customers to take, and according to Ms. X, tend to be far more demanding and disrespectful of their hostesses, as Korean men tend to drink far more than American men in their socializing, on top of the fact that Korean men tend to come in groups, whereas men come either singly or in pairs. In both cases, women make their only money from the actual premises based on the drinks they encourage their clients to have. but in the Korean-style case, drinking/hostessing establishments give the workers a flat fee for the group, usually in the range of 30-50,000 won, whereas in places catering to foreigners, the money is a 50/50 split for every drink purchased, with no upper limit. So the woman working for a Korean place is saddled with the burden of constantly drinking large amounts of real alcohol and having to make her money from "the second stop" – going somewhere to have sex with the customer for usually a couple to a few hundred thousand won.

Figure 24 - A small "juicy bar" counter in Itaewon.

The Koreans-oriented room salon girl, in order to make any decent money, needs try to stay sober while as a rule convincing the customer to go out for sex after drinks, whereas the foreigners-oriented "juicy girl" makes the most money drinking "special" (read "non-alcoholic") cocktails while encouraging their clients to spend their cash on buying as many drinks as possible. Sexual services, if the "juicy girl" actually wants to offer any (some, she tells me, do not ever or often leave the bar), are occasional and
usually involve a returning customer, or a customer who has spent an inordinate amount of money on drinks.

Of course, there are places that offer straight sex and really only use the bar as a front, but most of the money in Itaewon is made on drinks, drinks, drinks, with sex as an option if the girl is willing and the price is worth it. In the Korean case, the game involves trying to imbibe as little alcohol as possible while trying to not appear to be doing so, even as you encourage the client to drink more. But there is no direct financial incentive to drink more, or even to get the client to do so, after having received a flat fee for the group, and the real money is made by leaving with the customer, in which case all of that money is the hostesses' to keep. Ms. X is a "juicy girl" who saved her money and bought out the owner of the bar, so she keeps all of her drink tab, since she is the owner and operator. She has another female friend working for her during the days, of whose cut Ms. X keeps an unspecified amount.

But what of straight sex-for-money? What of the many and much more typical red-light districts that are exclusively for Korean men? I spoke with Ms. Y, who is in her early 20's, lives in a small town in the southern part of the peninsula, and was frank about her reasons for entering into the more direct style of sex work, the red-light districts found in almost any medium-sized Korean city as well as all over Seoul – Cheongnyangni, Miari, Yongsan, and Yeongdeungpo.
My talk with her was brief, not to mention expensive. Her room, which she said is typical of many and any others these days, was surprisingly spacious and clean, albeit suggestively red. I had about 15 minutes to talk, since that's about all the time I'd get as a customer. I decided to get right to the point and broach the big question of how people generally got into this kind of work – was she in debt, were there cases she knew of women trapped in debt bondage, or perhaps even women being kidnapped from the countryside? Her reply was a dismissive laugh, whereafter she chided at how ridiculous a notion that was. Perhaps such things were true in the 70's or 80's, and you heard about such cases sometimes in newspapers, but there are so many women wanting to work in red-light districts that there was no need for such ruthless recruiting.

Contrary to what many people want to think, there is such a high supply of women wanting to do this work, with the competition to attract and keep the best girls so strong, that women scarcely needed to be coerced. In fact, her room and all the furniture in it was completely free and part of a package deal, such that women could walk in off the street, not pay a dime, and start earning money for herself and the house. The way she described it, supply was so abundant that it was in everyone's best interests to aggressively recruit with clean, fully-furnished rooms.

Ms. Y laughed off the "Special Anti-Prostitution Law" for what I already thought it was – a show for the media and the public, after which it was back to business as usual. Brief talks with a few other women confirmed that the crackdown had scared a few girls away and briefly kept recruitment down, but it was apparent that it was business as usual in the major red-light districts around Seoul.

Ms. Y explained that most working girls lived and worked in their rooms, with a day off once a week. Girls came for all kinds of reasons, from supporting family members back home, to paying off personal debts, to wanting to gather capital for starting their own businesses, or for no particular reason other than make a lot more money than they could otherwise. "That doesn't happen anymore" she said, snickering as
if even suggesting such a thing was utterly ridiculous. "There are so many girls wanting to come to do this work - why would you have to force them?"

