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About the British Association for Korean Studies

The British Association for Korean Studies (BAKS) was founded in 1987 as a forum to host conferences and workshops on Korean Studies around the UK. At such events, papers have been presented on a wide range of subjects including archaeology, art, economics, literature, politics, and society. BAKS continues to hold annual conferences, sometimes in partnership with her sister organisations, The British Association for Chinese Studies (BACS) and The British Association for Japanese Studies (BAJS).

Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies (BAKS Papers) was founded in 1991 to publish the editorially approved transactions of the then annual conferences of the Association. The journal for several years actively solicited submissions from outside the conferences as well. Fifteen volumes were published, the final two issues digitally.

Initially the quality of *BAKS Papers* was maintained by an internal editorial board and the editor. Since Volume 14 (2012), *BAKS Papers* became a fully peer-reviewed journal. There was established an external editorial board of 20 international scholars covering a range of areas within the humanities and the social sciences. The Editorial Board is under the leadership of the Editor. There are prescribed rules for the examination of submissions and regulations for writers making a submission. Just under half of the submissions (including external submissions) were rejected for publication in Volume 15 (2013).

Since its inception in the late 1980s, the *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies* has focussed on modern and contemporary Korea but has not neglected traditional culture and history. For example, Volume 5 (1994) was a special issue devoted to archaeology and material culture. The journal has published other special issues, such as Volume 6, which focused on 'Nationality and Nationalism in East Asia', reflecting the Association's broader interests in contemporary East Asia, and Volume 14 (2012), which focussed on British witnesses to the social, cultural, political and economic changes in late twentieth-century Korea.

About the *European Journal of Korean Studies*

At the General Meeting for The British Association for Korean Studies in London on 9 September 2016, the Association decided to re-launch *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies* (BAKS Papers) as the *European Journal of Korean Studies*.

The new name better reflects the existing breadth of the editorial board as well as the extensive range of submissions that result from expanded offerings on Korean Studies across the European continent, including Great Britain. Using our experience gained in publishing the *BAKS Papers* over the last 25 years, we are delighted to relaunch the publication as a Europe-wide journal dedicated to Korean Studies.

BAKS Papers has been blind, peer-reviewed since volume 15, and the *European Journal of Korean Studies* will carry on being blind, peer-reviewed. The new *Journal* will be published twice a year, rather than just annually. It is the only English-language journal in Europe devoted to the broad field of Korean Studies, and we hope that it will become the show-case journal for the outstanding work on Korea being done in Europe.

First published in 1991 and originally available in printed format, *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies* (informally known as *BAKS Papers*) is now available on-line through the Association's website. Articles are indexed with SCOPUS and SSCI. Volumes 1–16 are available for download, as future issues of the *European Journal of Korean Studies* will be as well. Since Volume 17 (1) the *European Journal of Korean Studies* is available again in print. The *Journal* is free to BAKS members and those who want copies can access them on www.ejks.org. uk or contact Robert Winstanley-Chesters: treasurer@baks.org.uk

Editors

James Lewis, Editor in Chief

Robert Winstanley-Chesters, Managing Editor

Editor's Note

Despite the trepidations of a global pandemic and all of the economic and even political disruptions that have resulted, we are pleased to bring you the second issue of volume 20. We hope that all our contributors and readers are well. Wolfson College, Oxford, continues to provide the *Journal* a safe haven in the storm.

The current issue boasts two special sections. One special section is guest edited by Youngmi Kim of the University of Edinburgh and collects papers from an event in Edinburgh from late 2018 that focused on “Inequality in Global cities, Seoul in comparative perspective.” HaeRan Shin investigates various strategies that Chosŏnjok use to cope with and further destabilize the precarity of the South Korean job market: the use of unofficial job markets and broker systems, moving back and forth between South Korea and the PRC, and place-making or establishing a community of fellow Chosŏnjok in the Kuro-Taerim area in Seoul. Youngmi Kim looks at online confrontations over misogyny to explore identity politics, social polarization, and digital populism in contemporary South Korean society. Yoonkyung Lee discusses various cases of workers who leave their workplaces for various locations around the city of Seoul, some iconic, to protest their working conditions. The locations carry metaphoric significance and bring attention to the rising insecurity brought on by a neoliberal economy. Matteo Fumagalli writes on the Koryo saram in Kyrgyzstan and presents a case for viewing them dynamically in diasporic and generational terms rather than as an essentialist, bounded, and static community.

The second special section is guest edited by Taehee Kim of Konkuk University in Seoul and features a series of papers from members of Konkuk University's Academy of Mobility Humanities. Jooyoung Kim considers the new field of sociological geography known as mobility studies within the Korean academy and in particular the research being conducted at the Mobility Humanities Education Center of Konkuk University. Taehee Kim discusses the DMZ as a Foucauldian heterotopia or other place that appears to be immobile but has future mobilities latent within it: a borderland between rival powers, an inaccessible and immobile space that controls other spaces around it, and a mirror through which other places are perceived. Inseop Shin writes on the motif of islands in Korean films as symbolic of the conflict between mobility and immobility in society. Jinhyoung

Lee uses the theory of mobility imperialism, or the construction of new regimes of control in Korea by the Japanese empire through the imposition of transportation systems, to enable an interpretation of the travel settings in Kim Namch'ŏn's short story "To Chŏllyŏng."

This issue of the *Journal* also includes one individual paper. Ahlem Faraoun uses argument framing and theory from the work of René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche to consider the role of emotion in Korea–Japanese trade disputes. The issue also includes an interview record focused on Anton Hur and the Smoking Tigers translation collective, with questions sourced from Robert Winstanley-Chesters, Immanuel Kim of George Washington University, and Janet Poole of the University of Toronto.

Our book reviews also range widely. Kevin Gray (University of Sussex) writes on Hyung-A Kim's *Korean Skilled Workers: Towards a Labor Aristocracy*. Keith Howard (SOAS University of London) reviews Kim Gooyong's *From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Groups: Cultural Politics of Developmentalism, Patriarchy, and Neoliberalism in South Korea's Popular Music Industry*. Lisa Brady (Boise State University) looks at David Fedman's *Seeds of Control: Japan's Empire of Forestry in Colonial Korea*. Mark Caprio (Rikkyo University) considers Alexander Bukh's *These Islands are Ours: The Social Constructions of Territorial Disputes in Northeast Asia*. James Grayson (University of Sheffield) reviews Seung-kyung Kim and Michael Robinson's edited volume entitled *Peace Corps Volunteers and the Making of Korean Studies in the United States*. Pekka Korhonen (University of Jyväskylä) writes on Keith Howard's *Songs for "Great Leaders": Ideology and Creativity in North Korean Music and Dance*.

In this issue, we are extremely pleased to announce the winner of the Bill Skillend Prize for 2020. The Bill Skillend Prize is awarded annually by the *British Association for Korean Studies* (BAKS). The Prize is awarded in commemoration of the late Professor Bill Skillend (1926–2010) to an undergraduate student submitting an outstanding dissertation on a Korea-related topic. Professor Hazel Smith will, in a following page, announce the winner and describe this year's entries in greater detail, but it is worth reminding readers for whom this prize is named. Bill Skillend was a pioneer in Europe in the study of Korea and the first to introduce Korean language instruction in Britain. He was awarded a scholarship to read classics at Christ's College, Cambridge, but military service trained him in Japanese, and he decoded military messages at Bletchley Park. After the war, he continued the study of Japanese at Cambridge and received his undergraduate degree in Japanese in 1949. As a postgraduate student, he studied *Manyōshū* and received his doctorate in 1955. While still a postgraduate student, he started to learn Korean at SOAS and was chosen to take up the first full-time lectureship in

Korean in Britain and Europe in 1953. He spent a year in war-ravaged Seoul in 1955, returning again in 1961 and 1968. At SOAS, he acquired a reputation as a first-class teacher and taught generations of students. As a Visiting Professor at Columbia University (1963–1964), he established Korean Studies in the university. His *Kodae Sosöl: A Survey of Korean Traditional Style Popular Novels* (1968) is an annotated bibliography of all pre-modern Korean works of fiction in Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States and was enormously influential in stimulating the study of pre-modern Korean literature in the West. In 1977, with a handful of European colleagues, he established the Association for Korean Studies in Europe (AKSE). Skillend promoted colleagues from behind the Iron Curtain to attend AKSE conferences, and at the 1989 Conference at SOAS, scholars from South and North Korea attended for the first time. On his retirement from SOAS in 1989 he received a citation from the Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea.

Finally, the *Journal* is happy to announce that as well as being indexed in SCOPUS and by Web of Science/Clarivate Analytics in ESCI, it will be indexed in the Modern Languages Association International Bibliography and listed in the MLA Directory of Periodicals. The Directory contains detailed information on over 4,000 journals and book series. Again, the *Journal* is most grateful to the Academy of Korean Studies, which awarded the *Journal* a Scholarly Publication grant (AKS-2021-P11) to defray production costs. If it were not for this generous support, we would not be able to produce the *Journal*.

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Bill Skillend Prize 2020

The British Association of Korean Studies (BAKS) is delighted to announce that the 2020 prize for best undergraduate dissertation in Korean studies in a UK higher education institution (HEI) was awarded to **Tilley Sampson at the University of Brighton** for the dissertation entitled **Boro and Jogakbo: Scraps of Beauty**. This highly original study investigates the classical textile production techniques of Korea and Japan that are founded on the re-use of scraps of material, and their influence on contemporary fashion design. The dissertation is based on extensive and careful research and provides a major contribution to knowledge. It is an intellectually sophisticated piece of work that demonstrates a level of ease and control of the subject matter and material that is often difficult even for professional academics to sustain.

Submissions were from a range of disciplines and investigated very diverse subjects. Topics included Korean mortuary practices in the late fifth and early sixth century, South Korean nation branding strategies, male-bonding within Korean gangster cinematography and North Korean popular music performance.

Once again, the Bill Skillend prize showcases the breadth and vitality of Korean studies in UK higher education. The high quality of these undergraduate submissions is a testament to the serious commitment to research throughout the Korean studies community in the UK.

We as always use this opportunity to request all academic colleagues to advertise widely the prize this year in your departments.

The prize is named for the late Professor Bill Skillend, who was a pioneer in the study of Korean language and literature and responsible for the introduction of its instruction in Britain. BAKS would also like to acknowledge Dr. James Hoare, whose generous donation made the award possible.

Hazel Smith PhD FRSA

BAKS Committee member

Professorial Research Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Professor Emeritus in International Security, Cranfield University, UK

Member Global Futures Council on Korea World Economic Forum

Special Section: Adaptation and Resistance In and Around South Korea: The Cases of Migrant Workers, Diasporas, Laborers, and Online Feminist Activists

GUEST EDITOR: YOUNGMI KIM Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh¹

This special issue tells the story of adaptation and resistance by a small set of individual and social groups that have traditionally been at the margins of both society in Korea and the Korean Studies scholarship. In different ways they serve as vantage points on the effects of globalization on Korea, Korean society and diasporic communities, with particular attention to marginalized and/or vulnerable communities. Although of course this small sample is by no means representative of the many and complex facets of Korean society, the four contributions illuminate important dynamics and trends that are more broadly applicable beyond the four case studies examined in the articles. This includes irregular workers in secondary firms outside the capital city, Chinese-Korean migrant workers communities between China and Korea, online feminist activism and the post-Soviet Koreans, whose lives have been shaped by multiple mobilities and dislocations. The articles were initially presented at the conference on “Inequality in Global cities, Seoul in comparative perspective” held at the University of Edinburgh (UK) in November 2018. In this introduction, I briefly review the key themes explored in the articles and highlight their distinctive contributions.

The broader backdrop for the four studies is that of economic globalization and the geographic and social mobility that has accompanied some of the four social

groups under considerations. The two key themes that emerge are adaptation and resistance. The first two articles examine the processes of mobility and adaptation by two diasporic—yet very different—communities: the Chinese-Koreans (*Chosŏnjok*) commuting between South Korea and China and the post-Soviet Koreans (Koryo saram) in Kyrgyzstan. Both are vivid, if different, exemplars of in-betweenness. The article by HaeRan Shin focuses on the case of Chinese-Korean migrant workers to reflect on the hitherto under-examined relationship between migration and precarity.² Shin explores how, in virtue of common ethnic bonds with the Koreans of the peninsula, the Chosŏnjok have managed to enter a notoriously difficult job market where, in the face of “insecurity, instability and uncertainty” they have carved a role for themselves. To that end, Shin shows, they have deployed three main strategies: informality, engagement in circular mobilities, and place-making. Their condition of being simultaneously insiders (Koreans) and outsiders (Chinese) means that they have eschewed formal avenues to enter the job market in favor of informal, unofficial markets and broker systems. Circular mobility in this case means that rather than settling down permanently in Korea, the migrant workers examined by Shin are engaged in regular travel back and forth between China and Korea. They are not simply suspended or uprooted: quite the contrary, Shin details, they are also engaged in strategies of place-making, by making Kuro-Taerim a modern-day version of an ethnic enclave, a “home town” which provides psychological comfort and where migrants can rely on each other for support and networks, living “by themselves” and re-affirming their identity. The mobilities (from China to Korea and back) have enabled Chinese-Korean migrant workers to enter the Korean market, have in their own way contributed to “Korea’s shift to an unpredictable state,” and have in turn been “precaritized in the process.”

Matteo Fumagalli’s article explores the experience of the Koryo saram, the ethnic Koreans living in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.³ This traditionally under-studied case in the field of Korean diaspora studies sheds light on changing perceptions of Korean-ness in the wake of multiple mobilities. Kyrgyzstan’s Koreans are descendants of those who had settled in the areas south of Vladivostok in far eastern imperial Russia in the final decades of the nineteenth century, before being deported in toto by Stalin in 1937. The deported Koreans were initially forced to settle in Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, but the relaxation of the restrictions on their mobility from the mid-1950s onwards meant that some of them moved to other Soviet republics, urbanized, and become linguistically and culturally Russified. Over time, their ties with an imagined Korea (they had left Chosŏn and now face two Koreas) have waned, and they have adapted to life in new multiethnic and multicultural environments, first under Soviet rule and then in the new successor states in Central Asia. The end of the Cold War and the

Soviet collapse brought new challenges but also new opportunities. What emerges in Fumagalli's paper is the growing heterogeneity of these Korean communities, especially evident as the experiences of the new generations significantly diverge from those of the previous ones. The notion of homeland is changing, the memory of the 1937 deportation is fading, and the boundaries between groups are also being eroded in many ways, so that the Koryo saram seem to embody the liminality of the modern, or even post-modern, condition. Compared to older generations, younger Koryo saram in Bishkek reveal "greater fluidity, contingency, dynamism and heterogeneity" in the way in which Korean-ness is perceived, expressed, articulated and negotiated.

The third and fourth articles examine instances of conflict and resistance in Korean society. In her contribution, Yoonkyung Lee adds important insights into labor protests in Seoul.⁴ The focus of her contribution is Seoul as a site of resistance for increasingly insecure and precarious workers. Unlike the cases of workers for larger firms, Lee draws attention to the experiences of workers for primary and subcontracting firms outside the capital. Without any avenues for either formal negotiation with the employers or opportunities for their grievances to be heard, the workers of Lee's study have no other option other than turning up in Seoul. The city provides them with the spaces and the structures to articulate and express their grievances. What emerges vividly in Lee's article is the variegated repertoires of contention, which include long-term camp-in protests and sky protests as solo "self-afflicting forms of resistance" that can last for months. The "physical visibility of labor grievances," Lee persuasively shows, are both calls for national attention to the workers' precarious condition and for government intervention.

During the Kim Young-Sam administration (1993–1998) with the national moto of globalization (Segyehwa 세계화), sudden deregularization and the opening of markets for foreign investment without proper preparation caused a financial crisis when a short term loan was not extended and foreign investors requested neo-liberal policies and reforms for business friendly environment.⁵ Lee argues that the neo-liberal policies imposed on the labor market with flexible labor policy and labor unions brought a more precarious environment for the laborers to have their voices and represent their grievances from the traditional labor union movement. Laborers are divided into regular workers with permanent work contracts and full insurance support for employment and industrial disasters and irregular workers with limited periods of contract being paid much lower income. The workers are further divided by those working for the primary firms and subsidiary or subcontracting firms.

The fourth article by Youngmi Kim examines a case of conflict around gender and gender identity in social media.⁶ The conflict took place in 2015–16 and

revolves around the mirroring strategies taken by Megalians (later Womad), a group of online feminist activists opposing the misogyny pervasive and thriving among young users of the far-right virtual community called ILBE (Ilgan Best, “The Daily Best”). Although Korea’s feminism (also its online variant) has received some attention in sociology, media, and communication studies, Kim adds a novel perspective by using the analytical lens of digital populism to shed light on the controversy between the Megalians and ILBE activists. Central to the analysis are the strategies of mirroring deployed by the Megalians to fight back against discrimination and misogyny online. Although this seems to be “confined” to gender-based conflicts, Kim shows that in order to fully understand the origins and even the core of the dispute between the two sets of users it is crucial to embed the case in broader processes of transformation and precarization and the gendered nature of the Korean labor market. Though the Megalia–ILBE conflict predates Korea’s own #MeToo movement, the case study adds important insights to capture how moves towards greater gender equality in Korea were confronted with a serious backlash (as embodied by ILBE activists), which in turn triggered a reaction.

Taken together, the four articles contribute theoretically innovative and empirically-grounded stories of different forms of Korea-related precariat, their vulnerabilities and also their display of individual and collective agency to shape new trajectories for themselves in challenging and complex socio-economic environments. As such they offer new ways of thinking about and researching Korea and Korean society, shifting the focus from the rise and the consolidation of democracy⁷ towards a greater sensibility for and a critical enquiry of the quality of Korean democracy.

Notes

1. Research for this article was supported by the Seed Program for Korean Studies through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2019-INC-2230005).
2. Shin, HaeRan. “The Precarity and Strategic Navigation of Korean-Chinese Migrants in South Korea.” *European Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021).
3. Fumagalli, Matteo. “‘Identity through Difference’: Liminal Diasporism and Generational Change among the Koryo Saram in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.” *European Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021).
4. Lee, Yoonkyung. “Seoul as a Site of Labor Resistance: The Spatial Representation of Inequality and Injustice.” *European Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021).
5. Haggard, Stephan. *The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis*. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2000; Youngmi Kim. “Hell Joseon: Polarization and Social Contention in a Neo-liberal Age,” in Youngmi Kim, ed., *Korea’s Quest for Economic Democratization: Globalization, Polarization and Contention* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 1–20.

6. Kim, Youngmi. "Mirroring Misogyny in Hell Chosŏn. Megalia, Womad, and Korea's Feminism in the Age of Digital Populism." *European Journal of Korean Studies* 20, no. 2 (2021).
7. Choi, Jang-jip. *Minjuhwa ihu ūi minju chuŭi: Han'guk minju chuŭi ūi posu-jŏk kiwŏn kwa wigi (Democracy after Democratization: The Crisis and Origin of Conservative Democracy in South Korea)*. Seoul: Humanitas, 2002. Crozier, Michel, Samuel P. Huntington, and Jōji Watanuki. *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*. New York: New York University Press, 1975. Haggard, Stephan. *The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis*. Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2000. Im, Hyug Baeg. *Democratization and Democracy in South Korea, 1960–Present*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan. "Toward Consolidated Democracies." *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996): 14–33.

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The Precarity and Strategic Navigation of *Chosŏnjok* Migrants in South Korea¹

HAERAN SHIN Professor, Seoul National University

Abstract

This paper investigates how ethnic Koreans migrating to South Korea from the People's Republic of China (PRC) have learned to adapt to precarity, tailoring their strategies to cope with an increasingly uncertain South Korean job market. Using archival analysis, participant observations, and in-depth interviews, the findings of this study demonstrate that the in-betweenness of those migrants' ethnicity and nationality gives them licence to slip into the South Korean job market. They find employment, albeit part-time or contract-based work, further upsetting an already precarious job market. This research argues that *Chosŏnjok*, Korean-Chinese migrants, have developed strategies to navigate unstable situations and use precarity to their advantage as a tactic to survive, relying on their Korean ethnicity to give them a foot in the door. In this paper, I explore the three strategies they employ to survive in increasingly precarious circumstances. One strategy is their willingness to seek employment through informal and unofficial job markets and broker systems. The second strategy is to engage in circular mobility, allowing *Chosŏnjok* to reap the benefits of citizenship in both South Korea and the PRC. The third strategy is place-making, and I used the enclave in the Kuro-Taerim area of Seoul, as an example. By engaging in South Korea's unstable job market, *Chosŏnjok*'s precarious circumstances are exploited by employers while at the same time the migrants learn to exploit the precarity to their benefit.

Keywords: Korean Chinese, *Chosŏnjok*, precarity, migrant workers, informality, place-making

Introduction

This paper discusses a particular group of “in-between” migrants whose ancestors migrated to another country, but now these descendants have, in essence, come to the country of origin of their ancestors. It focuses on how *Chosŏnjok* migrants, who share ethnicity and language, have managed to navigate the escalating precarity of the Korean job market and, as a result, contributed to the precarity of Korean society. Precarity in this research refers to employment that is becoming progressively more insecure, unpredictable, and uncertain, as a result of fluctuations in job markets. While there are those able and flexible enough to see these fluctuations as opportunities and capitalize on them,² most people, however, fall victim to and are marginalized by these constantly changing developments. Precarious employment has been on the rise and as such has received increasing attention from academics and governments.³ While migrants are both the objects driven by and the agents who drive precarity, the relationship between migration and increasing precarity has gone by and large unexplored. This study is an attempt to analyze the critical role the “in-betweenness” of migrants returning to their homeland plays in the context of how it contributes to the increasing levels of precarity in that country.

The research subjects in this study are *Chosŏnjok* and local Koreans residing in Seoul, largely focusing on the Kuro-Taerim area. *Chosŏnjok* refers to those ethnic Koreans that crossed into China and settled mainly in the Jiāndǎo (間島, 간도) border region. Migration that started in 1627 right up until 1945 was precipitated by harsh conditions, starvation, or Japanese colonial rule. Considering the more than 300-year span, this exodus is viewed as an example of Korea’s tragic history.⁴ Long before the Korean War brought about the division between South Korea and North Korea, and long before the national border between the PRC and Korea formally emerged in 1962, *Chosŏnjok* migrants’ mobility history illustrates the wider East Asian context of geopolitical shifting. These migrants became known in the PRC as the descendants of Chosŏn, the name of the Korean state prior to 1897, ruled by the Chosŏn dynasty.

Before South Korea and the PRC normalized relations in 1992, ethnic Koreans’ mobility between China and South Korea was strictly controlled for more than three decades. Improved relations between the PRC and South Korea opened the door for their return. Significant changes were implemented during the Chinese government’s Open Door Policy of 1978⁵ and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between South Korea and the PRC in 1992.⁶ *Chosŏnjok* migrants could now cross into South Korea, but since Korea did not have bureaucratic procedures in place to issue work visas to temporary migrant workers, they were essentially

undocumented immigrants. Recognizing the country's labor shortage, especially in small- and medium-size manufacturing companies,⁷ the South Korean government created the H-2 visa in 2007 that lifted restrictions on employment. These changes meant *Chosŏnjok* migrants could relocate to South Korea legally, and the reassurance of legitimately being allowed to work there encouraged greater migrations.

While times were good, *Chosŏnjok* migrants served their purpose. They were even once considered as 2nd or 3rd-generation returnees in the sense that their ancestors were originally from the Korean peninsula. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, *Chosŏnjok*'s high expectations were somewhat dashed as they were subjected to unexpectedly harsh treatment. The expectations of their Korean employers and neighbors were also disappointed as they realized that the *Chosŏnjok* migrants were neither fluent in Korean, complicating interactions at work, nor did they identify as Koreans.⁸ However, their shared ethnicity and language, even at a remove, enabled *Chosŏnjok* migrants to sufficiently fill the gaps in the job market and fit in more quickly than other migrants without this advantage.

By looking at the case of *Chosŏnjok* migrants in South Korea, this study contributes to a better understanding of the interactive dynamics between larger global issues and individuals' responses to forces they can react to, but which are beyond their control. Rapid globalization followed by the Asian financial crisis in 1997 left South Korea's job market decimated. The financial crisis changed the way that South Korean society looked at *Chosŏnjok* migrants and how to employ them. The job market had to become flexible to mitigate the burden on businesses and the labor shortages in low-income but "dirty, dangerous, and demeaning" (the so-called "3D"), industries. The influx of *Chosŏnjok* returnees, regardless of the economic collapse, was vital to the country's industry. At first, *Chosŏnjok* migrants were limited in where they could work, but after several changes of migration policies in South Korea, they could obtain a variety of jobs including professional ones. However, service, manufacturing, and general labor still make up of 63% of the jobs *Chosŏnjok* migrants hold.⁹

In addressing their experiences as returnees, this research poses two important questions. First, how has *Chosŏnjok* migrants' in-betweenness been exploited by employers in this era of job precarity, at the same time as it increased precarity in Korean society? Second, how have *Chosŏnjok* migrants navigated these perilous dynamics and unstable job situations in South Korea? The first question seeks to address how *Chosŏnjok* migrants and the geopolitical and economic transformations have influenced each other and contributed to the increasing precarity of South Korea's labor environment.

Based on various sources used to illustrate *Chosŏnjok* migrants' experiences between 1992 and 2016, the findings of this study demonstrate that *Chosŏnjok* migrants' in-betweenness as simultaneously ethnic Koreans and foreigners gives them a flexibility that allows them to easily adapt to irregular job markets. For instance, as ethnic Koreans, their Korean language capacity and ethnicity means they are more readily accepted by South Korean employers. As foreigners whose expectations are different than those of native Koreans who have come to expect a certain quality of life, they are more willing to accept irregular work. Their presence has had a destabilising effect on labor costs, and even though they may not wish to make matters worse, they are not in a position to refuse jobs, no matter how lowly. As such, Korean society, already teetering on the edge of precarity, is given a push over it by the *Chosŏnjok* migrants. Even as lowly workers in the care and domestic job markets,¹⁰ they significantly aggravate the situation. Should they refuse to accept low pay, then employers would be forced to offer better wages that Koreans might consider.

As for the second question, this study argues that *Chosŏnjok* migrants have managed to navigate unstable environments by engaging in three specific coping strategies: using informal job markets, engaging in circular mobility, and engaging in place-making in the Kuro-Taerim area in Seoul. While their ethnicity allows for greater interaction with Korean natives compared to migrant workers of other ethnicities, ethnicised migrant policies have sanctioned those place-making strategies that allow them to remain discrete from the local populace.

In addressing the above arguments, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section reviews the literature on precarity and suggests paying more attention to interactions between social environments and migrants, especially in the East Asian context. The second section introduces the historical and the geopolitical contexts of *Chosŏnjok* migrants, followed by a discussion on the research methods used for this study. The third section focuses on the findings that show how the mobility of *Chosŏnjok* as kin-migrants has contributed to South Korea's shift to an unpredictable state and, at the same time, how the *Chosŏnjok* themselves have become precaritized in the process. The fourth section discusses the findings on how *Chosŏnjok* migrants have navigated instability and the role their ethnicity plays in their interactions with Korean natives as they make the most of the opportunities available to them. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of this interactive approach to precarity and migrants.

Precarity and In-Between Migrants' Strategies

As uncertain socioeconomic conditions have increased in late capitalism, social scientists and policy-makers have paid much more attention to the notion of “precarity.”¹¹ The increased mobility of people as cheap labor, flexible production and lifestyles, neo-liberal ideology, and the commodification of education and governmental services have constituted the changes affecting contemporary societies today. Precarious work is associated with part-time employment, contract-based work, fixed-term work, temporary work, on-call work, home-based work, self-employment, and telecommuting.¹² Precarity is not simply about a flexible job market but also about the ways in which societies and people define time and space and the particular emotions they evoke.¹³ By linking the global political economy to individuals' lifestyles and emotions, this literature contributes to an understanding of the dynamics of contemporary society in a comprehensive way.¹⁴

Those people who suffer from or strategically use precarity are defined as the precariat, a term that combines “precarious” and “proletariat.” Standing (2016) defines the precariat as a category of people lacking job security, guaranteed income and representation. Though Mosoetsa et al. (2016) debate this definition of precarity and criticize it for being overly simplistic and narrow, Standing's concept of precarity can be applied to broad social changes and not just individuals' employment.

The main groups making up such populations include youth, women, the elderly and the disabled, welfare claimants, criminals, and migrants. Eventually, the majority of those living in contemporary societies will be affected by such changes, with more members becoming part of the precariat because not only job markets are changing but, more fundamentally, societies and individual lives are undergoing transformation, too. As people live through temporary projects and contract-based jobs, their lifestyles and political inclinations also become unpredictable and unstable.¹⁵ These individuals face decreased welfare and a challenging family life; they also suffer from debt and emotional turbulence.¹⁶ There has been increasing attention to the importance of affect and sentiment in relation to geopolitics.¹⁷ Dominant emotions in and consequences of such situations include anxiety, alienation, anomie, anger-driven political inclinations, and possible resistance.¹⁸

Despite contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the political economy and individual material and psychological well-being, previous studies on precarity have two significant gaps. The dynamics between returnees and their ethnic homeland is the first quite critical gap in existing studies. Migrants

in general are frequently viewed as outsiders and different from natives,¹⁹ but ethnic returnees straddle a line between being the same and yet somehow different. The interaction between the returnees and the general population deserves more attention not just for the social changes but also job market changes. Through this relationship one sees the returnees as both victims and perpetrators of precarity.

The second gap in previous studies on precarity is that the discussion has not embraced the growing literature on migration in South Korea. The South Korean context²⁰ has often been a representative example of the flexible job market, because it has the highest rates of temporary employment (32.3 percent of the total workforce) among the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).²¹ However, few studies address how precarity and migrants' coping strategies position them in South Korean society. There is a divergence in terms of the specific processes of dealing with precarization and the consequences of precarity. For example, migrants' coping strategies that result in ethnic enclaves demonstrate a proactive response to social instability. Despite their best efforts to create stability, the host society's view of migrants as transitory results in an uncertain social standing and little to no access to social resources.

I propose a reconsideration of precarity as a product of the interactive dynamics between structure and agents, especially in the East Asian context. By approaching migrants as an articulated example of such interacting actors, this research considers contemporary Korean society and the East Asian region from a relational and dynamic perspective. Migrants' decision-making—whether their decisions are made freely or are forced—needs to go beyond rigid binaries between a voluntary decision and a forced decision that leads to victimization.²² For instance, as illustrated in Collins' study, these two distinct situations are mixed in the cases of highly educated and/or ambitious migrants. They approach precarity strategically, aspiring for socially upward mobility, but still end up being permanent precariat.²³ Another example is the case of Vietnamese marriage migrants who were forced to migrate to South Korea but, as time passed, ended up as activists advocating for other women migrating for marriage.²⁴ As the case of the *Chosŏnjok* demonstrates, the combination of geopolitical circumstances, the state's governing strategies, and *Chosŏnjok* migrants' mobilities have each played a part in creating this situation.²⁵

This study focuses on the three coping strategies migrants use to survive. The first coping method is informality, which has been a part of ordinary life even in advanced societies as migrants use informal strategies to make their lives safe.²⁶ Migrants, undocumented migrants included,²⁷ integrate themselves into informal

job markets and institutions, as well as formal ones.²⁸ This liberalization of the system has spread and is increasingly taken up by those native to the regulated places.²⁹ Local governments and businessmen play important roles in maintaining informality by mediating geopolitical dynamics and migrant regulation within a particular local context.³⁰

The second coping method is circular mobility.³¹ Based on telecommunications and transport, permanent temporariness is possible for those who engage in high levels of mobility and lead transnational lives.³² In the context of the Asia-Pacific region, circular mobility has been the dominant mode of labor migration. Seoul is one of the large urban areas where there are an overwhelming number of migrants with temporary permits.³³

The third coping method is place-making, which is evidenced in the enclave located in the Kuro-Taerim area of Seoul. Place-making, creating their own places, plays an important role in maintaining their ties and identities.³⁴ One representative example is an ethnic enclave. Ethnic enclaves have a concentration of ethnic entrepreneurship³⁵ and ethnic churches³⁶ that preserve ethnic identity and bolster the effect of geopolitics on shaping migrants' emotional and political lives.³⁷

Ethnic in-betweenness plays a significant part in the *Chosŏnjok*'s three strategies for coping with precarity. First, their Korean ethnicity helps them to establish a network with and receive sympathy from Korean natives, who play an essential role in developing informal ways to help migrants make a living. Previous studies on the *Chosŏnjok* have focused on the *Chosŏnjok* diaspora,³⁸ ethnic identities and conflicts,³⁹ changes in Korean migration policies,⁴⁰ including ethnicization,⁴¹ and the Kuro-Taerim area.⁴² They have contributed to a better understanding of the *Chosŏnjok* and the various issues surrounding them, but have not paid enough attention to conceptualizing the interactive evolution of *Chosŏnjok* migrants and Korean society. Previous studies have focused either on the receiving society or on the migrants.

Second, Korean ethnic migrants' circular mobility has been simplified by improved migration policies so that they travel to and from China without incident. Even before the creation of H-2 and F-4 visas that allowed for freer movement between the countries, however, most undocumented *Chosŏnjok* migrants had adopted a strategy of circular mobility to avoid detection as illegal residents. Now that the visas granted legal residence and made their comings and goings straightforward, circular mobility became doable and popular. Third, the place-making of ethnic enclaves is common in any migrant group, but *Chosŏnjok* enclaves are more closely related to and have stronger networks with Korean natives because of their shared language and culture. The ethnic similarity also can make them

notice discrimination and inequality and cause conflicts.⁴³ It should be noted that *Chosŏnjok* migrants were forced to develop those strategies first and later came to use them more actively.

Case Background: Increasing Need for Migrant Workers in Job Market Shifts

The 1990s and 2000s witnessed shifts in the global political economy and the dynamics of economic globalization, including the East Asian financial crisis in 1997. Chinese policies of economic opening and the emergence of the PRC as a global power brought about changes in the PRC's relationship with North and South Korea.⁴⁴ Also within the PRC, the mobility of people looking for better job opportunities significantly increased and brought about changing dynamics in people's lives.⁴⁵

Facing a shifting global economy and trying to survive the economic crisis, the South Korean state attempted to ease the shortages in the job and marriage markets by promoting the mobility of people from outside South Korea.⁴⁶ The percentage of people who went to college increased, but the Korean job market was restructured, and there was an increase in low-income and temporary jobs. Low-income jobs in the service sector increased and attracted labor, while low-income manufacturing and agricultural jobs went unfilled. Compounding this issue, the unequal gender ratio left a number of Korean men (especially in rural areas) unable to find themselves brides willing to marry them. South Korea promoted an influx of transnational migrants so that those manufacturing and agricultural job markets could hire migrant workers from other developing countries and that the marriage market could bring in brides to balance the gender ratio.

The Korean government revised its migrant policies so that it could govern society through mobility. In 1993, the implementation of the Industrial Training Programme, following the South Korea–PRC Amity Treaty, responded to the influx of *Chosŏnjok*. It allowed small companies to hire migrant workers without a work permit.⁴⁷ After the Asian financial crisis, the Overseas Koreans Act in 1999, which purported to attract the capital of overseas Koreans in wealthy Western countries, served to protect linear descendants of a person who emigrated after the establishment of the Korean Government in 1948 from discrimination. This 1999 law predominately excluded *Chosŏnjok*, because their ancestors had left Korea before 1948. As a result, *Chosŏnjok* were not allowed to enjoy the same privileges that other Koreans abroad could enjoy, and they contested this act until it was deemed unconstitutional and overturned in 2001.

As social concerns emerged about the increasing number of undocumented migrants, two legal changes—the F-4 and H-2 visas—were made between 2002 and 2007.⁴⁸ *Chosŏnjok* were not given F-4 visa until the late 2010s. Undocumented *Chosŏnjok* were forced to leave South Korea during this period (2002–2004). That’s why the number of undocumented migrant workers shrank in this period. The number of undocumented *Chosŏnjok* became much smaller after the introduction of the H-2 visa in 2007. Migrant regulations later became ethnicized, in that the state implemented an employment management system that legalized undocumented *Chosŏnjok* migrants and secured a job for them after they visited their home countries and returned. *Chosŏnjok* migrants without family or friends were allowed to stay and work in South Korea for five years, according to the Visiting Employee System implemented in 2007. Since the Constitutional Court deemed the Overseas Koreans Act unconstitutional, it was revised to include ethnic Koreans from the PRC and countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2007.

The Ministry of Justice estimates the total number of *Chosŏnjok* living in South Korea in 2016 at 614,293 in an internal report.⁴⁹ Until 1988, very few *Chosŏnjok* lived in South Korea, but a system of home visits allowed the *Chosŏnjok* to visit South Korea legitimately.⁵⁰ The *Chosŏnjok* comprise 31% of non-Koreans⁵¹ and hold either a work visa (42% of the total *Chosŏnjok* migrants) or an overseas Korean visa (39.4%). In Seoul’s Yŏndŭngp’o-gu District, Taerim-dong has 50,378 *Chosŏnjok* (22.0% of the total *Chosŏnjok* population in Seoul) and Kuro-gu has 40,926 (17.8%).⁵² To date, approximately 100,000 *Chosŏnjok* have attained Korean citizenship. The emergence of *Chosŏnjok* in South Korea has brought significant changes and societal challenges. *Chosŏnjok* as kin-migrants, meaning people with the same ethnicity that migrated from another country, raises questions about notions of belonging, ethnicity, and migration policies.

The *Chosŏnjok* have been concentrated in the Yanbian region of the PRC and have maintained their identity as Koreans through language, education, and culture.⁵³ At the same time, they have assimilated to Chinese society as both Chinese nationals and as an ethnic minority. The Open Door Policy that attracted foreign businesses in 1978 and the Amity Treaty between the PRC and South Korea in 1992 have brought about the out-migration of 70% of the *Chosŏnjok* working population in Yanbian to various countries in the early 2000s, including Russia, Japan, South Korea, and the large urban cities of the PRC. The Kuro-Taerim area used to be primarily industrial, and the main residents were factory workers until the late 1990s. The *Chosŏnjok* flocked to the area for the affordable housing and convenient public transportation.⁵⁴ Forty percent of the *Chosŏnjok* population in Seoul live in this area, the second largest after Kyŏnggi province.

Data and Methods

To gain a deeper understanding of the changes in Korean society and the reaction of *Chosŏnjok* to them over time, this research used a mixed methods approach, including archival research, participant observations, and in-depth interviews with native Koreans and *Chosŏnjok* in their enclaves. The qualitative research methods demonstrate the evolving dynamics between geopolitical environment, the Korean domestic job market, and individuals' everyday lives and emotions. Since the scope of the research covers an extended time period, I used archival data such as newspaper articles as the main method for the period of 1992 to 2016. In-depth interviews and participant observations were conducted as supplementary to 2011 and 2015.

I conducted a total of twenty-nine in-depth interviews with eleven *Chosŏnjok* migrants and eighteen Koreans who worked in the relevant organisations, as well as short on-the-spot interviews with a number of *Chosŏnjok* migrants. In-depth interviews with the *Chosŏnjok* were significantly limited because *Chosŏnjok* migrants were concerned about security and their visa statuses. Many refused to be interviewed and did not show up to meet me even after making an appointment. The unfortunate result was that the snowball method based on acquaintances' introduction did not work, because the migrants felt as if they were putting themselves at risk. As an alternative, I carried out a number of short, on-site interviews and participant observations in churches, shelters, restaurants, and coffee/beer shops. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed in Korean and translated into English when necessary. The interviews with the *Chosŏnjok* focused on their survival and coping strategies, while those with Korean natives included questions on how they engage in the developing *Chosŏnjok*'s strategies for dealing with precarious conditions.

I analyzed the data collected during my fieldwork and archival research by cross-checking the information in an interpretative fashion. The interpretations mainly pertain to how *Chosŏnjok* migrants and increased precarity in Korean society have influenced each other over time. I also address informality, circular mobility, and place-making for their religious and social gatherings such as ethnic churches and ethnic associations.