She continued to emphasize the ludicrousness of the notion that anyone was forced into this sort of work anymore, before proceeding to explain her own circumstances. In her case, her mother had become hospitalized, so she had made the decision to come to Seoul and earn the money to cover the ongoing bills. She had been allowed by the house to adjust her schedule to three weeks on and one week off to travel back home, so she lamented the fact that she had no rest days for that long stretch of time. In the end, she seemed to be implying with her answers, as well as through her expressions and demeanor, that it had been a financial choice, albeit one inevitably influenced by circumstance and the social reality that she was able to easily make more money through sex than any other kind of labor, but she did not equate this with not having had a choice.

This brought me to think once again about the issue of supply, which is positively staggering. The Korean government's own late 2002 estimate places one million women engaged in sex work at any one time, which is almost unbelievable until one remembers that it would take a high number to support an industry that was 4.4% of the GDP, which is more than is constituted by forestry, fishing, and agriculture combined (those three industries make up 4.1% of the GDP). And this is a conservative estimate, based on the of formal places of prostitution that can be tracked, in terms of numbers of workers and estimated revenue; other, less trackable forms of informal prostitution are still nearly impossible to quantify.
When one realizes that these statistics easily translate into something from 1 out of 10 or even 1 out of 6 adult Korean women having worked in the sex industry at the present moment – and this goes without mentioning the number of women who might have worked at any point in their lives – the social implications of these estimates simple take the breath away.\textsuperscript{181}

What seems apparent in this whole public discourse about sex work and its treatment as a "social problem" with a clear and concrete solution – public crackdown and a "zero tolerance" policy – is just how unrealistic and ignorant of history it is. Obviously, sex work has become as important a part of the economy as any other "legitimate" one; more important than even that, it is an integral part of everyday culture as well.

Unfortunately, the Korean media treats the issue as they do any other – superficially, and represented through atypical and extreme examples that work better to spice up the story than convey a more realistic slice of reality. Political groups use the issue – and the women – as alternatively whipping boys or sad sob stories that further their own agendas. What is really being ignored is the very culture that legitimates sex work as a part of everyday life, or the use of the female body to sell everything from bread to even toothpaste – as something that has been completely normalized.

\textsuperscript{181} While I have been unsuccessful at tracking down the original statistics that were emblazoned across Korean news media in 2002, this source conveys a similar set of statistics as they have been reported over the last decade in South Korea: Ghosh, Palash. "South Korea: A Thriving Sex Industry in a Powerful, Wealthy Super-State." \textit{International Business Times}, April 29 2013 2013.
Whether sex work is "good" or "bad" is not the crux of concern here, but it would seem that this is the only truly interesting aspect of the matter, and is the only worthy question of consideration for anyone truly concerned about this issue. What does the fact that there are more sex workers than schoolteachers mean for society? What should one make of the fact that it is easier to gain employment as a sex worker through a neighborhood jobs circular than it is to get a job in McDonald's? What of the fact that, anecdotally at least, some significant amount of the capital that goes into starting "legitimate" businesses in Korea can actually be traced back to a women working on her back? This leads us to the big question: How does this affect men's views towards women in general?

What these questions speak to – as well as the several people interviewed for this article – is the fact the "social problem" approach to this issue becomes an exercise in futility when we, as a society, simply morally condemn all sex workers, or the industry itself, or even the police forces and government agencies that protect and regulate this trade in sex for money. The problem is deeply structural – it is not a matter of mere morality, or one of passing new laws, or having temporarily enforced, zero-tolerance crackdowns. In order to deal with this deeply-rooted structural problem – one that is also a major underpinning of both the economy and culture itself – it is most useful to contextualize this issue – or the cases of the girls with whom I spoke for this piece – within a much larger picture. One must see the problems as they are linked together, rather than simply scrutinize the smaller parts of the equation.
Gender and Social Status