Precarious Job Market and Migrants' Flexible Labor

This section demonstrates how the geopolitical shifts in East Asia, the Korean state's attempt at governing through mobilities,⁵⁵ and migrants' navigation of their future directions mutually enhance each other.⁵⁶ *Chosŏnjok* migrants, due to their

ongoing history of displacement became even more unstable and temporary in South Korea than they had been in the PRC. At the same time, they contributed to creating a more flexible job market by providing flexible labor and fuelling the demand for more flexible labor in an already flexible job market. The influx of *Chosŏnjok* migrants to South Korea, and many other countries, coincided with the advent of neo-liberal policies in South Korea and the Chinese open-door policy, which resulted in increased precarity the world over. During South Korea's economic and geopolitical transformation, *Chosŏnjok* migrants accepted the newly forming temporary, part-time, and low-income jobs (Oh et al., 2016: 51) that native Koreans shunned while, since the adoption of H-2 visas in 2007, some of them could get into professional sectors with higher wages.

This strategy significantly increased contact between *Chosŏnjok* migrants and South Korean employers, which has influenced mutual attitudes and perceptions. Cases of discrimination, exploitation, and abuse by Korean employers have been reported, which raised the issue of human rights for migrant workers.⁵⁷

Despite their shared ethnicity, *Chosŏnjok* migrants who used to live in the rural areas of the communist PRC were not familiar with Korean capitalist society. Working in restaurants, homes, and hospitals, they had to adapt to different expectations in terms of work ethic and work culture, such as the culture of hierarchy between employers and employees. A critical discourse emerged about *Chosŏnjok* migrants, citing that they lacked loyalty and would quit for another job that offered only slightly higher hourly pay rates. South Koreans may have been disappointed with the perceived lack of work ethic among *Chosŏnjok*, but *Chosŏnjok* migrants were also disappointed as they had expected a more welcoming reception from their compatriots. Besides, Korean employers and the public felt culturally and socially threatened by *Chosŏnjok* migrants who can speak Korean.⁵⁸

Despite this mutual disappointment, the fact that the job market favoured hiring *Chosŏnjok* migrants over non-ethnic Korean migrant workers meant that *Chosŏnjok* migrants became pioneers of flexible labor as a result. As job security dramatically decreased in South Korea, the lack of economic security turned into an opportunity for *Chosŏnjok* in a society where the Korean people were unaccustomed to and less accepting of different ethnicities. For example, as an increasing number of Korean women entered the job market, the number of traditional multigenerational families living together declined, and households needed help with childcare, household work, and elderly care. In the care-work market, *Chosŏnjok* workers for babysitting, domestic work, private nursing, and postnatal care flooded the market. Babysitting used to mainly be done by women or grandmothers, who informally received pocket money at a lower than market rate. There were few Koreans willing to take jobs once held by rural-to-urban

domestic migrants in the 1970s and the 1980s. When *Chosŏnjok* women were willing to take these jobs, the availability of their cheap labor formalized the job market.

It should be noted that the *Chosŏnjok* did not wish to work as irregular or temporary workers. In fact, until the visa changes in the late 2010s, they had no choice but to adapt to the job market, accept the jobs allotted to them, and then leave once their work permits expired. Different education background and socio-economic status among them seemed to have influenced the adaptation process. The few *Chosŏnjok* with college degrees found stable desk jobs in the enclaves. But, the majority of the *Chosŏnjok* were forced to actively choose to be temporary and flexible labor for better job opportunities and social upward mobility. In the end, they gravitated towards temporary jobs, believing that these jobs were preferable because there was no guarantee that they could or would stay for long. In the process of adjusting their preferences, they developed three strategies to adapt to their limited situations. As time went on, according to the majority of *Chosŏnjok* interviewees, they either became increasingly savvy about using informal practices, fond of travelling, or attached to the Kuro-Taerim area.

The resulting migration of the *Chosŏnjok* cast these displaced peoples as both precaritized by and precaritizing South Korean society simultaneously. For instance, *Chosŏnjok* female migrants supplied labor for the increasing demand of the care-work market. The care-work market developed, and that motivated Korean workers to join the labor market as well. As a family's net income decreased, Korean women in low-income households increasingly participated in the job market. So both the demand and the supply of the precarious job market for care-work increased.

At first, those job markets were hierarchized.⁵⁹ Korean workers earned more money for the same work performed by *Chosŏnjok* workers, which was justified based on cultural differences and lack of references and skills. It meant that non-ethnic Korean migrants were relegated to the lowest levels of the Korean social structure. Care-work was one category in which Korean families were especially hesitant to hire non-Korean migrant workers. This was mostly because it would be difficult to convey sophisticated instructions in an efficient manner between people who speak different languages. *Chosŏnjok* migrants accepted care-work that was physically and emotionally demanding, and from my participant observations in the shelters, I often heard the *Chosŏnjok* women talk about full-time babysitting and nursing. One *Chosŏnjok* female migrant, for example, recounted,

Staying in your employer's house and doing domestic work and babysitting is the worst. It is so demanding and exhausting. You lose weight if you do that more than three months. (29 January 2011)

Such statements could be heard mostly from *Chosŏnjok* women who fulfilled most live-in domestic jobs at the time of the interview, in 2011. Korean women avoided those types of jobs. Because *Chosŏnjok* women needed to work and make money, not one person said that she would refuse or quit her job.

However, eventually the hierarchy shifted as time went on. Mainly due to the willingness of the *Chosŏnjok* to take on such employment, the income gap decreased as *Chosŏnjok* attained the required skills and language proficiency. Irregular and/or temporary jobs increased as a result of the interaction between the job market and the availability of *Chosŏnjok* as willing and cheap labor. When *Chosŏnjok* moved to other countries where South Koreans had already settled, they would initially work in Korean-owned businesses (Shin, 2018). Due to their willingness to accept low-paying part-time jobs, they created a market for temporary, project-based jobs, sparking a vicious cycle leading to them taking low-paying jobs out of need, which, in turn, fuelled the job market that provided these jobs.

The in-between identities of *Chosŏnjok* worked in the following ways. On the one hand, the in-betweenness of *Chosŏnjok* migrants significantly influences the ways through which they co-constitute precarity and their reputations. In the 1990s, the arrival of *Chosŏnjok* in South Korea was viewed as a return migration⁶⁰ of second- or third-generation Korean migrants from the PRC. Indeed, there is a consensus among the *Chosŏnjok* that they should not be treated as “migrants” because of their Korean ethnicity. Such perception was reflected in a different immigration policy for *Chosŏnjok*. *Chosŏnjok* emphasized their Korean ethnicity rather than Chinese nationality in the Korean society, but at the same time, their Chinese nationality was an important part of their identity.

On the other hand, their in-betweenness motivated them to choose to work in South Korea. While the main perspective in South Korea focuses on ethnicity and identities, *Chosŏnjok* approaches and strategies are largely based on economic interests.⁶¹ In order to gain access to opportunities in South Korea, kinships and marriages were instrumentalized and in some cases falsified until the early 2000s, when the migration policies that have been mentioned rendered these ploys unnecessary.⁶² These actions raised questions as to whether the *Chosŏnjok* identified as endemic Koreans or as Chinese nationals who needed to leverage or falsify relationships to gain entry to South Korea. How they view themselves is just one aspect of the convoluted shared ethnicity as South Koreans too wonder where *Chosŏnjok* loyalties lie. Addressing this issue, one *Chosŏnjok* interviewee asked,

Why do so many Koreans ask us about a football game, like which team we are going to support, the Korean or Chinese one ...? They don't treat us as Koreans. They don't appreciate our multiculturalism, either. Once I went to a

multicultural event sponsored by the local government. By the end of the event, they wanted to take a photo and realised that we don't look multicultural. So they paid some Western people to be in the photo so that the photo looks like a multicultural event. (22 January 2011)

While some *Chosŏnjok* could trace their families and relatives to South Korea, a number of them had mixed feelings about their new host country, because some of them originated from parts of North Korea. South Koreans, on the other hand, have a strong sense of national identity and therefore focus on how *Chosŏnjok* identify themselves. According to the majority of Korean interviewees, one of the main concerns was that they found the *Chosŏnjok* consider themselves to be Chinese, not Korean. Those Korean interviewees criticized the *Chosŏnjok* who did not feel as if they belonged to Korean society. In Korean society, this notion has become widespread, and it was used to justify discrimination against the *Chosŏnjok*.

Precarious conditions affected not only the circumstances surrounding their job status but also their family situations. *Chosŏnjok* migrant workers had to endure lengthy separations from family members who were prohibited from travelling to South Korea. The elderly and children were most frequently left behind in the PRC, and this received attention from the media and academia due to the risks to the wellbeing of the family unit and the children. The media dealt with the social concerns over the impact of family separation on the children's wellbeing, family dissolution, and the loss to the *Chosŏnjok* community due to the lack of workers back in Yanbian, PRC.⁶³

It is worth noting how those first-generation *Chosŏnjok* migrants to South Korea were frustrated by the precarity in their children's life, not in theirs. While not being included in the scope of this research, because they were not willing to be in the job market, the second generation *Chosŏnjok* migrants' situations were a big concern to their parents. Older generations of *Chosŏnjok* chose to maintain their migrant status because it cost less.⁶⁴ They were willing to be deported back to the PRC rather than go through the process of legalizing their visas. In contrast, their children were only forced to be in precarious jobs without a proactive response. The majority of these children grew up in the PRC, were left behind by parents migrating to South Korea, and taken care of by their grandparents. The first generations' remittances provided a good-quality education and material goods as a form of recompense for not seeing both parents on a daily basis. Their concern was that their children were not as tough as they were to manage the harsh conditions that migrants have to face.

In the interviews that took place in 2015, a member of one of the *Chosŏnjok* ethnic associations expressed her concerns over the *Chosŏnjok* second generation. She said,

Try any internet cafe in this area. There are so many second-generation *Chosŏnjok* who literally live there, playing computer games. They don't have jobs. They don't know how to get a job in South Korea. They just depend on their parents' income and kill time. It is a big problem for the *Chosŏnjok* society in South Korea. (14 August 2015)

This interviewee sighed and said that the parents came to South Korea and worked very hard to ensure a better future for their children. *Chosŏnjok* parents were finally able to bring their children to South Korea, expecting them to go to university or to find a decent job. However, their children were too old to integrate easily into South Korean society and too young and inexperienced to find a job. Given this situation, the first generation seems to finally experience the pains of precarity.

In-Between Migrants' Navigation Strategies

This section focuses on the strategic uses of precarity from the perspective of *Chosŏnjok* migrants. How have those self-selected migrants navigated precarity with little more than the desperate need to survive? This section looks at how they have developed social and individual capacities of navigation through unstable and flexible situations. Increasingly unstable situations turned into opportunities as well as challenges for the *Chosŏnjok*. That was because increased precarity provided a new niche in job markets for *Chosŏnjok* migrants, who do not mind working as flexible laborers and have a support network with other *Chosŏnjok* in the PRC that affords them flexibility. Since many of them prioritized making money and were free from day-to-day familial responsibilities, they could move freely from job to job, city to city, or stay in the workplaces or houses of their employers, while they performed domestic work, childcare, postnatal care, and patient care. Over the decades, *Chosŏnjok* migrants have honed their survival techniques and renegotiated their identities.

It should be noted that the capacity to navigate these changes is supported by connections to Korean networks and natives, especially those who are receptive to the *Chosŏnjok* in communities like those in the Kuro-Taerim area. Koreans in various sectors benefit from and have a growing interest in engaging with the *Chosŏnjok*.⁶⁵ Their attitudes to the *Chosŏnjok* became accommodating rather than controlling, and the collaboration between Korean natives and *Chosŏnjok* migrants was enhanced by a shared language and culture. A Korean local policeman said,

I recently organized a mountain-climbing club with *Chosŏnjok* people so that I can network with them and get to know what is going on with them ... I sometimes go to China [PRC] and meet the friends and relatives of the *Chosŏnjok* here in Korea. It might help for my future business if I showed interest in them. (7 March 2014)

This policeman became close with some *Chosŏnjok* and developed the skills he needed to navigate the job market based on his contact with *Chosŏnjok* people, as even his own occupation became unstable. Private businesses such as local coffee shops, real estate agents, and private hospitals also said that they benefitted from *Chosŏnjok* customers. Even though their presence in the area might be short-term, the *Chosŏnjok* and their lifestyles brought prosperity to local businesses.

Chosŏnjok migrants used the following three strategies to cope with precarity. First, as mentioned, the *Chosŏnjok* developed informal ways to manage their visa statuses, jobs, housing, and marriages. The number of brokers and agencies that linked *Chosŏnjok* migrants to the necessary services and jobs increased exponentially. They created new modes of organising new types of labor and legitimized them within existing regulations.⁶⁶ In response to a shifting geopolitical environment and fluctuating migrant policies, they developed casual attitudes and informal management styles. Despite the large-scale legalization undertaken by the state, which reduced the number of undocumented *Chosŏnjok*, approximately 19,000 undocumented *Chosŏnjok* still exist according to local actors of the Kuro-Taerim area.⁶⁷ The flexibility inherent in migrant policies led *Chosŏnjok* migrants to think that these visa statuses were not legal and ethical matters but practical matters that they could manage flexibly, *Chosŏnjok* interviewees said.

One *Chosŏnjok* interviewee who used to be an undocumented immigrant for seven years said,

It [visa status] is a matter of money. You can do anything with money in this country. This is what I learnt here. Being undocumented is of course scary. But, you can live like that; you can have a job, a life, and a house. (27 January 2011)

True or not, this statement demonstrates how *Chosŏnjok* migrants perceived and approached their migrant status. As local Korean native actors mellowed over time and became accommodating rather than controlling,⁶⁸ *Chosŏnjok* migrants figured out various ways to stay in South Korea regardless of their expiring visas.

Prioritizing jobs over legal status, *Chosŏnjok* migrants responded proactively to informal jobs, which needed flexible and cheap labor. The influx of *Chosŏnjok* migrants was a boon to the informal job market that already existed, but, at the same time, their availability motivated the creation of more informal jobs. *Chosŏnjok* migrants found informal jobs in care-work, cleaning, agricultural work, construction, and various service sectors. One *Chosŏnjok* interviewee without a work permit said,

You can find jobs on the Internet, wall boards, and job agencies in this area. I call the number and renegotiate the payment and time. (4 September 2015)

South Koreans started to associate *Chosŏnjok* migrants with informal work, which contributed to an image of people living outside the law.⁶⁹ There was a perception that the *Chosŏnjok* would be willing to commit crimes such as voice phishing⁷⁰ and even murder; never mind that the *Chosŏnjok*'s crime rate remained lower than Korean natives and other migrant groups.⁷¹ Illegal businesses such as voice phishing need cheap workers who can speak Korean, and according to a police officer interviewed in the area, brokers approached *Chosŏnjok* migrants and tried to recruit them for these purposes. By accepting informal working conditions, *Chosŏnjok* were viewed as undermining society's values, which justified blaming them for illegal businesses cropping up even though a number of native Koreans participated as well.

The informal housing market also underwent a boost through the emergence of *Chosŏnjok* migrants. Cheap and temporary rental homes were built in the Kuro-Taerim area for factory workers, but because those workers left as the factories moved to smaller cities in South Korea or to other Southeast Asian countries or the PRC, the homes were planned to undergo renovation. It was at that time that the *Chosŏnjok* moved from the PRC and rented those vacant homes. One Korean local interviewee who was a realtor said,

The *Chosŏnjok* saved the housing market in this area. Homeowners lost renters because those factory workers left, then the *Chosŏnjok* showed up. Now homeowners don't want to renovate. The rents even went up because there was more demand for cheap housing than supply. (7 July 2014)

As *Chosŏnjok* migrants replaced the previous and somewhat reliable renters, the renovation plan was cancelled, and, at the time of this research, urban regeneration has been planned instead.⁷² The renter system changed to one based on temporary stays because *Chosŏnjok* migrants wanted to be ready to leave with very little notice.

Second, in addition to informality, *Chosŏnjok* migrants developed a strategy to manage precarious conditions in South Korea and to maintain their family in the PRC through circular mobility. Migrant policies would only allow work permits of limited duration, so a temporary stay in South Korea and eventual return to the PRC was inevitable. Even though it was enforced, a number of *Chosŏnjok* migrants developed a positive perception regarding circular mobility mainly because it allowed them to visit their families back in the PRC. By moving back and forth, they could visit their families often and still find transient work opportunities.⁷³

Their in-betweenness was what helped them settle into a routine of circular or repeated mobility. *Chosŏnjok* interviewees would casually discuss the fact that they were thinking of going again to the PRC or South Korea. One interviewee said,

At first, I wanted to make money as soon as possible and go back to my hometown to support my family. But now I see many good things in Korean society. I would like to bring my son over here. Eventually, I want to live here [South Korea] for a few months and spend the rest of the year in my hometown [Yanbian]. (30 January 2011)

I repeatedly heard this idea of circular mobility as an adaptive preference for a period of time in the majority of my interviews. Another *Chosŏnjok* interviewee who had lived in the UK and the US to make money said,

When I went back to China [PRC], I thought I couldn't live there any longer. Of course, it doesn't mean that I will leave China forever. I just want to stay for a while to make money and experience a new life in South Korea or other places and go back to China and stay there for a while having a good time with my family and friends. (17 January 2013)

As the number of *Chosŏnjok* migrants developed circular mobilities, they also developed businesses that would buy products such as cosmetics in South Korea to sell in the PRC. Though the businesses were based on circular mobilities of *Chosŏnjok*, they included *Chosŏnjok* and Koreans alike. One interviewee explained that he had started a business that depended on his circular mobility with both his *Chosŏnjok* and Korean friends. Another interviewee affirmed that he has plans for a business that similarly includes *Chosŏnjok* and Koreans so that they have easier access to goods in Korea. While this is an example of an advantage of in-betweenness, it should be pointed out, that *Chosŏnjok* interviewees often felt that they were discriminated against more than other migrants and not accepted wholeheartedly while they consider the Korean society as their ancestors' land.

The third and final coping strategy is place-making in enclaves, which serves a dual role. On the one hand, place-making takes on the role of a hometown where migrants can rely on and get psychological comfort. As one interviewee described, they can eat familiar foods, speak freely without being self-conscious of their accent, and, most of all, simply be themselves.

I love this Kuro-Taerim area because here I can shout as I want and use the *Chosŏnjok* accent without being self-conscious. I don't know. I just feel so comfortable here. (14 August 2015)

The making of *Chosŏnjok* churches, restaurants, associations, and places of leisure in their enclaves in the Kuro-Taerim area has provided opportunities for the *Chosŏnjok* to reaffirm their identities. Their in-betweenness helped them settle into Korean society relatively easily, but, at the same time, it also brought feelings of ambiguity and confusion. One interviewee said,

I was so often asked by Koreans if I think of myself as Chinese or Korean. Well, I am *Chosŏnjok*. That's how I think of myself. Korea, not South Korea necessarily, is my father, and China is my mother. In this area, I don't have to think about it and just hang out with other *Chosŏnjok*. (22 June 2015)

That identity pressure made them feel anxious, according to the *Chosŏnjok* interviewees. Place-making was an effort to find a safe place, although in reality those places constantly renegotiated a sense of Korean-ness and *Chosŏnjok*-ness.

The second role is that the enclaves also provided information on jobs, temporary places, and various arrangements for short-term residence. There were particular spots where construction worker candidates were waiting to be picked up early morning for day labor. Job agencies provided various jobs, and job brokers approached people for job opportunities usually in informal jobs or for 3D jobs. Shelters, temporary housing, and job agencies enabled transient labourers to stay in South Korea temporarily and without too much trouble. By playing a dual role, the Kuro-Taerim area supports a variety of needs and helps *Chosŏnjok* migrants with navigation strategies.

Conclusion

The case of the *Chosŏnjok* migrants in this research shows that geopolitical changes and demands for laborers while the South Korean economy was booming led the government to invite migrant workers. But while most transnational migrants struggle with language barriers and culture shock, *Chosŏnjok* migrants are somewhat spared these difficulties. Yet, regardless of *Chosŏnjok* migrants' ability to blend in, they are still viewed as thieves there to take jobs from the native-born population, especially when the economy experienced a downturn. Suddenly, after the Asian Financial Crisis, the ready availability of *Chosŏnjok* migrants has been exacerbating the precarity of the South Korean job market. Their willingness to take on contract-based, part-time, or temporary jobs allows employers to offer employees less, and this makes it difficult for other jobseekers to compete. *Chosŏnjok* migrants are now a part of the precariat in South Korean society, and their in-betweenness plays an important role in their survival as they engage in three strategic coping methods. First, they sought informal job markets rather than go through official avenues. Second, they internalized the logic of mobilities and embraced circular mobility between the PRC and South Korea. Third, they engaged in place-making and created an enclave in the Kuro-Taerim area in Seoul.

While precaritization is a global phenomenon, *Chosŏnjok* migrants have contributed to a home-spun precarity in South Korea in three main ways. First,

following the easing of tensions between the PRC and South Korea after several decades, *Chosŏnjok* migrants' influx into South Korea accelerated the precaritization that globalization had already started. Second, due to shared ethnic and linguistic characteristics making adaptation to Korean society smoother relative to other migrants, *Chosŏnjok* migrants' immediate readiness to join the work force hastened South Korea's precaritization. Third, since some *Chosŏnjok* trace their roots back to North Korea, they pursued their economic interests without any feelings of allegiance to South Korea or concern for how their actions might adversely affect the country's overall wellbeing. The findings demonstrate that the contextualized geopolitics of the East Asian region has shaped a particular form of precarity. The interaction between macro-processes, such as globalization, national policy, and job markets, and individual responses is an important part of migrant studies. Migrants and other proactive individual citizens develop social or individual navigational capacities separate from a nation's best interests.⁷⁴ It is possible that, in future societies, precarious social economic conditions will escalate and these navigational capacities will become critical for survival.

This study has explored the theoretical implications that actions as well as preferences are often the consequence of a desire to survive. The state, private companies, and individuals cross national boundaries seeking what they need to not only survive but, hopefully, thrive. Unintentionally, precarity increases in the process, but then precarity itself becomes a tool for survival. In the case of South Korea, a lack of available cheap labor motivated the state to invite migrant laborers into the country, but in times of economic recession, migrant workers who are willing to take on temporary and part-time employment bring more instability to an already fragile job market. As a result of scarce employment, individuals increase their mobilities seeking work. In a sense, individual migrant workers become dependent on governing through mobility.⁷⁵ As Standing notes, "the precariat is not a victim, villain or hero but just a lot of us."⁷⁶ Where people fall within the spectrum that exists between victim and hero would partly depend on whether they stubbornly refuse to change their adaptive preferences and perpetuate insecurity or become proactive individuals and navigate precarity either individually or collectively.


Notes

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“Identity through difference”: Liminal Diasporism and Generational Change Among the Koryo Saram in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan¹

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Abstract

This article examines the case of the Koryo saram, the ethnic Koreans living in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, to reflect on how notions of diasporas, community, and identity have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It contends that the Koryo saram are best understood through the lenses of diasporic conditions rather than as bounded communities, as such an approach allows for greater recognition of heterogeneity within these communities. While many Koryo saram continue to claim some form of Korean-ness, how they relate to issues of homeland-orientation and boundary maintenance evidences internal variation and growing in-betweenness. The community’s hybridity (“hyphenization”) and liminality (“identity through difference”) stand out when examining generational differences and are especially evident among the local Korean youth.

Keywords: Koryo saram, Korean diaspora, post-Soviet, Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, liminality, generational change

Introduction

Deported by Stalin in 1937 and later widely regarded as “the model Soviet people,” owing to their assimilation and integration in Russified Soviet society, the Soviet/post-Soviet Koreans have shown—over generations and space, through forcible and voluntary migration—remarkable skills of adaptation and survival to new political and cultural environments. The collapse of the Soviet Union engendered yet another experience of dislocation and mobility; this time of borders between peoples, with the establishment of new republics where before there had been one single Soviet state and homeland.

This article examines the case of the Koryo saram (as Central Asia’s Koreans call themselves) and specifically the ethnic Koreans living in Bishkek, capital city of Kyrgyzstan,³ to reflect on how notions of diasporas and identity have changed since the Soviet collapse. While the local Koreans’ path to social integration and the process of assimilation have been well covered in the literature,⁴ including their distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Koreans of the peninsula,⁵ we still know very little about their condition of in-betweenness, or liminality, and particularly the considerable heterogeneity of the community.

The article pursues two aims. First, it seeks to broaden the analysis of Korean diasporas beyond the more common focus on Koreans in the West,⁶ China,⁷ and Japan.⁸ At about 500,000 (Table 1) the post-Soviet Koreans represent the

Table 1 The Koryo saram in the post-Soviet space

	Uzbekistan (2017 est.)	Kazakhstan (1999)	Tajikistan (2010)	Kyrgyzstan (2019)	Turkmenistan (2012)	Russia (2010)
Overall	32,120,500	16,009,597	7,564,502	6,389,500	4,751,120	142,856,536
Majority group	Uzbeks 26,917,700 (83.7%)	Kazakhs 10,096,763 (63.1%)	Tajiks 6,373,834 (84.3%)	Kyrgyz 4,655,646 (72.8%)	Turkmens 4,066,969 (85.6%)	Russians 111,016,896 (80.9%)
Koreans	176,900 (0.55%)	100,385 (0.6%)	600 (0)	17,105 (0.2%)	396 (0)	153,156 (0.11%)

Sources: O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Davlat Statistika Qo‘mitasi. *O‘zbekiston Respublikasining Demographic Holati (Demographic Status of the Republic of Uzbekistan)*. Tashkent, 2017; Агентство по статистике при Президе денте Республики Таджикистан, *Перепись населения и жилищного фонда Республики Таджикистан 2010 года (Population Census and Housing Stock of the Republic of Tajikistan 2010)*, Душанбе, 2010. Всероссийская перепись населения 2010. *Национальный состав населения РФ 2010 (National Composition of the Population 2009)*; Комитет по статистике, Министерство национальной экономики, Республики Казахстан, *Перепись населения 2009 (Population Census 2009)*, Astana 2010. Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики *Национальный состав населения (National Composition of the Population)*. Bishkek, 2019. Türkmenistanyň Statistika döwlet komiteti. *Türkmenistanyň milli haspary (National Account of Turkmenistan)*, Aşgabat, 2012.

world's fifth-largest Korean diaspora. In the post-Soviet context, what makes the experience of the Koryo saram noteworthy is that, as Marco Buttino notes, they show how “a deported minority ingeniously adapted to the new environment and was capable of negotiating with the Soviet authorities a respectable position in the new society.”⁹ The Koryo saram literature has primarily focused on Koreans living in Russia,¹⁰ Kazakhstan,¹¹ and Uzbekistan,¹² or the whole Central Asian region,¹³ as these are the territories of greater Korean settlement (Table 1; Map 1).

Some attention has been paid to the aims and conduct of South Korea's foreign policy towards the Central Asian region, including the Koryo saram there, although the focus has primarily been on the outside-in (from Seoul towards the region), rather than on the local Korean communities themselves.¹⁴

In the pages that follow, I focus on one of the lesser known cases from the post-Soviet space, namely that of the Koreans of Kyrgyzstan,¹⁵ in order to broaden the empirical scope of the Koryo saram scholarship. The article thus seeks to move the discussion beyond the important, but by now well-covered, issues in the literature, such as the initial migration of the Koreans to Russian territory¹⁶ and their deportation¹⁷ in favour of a greater acknowledgement and appreciation of intra-group variation.¹⁸



Map 1 Central Asia

Source: By Pline—Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=87978519> (Creative Commons)

Overall, in this article, I take issue with recent trends in the scholarship that seek to establish whether the Koryo saram are “still” Korean or constitute a new, “separate,” Korean nation. Questioning whether the Koryo saram are “still” Korean or whether their distinctiveness makes them substantially different from the Koreans of the peninsula has gained some traction in the literature,¹⁹ which makes this a relevant issue with which to engage. At the same time, such an approach (are the Koryo saram still Korean?), perpetuates assumptions of an idea of the Korean nation as primordialist, essentialist, and fundamentally static.

To explore these issues, I draw on insights from constructivist and more critical approaches to the study of identities and diasporas. The work of Rogers Brubaker²⁰ is especially useful in that it questions assumptions of groupism and groupness still dominating the study of ethnicity and diasporas. Furthermore, the work of James Clifford²¹ and Floya Anthias²² appears similarly relevant in shifting the focus away from the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland (particularly the latter), and towards the condition of the diasporic communities themselves, allowing a diversity of voices to emerge.

Methodologically, I draw on various rounds of field research conducted in Kyrgyzstan over two decades, most recently in the capital city of Bishkek in 2018 and 2019 (Map 2). I consulted archival sources including documents of the NKVD (Narodnyi Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del, the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in the 1930s and 1940s, correspondence between Soviet authorities at



Map 2 Administrative divisions of the Kyrgyz Republic

Source: By Waltie—Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9959915>

the time, Soviet census data (1926, 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989), and the publications of the local Korean cultural centre, such as the periodical *ильчи/일치* published primarily in Russian with a handful of pages in Korean. In addition, I conducted several semi-structured interviews, in Russian or English, with local Koryo saram. Although the sample was not representative and the findings are more exploratory than conclusive, they speak to the usefulness of single-country case studies.²³ Although my concern here is to contribute to critique and unpack notions of groupism and assumptions of groupness in diasporas common in the study of politics and sociology, the article shares with comparative area studies²⁴ a sensibility and effort to “understand politics in a local context.”²⁵

In telling the story of multiple mobilities, contingency and adaptation, the article advances two main arguments. First, it contends that rather than thinking of diasporas as bounded communities, we should think in terms of diasporic conditions and claims, allowing for greater fluidity, contingency, dynamism, and heterogeneity in how we approach the study and understanding of identity and identity transformation among the Koryo saram. Such conditions of hybridity and liminality are evident among individual Koreans living in the city of Bishkek. While many Koryo saram continue to claim some form of Korean-ness, this is understood, perceived, negotiated—even contested—differently. Second, my findings highlight a growing erosion of two of the three dimensions Brubaker regards as crucial in diasporic conditions, namely homeland orientation and boundary maintenance.²⁶ This is especially evident when comparing how younger Koryo saram perceive their Korean-ness, also in comparison with older generations. Taken together, the findings shed light on the hitherto neglected issue of generational change.

The article is divided into five sections. In the next section I review some key terminological and conceptual issues and lay out the theoretical framework I apply in this article. Next, I ground the experience of Kyrgyzstan’s Koreans in the Soviet period and subsequently the post-independence era. In the remainder of the article I discuss the empirics, drawing on fieldwork conducted in Kyrgyzstan, before concluding.

Terminology: What’s in a Name?

Koryo Saram

“What is in our names?” asks German Kim, a leading scholar of the post-Soviet Koreans and a Koryo saram himself.²⁷ While the rhetorical question might have well pertained to the actual first names (and patronymics), of the Koryo saram, the broader point actually relates to the ethnonym too. Historically, in local parlance

and official policy, Koreans living in Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and the post-Soviet republics were called just that: Koreans (in Russian: sing. Коре́ец/Коре́ецы, pl. корейцы/Коре́йцы, adjective: Коре́йский/Коре́йский). This is how the local ethnic Korean population was classified in the censuses. The English-language ethnonym does not distinguish between local Koreans and Koreans from elsewhere (the peninsula or beyond). In Soviet times the adjective Soviet was added to distinguish them from Koreans living outside of the USSR. Members of the community, however, prefer to use a different term: Koryo saram (고려 사람), or people of Koryō.²⁸ The ethnonym literally means Korean people and is widely accepted among the members of the communities themselves, as well as being used in the scholarly literature. In South Korea, however, the term is not widely used, where Koryoin (고려인/高麗人) is preferred—literally a Korean individual.²⁹ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the terminology has simply reverted to Korean for local census purposes or for self-appellation Koryo saram or, less commonly, Koryoin. The use of the hyphen between adjectives/ethnonyms (e.g. Uzbek-Korean or Kyrgyz-Korean), has become increasingly common also in light of the growing number of inter-ethnic marriages. In this article, I adopt the term that Koryo saram prefer to use to refer to themselves and use the simplified spelling of Koryo saram as the transliteration from the Cyrillic alphabet into the Latin one (Корё сапам), instead of following McCune-Reischauer romanization rules. To be clear, as Saveliev notes, Soviet/post-Soviet Koreans include three different groups of people, depending on patterns and timing of settlement on Russian/Soviet territory: first, and the largest community among them, were the Koryo saram (also known as Soviet Koreans or continental Koreans/материковые корейцы); second, the Sakhalin Koreans (Sahallin hanin/사할린 한인 or Сахалинские корейцы in Russian), descendants of those who left the southern part of the peninsula in the 1930s and 1940s, then under Japanese rule, to work on Sakhalin island; and lastly the immigrants from the DPRK in the period 1946–49.³⁰

From Diasporas to Diasporic Conditions: Contesting Groupism and Questioning Groupness

The Diaspora Studies scholarship has broadened its substantive and geographical scope in recent decades, reflecting the expansion, arguably the conceptual stretching, of what groups the term is supposed to include. As Appadurai notes, the notion of “diaspora denotes the transnational movement and ties in with arguments around globalization and the growth of non-nation-based solidarities.”³¹ As such, the concept places a strong emphasis on “contingency [and] indeterminacy.”³² Diaspora “involves a conception of identity that avoids the essentialism of much of the discussion on ethnic and cultural identities” and

“refocuses attention on transnational and dynamic processes, relating to ethnic commonalities, which can recognize difference and diversity.”³³

Much has changed since the term, which semantically comes from the ancient Greek διασπορά (“scattering of seeds”), and was first applied to the Jewish dispersal and later the Armenian one. Because the term now tends to share meaning with cognate groups, such as immigrants, refugees, guest workers, and ethnic communities,³⁴ the world has truly witnessed a proliferation of diasporas.³⁵ A key problem arising from the increasingly loose use of the term is thus what Brubaker calls its “dispersion [...] in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.”³⁶ The conceptual “over-stretching implies that if everything, all sorts of communities more or less dispersed, become diaspora, then nothing is distinctively so.”³⁷ The term therefore loses its discriminating power, making it impossible to distinguish diasporic from non-diasporic communities, (im)migrants *in primis*.

At the risk of simplification, conceptualizations of diasporas can be divided into two approaches.³⁸ On the one hand are those who think of diasporas in a more classical sense, as communities or “bounded entities.”³⁹ The classical definition of diaspora comes from the work of William Safran; a community can be referred to as diaspora if it presents the following six features: “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity defined by this relationship.”⁴⁰ This approach is relevant to the post-Soviet context. Predominant approaches to identity and nation-building across the post-Soviet space have been informed by Stalin’s infamous definition of the nation, which was heavily materialist, essentialist, and primordialist. A nation was defined as “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.”⁴¹ The Soviet emphasis on ethnogenesis has until recently informed the way in which ethno-national groups, including ethnic minorities and diasporas, including the Koryo saram, were understood, namely as bounded groups. At a first glance there appear to be good reasons for this. The Koryo saram are a small non-indigenous population in Central Asia, whose presence in the region dates back to less than a century ago. They surely have a long history of dispersal that is tragic in origin, which is typical of the other two arch-typical diasporas, the Jewish and the Armenian ones. Forcible resettlement and mobility restrictions fostered alienation in the host territories (Central Asia), at least until they were allowed to move, urbanize, and ultimately Russify and assimilate into local societies. The memory of the deportation has strongly shaped the community’s collective identity. There were of course problems with the fit between the definition and the Korean case, in that the relationship with the “homeland” has remained problematic.

What is the Koryo saram's homeland? Is it the Korean peninsula, as in the Soviet tradition all ethnonational groups were supposed to have a "historical homeland" (*istoricheskaya rodina*)? Or is it rather the Russian Far East, where Koreans had settled in the late nineteenth century and from where they were deported? And if they were ever to return, where would they go? Furthermore, there is an evident problem arising from the application of such an essentialist approach to the Koryo saram: its homeland-centredness. As Clifford also argues, homeland-centrism, and the links—material or symbolic—between the homeland and the diaspora, are not relevant to many communities that experience a diasporic condition. This is because, he continues, a diasporic condition arises from the "experience of being from one place and of another" is linked "with the idea of particular sentiments towards the homeland, whilst being formed by those of the place of settlement."⁴² Such an approach allows for what are now called hyphenated identities, highlighting a community's attachment to more than one place.

Anti-essentialist approaches to diasporas, informed by constructivist and more critical sensibilities, have gained traction in recent decades and seem preferable here, because they shift the focus from what diasporas are, or are supposed to be, to what they actually do, or is done in their name: from being (a diaspora) to claiming (to be one). In this respect, a useful way of thinking about this phenomenon is less in terms of diasporas, per se, and more as diasporic conditions and diasporism. The diasporic condition is therefore "one where one is constructed in and through difference, and yet is one that produces differential forms of cultural accommodation or syncretism: in some versions, hybridity."⁴³ Helpfully, Brubaker has unpacked the notion of diasporas and other groups by questioning the notions of groupness, groupism, and ultimately their bounded nature.⁴⁴ This approach does not render the term or its usage irrelevant, but shifts attention to the political consequences of the articulation of an identity as diasporic. Who diasporizes whom to what ends, and with what results? Diasporas matter because of what they do or what is done in their name, rather than because of what they (allegedly) are.

Such an approach appears preferable within this context for two reasons. The first is because of the consequences of the multiple experiences of dispersals and mobility among several generations of Koryo saram, which forced adaptation to new multi-ethnic contexts. Renegotiation with such environments calls for a new understanding of what home and homeland mean. The second is because Soviet—and still post-Soviet to a large extent—nation-building has been largely a top-down elite-driven affair. The Koryo saram are not an exception, with intellectuals, leaders of the ethnic cultural centres, and ethnic entrepreneurs engaged in defining what makes someone a Koryo saram.

In his review of the core features of diasporic conditions, Brubaker contends that three dimensions remain constitutive:⁴⁵ the experience of dispersal, forced and non; orientation towards a real or imagined homeland which remains the source of loyalty and values; and boundary maintenance, that is the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis the host society. First is the question of the importance of dispersion as a defining dimension of the diasporic experience. Originally, diasporas were communities that emerged out of a forced dispersion. While dispersion and the memory thereof still remain central to diasporic identities, two new aspects have enriched the debate. One is the fact that dispersal may not necessarily have a traumatic or even forced origin, and the other is that—as a result of the reconfiguration political spaces in post-communist Eurasia—dispersion may not only be the result of the movement of peoples across borders, but also the consequence of the movement of borders across settlements. The 25 million ethnic Russians left stranded by the Soviet collapse and the redrawing of political space without actually moving is a clear illustration of this new type of mobility.

The second reason for preferring an anti-essentialist approach to diasporas is that the very relationship with the homeland has started to be called into question. Homeland orientation (in terms of the memory of the dispersion or the commitment to return), dominated classical definitions of diasporas. Homeland remained the ultimate source of identity. Diasporas were homeland-centered communities. Especially on the wave of contributions coming from post-modernism, the salience of homeland orientation has been replaced by an approach that critiques the teleology of return, thus de-centering diasporas.⁴⁶

In addition to the above, according to Brubaker, there is “a tension in the literature between *boundary-maintenance* and *boundary-erosion*.”⁴⁷ While more classical approaches have emphasized how diaspora members have struggled to preserve and emphasize the boundaries between in-group and out-group, post-modern approaches, such as those of Clifford and Anthias, have emphasized the notions of hybridity, expressed through hyphenized ethnonyms (e.g. Korean-American, Kyrgyz-Russian, Korean-Chinese, etc.), and inbetween-ness or liminality. This is especially relevant to the Korean context as it explicitly recognizes, and values, heterogeneity and diversity over essence and coherence.