For example, one might consider the fact that Korea ranks 64th out of 70 countries measured in the United Nations' commissioned Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) in 2007, which is calculated based on the number of women in actual positions of economic or political power. Just to give this statistic some context, the US that year ranked 10th, Japan was ranked 44th, Thailand 55th, Russia 57th, and Pakistan 58th. The only other countries that actually managed to score behind Korea were all places in which women's inequality is overtly and sometimes even brutally enforced; in ascending order of GEM rank: Cambodia, where domestic violence is not even legally a criminal offense, comes in right behind Korea. The United Arab Emirates, where a man can still legally take up to four wives, is 65th, and Turkey, where "honor killings" of women who have had the audacity to be a victim of rape are still often committed by male relatives of actual victim, took 66th. Sri Lanka followed, with Egypt, Bangladesh, and Yemen bringing up the rear, last out of of the countries measured. It was again a blow to Korean national pride to have that already abysmal ranking drop again in 2008 to 68th place.\footnote{The Hangyooreh, no. March 10, 2012 (2012). http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/343215.html [accessed July 28, 2014].} No matter how high the GDP rises, or Korea hosts G-20 conferences, the reality in a nation steeped in a consumer culture in which women have become a common currency is reflected in such measures of international standing that examine aspects of life that are not mere functions of the fiscal economy.

Does this statistic really have absolutely nothing to do with the high rate of state-supported, socially sanctioned sex work in South Korea? Does it have nothing to do with the fact that appearance is still, realistically, the key factor in most women getting jobs, all other factors being equal? In many other developed countries, including the United States, requiring pictures on résumés, or even asking to indicate age, place of birth, ethnic origin, religion, and marital status is illegal and is the grounds for lawsuits if asked for. Is it really surprising that in a country in which the sale and importance of the woman's body plays such a large part of the economy and culture that even the Ministry of Gender Equality has not even addressed this obvious issue?
If the sex industry is as much a part of Korean life and the economy as any other, then what seems important to consider are the demands of the sex workers themselves, echoed in the comments of all those interviewed for this piece, to be treated as what they are, for better or for worse – integral parts of the economy and culture. If someone has a bone to pick with the ramifications of this on greater society, it seems wiser to call into question the overall position of women in society, the legal and structural factors that create gender inequality and sex discrimination, as well as the overall societal attitude that so disproportionately values consumption of the female body over any other kind of work that a woman does and can do. If one wants to address this so-called "social problem," the best strategy would seem to involve ceasing to focus on individual cases, and instead squarely address what is a macro-level issue with macro-level solutions that speak directly to the problem of women's overall status in Korean society, as opposed to alternatively demonizing or lionizing the cases of individuals for the sake of news ratings or use as a whipping boy for one's moral agenda.

**Into the Light, into the Future**

"Light" is often the metaphor for talking about the future; Korean media campaigns and propaganda slogans often talked about the "bright future" linked with an open heart. I am of two minds about the subject; I believe that the future of Seoul and Korea indeed to be bright, but that with every silver lining, there is a hidden price.

Moving from golmok to "playground" to where? There are, of course, the many places where people live, and people have made great effort to combine the seemingly
contradictory goals of cramming as many people as possible into a given amount of space, while making it a space humans would actually want to live in. So city planners and apartment engineers build up, seeming to try and reach higher and higher away from the gritty reality of the ground.

Figure 30 - The golmok meets the modern city.

But there seems to be a price paid for Koreans' sudden obsession with everything modern, new, and branded with names of seeming wealth, status, and power. As an outsider, as someone who comes from a country that has naturally developed into its industrial and economic power, I see something else that comes with the nouveau riche naming of apartment buildings – "Golden" and "Mansion" and "Palace" and "Tower" and "Castle" can be combined in any way you like, along with specific words that connote feudal status, such as "Noblesse" or "Noble" or "Rich" or "Intelligent." The furniture that Koreans tend to buy seem like a veritable parody of the concept of luxury, a hodge-podge of European baroque gaudiness and a tribute to conspicuous consumption.
Figure 31 - The auspicious name of one of Seoul's popular apartment brand/chains.
“Honor Thy Consumer”

The very spaces of the city have come to no longer resemble anything Korean. And perhaps it is too simple to glibly call this "Americanization." I think it's something more, perhaps the first steps to a truly global culture that America and other capitalist democracies came to define first. The future is indeed fun, since I'm told that Starbucks tastes better, movies in a Megabox theater are punchier and more dynamic, the comfortable cars of Hyundai, Daewoo, and now Samsung have smoother rides than the sputtering, manually operated vehicles of old. Maybe this move "forward" is inevitable?

Indeed, the aesthetics of an inevitable capitalist/corporatist futurescape have already been articulated by author David Mitchell in his book *Cloud Atlas* and the film of the same name, which imagined an future slave caste in a heartless future Korea with a “Neo-Seoul” at its center. The film extrapolated from many elements of present-day Seoul that could point to a technologically advanced, dystopic, freedomless future in which humans relations have deteriorated to the point that people have become not just mere slaves to the interests of capital, but to desire itself, a reality in which the slave-clones who are often subjected to normalized sexual abuse and exploitation, have only one directive: “Honor thy consumer.”

Needless to say, the Korean movie audience and general public, as sensitive as it is to potentially embarrassing representations or criticisms of Korea, was completely nonplussed by the film, despite the fact that a Korean actress was appearing in an international, big-budget production. It is safe to say that the Korean audience completely missed the subversive, subtextual critique altogether.
Considering the way reality looks today, the fact of fetishized femininity, the visual prostitution that is part and parcel of “Lolita nationalism,” and the many other ways in which South Korean society has become a slave to interests of consumer capital, with any cognitive dissonance being resolved by the rationalizing power of *hangukinron* logic, the dystopia of Neo-Seoul does not seem so far-fetched. Especially given the infamous exploits of South Korea’s prodigal son, human cloning researcher Hwang Woo-seok, the idea of putting basic ethics on the back burner for the sake of national glory – for gaining the nation another First-prize plaque on the global wall of fame – the invocation of the dark spectre of human cloning was entirely *apropos*. South Korea has been and will likely continue to be able to forgive any ethical slight for the sake of international vainglory.

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183 Wachowski, Lana and Andy Wachowski. "Cloud Atlas." 172 min., 2012: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVAPjl6PZ2g
Why do corporate visions of urban spaces and reality have to dominate over others? What about the democratization of the landscape? Is it not tragic that the spaces that come to define the boundaries of all our activities are largely not created by most of the people who occupy them? In democracies, we tend to find it important to participate in the choosing of our political leaders. We expect to have a say in the people we associate with, the freedom to move about and travel, and revel in our freedom to define our private spaces.
The Saccharine Pleasures of the New

Still, there is a certain saccharine pleasure in the mass consumption even in the corporatized and commercialized atmosphere of urban culture, the tension between the old sensibilities and Korean personality that are the legacy of times spent living in the golmok, which conflicts with the newer attitudes created by a new Korean affluence and obsession with things "luxury" and "comfortable." Within this whirlwind of change, you have both the disappearance of individual choice that comes crashing up against old-fashioned Korean dynamicism that makes Seoul a truly "interesting hell."

This is what will really mark the beginning of the end of the "old Seoul" – the remnants of pre-development Korea that was and is a welcome counterbalance to the ever-encroaching invasion of glass, steel, and plastic. Yet, it is not the materials themselves that spell the doom of everything that makes Korean city culture unique. It is the unquestioning willingness of the city's denizens to knock down all that is old or stained by years of use, or to welcome the corporatized versions of what was once original and individual; the taste of Seoul's food is already becoming notably bland and uninteresting, as the basic ingredients for cooking most foods now tend to come from the same sources, forcing even the most old-fashioned and talented grandmother cooking her favorite recipes to work with the most uninteresting of creative palettes. No matter how talented, even the most inspired artists cannot create well if limited to a few simple colors.

But by the time the taste of dwaenjangjigae starts to taste the same everywhere you go, it will already be too late. When the clothes we buy are the same as what everyone else's, we lose something. When we all drive the same cars, live in the same
apartments, eat the same food, and even spend our free time in exactly the same ways, and even as our own desires are now largely no longer our own but what advertisers and marketers have convinced you to need and want – where does one define the self? The pieces of Seoul life that have made it unique, like little bits of heaven surrounded by what people have mistakenly called "hell," are going to disappear. When the street food stands either disappear or become chains, the crooked streets so full of character have been paved over by high-rise officetels and apartment buildings, and the open-air markets all become E-Mart outlets for mass consumption – what will define Korean life so specifically from Japanese, French, Canadian, or American life?