Alongside his work on diasporas, Brubaker has insightfully questioned notions of groups and groupness, which are too often unproblematically taken-for-granted.⁴⁸ What he takes issue with is a tendency, in academia as much as beyond, to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as “basic constituents of social life, fundamental units of social analysis.”⁴⁹ The problematization of groupness evokes⁵⁰ the notion of Bourdieu’s performative character, whereby “by invoking groups, they seek to evoke them, summon them,

call them into being.”⁵¹ What follows, therefore, is that we tend to “treat groupness as variable and contingent rather than fixed and given.”⁵² Quite the contrary, groupness, according to Brubaker, should be treated “as an event, as something that happens.”⁵³ In ultimate analysis, groupness may or may not happen.⁵⁴

In light of the above, asking whether the Korean diaspora forms a “single transnational community” or whether the Koryo saram have evolved into a “separate Korean nation” is, it seems to me, immaterial. While the Koryo saram may have constituted a more homogenous and bounded community when they settled in the Russian Far East from the 1860s onwards, the farmers and peasants that migrated at the beginning were soon joined by political dissidents in the early twentieth century,⁵⁵ divergent socio-spatial geographies have led to the emergence of different smaller Koryo saram communities. Rather than privileging the point of origin or the relationship with it “the diaspora experience [...] is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a concept of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite difference; by hybridity.”⁵⁶

Context: The Soviet and Post-Soviet Koreans

Whether as individuals or entire households, Koreans moved from the northern part of the Korean peninsula and Manchuria to the Russian Far East from 1863 onwards. Migration to the Far East began towards the final decades of Chosŏn (1392–1910), when farmers started to flee abuse by landowners, moneylenders, drought in 1863 and famine in 1869–1870.⁵⁷ The prospect of land grants, economic subsidies and even the acquisition of Russian citizenship attracted growing numbers of Koreans to the territories of Primor’e and Priamur’e.⁵⁸ Some localities, like Pos’et, were 95% Korean, with printed weekly newspapers, schools, technical colleges, and hospitals. Others in the Vladivostok okrug, like Khankai, Grodekov, Pokrov, Shkotovo, and Suchan also had substantial Korean populations.⁵⁹ The first three decades saw a surge in the Korean presence in the Russian/Soviet Far East. From over 50,000 people in 1910 (100 villages), numbers had almost doubled by 1925 (90,000), 170,000 in 1927 and between 1923 and 1936 there was an average increase of 17% per year.⁶⁰ By 1935 about 200,000 Koreans were living in the Russian Far East. However, by 1931 Korean immigration to the Soviet Union had virtually ceased. Geopolitics played a large part in this. The opening decades of the early twentieth century saw an oscillation between welcoming and more hostile policies from Tsarist Russia first and later the Soviet Union, mostly dictated by Russian/Soviet–Japanese relations. Russia’s strategic concerns over a growing Japanese presence and influence in the Far East raised the question of

the allegiance of the Korean population of the border regions. Tsarist Russia had already begun relocating Koreans that had settled in the Far Eastern regions after 1884 outside the border regions.⁶¹

The single most important event in the Soviet history of the Korean population was the 1937 deportation (*deportatsiya/pereselenie*). Resolution 1428–326ss of the Soviet People’s Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, adopted on 21 August 1937,⁶² subsequently reinforced by Resolution 1647–377ss passed on 28 September of the same year,⁶³ led to the near-complete wiping out of the Korean presence in the Far Eastern provinces.⁶⁴ Over the space of two months (September and October) Koreans were all placed on trains and deported to Soviet Central Asia, mostly—though not exclusively—in the southern provinces of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (Kazakh SSR) and the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR). Recipient of the new inflow of Koreans were the oblasts (provinces) of Tashkent, Kyzyl-orda, Almaty, and the Russian SFSR provinces of Astrakhan and Stalingrad (now Volgograd).⁶⁵ As the Great Purge or Great Terror (also known as *Ezhovshchina*, or Era of Ezhov, from the name of the head of the NKVD, Nikolai Ezhov) got under way between 1936 and 1938, this was the first full-blown deportation of entire peoples in the Soviet Union, although there were smaller-scale precedents⁶⁶ in 1930/31, 1935, and that of the Buryats in 1936.⁶⁷ There were earlier, aborted attempts at relocating Koreans away from border regions, dating back to 1926 and 1928, but decisions to that effect were not implemented, with plans effectively abandoned in 1931.⁶⁸ Formally, Koreans were not accused of any crime, and thus were not bundled alongside other “punished peoples” (*nakazannye narody*), such as the Germans, Chechens, Volga Tatars, and others.⁶⁹ The nature of the deportation was pre-emptive, as—the Soviet argument went—the local Korean population might have become involved in espionage in favor of the Japanese but were not accused of any crime.⁷⁰ Thus, initially, the legal status of the deported Koreans was that of “internal exiles” (*ssylka/poselentsy*). They were confined to the Central Asian countryside (with some exceptions),⁷¹ where they were tied to the land and worked in local (Korean) collective farms, primarily cultivating rice. The procedures accompanying their deportation, as laid out in Resolution 1428–326ss, also made it clear that they were entitled to take property with them during resettlement and claim compensation for the valuables and property left in the Far East; the document also refers to the fact that proper arrangements and assistance would be set in place on arrival.⁷² Uniquely in the experience of the Soviet deported peoples, those Koreans willing to leave the Soviet Union were to be allowed to do so, as long as they were not working in the secret police themselves.⁷³ Reality turned out to be much harsher than what appeared on paper and the deportation, as Pohl notes, “greatly altered their legal status, spatial distribution

and everyday culture.”⁷⁴ Upon arriving in Central Asia some Koreans did nevertheless move, leaving the Kazakh SSR for the Uzbek SSR, either for family re-union or because of the milder climate there.⁷⁵ In practice there were both differences between the administrative exile category and the special settlement regime, and some areas of overlap. Similarly to the nations deported later, Koreans suffered from legal restrictions as to the place of residence, but were not placed in special camps. They could not leave the Central Asian SSRs where they had been resettled and nor were they allowed to live in border districts there. They were also subject to surveillance by the NKVD to which they had to report regularly. The deported Koreans were also barred from serving in the army; rather they were forced to serve in the labor army, constructing industrial plants or working in mines. Initially some ethnic institutions were retained, including Korean schools, a theatre and the Korean Pedagogical Institute, a newspaper and a publishing house, though many of these were later abolished. The situation changed in 1945, when the Council of People’s Commissars extended the special settlement regime to the deported Koreans (Decision n. 35, 8 January 1945). In an order dated 2 July 1945 Beria recategorized Koreans as special settlers (*spets-pereselentsy*).⁷⁶ They were not allowed to leave the region and were not issued new passports without the five-year limit to exile. They were prevented from studying science or other technical subjects at universities and lost many of their ethnic institutions. Following the death of Stalin in 1953 and de-Stalinization under Khrushchev (1953–1962), such restrictions were gradually lifted from 1954 onwards.⁷⁷ This led to a steady urbanization and Russification of the Soviet Koreans, particularly from 1970 onwards, as evidenced by the Koreans’ linguistic Russification shown in subsequent Soviet censuses.⁷⁸ A minority chose to return to the Far East or move to other parts of the Soviet Russian or Ukrainian republics. Official rehabilitation only came much later with the USSR’S Supreme Soviet recognising that eleven of the thirteen ethnic groups deported by Stalin, including the Koreans, “constituted illegal and criminal repressive acts”.⁷⁹ The Law on Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples was only signed by then Russian President Boris Yeltsin and approved by the Russian Parliament in April 1991.⁸⁰

Nation-Building and Nationality Policies Under Soviet Rule

The Soviet Union was administratively structured, formally, as a federal state. Crucial to its organization was the link between ethnicity and territory, whereby—subject to certain conditions—each ethno-national community was expected to be endowed with its own territory. There was a hierarchy of administrative units of the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) with the Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Ukrainian ones at the top of this hierarchy endowed with relatively higher

(though still limited in practical terms), levels of autonomy, descending all the way down to autonomous republics (e.g., the Karakalpak ASSR within the Uzbek SSR), autonomous regions (e.g., the Birobidzhan Jewish autonomous region in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, RSFSR), autonomous territories, and districts. While officially countering nationalism as a reactionary and backward phenomenon, the Soviet authorities crystallized and even promoted nationality (*natsional'nost'*, built on ethnicity at its core), as a central category to classify and count people (its citizens).⁸¹ The ultimate aim was for a supra-national Soviet people (*sovetsky narod/sovetsky chelovek*), a non-national category to supersede national divisions. This meant that, for example, as James Critchlow aptly put it in reference to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, Uzbek children would go to Uzbek schools where they were taught in Uzbek language and would later read Uzbek-language newspapers and listen to radio programmes in Uzbek.⁸² The Uzbek SSR had its own institutions, besides schools, including theatres, parliament, a flag, and a constitution. All Soviet citizens were reminded, from an early age onwards, of who they were (or who the authorities had decided they would be). Ethnic institutions helped foster and maintain a sense of national belonging. Ultimately, the relevant entry in one's own passport (the *piataya grafa*, or fifth line) crystallized one's own ethnicity. In short, the Soviet language of self-determination and debate over nationality issues crucially framed how populations were organized and how their national consciousness was, to some degrees, promoted.⁸³ Francine Hirsch called this a double assimilation policy:⁸⁴ first of groups into nations and then subsequently into the afore-mentioned Soviet people. The disintegration of the Soviet state occurred before this process was completed.

What did this all mean for the Soviet Koreans? As a dispersed population without its own national territory on Soviet soil, they had some of these ethnic institutions, but not all. Crucially, they were not endowed with a national territory, as Korea (under Japanese rule during 1910–1945 and then the two Koreas), was regarded as their historical homeland(s). Thus, petitions for territorial autonomy in the Far Eastern regions of the Russian SFSR were not granted on the grounds that an external, historical homeland already existed (“Korea”).⁸⁵ As such, there was no cadre policy either since there was no land where Koreans could enjoy a *primus inter pares* status, where they could be regarded as the “titular nation” (*titul'naya natsiya*) in Soviet parlance. Koreans, and other smaller groups among them, started to be referred to as one of the diasporas/диаспоры, a term that was also used, confusingly, to refer to groups with a history of dispersal to settler groups (such as the Russians), or local indigenous communities (like the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan). The everyday reality for Soviet Koreans was one of steady Russification, in the form of their assimilation into Russian language and culture.

Koreans in Soviet Kirgizia and Post-Independence Kyrgyzstan

A minuscule Korean presence was first reported in Central Asia already in the 1897 census, around Pishpek (today's Bishkek) and Przhevalsk (now Karakol, in the eastern part of the country).⁸⁶ As Table 2 shows, the presence was still negligible in the 1920s (1926 census) and began to increase in the late 1930s (1939 census). Some activists from the Korean national independence movement, such as Petr Semenovich Tsoy (чке дзе кен/Chke Dze Khen, 최재현) arrived in Soviet Kirgizia in the 1920s and 1930s.⁸⁷ Another 130 Koreans settled in 1934–38.⁸⁸ As the numbers of Koreans in Soviet Kirgizia grew somewhat between the census of 1926 and that of 1939, some were left wondering whether Koreans had also been deported to this Soviet republic, too, in 1937, a question raised in his work by Gennady Li.⁸⁹ According to Li, there was no plan to deport Koreans to the Kyrgyz SSR, although this did not prevent some individuals from being forcibly relocated there. Census data, as observed above, show that the Korean population rose from 9 in 1926 to 508 in 1939. In the archival material I examined there is no reference to the Kirgiz SSR being the destination of the deportation, which were listed as the “South Kazakhstan region, the regions of the Aral Sea, Balkash and the Uzbek SSR.”⁹⁰ That said, given that at least initially some Koreans did leave the Kazakh SSR southwards it is possible that some ended up in Soviet Kirgizia. Li also mentions the presence of some Koreans in the villages of Kyzyl-Kiya and Sulyutka in southern Kyrgyzstan.⁹¹ As these areas border Uzbekistan and some Koreans were resettled in the Uzbek side of the Ferghana Valley, it is also conceivable that they also moved voluntarily.⁹² As mobility restrictions were lifted from the mid-1950s onwards Koreans could move from the countryside to the cities and across SSRs. This led to a more noticeable Korean presence being established in the Kyrgyz SSR. Numbers grew over time as Koreans abandoned agricultural activities in favour of employment in urban centres. From 1959 onwards the local Korean population increased further. A more significant migration to the Kyrgyz SSR began in the second half of the 1950s.⁹³ The numbers remained fairly stable until the 1990s, when in line with broader patterns of post-Soviet migration, many members of minority groups left the place where they were living. The number of Koreans in Kyrgyzstan initially declined, before increasing again in the 2000s.

From the Soviet experience, Kyrgyzstan “inherited a legacy of complex ethnic politics,”⁹⁴ which included the presence of cross-border minorities and a number of territorial oddities such as enclaves (small pockets of land formally under Uzbekistani and Tajikistani sovereignty), and exclaves (portions of territory in neighbouring Uzbekistan). Although the post-independence authorities have sought to emphasize continuities between post-independence Kyrgyzstan and pre-modern Kyrgyz tribal confederations—many of which were not really

Table 2 The Koryo saram in the Kirgiz SSR/Kyrgyzstan (population, %)

Ethnic group	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999	2009	2013	2018	2019
Overall	993,004	1,458,213	2,065,837	2,932,805	3,522,832	4,257,755	4,822,938	5,362,793	5,663,133	6,256,730	6,389,500
Kyrgyz	661,171 (66.6)	754,323 (51.7)	836,831 (40.5)	1,284,773 (43.8)	1,687,382 (47.9)	2,229,663 (52.4)	3,128,147 (64.9)	3,804,788 (71)	4,099,433 (72.3)	4,587,430 (73.3)	4,695,646 (73.4%)
Korean	9 (0)	508 (0)	3,622 (0.2)	9,404 (0.3)	14,481 (0.4)	18,355 (0.4)	19,784 (0.4)	17,299 (0.3)	16,753 (0.2)	17,074 (0.2%)	17,105 (0.2%)

Sources: ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 года (All-Union Population Census 1926)*. Москва: Издание ЦСУ Союза ССР, 1928–29. ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 года. Национальный состав населения по регионам республик СССР (All-Union Population Census 1926. National Composition of the Population by regions of the USSR)*). ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1939 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР (All-Union Population Census 1939. National Composition of the Population by Republic of the USSR)*). ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1959 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР (All-Union Population Census 1959. National Composition of the Population by Republic of the USSR)*). ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1970 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР (All-Union Population Census 1970. National Composition of the Population by Republic of the USSR)*). ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Республик. *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1979 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР (All-Union Population Census 1979. National Composition of the Population by Republic of the USSR)*). Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики. *Национальный состав населения (National Composition of the Population)*, 2019.

associated with the territory of today's Kyrgyzstan, within its current boundaries Kyrgyzstan is very much a recent formation; its origins date back to the Soviet period, when the national-territorial delimitation of 1924–36 reshaped the political and administrative space of the Central Asian region in a way that resembles the way it looks today.⁹⁵ Initially the Kyrgyz entity was set up as an autonomous region within the Russian SFSR and erroneously called Kara-Kyrgyz, as the Kazakh ASSR was called Kyrgyz instead. In 1936 the status of the region was upgraded to that of a full union republic (SSR), at the same level of the Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh, and other SSRs.

As Buttino notes in reference to the Korean population in Samarkand (Uzbekistan), the story of the Koryo saram is one of “how a deported minority ingeniously adapted to the new environment and was capable of negotiating with the Soviet authorities a respectable position in the new society.”⁹⁶ Since the Soviet collapse, due to a combination of uncertainty over status and the possible rise in local ethnic nationalism and—more generally—the social and economic hardship that affected all groups in post-independence Kyrgyzstan, some Koreans left, as the dwindling numbers show (Table 2). At the same time, some have moved from the neighboring republics due to its overall more open social, economic, and political environment. At just over 17,000, Koreans represent around 0.2% of the country's population.

As I have argued elsewhere, “the story of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan is one of unexpected independence and statehood, a fragile—‘imperilled’—sovereignty.”⁹⁷ From the outset, Kyrgyzstan was confronted with several challenges. A market economy had to be created from the ashes of the Soviet command economy in a context that was still largely rural and agricultural. A common national identity had to be created when the titular group was itself divided along tribal and regional lines and had no clear idea as to what kind of approach to nation-building it would promote, whether ethnic or civic. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, like its neighbors in the region, was home to a culturally and ethnically plural society. Kyrgyzstan emerged from the Soviet experience as an ethnically diverse country, with the titular group—the Kyrgyz—demographically constituting a bare majority. Two large minority groups stood out, the Russians and the Uzbeks.⁹⁸ Askar Akayev, the first president of independent Kyrgyzstan (1990–2005) sought to reject the sort of nationalizing policies that would have elevated the status of the titular group above that of others,⁹⁹ favoring—with some ambiguities—a more internationalist approach. The state promoted the notion of “Kyrgyzstan—our common home” (*Kyrgyzstan: nash obshchii dom*), where all groups would feel equally welcome and protected. However, over time, a “dual identity narrative”¹⁰⁰ during the Akayev years gradually gave way to the rise of Kyrgyz nationalism, first

Table 3 The Koryo saram in Kyrgyzstan (2009; administrative units)

	Total	Bishkek	Chuy	Issyk kul	Talas	Naryn	Jalalabad	Osh city	Osh region	Batken
Korean	17,299	12,014 (69.4%)	4388 (25.3%)	133	70	1	237	327	47	82

Source: Национальный статистический комитет Кыргызской Республики. *Национальный состав населения. Численность постоянного населения по национальностям (National Composition of the Population. Resident population by nationality)*. Bishkek 2019. <http://www.stat.kg/media/files/9cd9d7ee-78f0-413e-885d-80f914049ebf.pdf>

under Kurmanbek Bakiev (2005–2010) and later on under Almazbek Atambayev (2011–2017).

What were the implications of post-independence turbulence and nation- and state-building strategies, and the consequent changes for local Koreans? The Koryo saram were not the Kyrgyz nation's significant other. Initially these were the ethnic Russians, and later the Uzbeks, following Russian out-migration, especially in the 1990s, and relative demographic decline vis-à-vis the titular group. As Table 3 shows, Koreans currently number less than 20,000 in the country and are overwhelmingly concentrated in the northern part of the country (about 95%), particularly in the capital city of Bishkek (almost 70%) and the surrounding Chuy province (about 25%). They are a highly urbanized, educated community, and well integrated in local societies. As such, politically and demographically, they have posed no threat to the titular group.

Cultural revival started for the local Koreans, as for many ethno-national communities in the late Soviet period, in the late 1980s, when cultural centres and associations were established for minority groups. The “Chinson” Association for the Koreans of Kyrgyzstan was founded in 1989. Links with South Korea were established in the 1990s. As examined elsewhere,¹⁰¹ Seoul established a wide range of educational programmes aimed at the promotion of Korean language and culture, educational opportunities including scholarships, grants, and exchange programmes. These were not explicitly designed to specifically support the Koryo saram, and the whole local population was invited to learn more about Korean culture. Language courses proliferated, also fuelled by the success of Hallyu (Korean wave), Korean dramas, K-pop, films, food, and cosmetic products. Korean shops now line many of the streets of Kyrgyzstan's capital city, Bishkek.

Identity Transformation Among Today's Koryo Saram

“Koreans are Korean everywhere; [being Korean] is about blood,” passionately argued Gennady Li, a well-known local writer in Bishkek as we met in the “Korean House” (*Koreisky dom*), one of the cultural institutions where the more engaged Koryo saram population gathers in town.¹⁰² Li, born in the Uzbek SSR in 1940, spent time in Moscow in 1960–1965, before relocating to Soviet Kirgizia. His remarks were about Koreans, but reflected a broader approach to identity promoted during Soviet times (ethnogenesis), essentialist, and primordialist, which still resonates among some today. Viktoriya, a 65-year old lady active in the Society of Koreans of Kyrgyzstan, an organization represented in the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, echoed Li's comment: “traditions, values, culture, food. All Koreans share those; it does not matter what age they are.”¹⁰³

This view stood in stark contrast to remarks by young local Koreans, though. “My parents tell me I am Korean; my grandparents tell me I am Korean as they recall their tragic experiences as children during the deportation from the Far East, but I don't feel the same. I lived in Russia and I feel closer to them [Russians, author's note]. I also studied and lived in America and South Korea. I am full of doubts, I do not know who I am,” says Nataliya, a 19-year old resident of Bishkek.¹⁰⁴ As she recalls her own identity dilemmas and struggles with her sense of (multiple) belongings or her in-betweenness, I am reminded of the sheer diversity of opinions among the Koryo saram, or the post-Soviet Koreans, and the way in which they articulate, express, and negotiate their Korean-ness and senses of us-ness and other-ness. The two views above also illustrate how older-generation Koreans are more inclined to emphasize diasporic identities as claims and stances and are aware of their role in this process, whilst younger Koreans are more visibly open to notions of hybridity and hyphenated identities, or even abrupt identity changes like that of Nataliya, above. Despite such obvious and growing differences, both generations have grown up in multi-ethnic societies, the Soviet one and the post-Soviet republic, which, by and large, continue to be ethnically and culturally diverse environments. While there is a growing inter-generational gap, much remains shared too.

Dispersal

The memory of the deportation, its direct experience for the older generations and the way it is narrated and passed on across generations, remains an important dimension of the Koryo saram's diasporic condition, although the extent to which this is a defining moment depends on individual experiences and especially the generation. All young Koreans I spoke to in Bishkek recalled stories they had been

told by their grandparents: “I know the events took place a long time ago, but this is still part of who we [Koreans of the former Soviet Union] are and what makes us different [from other Koreans],” says Valeriy, a young undergraduate student at a local international university.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, with the more elderly members of the older generations dying and new waves of international mobility, from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, from Kyrgyzstan to Russia or South Korea or the United States, intensifying, it is likely that this memory will gradually fade away like other aspects of Koryo saram-ness that have long become extinct, such as language (Koryo mar). “Language represents the most important element of a culture, element of self-identification” writes Li,¹⁰⁶ and yet, Koreans in post-Soviet Eurasia have felt no less Korean even without language use and proficiency.

Homeland Orientation

If ties with the homeland, a sense of longing and belonging, the need to either restore or return to it were key elements of traditional diasporic identities, these are clearly not applicable to the case of Bishkek’s Koreans. How Koryo saram relate to the notion of homeland is, by contrast, blurred and contested. “My home is where I was born,” local Koreans all seem to concur. The strongest parallel between the younger and older generations is an attachment to territory, wherever they may be living. Gennadiy Li emphatically proclaimed it thus: “our homeland (*nasha Rodina*) is Kyrgyzstan; we are Kyrgyzstani,” an expression reminiscent of his publications (*My Kyrgyzstantsy, We are Kyrgyzstanis*).¹⁰⁷ The interesting aspect of this is that Li had lived in other Soviet republics, having been born in the Uzbek SSR before going to university in Moscow, and only subsequently settling in the Kirgiz SSR. At the same time, he also felt it necessary to add a note clarifying that “Korea is our (the Koreans’) historical homeland, this is where we come from.”¹⁰⁸ Viktoriya, who as a retiree volunteers at the Korean national cultural centre, an institution affiliated with the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan (*Assembleyey Naroda Kyrgyzstana*, created by former President Akayev in 1997, to give institutional representation to the country’s ethnic minority groups), agreed on an unspecified and imagined Korea (North? South? Chosŏn?) being the ultimate homeland. In reality, whilst for historical diasporas the relationship with the homeland is crucial, alongside a myth of return, this appears to be an increasingly less relevant aspect of the identity and self-perceptions of the local Korean youth. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, local Koreans have experienced a dual wave of de- and re-territorialization of their identities, well noted both in the literature on the Koryo saram¹⁰⁹ and Koreans abroad more

generally.¹¹⁰ Initially, the opening of previously sealed boundaries and a discovery of links with South Korea led to greater enthusiasm for the country. Over time, however, the different historical experiences and cultural products available to Koreans from the peninsula and the Koryo saram meant that a phase of disenchantment followed.¹¹¹ Although this point holds true across generations, younger Koryo saram expressed a sense of “confusion” and “disorientation” in relation to the place they consider as homeland. Some, like the younger Viktoriya, confess changing their “homeland orientation” depending on where she lived.¹¹² As she has lived in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and the United States, she admitted being confused and not knowing where she belongs or which place, if any, she would consider as her home(land). Viktor, by contrast, strongly emphasized his attachment to Kyrgyzstan given the similarities, he mentioned, in the cultures and traditions between the local Koreans and the other local communities, whereas whenever he visited South Korea he felt a remarkable cultural distance, also of values: “Kyrgyzstan is more traditional, Koreans in South Korea are different from us. I feel like a foreigner here.”¹¹³ Nataliya felt evenly split between Kyrgyzstan and Russia, a country she felt culturally closer to than Kyrgyzstan due to her being a Russian-speaker without advanced knowledge of the Kyrgyz language.¹¹⁴ While more systematic assessments of identity perceptions among local Koreans are needed, this exploratory overview of self-perceptions among local Koryo saram youth suggests that attachments to Korea and a perception that this is a historical homeland are visibly decreasing over time. The local Korean youth are much more open to acknowledging multiple loyalties, attachments, and affiliations, without these being static and unchanging.

Boundary Maintenance

The Koreans of Kyrgyzstan are more prone to embrace multiple identities, as both Koreans and Kyrgyz, Russian, or Uzbek, contextualizing the perception of Korean-ness in a very personal, yet malleable way. Hybridity, in other terms, is something that perhaps, over generations of survival in and adaptation to evolving multi-cultural environments, has come to accompany the Koryo saram. Often regarded as key identity markers, language and religion do not serve the purpose of maintaining the boundaries between the local Koreans and their “others.” Koryo mar is virtually an extinct language, only spoken—not written—by an increasingly small number of elderly Koreans.¹¹⁵ As a result of their assimilation and integration into Russian/Soviet society, Russian was, and is, the main language of choice of local Koreans, although Korean language has become increasingly popular in the whole Central Asian region as a result of South Korea’s cultural

diplomacy and educational exchange, promoted by the Korea Foundation and the Academy of Korean Studies, among others. Interest in Korean culture, including language, is increasing especially among the local youth, but this has more to do with pop culture than shared cultural references with young South Koreans. Religion is no more of a glue: Koreans profess various confessions of Christianity or no faith, and despite the growing presence and influence of Korean missionary groups, this has not translated into visible mass conversions, although data on religious affiliation among Koryo saram are more scarce compared to those on language knowledge.

Overall, the cultural referents seem to be different from those of South Koreans, but also of older generations of local Koreans. In Soviet times ethnic institutions had the important role of preserving, promoting, or reviving national culture, in whatever way this might have been defined. Crucially, tuition in a group's language, media, schools, theatres, and other aspects crucial to group identity, served the purpose of reinforcing both the members' identity and sense of belonging and accentuating their difference (boundaries) from outsiders. Yet, if there was a common thread in my interviews with young local Koreans, it was their difficulty to relate to those very Soviet-era institutions such as the Korean national-cultural centre (OKK, *Ob'edinienie Koreytssev Kyrgyzstana*). Apart from a generational issue (they felt that the ethnic associations were just "a place for people of a certain age"¹¹⁶ what they could not relate to was the emphasis on "traditional" dresses, food, or culture more generally. Not that these were not of interest, and many young Koreans recalled celebrating Korean traditional holidays such as Ch'usók at home, but they seemingly struggled with cultural performances where all ethnic minorities were routinely asked to express and celebrate "their national culture." This assumption of "one-ness" rendered the generational gap particularly acute, raising the questions of whether old and new understandings of Korean-ness had much in common with each other. It was thus apparent that boundaries between Koreans and other groups have been progressively eroded. This is due to the combined influence of their gradual Russification, which resulted in their assimilation in the broader Russian or Russian-speaking group and also the number of mixed marriages.¹¹⁷

In Lieu of Conclusion: *Ex Uno Plures?*

Over decades in Soviet and post-Soviet times, the lives and identities of the Koryo saram have been shaped by different and divergent socio-spatial geographies. The Soviet Union was a multi-national environment they gradually got used to and integrated in, while experiencing distinctive aspects of Soviet life in their different

socio-cultural milieu. The disintegration of the Soviet state and the emergence of fifteen successor states rendered such differences among Koreans even more apparent and acute.

While most of the Koryo saram scholarship has focused on the differences between them and “other” Koreans, typically from the peninsula, in this article I have focused on the emerging differences among the Koryo saram of the same *locale* themselves. The Koryo saram of Bishkek and the surrounding areas have experienced upheaval and forced adaptation for generations as a result of multiple experiences of mobility. Due to the limited scope of this study, the findings are tentative and could be subject to more systematic probing in future research, for example, through either large scale surveys or thorough ethnographic investigations.

Although the memory of the deportation remains an important feature of the diasporic condition, local Koreans relate very differently to the other two dimensions identified by Brubaker. Consistently with the findings of more recent studies of diasporas, the relationship with the homeland—alongside very different understandings of what the homeland is—has progressively diminished. Similarly, rather than seeking to preserve their boundaries with the surrounding cultural milieu, the Koryo saram have, through assimilation, seen those boundaries erode. This is especially evident among Koreans of about twenty and thirty years of age. Findings suggest a clear tendency among the young Koryo saram to hyphenize their identities, as Korean-Kyrgyz, Korean-Uzbek, Russian-Korean, or something else. The broad tendency towards re-territorialization of diasporic identities is something that other scholars have noted in relation to, for example, the Koreans of New Malden in London or Kazakhstan’s Koreans.¹¹⁸ The Koryo saram perceive, articulate, and negotiate their Korean-ness differently in a way that is reminiscent of Stuart Hall’s notion of “identity through difference.”¹¹⁹ As such they can be understood as liminal diasporic communities, where their primary affiliations are constantly in flux, subject to change, contestation, and re-negotiation. To conclude, the question thus is not whether the Koryo saram are or are not (still) Korean. Shaped by increasingly distinctive historical geographies, the Koryo saram tell a story of contingency, survival, adaptation, and—at its core—human agency.

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Korean Studies Grant Program of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2015-R39).
2. The author is grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their insightful and valuable comments.
3. Officially, the country is called the Kyrgyz Republic, though its previous name remains widely used domestically and internationally. I use the two terms interchangeably.
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 29. Kim. “Correlations of Ethnicity,” 22.
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 45. Brubaker. “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 5.
 46. Hall. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.”
 47. Brubaker. “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 6.
 48. Brubaker. “Ethnicity without Groups,” 163.
 49. Brubaker. “Ethnicity without Groups,” 164.
 50. Brubaker. “Ethnicity without Groups,” 165.
 51. Brubaker. “Ethnicity without Groups,” 166.
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 62. The term used in the resolution is actually “vyselenie” (eviction). Postanovlenie SNK SSSR I TsK VKP(b). 1428–326ss ‘O vyselenii koreiskogo naseleniya pogranichnykh raionov

- Dal'nevostochnogo Kraya', 21 August 1937, available at <https://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1021140>. In this resolution Stalin and Molotov ordered the secret police to deport all Koreans living in the Vladivostok region and the adjacent territories.
63. Postanovlenie n. 1647–377ss Soveta Narodnykh Kommissarov Soyuza SSR, 28 September 1937, available at <https://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1021151>. In this resolution Molotov ordered that all remaining Koreans in the Far Eastern region (Dal'nevostochnyi Krai) be deported.
 64. To clarify, only Koreans living in the Far East were deported. By then some Koreans had settled in the western regions of the USSR, but those were not forcibly resettled and neither were legal restrictions imposed upon them.
 65. Huttenbach. "The Soviet Koreans."
 66. Kim. "Deportation of 1937."
 67. Caroline Humphrey. "Deportees in Society. Ssyl'ka and Spetsposelenie in Soviet Buryatia," *Inner Asia*, 21 (2019): 38–60.
 68. Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 317–319, 323–324. Although ethnic tensions were present—and intensified in the 1930s—conflict at the time revolved around land possession.
 69. Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR*.
 70. There is some debate in the literature as to whether the driver of the cleansing of the Korean population from the Far East was ideologically (as opposed to racially-defined) Soviet xenophobia, as Martin argues (Martin. *Affirmative Action Empire*) or whether there was a racial dimension to the move, consistent with earlier Tsarist policies, as contended by Chang (*Burnt by the Sun*) and G. Kim ("The 1937 deportation").
 71. Buttino notes that some Korean families were deported to urban centres, such as Samarkand (Buttino, *Samarqanda*, 252).
 72. Articles 3–7.
 73. Article 5 of Declaration 1428–326ss states that "no obstacles should be created" for Koreans wishing to leave the Soviet Union. At the same time the rapid succession in declarations by the Council of People's Commissars and the NKVD in August and especially September points to the shift away from relocating "only" Koreans settled in border districts to removing all Koreans from the Soviet Far East (see Decisions 1428–326ss 21 August 1937; 1527–349ss 5 September 1937; 1539–354ss 8 September; 1571–356ss 11 September 1937; and 1647–377ss 28 September 1937. Small pockets of remote Korean villages remained, for example near Okhotsk and north Sakhalin island (Chang, *Burnt by the Sun*, 158). About 2,500 Koreans were not deported but arrested and executed (Ibid., 159). The southern part of Sakhalin island was under Japanese rule from 1905–1945 and several Koreans moved there from the southern part of the Korean peninsula, initially voluntarily and later forcibly (1939–1945).
 74. Pohl, "Cultural, spatial and legal displacement of the Korean diaspora," 172.
 75. Pohl, "Cultural, Spatial, and Legal Displacement," 180–181.
 76. Khan, *Kore Saram: Kto my?*, 59. For the text of the decision n. 35 of the Council of People's Commissars made on 8 January 1945 see Bugai, *Iosif Stalin-Lavrentiyu Berii* 231. On the special settlement regime as a legal category see the work of Viktor N. Zemskov. *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR*. Moscow: Nauk, 2005; Otto J. Pohl. *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999. Otto J. Pohl, "Stalin's Genocide against the 'Repressed Peoples'." *Journal of Genocide Research* 2.2 (2000): 267–293. Otto J. Pohl. "Cultural, Spatial, and Legal Displacement of the Korean Diaspora in the USSR: 1937–1945." *Review of Korean Studies* 21.1 (2018): 171–188. Pavel Polian. *Against their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003. U He Li and En Un Kim. Eds. *Belaya Kniga: O deportatsii koreyskogo naseleniya Rossii v 30–40kh godakh*. Moskva: Interprask. Nikolai F. Bugay. *Iosif Stalin-Lavrentiyu Berii: "Ikh nado deportirovat'."* Moskva: Druzhba Narodov, 1992. Viktor A. Berdninskikh, I.V. Berdninskikh and V.I.

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 78. For a full list of the sources consulted see in the bibliography under: ЦСУ СССР (Центральное статистическое управление при Совете Министров Союз Социалистических Социалистических Республик).
 79. Pohl, *Stalin's Genocide*, 268.
 80. Российской Советской Федеративно Социалистической Республики “О реабилитации репрессированных народов (В редакции Закона Российской Федерации от 01.07.93 г. N 5303-1).
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 89. Li, *Moya Planeta*, 2014, 180.
 90. See the letter sent by Ezhov to the heads of the Kazakh and Uzbek SSRs' NKVD on 24 August 1937 (<https://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1021142>).
 91. Li, *Moya Planeta*, 2014, 278.
 92. This is also consistent with the point made by Pohl that Koreans moved across the region, most notably from the Kazakh SSR to the Uzbek SSR between late 1937 and April 1939 (Pohl, “Cultural, Spatial and Legal Displacement,” 180).
 93. Pohl, “Cultural, Spatial and Legal Displacement,” 126–127, 180–181, 200–201.
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96. Buttino. "Minorities in Samarkand," 719.
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Seoul as a Site of Labor Resistance: The Spatial Representation of Inequality and Injustice

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Abstract

Under rising insecurity and precarity in the neoliberal labor market, Korean workers have protested mass job cuts and deteriorating working conditions. Although their grievances originate from the regions and workplaces where they are employed or laid off, the protest sites often move to major political landmarks in Seoul, the nation's capital, with demands for political redress. These labor protests in the capital demonstrate two distinctive features of Korean labor movements in the 2000s: protests go on for a protracted period of time with few tangible results and take extreme forms of resistance.

Approaching Seoul as a site of contentious politics, this study analyses the mutual nexus between labor protests and urban spaces with cases that appropriate various sites, such as Kwanghwamun (Gwanghwamun) Square, the Blue House, and the National Assembly, involving diverse tactics like long-term camp-ins, *sambo ilbae* (삼보일배) marches, and the occupation of structurally perilous structures. It examines which layers of inequality and injustice in the labor market, or in Korean society at large, are articulated through protest methods that spatially engage with specific urban locations in Seoul. With this investigation, the paper argues that the labor movement practices novel repertoires of resistance to neoliberal precarity by choosing the urban sites with metaphoric significance and by publicly displaying bodily torment. These new forms of contention, in turn, redefine the sense and political implication of the protest site and make the space part of the new protest repertoire.

Keywords: Seoul, labor movement, urban space, inequality, camp-in protest, sky protest

Introduction

Seoul is a dynamic megacity with multiple hubs for shopping, food, historical attractions, nature, and entertainment. It has grown into one of the global cities that showcase material affluence, high-tech infrastructure, and vibrant cultural scenes. But Seoul is also a hotbed of political contention and social protests. Kwanghwamun Square, for instance, is not only the primary spot for international tourists to begin their exploration of the capital, but also a public space of contentious politics where huge waves of so-called “candlelight protests” take place generating critical political breakthroughs in the nation. The most recent example is the case of weekly demonstrations for six months in 2016 and 2017, which resulted in the impeachment of a corrupt and incompetent president.² In addition to Kwanghwamun, other politically significant landmarks in the city, such as Seoul Plaza, the City Hall, or the front yard of the Blue House (presidential office and residence), and the National Assembly Building, are often occupied by various groups of protestors, like workers with acute grievances. In some corners, there are tents set up for long-term camp-in protests that almost look like permanent fixtures in the city. Not only at ground level but also on the skyline, advertisement towers and power plant chimneys are often occupied by union activists fighting for labor rights that are so conveniently violated in the neoliberal labor market.

Scholars have long studied cities and social movements in relation to each other as they are intricately intertwined. Cities and urban life create grievances and collective contention in their own right,³ while urban spaces serve as sites for visible dissent and large-scale protest.⁴ Due to the centralized political symbolism of metropolises and capital cities, citizens with non-urban issues also gather at politically symbolic places in cities to advance and publicize their rights and claims.⁵ The city becomes particularly central to the discussion of social movements because it serves “as the relational conduits where movements connect and develop.”⁶ People with grievances and demands gather in main squares, occupy public spaces, and march toward government buildings. In this process, diverse groups form solidarity networks and experiment with new strategies and protest repertoires.⁷ Public demonstrations in nineteenth-century Britain were a novel protest method enabled by increasing urbanization and the presence of the Parliament in London.⁸ Erecting barricades was another emblematic repertoire widely practiced during the

French Revolution as a statement of challenging the legitimacy of the old regime and as a tactic for augmenting internal solidarity of the insurgents.⁹

Contentious politics, in this sense, is inseparable from cities, as urban spaces become part of social movement infrastructure and culture, which movement actors appropriate and reinvent their meanings. Capital cities stand out even more, because of the spatial concentration of political and cultural power with “the places where power makes itself accessible and visible—police stations, barracks, administrative buildings.”¹⁰ Social movement actors choose politically significant buildings and structures in the capital and disrupt existing spatial routines to dramatise their demands and to validate their claims to rights and power.¹¹ Such a form of “spatial claim making,” as Charles Tilly suggests,¹² is an insightful lens through which we can analyze how space matters for defining claims and inventing new repertoires as well as how the meanings of the space are recreated in this mutual nexus of protest and spatiality. Spaces are relational because their meanings are made and remade through human practices that unsettle the existing spatial routines.¹³ In the process of resistant acts, “alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation” are generated.¹⁴

This study sheds analytical light on Seoul, the capital of South Korea (Korea hereafter), which has long been the epicentre of contentious politics and mass demonstrations, including labor protests. The reason for protestors to stage collective resistance in Seoul is straightforward. Korea is a highly centralized state with political power concentrated in the president and the executive office that preside over national affairs from the capital, and the greater metropolitan area contains over 25 million residents, about half the nation’s entire population.¹⁵ Thus, momentous contentious politics, such as street demonstrations demanding the removal of autocratic and corrupt leaders or pressing for democratization and institutional reforms, have all taken place in the capital city. Not only national political agenda issues but also the grievances and claims of marginalized social actors are asserted in urban protests.