But there is something more than just this downside. One cannot deny the sheer, unadulterated fun that defines Seoul life, Seoul nights. There is pleasure, especially as an American, at going to the E-mart or watching movies at massive cineplexes. Watching the overwrought melodrama of Taeggukki play out on the big screen was almost painful to watch; yet, I couldn't help but shed a tear in one scene, despite the fact that I hate all of that director's films. It's slick, pre-packaged claptrap; but it works.

Many Koreans who move to the US or Canada describe, to their surprise, that these are boring places to live, in comparison to Korea. With America's overall economic development and relatively high standard of living, with that long-developed stability, comes a lack of surprise, tension, or social danger. Korea is a country whose development happened in fits and starts, partially under self-determined, Japanese, and American regimes, against the backdrop of war and the insecurity that followed it, combined with the conflicts and contradictions caused by a rapid, forced, and often violent development regime. Korea gathered its capital through both hard work and borrowing, through means both moral and immoral; individual sacrifice, lack of freedom of dictatorship, gains offered by the US through the dispatch of troops to Vietnam, capital gained through sex work, the exploitation of labor, as well as countless acts of individual selflessness – both good and bad were part of the development story. Both good and bad manifest themselves even today.

So in all honesty, I cannot say that I don't feel a conflicted relationship with the ease of life here, especially as Korea and the world globalize along increasingly similar lines. And yes, there is obviously real, palpable pleasure in the older ways of playing as well, as found in drinking, dancing, singing, and sexing the night away. There is a "dirty" underside to the clean, polished face of Seoul and Korean life. It is, strangely enough, that dark side that gives the one of light a certain kind of meaning. There is a constant, nearly indescribable tension here, one I had never felt before coming to Korea, marked by the dichotomies of old and modern, dirty and clean, corrupt and pure, light and darkness. That tension is what marks Korea's charm, its irresistible new lure to the outside world. But there is a sadness, too. There is loss here. As Korea walks away from and becomes more and more of a stranger to its own older way of life – as the cultural memories of the golmok pass out of memory, as Korea becomes more of the sungjinguk it has so desperately wanted to be – a certain unique and peculiar aspect of the Korean character is being lost. From the early 1990's to just into the present is what I see as the "golden age" of the Korean street, when Korea stands at a fragile balance point between the past and the present, the then and now, un- and over-developed. In a way, it will never be worse and always seems to be getting "better."
Once Korea comes a bit further into the realm of the modern and postmodern, when the rule of law become pervasive and people no longer ignore traffic lights, all wear their seat belts, and don't curse at each other any longer; when the street stands are gone, restaurants are all chains, and we all eat lunch in food courts; when the red light districts are closed, people stop drinking to excess, and the streets are empty after 12 – for many people, Korea will have taken a step closer to being a "heaven," the dream of decades of development. But for all the hard work and feverish effort made to get ahead – without
ever asking the question of "why?" – many Koreans will have forgotten all the guilty pleasure of having lived in "hell" along the way.

Epilogue:
The "Global Fetish", Or How Identity Consumerism has Supplanted *Hangukinron*

Social sciences are not predictive, but can only provide explanation and analysis after the fact. This is not to say that theoretical frameworks and models aren't useful to get a general sense of the way things will go, but they aren't useful as predictive models of the universe down to the point that you can see what will happen in individual cases at the micro level. However, this being said, I'm going to go ahead and make a wildly irresponsible and provocative predictive statement here today, anyway.

As I am wont to do, I'm going to make a wild prediction just for the sake of making a point. Again, Hyunjung Lee’s dissertation on *Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea*\(^\text{184}\) poses just the right questions of “Who are we?” and “Where are we going?” became tantamount, above even the most logical question to raise, which would be, “what does this all mean?” And “was it all worth it?” Have South Korea somehow come to consider the latter two questions, I believe this would be a very different country we live in today.

However, as it happened, the former two questions were posed in the most simplistic senses, in terms of whether or not South Korean society had forgotten its original “traditional culture” and where that would fit into a modern, new society that looked very much like the West, but which people were starting to slowly realize was not the West itself. South Korea had become the modern, shiny, successful nation it had always wanted to be, but it was becoming more apparent that there had been a hidden price. To me, an outsider an academic city and looking back on things in 2014, the price seems to have been something akin to the spiritual price one pays when you sell your daughter during hard times to pay the rent. Obviously, I'm being a bit hyperbolic, but I'm simply saying that this is a “price” that's hard to define or put into a specific lineitem or monetary figure. as it happened, the question of the price we paid started to be posed in terms of “what we lost”. Unfortunately, the question of what was “lost” was posed in very culturally essentialist and reductionist terms. people started getting busy with concern over how many young kids hadn't grown up speaking regional dialects, or learning traditional folk songs, or playing traditional Korean musical instruments. on one side, objects and ideas of “Korean traditional culture” were grouped together against a perceived encroachment of Western, modern ways. the simple answer seemed to be that kids were too busy learning American pop music in English and not learning traditional songs and musical forms; instead of spending necessary energy speaking regional dialects, students were being pushed to learn foreign languages. as the unexpected runaway cinematic hit *Sopyonje* articulated, a modern and developed Korea had suffered and inevitable and unconscionable spiritual loss, akin to the loss of the very Korean soul. of course, this sparked a huge new social trend of learning Korean fishing instruments and musical forms. People, to the best of their abilities to do so, tried to solve this existential issue by simply trying to relearn the traditional arts. but as trends tend to fade

\(^{184}\) Lee, Hyunjung. "Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea." PHD, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008.
with time, and as the Zeitgeist inevitably shifts, societal concerns and questions so, too, shift or fade away.

To this point, I've been talking about some tendencies in Korean thinking about the perceived burning questions for society undergoing rapid modernization and change, especially as it has to do with what should be done about the loss of an essential Korean traditional center, even as that question has been partially answered through the processes outlined in the concept of "global fetish" -- utilizing traditional arts in the global productions of Nanta and musicals such as *The Last Empress* are key examples of a consumer-culture driven economy that became quite adept at posing these inter-questions in terms of personal consumptive choices. Now, I'm not saying that this was a deliberate process, for if it had been, Korean marketers would be the biggest marketing geniuses on the planet.

**The Devil in the Details**

Economic success and other markers of “making it” have found new purchase in the context of a “Korean pride” borne out of the original, old notion of the Korean race/ethnicity/nation’s “sanctification.” Before the modern Korean nation-state was economically mature, this was a source of hope and confidence in a better future, and after internationally-recognized markers of success became apparent, they became symbolic points of justification for a curious kind of confidence and arrogance that defined a Korean way of thinking. In this study, we have called this the *hangukinron* way of thinking about the race/people/nation. As new kinds of cultural success not so directly linked to economic indices and the formal economy have come to define discourses about the nation and culture, especially as the nation goes through high-profile motions of self-congratulation about the success of Korea’s “soft power” through the “Korean Wave,” and as foreign people and influences work to disrupt old notions of the acceptable landscape of the modern, it remains to be seen what shape *hangukinron* will take in the future. However, it would be a mistake to assume that this old paradigm has simply died away, never to play a role in public thinking about “Korea” in the future. Like the Korean Wave is fueled by *hangukinron* sensibilities and sentimentalities. Korea finds recognition in the international sphere through its culture.

Or put another way, the three-dimensional shape of *hangukinron* is defined by a complex configuration of discrete ideological points joined together in an intelligent latticework, all of which is quite invisible underneath the skin that defines the ideological organism as a whole. And to characterize the whole by one of its defining parts is misguided to the point of error, since for example, one cannot define *hangukinron* as simple "racism" although elements of *hangukinron* are certainly racist in the simplest and original sense of the term, as evident in the deep roots that *hangukinron* and Korean intellectual culture have in social Darwinism and other overt arguments for racial/national superiority of the Korean people. However, this is not all that *hangukinron* is. And for those who are aware of the existence of problematic aspects of Korean thinking that I have described here as constituent parts of *hangukinron* and are trying to change it, it must be realized that this complex latticework of discreet ideological points “that define the whole are very much like the Greek Hydra in two crucial ways.
First, the ideological organism we have identified here as *hangukinron* has a vested interest in remaining intact and maintaining its existence and ideological function. Second, even if one is successful in cutting off one of the many heads of the beast, or along the lines of the present metaphor, in eliminating one of the discrete, defining points of the latticework, such as eliminating overtly racist or racialist content from school textbooks, the other discrete and defining points in the structure will shift in order to take up the slack and maintain the original shape. Often, this happens without premeditated intent or an overall self-awareness or even administrative actor. South Korea has succeeded in building its own self-sustaining, all-rationalizing, totalizing system that has grown bigger than the sum of its ideological parts. It is a chimerical monster that is difficult to even identify, let alone injure or destroy. Yet, as anyone who is ideologically intuitive—and this is a subject position often occupied by non-Koreans who come to live in South Korea or come into direct contact with one of X's defining points in much the same way that one is quite aware of the human skeleton when accidentally coming into contact with a sharp elbow in the rib. A good example might be a an young expatriate of the United States, raised, as most are, on a strong diet of post-1960s and 1970s egalitarian thinking on the level of race, gender, and rights, who comes into direct and uncomfortable contact with sharp elements of South Korean cultural logic as found in direct expressions that light or white skin is better than dark skin, the Korean brain is fundamentally different from those of other members of the human race, or that women in the workplace is an inherently negative social phenomenon since that is not a part of "traditional Korean culture", the sanctity of which is something worthy to be maintained for no other reason than the sake of doing so.