Approaching Seoul as a site of contentious politics, this paper engages with the question of the relationship between urban space and protest repertoire. But unlike existing studies that have focused on popular demonstrations or the evictees’ struggles in urban Seoul,¹⁶ its attention is placed on workers’ protests. It explores how different spaces and structures in the capital city are appropriated as locations of labor contention, and discusses which layers of inequality and injustice in the labor market, or in Korean society at large, are articulated through the connection of urban locations and labor protests.

The paper begins with a discussion on the background of workers’ resistance by outlining the neoliberal restructuring of the labor market and concomitant

changes in workers' central demands and protest patterns. It explicates how the widened gap in power between capital and labor has led to workers' prolonged resistance and extreme protests. This is followed by a presentation of several protest sites in Seoul, which highlights workers' contentious claim making and their calling for political intervention through acts of occupation or dramatization of public spaces and commercial structures. The paper ends with a discussion on how these specific forms of labor protest and rights claims contribute to the rethinking of the relationship between cities and social movements. In the process of choosing specific urban sites and methods of resistance, the labor movement practices novel repertoires and these new forms of contentious acts, in turn, redefine the sense of the occupied place and its symbolic significance in the capital city. This study is based on empirical data collected from participatory observations and interviews conducted over the last five summers (2013–2018) and one winter (2016–2017) in Seoul, Korea.

Neoliberal Restructuring, Stratified Workers, and Divergent Labor Grievances

With the advancement of the neoliberal restructuring of the Korean economy, workers have become stratified by their employment status, leading to the diversification of workers' grievances, depending on their location in the labor market. Today, most full-time workers employed in large conglomerates are organized into labor unions and their major concern is job insecurity.¹⁷ By citing business needs to streamline the production process, firms carry out outsourcing, subcontracting, and overseas relocation, which result in mass layoffs and factory closures. Labor unions in these firms resist the massive job cuts and plant closures with militant strikes, but courts often deem these strikes "unlawful" collective action under the amended Trade Union Act of 2001.¹⁸ Because the reemployment of laid-off workers (especially if they are middle-aged) is highly unlikely, regular workers engage in dire struggles in order to keep their employment. Those who are laid off are drawn into the already overcrowded service sector and become small tenant shopkeepers who are exposed to low income, high debt, and business insecurity.¹⁹ Therefore, regular workers who lose their employment from secure jobs claim that "layoff is death" (*haego nün sarin ida*, 해고는 살인이다) to express their desperate circumstances. This claim reflects the deep gulf between having a secure formal job in a corporation and falling into insecure and contingent work in the industrial or service sectors.²⁰

Another significant aspect of labor market restructuring in Korea is the rise of irregular and precarious work. Irregular workers have grown in number

to constitute 42 percent of the labor force.²¹ The division between regular and irregular employment is significant because irregular workers are subject to low wages, high job insecurity, multiple forms of discrimination, and the lack of legal protection or organizational representation. They are paid about 52 percent of the hourly wage of regular workers and are covered by social protection programs (national health care, national pension, and unemployment insurance) and other benefits (paid vacation and bonuses) at a much lower rate than regular workers.²² Furthermore, women and young workers are located at the bottom of the labor market hierarchy and are more vulnerable to precaritization and wage differentials than men and older workers.²³ Korea's overall unionization is low at 12.3 percent of all employees, and there is a stark gap between regular workers (19.3 percent) and irregular workers (2.5 percent).²⁴

As such, the central concern for irregular workers is securing stability in employment and decent material remuneration for their labor. Those who are protesting for their rights are often the irregular workers who experience conspicuous discrimination in their wages, benefits, employment security, and rights entitlements by working side by side with regular workers in the same workplace and performing almost the same labor. Consequently, the protests of irregular workers occur with demands for the conversion to full-time regular employment and the right to form labor unions to negotiate employment terms.²⁵ But it is challenging for them to organize effective collective action in their workplaces, because their precarious and insecure employment status leads to a swift termination of contracts when a labor protest erupts.

In short, the central issues raised by labor movements since the 2000s have diverged into two groups. First, Korean workers demand job security against massive layoffs and plant closures caused by capital's strategy of outsourcing and overseas relocation. Second, irregular workers struggle for the elimination of discrimination and the conversion into full-time jobs to vindicate the worth of their labor and employment stability. My participant observation of labor protests in the last few years confirms that securing jobs and reducing irregular employment have been the most frequently chanted slogans. Protesting workers often hold banners reading "Layoff is death" or "Abolish irregular employment," which represent their core demands.

Korean workers bring these grievances and stage their contention in central plazas in Seoul because they recognize these labor market issues as structural problems that require a political intervention by the national government. Figure 1 shows a national labor rally organized by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) in Kwanghwamun Square on June 30, 2018. The unifying title of the rally was "Abolish irregular employment" and participating workers



Figure 1 KCTU rally in Kwanghwamun Square in June 2018

Source: Photo taken by the author at Kwanghwamun Square on 30 June 2018.

were wearing union vests with this slogan printed on their backs. Particularly eye-catching in the rally was the participation of a large number of irregular school workers (substitute teachers, administrative and information-and-technology staff, nutritionists, and school meal preparers), who work side by side with regular school teachers but who are separately organized into the teachers' union.²⁶

Resisting on Tilted Ground: Empowered Capital and Divided Workers

There are several reasons why workers bring their labor grievances to the capital city and demand political adjudication by the central government by appropriating politically symbolic or structurally perilous sites. First, Korean workers have encountered immense difficulties in securing meaningful concessions through collective action or negotiations with their employers in the context of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy. Neoliberal deregulations have led to a growing imbalance of bargaining power between capital and labor, which had already been skewed in favour of powerful corporations.²⁷ With increased freedom of movement, Korean firms close their domestic factories and move their facilities abroad to avoid labor unions and high labor costs. The prolonged protests by laid-off workers of Hanjin Heavy Industry and Cort-Cortech Guitar factories exemplify the fate of workers when firms opt for overseas relocation. There are also cases when foreign capital acquires Korean firms and cuts jobs in the name of managerial efficiency. This was the reason that fuelled fierce resistance by the employees of Ssangyong Automobile, Hydis Electronics, and GM Daewoo Automobile. Under these conditions, local workers, even if they resist through labor strikes, can hardly achieve meaningful gains against transnationally mobile capital. Building cross-national labor solidarity to confront spatially unfixed capital is daunting and costly for resource-limited labor movements when unions have difficulties organizing even at the local or national level.

Second, corporations have continuously lobbied for labor law reforms that would benefit their business interests while labor unions have been unsuccessful in building solidarity among the stratifying workforces. The revised stipulations in labor laws relaxed the conditions of hiring irregular workers and firing workers in mass layoffs (the 1997 revision), while excluding job cuts from the list of lawful reasons for labor strikes (the 2001 revision).²⁸ In the name of business rationalization, employers can easily fire workers and close factories and reorganize their production and service systems within a highly complex hierarchy of subcontracting and outsourcing. With massive job cuts, factory relocations, and outsourcing, workers are constantly exposed to insecurity

and subjected to internal hierarchies. Under stratified employment structures, workers are not only divided between regular and irregular workers within the same firm, but also between workers employed in the primary firm and those in subsidiary or subcontracting firms, who are further split between regular and irregular workers.²⁹

When the traditional industrial sector is shrinking and the workforce is fragmented, it is hard for labor unions to expand their organizational bases, to build solidarity among stratified workers, and to organize meaningful labor strikes. Only a few powerful and resourceful labor unions of regular workers, such as the ones at Hyundai Motor and Kia Motor, have been able to secure meaningful collective bargaining vis-à-vis their employers who cannot completely eliminate the domestic manufacturing lines. However, because these powerful unions dominate the KCTU, even this progressive labor center has been criticized for its failure to build broad solidarity between regular and irregular workers. Hyejin (pseudonym), a labor activist who worked for the Korean Metal Workers' Union for fifteen years (1995–2010), offered a critical assessment that “in essence, the Hyundai Motor Union dominates the Korean Metal Workers' Union and in turn the Korean Metal Workers' Union moves the KCTU. The most powerful unions that control the KCTU are basically the most powerful enterprise unions of regular workers and they don't want to open the union door to irregular workers.”³⁰ Thus, irregular workers who are subjected to wage inequality and insecure employment have a particularly hard time in pressing for their claims and need to seek alternative means of organizing and protesting to neoliberal conditions.

Third, corporations that are empowered by their heightened economic and political leverage have responded to workers' protests with a variety of novel repressive methods. For example, they call in industrial relations consultants consisting of public labor attorneys and private security firms to break down strikes and destroy labor unions. One of the anti-union plans that industrial relations consultants implement is called “aggressive factory closing.” This plan proceeds with a purposeful instigation of violence and divisions within independent labor unions, shut down of the factory, setting up a pro-management second union, and the deployment of private security guards to crack down violently on workers' collective action.³¹

Another method employers have used to repress and undermine labor resistance in recent years is damage compensation litigation. Since the early 2000s, corporations and government ministries (most notably the Ministry of Justice), alike have routinely filed lawsuits to collect compensation for damages incurred during a labor strike.³² These lawsuits impose an enormous financial burden on labor unions and individual workers involved in collective action, particularly

targeting those affiliated with the progressive KCTU (Sonchapko, 2017).³³ When firms sue unions for (real and alleged) damages associated with labor strikes (for which the labor law excludes mass layoffs as a legitimate reason), the court often upholds the corporations' claims and rules labor strikes to be unlawful. On these legal grounds, firms proceed with lawsuits to claim damages. The amount of damage compensation filed against unions rose from KRW 34.5 billion (USD 30 million) targeting thirty-nine unions in 2002 to KRW 186.7 billion (USD 163 million) aimed at twenty-four unions in 2017—more than a five-fold increase in fifteen years.³⁴ Employers recognize the effectiveness of damage compensation lawsuits as a way to financially drain labor unions and individual unionists and this method of monetary dispossession leaves a detrimental toll on workers as discussed in the following section.

Moreover, state institutions, such as public prosecutors, the police, and the courts, often serve as instruments to protect business interests rather than functioning as conscientious arbiters of conflicting interests in society. When union activists bring criminal charges against private security agents for unlawful and excessive use of violence, the police do not investigate the cases and prosecutors do not indict even the extreme cases that were formally investigated.³⁵ For instance, unionists and their lawyers accused 1,009 private security agents of violating the Law on Punishment of Violent Acts between 2008 and 2012, but only thirty-three of them (3.3%) were arrested and indicted.³⁶ In contrast, when the courts adjudicate lawsuits filed by employers against workers, they rule on the side of corporations more often than on the side of workers. According to a study of labor-related legal cases, there were 833 court cases between 1990 and 2015, of which about 80 percent were resolved in favour of the employers.³⁷

This tilted ground between capital and labor poses fundamental questions about the institutional channeling of class conflict in a democratic state. It was conspicuous that the heightened power of business interests worked through the collusive relationship between conglomerates and state institutions during the past ten years of conservative governments (2008–2017), as evidenced by two former presidents imprisoned on charges of, among others, bribery and corruption. However, even the center-left governments under Kim Dae-jung (Kim Tae-chung) and Roh Moo-hyun (No Mu-hyŏn) uncritically embraced neoliberal deregulations while the current Moon Jae-in (Mun Chae-in) administration has shown little progress in introducing policies to tackle labor market inequities.³⁸ Thus, despite the spectacular advancement in the realm of political or procedural democracy in Korea, the questions of labor and class remain far from being adequately addressed under a democratic government, regardless its ideological orientation.

In summary, as workers are stratified from within and unable to have reasonable collective bargaining against employers who are empowered with transnational mobility, new anti-labor strategies, and supportive juridical institutions, they have to seek alternative means to make their claims heard and labor rights violations corrected. This is the general structural and institutional background that brings labor contention to the politically symbolic sites in Seoul as a way of gaining national attention and political redress to workers' dire grievances.

Labor Contention: Protracted Protests and Extreme Repertoires

Under these economic and political circumstances, labor protests in Korea have evolved to show two distinctive features. First, many instances of workers' collective action tend to last for a highly protracted period, often without leading to tangible outcomes. These protests have gained the name of "long-term protest workplaces" (*changgi t'ujaeng saöpchang*, 장기투쟁 사업장) where the struggle lasts for several years (sometimes as long as a decade) and rotates a variety of protest repertoires.³⁹ The imbalance of power between mobile capital and immobile workforce, corporations' various restructuring methods, management reliance on private violence and litigation against labor unions, and political institutions' alignment with business interests all mitigate against the possibility of negotiating meaningful gains and, consequently, to prolonging the duration of workers' resistance.

Unresolved labor issues lead to workers' protracted struggle, which often ends up in the nation's capital in a search for national publicity and political redress. Although workers' grievances originate from their specific workplaces where they experience unfair labor practices, severe repression, and loss of employment, the impossibility of resolving these grievances at the local or firm level pushes them to move their protest to politically symbolic sites in Seoul. By doing so, they seek to ignite sympathetic public attention and to draw intervention by political authorities at the national level. This is why workers of long-term labor struggles set up banners inscribed with their demands, camp-in tents, and protest art structures in major locations of political significance in the capital. Labor activists occupy the protest sites (which concurrently become their living space) for months, if not for years, and sometimes rotate from one site to another, practicing multiple protest methods.

Figure 2 features a protest artwork set up in front of the statue of Admiral Yi Sun-sin, one of the most venerated public figures from the Chosön era, in



Figure 2 Protest artwork at Kwanghwamun Square during the candlelight protest in 2016
Source: Photo taken at Kwanghwamun Square in December 2016 (courtesy of Judy Han).

Kwanghwamun Square during the candlelight protests in 2016 and 2017. It shows the collusive relationship between the conservative government (under President Park Geun-hye [Pak Kün-hye]) and large conglomerates (e.g., Samsung's CEO Yi Chae-yong and Hyundai Motor's CEO Chŏng Mong-ku). At the same time, it points to the ultimate responsibility of Hyundai Motor Company, the parent company of Yusŏng, for the long-term protest by Yusŏng workers. Yusŏng is

Hyundai's subcontractor firm producing auto parts in Asan, a city south of Seoul, and Hyundai Motor Company was found to have coordinated with and financed Yusŏng management to contract a public labor attorney and private security firm who executed the aggressive factory closing plan in 2011.⁴⁰ The labor union at Yusŏng, which is one of the core members of the Korean Metal Workers' Union affiliated with the KCTU, was destroyed, while a second, pro-management union was created in the meantime. Union leaders sued the CEO of Yusŏng and Hyundai Motor Company in 2013 but no indictment was made by the prosecutors. Additional lawsuits were filed against Yusŏng management and Hyundai in 2016 and the court ruled Yusŏng management guilty in May 2020. It took nine years for workers to see this conclusion to their resistance to factory closing and union destruction.

Figure 3 shows a labor protest demanding government intervention to stop the abuse of damage compensation lawsuits filed against labor unions and individual workers. It took place in front of the statue of King Sejong, the most revered political leader by Koreans, located dozens of meters behind the statue of Admiral



Figure 3 Workers' protest against damage compensation lawsuits

Source: Photo taken by the author at Kwanghwamun Square on 27 June 2017.



Figure 4 A Cort-Cortech camp-in tent near the National Assembly in Yöüido

Source: Kyunghyang Sinmun: http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_storytelling/2016/republic/place_8.html?p=place

Yi at Kwanghwamun Square. The banner reads “[...] it is time for the government to step up,” a political demand frequently raised by protestors. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, labor activists chose the protest site purposefully to maximize the symbolic resonance of their claims to rights and justice by juxtaposing the statue of Admiral Yi or King Sejong, who are known for their political integrity and care for the people, and workers’ call for the resolution by the head of the government, the President.

Figure 4 captures a Cort-Cortech Guitar worker standing in front of the camp-in tent set up near the National Assembly Building in Yöüido. This protest tent is a typical structure found in many different locations in Seoul. Workers or other aggrieved actors erect such a tented construct decorated with their rights claims on the outside and occupy the space as their protest site as well as actual living place. Cort-Cortech workers lost their jobs overnight in 2007 when management of

this world-known guitar manufacturing company (making, among others, Gibson guitars) closed factories to move production lines to China and Indonesia. Laid-off workers were not given an adequate opportunity for negotiation or compensation and began to engage in one of the most protracted struggles by alternating a variety of protest tactics. Union leaders organized a sky protest, a hunger-strike, and an occupation of the closed factory, but private security guards demolished the site and the police arrested and indicted eighteen unionists.⁴¹ Their prolonged protest was concluded in April 2019 with an agreement with the management who promised a temporary reinstatement of union leaders and an unknown amount of consolation payment. In an educational session held after the signing of the agreement, the three union leaders of Cort-Cortech reflected that “it was a second-best but inevitable choice for us because there was no hope for a better deal even if we continued our struggle. We could not stand any more; we were exhausted [after thirteen years of struggle]; our health was devastated, and we missed the normalcy of life.”⁴²

Among the above-mentioned cases of protest that mostly take place at the ground level, “sky protest” (also called a chimney protest or *kulttuk nongsŏng*, 굴뚝농성) is a unique type of labor resistance that occurs at the sky level. In a sky protest, a small number of workers isolate themselves on top of a high-altitude, risky structure, such as an industrial crane, transmission tower, and factory chimney, with only the bare minimum living conditions for days and months, sometimes for more than a year.⁴³ Sky protests represent another noteworthy development in recent labor contentions as workers increasingly tend to engage in extreme forms of resistance. The extremization of protest tactics occurs for two main reasons. First, traditional forms of collective action like disruptions of assembly lines or mass rallies have failed to produce meaningful results. Even when workers are able to organize collective action, employers refuse to negotiate, relegate the statutory responsibility to subcontractors (in case of irregular workers), call in the riot police or private security guards to break the strike, and sue labor unions for damage compensation. Second, workers with acute grievances are those who have lost their jobs due to mass layoffs or those with precarious contracts, and they easily lose access to their workplaces to stage protests.

Thus, workers have to invent and resort to other means of contention and choose extreme repertoires, such as hunger strikes, hair shaving, single-person protests, sit-ins, long marches of *sambo ilbae* (삼보일배, the three-steps-and-one-bow march), and sky protests.⁴⁴ In comparison to traditional labor strikes, peaceful marches, or street demonstrations, the new forms of protest are extreme, because they involve a high level of self-imposed risk, danger, pain, and harm.

Protestors are exposed to perilous conditions when they starve their bodies, when they march several kilometers in *sambo ilbae*, or when they self-confine in high-altitude, tight-space structures with minimum necessities for days and months. By engaging in these extreme repertoires of contention, workers strive to gain public attention to often under-publicized labor issues and to seek solidarity from other civic actors, as workers alone cannot exercise sufficient leverage in the tilted political ground where corporations exert disproportional power.

Particularly distinctive in the neoliberal decades is the rise of both the sky protests and protest suicides by workers in their resistance against labor repression.⁴⁵ The number of sky protests has increased since the beginning of the 2000s, as protesters in most long-term protest locations have turned to this form of resistance in desperation. Between 1990 and 1999, there were only nine cases of sky protest, but this number soared to over one hundred cases between 2000 and 2015.⁴⁶ Workers choose from various high structures to climb on with the intention of drawing attention to their acute grievances after other methods of protest are exhausted. As a new repertoire of contentious politics in Korea, sky protests have spread across industrial towns and into symbolic places in the capital city.

Figure 5 is a map of sky protests that took place between 1990 and 2015 and illustrates the variety of high structures and the diversity of locations across the nation. Figure 6 shows two irregular workers of Kia Motors calling on Chŏng Mong-ku, the firm's CEO, and demanding irregular workers' conversion to regular employment. The protest was staged on the top of an advertisement tower positioned on the rooftop of the building where the National Human Rights Commission has offices. This sky protest lasted for about a year between June 2015 and June 2016. The picture also shows how tight and dangerous the occupied space is and how strenuous the protest would be in hot summers and freezing winters.