Often, the only way of even being able to see the enormity and the shape of the whole is by sharp contact between two immovable points in separate and opposing ideological structures structures. This is happening more often, and happened much more rarely in the past, because of the few points of possible contact between people outside of the Korean social and ideological system that existed because few non-Koreans actually lived in Korean society, spoke the language, and dependent on Korean society for material survival as one of its members. Additionally, South Korea has only recently provided said points of contact in being able to successfully export elements of its popular culture, which itself are as reflective as they are generative of social norms and rules of behavior -- South Korean values. One of the reasons North Korea *hangukinron* rarely garners international attention is, as B.R. Myers astutely points out in his book The Cleanest Race, that society has successfully masked the true nature of its all-rationalizing and totalizing ideology with a confusing disguise that it chooses to call "Juche." The South Korean version succeeds in remaining invisible in that, as a product partly of a consumer capitalism that is fundamentally similar and palatable to that of many other countries with whom it is in constant cultural contact, there isn't much to see. Much like Harry Potter's cloak of invisibility, the material itself is optically porous, but the point of difference and contradiction are visible in the sharp folds and points of departure with the background, all of which defined errors or weak points in the device. Additionally and perhaps most importantly, it is by having enough perspective on the object, by placing it into enough relief to make out some of the most important points that define its shape, that one can even argue it to exist.
“A Culture of Death”

Much like the Korean concept of jeong, hangukinron is a concept that is difficult to clearly and directly define and is usually only done so with a string of concrete examples that clearly delineate the overall shape of the concept. This is why, despite nihonjinron being a clearly defined word and concept in both Japan and Japanese studies as a discipline, "hangukinron," for all intents and purposes, does not exist in common Korean parlance nor take up much conceptual room in Korean Studies. Again, much like the Korean concepts of han or jeong, half the work is in merely defining the phenomenon as extant in the first place. Until the existence of the greater beast of hangukinron is unequivocally established, critical scholars chipping away at the most obvious of its constituent parts have a much more difficult task as they toil away in relative solitude and functional separation. It is my hope that the present work can accomplish some part of the task in identifying the name and nature of the Beast. Indeed, to help end this present work, I will offer an often mistranslated and mis-attributed quote from Charles Baudelaire's Paris Spleen:

“La plus belle des ruses du diable est de vous persuader qu'il n'existe pas."

("The devil's finest trick is to persuade you that he does not exist.")"\textsuperscript{185}

As if echoing this sentiment, Pope Francis, in his recent, well-received, and wildly popular visit to South Korea and first public mass on the peninsula, addressed the issue of materialism in the service of a consumer capitalism that siphons away the humanity of the people. A clarion call from a respected outsider and moral authority, it remains to be seen if his words will be heeded:

He called upon the Korean people to "reject inhumane economic models which create new forms of poverty and marginalize workers, and the culture of death which devalues the image of God, the God of life, and violates the dignity of every man, woman and child."\textsuperscript{186}

Indeed, any true Puritan, no matter how fervently Protestant, and whether an American living in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century or a Korean living under the austerity measures imposed during the development-era Pak Chung Hee regime, would find it difficult to disagree.


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