Figure 7 is another case of sky protest organized by labor activists from six companies undergoing prolonged labor disputes. They isolated themselves on top of an advertisement tower in the Kwanghwamun area in April 2017.⁴⁷ It may seem ironic that workers are protesting on top of a screen tower that advertises Samsung's QLED television, but it is this very contrast that protesting workers intend to capitalize on to highlight the dissonance between Seoul's world-leading technology sector and the corporations' archaic practice of labor repression. The protesters held up a banner with their demands: "Abolish massive layoffs, irregular employment, and vicious labor laws"; "Amend labor laws"; "Respect three labor rights."⁴⁸ The slogans printed on their banner effectively summarize the core demands of Korean workers in the 2000s and 2010s.



Figure 6 Sky protest by irregular workers at Kia Motors
Source: Yonhap News.

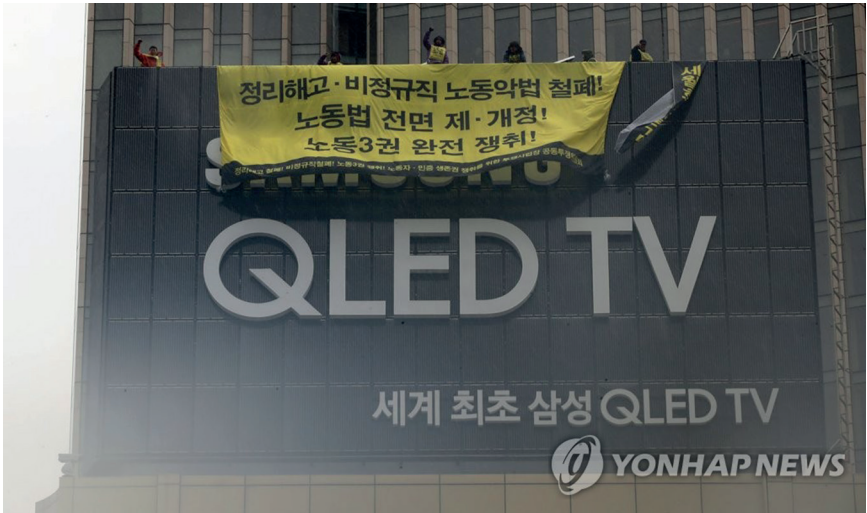


Figure 7 Sky protest by workers from long-term protest workplaces
Source: Yonhap News.



Figure 8 Sky protest by Finetek workers at Mokdong power plant chimney

Source: Hankyoreh Sinmun: <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/labor/827667.html>

Figure 8 captures the sky protest by two union leaders of Finetek on top of a power plant chimney (75 meters high) in Mokdong, an affluent residential district in Seoul. Korea Synthetic Fiber was sold to a new investor who renamed the company Star Chemical and later Finetek. The firm closed the factory in Kumi 2013, opened a new one in Asan in 2016, and closed it a year later. Workers were laid off without proper notice or compensation. The sky protest began in November 2017 and lasted for a historic record of 426 days until it ended in January 2019. Figure 9 shows Finetek workers proceeding with the *sambo ilbae* march for four days in May 2018. They marched in this strenuous method for nineteen kilometres from the office of the Korean Employers' Federation to the Blue House. This adds another protest example that demonstrates the public display of self-inflicted pain in the protest procession and the symbolic revelation of the cause (the Korean Employers' Federation) and solution (the Blue House) in the choice of the starting and ending point of the march.

One of the most extreme forms of labor resistance in Korea today is protest suicide, i.e., workers' ending their lives in defiance and frustration with labor

repression. Studies on this subject for the period of 1970 and 2015 find that the total number of such protest suicides rose during the democratization era (1986–1993) to ten cases per year and again during the neoliberal era (2003–2015) to three cases per year (M. Im 2017, S. Kim 2019).⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that while the overall number of such deaths has gone down, the share of workers compared to other actors, such as student activists and farmers, increased in the 1990s (12 workers accounting for 57 percent of 21 protest suicides) and again dramatically between 2003–2015 (29 workers accounting for 81 percent of 36 protest suicides) (M. Im 2017, S. Kim 2019).⁵⁰

What lies behind the suicides is not only the frustration of labor activists over the lack of results, but also the extreme pressure coming from a specific anti-labor tactic on which employers and the government have increasingly relied in recent years. Particularly, the unbearable financial burden associated with damage compensation litigation has been identified as the prime cause of several union activists' suicides. Pae Tal-ho at Doosan Heavy Industry in 2003, Ch'oe Kang-sŏ at Hanjin Heavy Industry in 2012, Pae Chae-hyŏng at Hydys Electronics in 2015,



Figure 9 *Sambo ilbae* protest by Finetek workers

Source: Hankyoreh Sinmun: http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/845727.html



Figures 10a and 10b
Ssangyong workers' memorial
altar at Taehanmun

Source: Photos by the author.



and Han Kwang-ho at Yusŏng in 2016 all committed suicide, leaving notes that described the severity of the financial pressure they experienced due to damage compensation lawsuits.⁵¹

The labor protest at Ssangyong Automobile against mass layoffs in 2009 is a prime example of a protracted struggle (for ten years), with a heavy toll on union activists collectively and individually. The strike in 2009 lasted about two months and was quelled by the brutal violence of a special weapons and tactics force and commercial security agents. This was followed by the imprisonment of twenty-two unionists and damage compensation lawsuits amounting to KRW 17 billion or USD 155 million.⁵² In the aftermath of the strike, thirty individuals (twenty-seven Ssangyong workers and three spouses), lost their lives due to mental and physical stress associated with post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the extreme violence experienced during the strike, the financial burden of job loss and damage compensation litigation, and frustration over the lost cause in general.⁵³ Of the thirty deaths, nine were by suicide.

Ssangyong unionists have engaged in all imaginable protest repertoires as Yi Ch'ang-kŭn, one of the union leaders of Ssangyong who participated in the decade-long resistance, recalls that “we did everything we could, including the self-confinement strike, hair shaving, hunger strike, camp-in protest, *sambo ilbae*, and chimney protest three times.”⁵⁴ The title of his interview book is “We Have Nowhere to Go,” in which he repeatedly mentions the physical and mental suffering caused by the extreme violence he and his colleagues experienced in their confrontation with employers and law enforcement authorities.⁵⁵ “We Have Nowhere to Go” is a statement about their resistance being the last resort and a testimony about labor’s sociopolitical alienation in Korean society.

In June 2018, Kim Chu-chung, a laid-off worker of Ssangyong, committed suicide, adding his name to the list of the victims of this protracted, unresolved struggle. His death re-ignited the public debate on the excessive violence exercised during the crackdown on the strike in 2009 and called for political intervention in the cases of reinstating laid off workers. Ssangyong unionists set a temporary memorial altar next to Taehanmun, the main gate to the historic Tŏksu Palace in downtown Seoul, to grieve the loss of a co-worker and to seek political redress. Figure 10a shows a tent set up as the temporary memorial place. It is guarded by the police because a far-right group had a tent erected next to the Ssangyong one. Figure 10b features a banner hanging next to the Ssangyong memorial altar along the wall of Tŏksu Palace. It reads “Back to work together” and “Keep the promise of reinstatement of all laid-off workers.”

Conclusion

This study approached Seoul as a site of labor contention with the goal of engaging with the question of the relationship between urban spaces and social movements. In the neoliberal context of a tilted ground between capital and labor, Korean workers have brought their labor claims to the nation's capital and sought political intervention. Workers' grievances stem from their workplaces where they experience unfair labor practices, employment discrimination, loss of employment, and union repression. However, when workers organize a strike against job cuts or form a labor union to negotiate their precarious employment status, they are laid off, labor unions are destroyed, factories are shut down, and protesting workers lose access to their workplaces to organize collective action. As it becomes unfeasible to address their concerns through negotiations, strikes, or legal channels, workers' resistance is prolonged for years, if not over a decade, and seek alternative means of redress, often expressed in extreme repertoires of contention.

The examples of labor protests presented in this study explicate the particular sites in Seoul workers choose and the specific claims for equality and justice they articulate. With the intention of drawing public attention and the political intervention by the national government, workers select politically symbolic or structurally unsafe sites in the capital city and engage in protest repertoires that display their bodily torment and physical insecurity. They occupy and protest around the statues of Admiral Yi or King Sejong in Kwanghwamun Square, set up camp-in tents in front of the National Assembly, crawl on the ground in a *sambo ilbae* march from the Korean Employers' Federation building to the Blue House, and self-isolate on top of 75-meter-high Samsung advertisement tower or factory chimneys in affluent quarters in the capital. Through these acts, workers do not only amplify their claims to labor rights and economic justice, but also uncover the contradictions hidden in the spaces they choose as protest sites. Their visually dramatic and physically tormenting actions on scorching asphalt streets or tight-space towers are metaphors for the insecurity and perilousness workers experience under the neoliberal economy. Labor protests in Seoul, and Korea by extension, show that the place is not just a global metropolis of material excess, cutting-edge technology, and K-pop attractions, but also a tense political space where workers are exploited, dismissed, and repressed.

This study on the nexus between labor contention and urban locations in Seoul depicts an instance of "spatial claim making"⁵⁶ as actors choose emblematic buildings and symbolic structures to dramatize their demands and to validate their claims to rights and power. With the engagement of specific urban structures,

workers experiment with novel protest repertoires that would most effectively convey their desperate statements about insecurity and precarity in a neoliberal capitalism. In the process of spatial appropriation of specific sites, workers' messages are conveyed through and projected on the locations. Therefore, the acts of workers' resistance and occupation of various urban sites redefine and transform the sense and significance of the capital's spaces. These spaces become more than a tourist attraction site, political offices, or commercial structure, but spatial reminders of the contradictions of Korean society, particularly the specific layers of inequality that Korean workers experience in the labor market and the injustices that political and legal institutions impose on them. With these altered meanings of the urban space, the site becomes part of newly invented repertoires of contention and provides primary tactical queues to subsequent protestors.

Notes

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27. Yoonkyung Lee. "Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossessive Litigation in Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 51.1 (2021): 20–37."
28. Jin-ku Kang, "Nodongja ullinūn nodongbōp shimp'andŭl (Labor case rulings that make workers sob)," *Kyungghyang Sinmun*, July 5, 2015: http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201507052231485 (accessed August 1, 2017).
29. Workers are stratified by their employment status (regular versus irregular), by the size of corporations (large firms versus small- and medium-sized subcontractors), by intrafirm relations (primary firms versus subsidiaries or subcontractors), and by union coverage (unionised versus non-unionised, and under the KCTU or the Federation of Korean Trade Unions or FKTU).
30. Interview with author, Seoul, May 25, 2018.
31. Yoonkyung Lee. "Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossessive Litigation in Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 51.1 (2021): 20–37, 30. Public labor attorneys (*kongin nomusa*) devise plans for the destruction of independent labor unions and work together with private security firms to execute these plans. The number of both private security firms and public labor attorneys increased in the 2000s.
32. Seong-jun Kang. "Recent Cases of Criminal and Civil Litigation against Labor," unpublished paper (in Korean), 2007.
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34. Sonchapko, "The 2017 Report," 2017, 8–10.

35. Gyuchool Oh. "Chaegae pal, nosa pungyu hyōngjang esō Burbōp yongyōk kyōngbi ūi p'ongnyōk haengwi (Violence by Unlawful Security Service in Urban Redevelopment and Labor Disputes)," *Sahoi gwahak yeongu* 18.3 (2011): 161–179.
36. *Policy Report* (Yongyeok pokryeok geunjeol eul wihan jeongchaek daean bogoseo). Unpublished paper compiled by the Anti-yongyeok Project Team: https://www.kpil.org/board_archive/%EC%9A%A9%EC%97%AD%ED%8F%AD%EB%A0%A5-%EA%B7%BC%EC%A0%88%EC%9D%84-%EC%9C%84%ED%95%9C-%EC%A0%95%EC%B1%85%EB%8C%80%EC%95%88-%EB%B3%B4%EA%B3%A0%EC%84%9C/ (in Korean). 2012. According to the Unfair Labor Practices Report 2015, a class bias is repeatedly found in the prosecutors' indictment rates of employers and in the court's final ruling of criminal cases involving corporations. The prosecutors indicted only 9.5 percent out of 5,738 sued employers (against of an average rate of 46 percent in 2010–2014), while the court gave prison sentences to only 1 employer out of 244 criminal cases committed by employers (against an average rate of 16 percent in 2010–2014).
37. Jin-ku Kang, "Nodongja ullinūn nodongbōp shimp'andŭl [Labor case rulings that make workers sob]," *Kyungnyang Sinmun*, July 5, 2015: http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201507052231485 (accessed August 1, 2017). There is an ongoing investigation on Yang Seung-tae, former Supreme Court Chief Justice (2011–2017) who drafted over 400 documents to influence court rulings. The documents include cases of the dismissal of KTX workers, the legality of a national teachers' union, and the reform of the wage structure. In these cases, the Supreme Court overturned the rulings made by lower courts and upheld the interests of corporations.
38. Yoonkyung Lee. "Articulating Inequality in the Candlelight Protest in 2016–2017."
39. They include unions of KTX women attendants, Dongyang Cement, Sejong Hotel, Asahi Irregular Workers, Cort-Cortech, Hydys, and HitecRCD. See Baek-seon Byeon, "Changgi r'ujaeng saōpchang (Long-term protest workplaces)," *Labor and the World*, June 22, 2016: <http://worknworld.kctu.org> (accessed March 2, 2018).
40. Yoonkyung Lee. "Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossessive Litigation in Korea," 31.
41. Geon-mo Ahn, "3431il [3431 days]," *Ohmynews*, July 3, 2016: http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A000223242 (accessed March 3, 2018).
42. Participant observation by the author, Seoul, June 10, 2019.
43. Yoonkyung Lee. "Sky Protest: New Forms of Labor Resistance in Neoliberal Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45.3 (2015): 443–464.
44. It originates from a Buddhist practice of lowering one's body and mind for meditation and prayer. This form of prostration is called *sambo ilbae* (三步一拜: three steps and one bow) or *och'et'uji* (五體投地: throwing five parts of body to the ground). The person or people involved take three steps forward, then bow to the ground, and repeat the process until they reach the set destination.
45. Yoonkyung Lee. "Neoliberal Methods of Labor Repression: Privatized Violence and Dispossessive Litigation in Korea."
46. Yoonkyung Lee. "Sky Protest: New Forms of Labor Resistance in Neoliberal Korea," 3–4.
47. The six protesters were workers of Dongyang Cement (where subcontracted workers formed a labor union and were instantly laid off in 2014), Sejong Hotel (where management set up a pro-management union in 2011), members of the Asahi Glass-Irregular Workers' Union (formed by subcontracted workers who were instantly laid off in 2015), Cort-Cortech (factory closing and mass lay-off in 2007), workers of HytecRCD (later renamed to Hydys; factory closing and mass lay-off in 2013), and members of the Hyundai Motor-Irregular Workers' Union (demanding conversion to regular employment in 2012).
48. The right to collective association (i.e., labor union), the right to collective action, and the right to collective bargaining.

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Mirroring Misogyny in Hell Chosŏn: Megalia, Womad, and Korea's Feminism in the Age of Digital Populism¹

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Abstract

In recent years digital populism has emerged in South Korea as a new type of political behavior, marked by the political use of the internet as both a form of political participation and an instrument of mobilization. Technological advances and the diffusion of social media have enabled social polarization, rooted in post-Asian Financial Crisis neoliberal policies, to take on a new, more intense, emotional, and radical dimension in the virtual environment. The article examines a case study of an online conflict over the issue of misogyny in 2015–2016 to reflect on how a group of online feminists, namely Megalia and its splinter off-shoot Womad, have used the new media as a terrain for challenging the pervasive misogyny in Korean society. As the article focuses on the online activists' strategy of mirroring, it highlights how the experiences and worldviews of members of both groups are rooted in identity politics and argues that the understanding of this online conflict should be embedded in similar global and national socio-economic processes. Lastly, the case study also identifies some of the challenges that online feminism has encountered in Korea.

Keywords: Feminism, Megalia, Womad, misogyny, mirroring strategy, digital populism, South Korea

Introduction

Populism is, as Mudde aptly put it, the *Zeitgeist* of the twenty-first century.² Populism offers a vision of politics and society based on a clear and antagonistic dichotomy between the “pure people” and the “corrupt elites.”³ Among the features of contemporary populist manifestations is the extensive reliance on technology. The rise of Web 2.0, with the emergence of new internet services such as social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and KakaoTalk in Korea, have created opportunities for more near-instantaneous un-mediated communication. Populist movements pre-date the internet, of course, but social media represents the glue between offline and online realities.

South Korea offers a particularly suitable ground for exploring the relationship between online and offline activism, and more generally the rise of digital populism,⁴ which Kim defines as “a new type of political behavior marked by the political use of the internet as both a form of political participation and an instrument of mobilization.”⁵ As examined elsewhere, the ties between the internet and politics in Korea date back to the Roh Moo-hyun (No Muhyŏn) presidential campaign of 2002, when young campaigners effectively pushed Roh to the presidency.⁶ Months-long street protests (candlelight vigils) in 2016 and 2017 were enabled by social media, where a diverse, leaderless movement took to the streets against the then President Park Geun-hye (Pak Kŭnhye), ultimately leading to her ousting and impeachment.

The context for this lies in the combination of growing economic inequalities and deepening social polarization, which has led Koreans to refer to the current historical moment as “Hell Chosŏn,”⁷ as the socio-economic predicament of many people bears some similarities to the class-based society of Chosŏn. Socio-economic inequalities and the ensuing polarization have received the lion’s share of scholarly attention among scholars of South Korean society and economy.⁸ The dichotomy between the elite and the people, and the resentment of the people towards the elite has been well covered in the scholarship on populism.⁹ Alongside this vertical dichotomy, a second, horizontal dichotomy stands out as equally important. The focus on horizontal dichotomies between groups, each claiming to represent the “real people,” is especially relevant to the Korean context.¹⁰ The integration of Korea in the global economy and the neo-liberal reforms that followed the Asian Financial Crisis generated sharp socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities have a strongly gendered dimension. In Korea, this has taken the form of misogynistic attitudes among groups of young Koreans directly affected by the above-mentioned global and national processes. While the origins of misogyny arguably date back centuries,¹¹ in a patriarchal and Confucian society

like Korea,¹² the question of why this phenomenon intensified in the 2010s has not yet been subject to scholarly scrutiny.¹³

In this article, I examine how one particular group of Korea's online feminists adopted the strategy of digital populist activists to counter the diffusion of misogyny in a virtual environment. Empirically, the paper focuses on the online feminist movements Megalia and its splinter group Womad. I detail how online feminist groups responded to the misogyny of radical-right groups such as ILBE (*Ilgan Best*, "The Daily Best") by examining their origins, aims, and strategies. The article highlights the centrality of the mirroring strategy as a tool deployed by young feminist netizens as they expose the misogyny pervasive in society and, in particular, counter the actions of ILBE. ILBE and Megalia/Womad were two antagonistic websites, one for far-right male misogynistic activists (ILBE) and the other for radical feminists (first Megalia and later Womad). Megalians started to confront ILBE's pervasive misogyny through a strategy of mirroring. Every derogatory expression was bounced and mirrored with a similar derogatory expression of men as shown in Table 1.

In this way, the article makes a three-fold contribution to the literature. First, the case study of Megalia and Womad and the 2015–2016 online misogyny and counter-misogyny conflict moves beyond the typically ideographic single-case discussions of online feminist movements in Korea. Rather, the article examines the dialectical relationship between Megalia and Womad on the one hand, and ILBE on the other, by examining how online feminist activists took on online misogynists in practice. In the end, the success of Megalia was mixed: their voices were heard in society, but the strong message and the vulgar and often violent language proved polarizing and divisive. Second, while acknowledging the differences where they exist, I bring the two literatures on populism and online feminism in conversation by examining, in tandem, the rise of digital populism on the one hand and the misogyny and the mirrored misogyny on the other. While the rise of online feminism, also in the Korean context, has received attention in the media and communications scholarship,¹⁴ in this paper I contend that our understanding of the rise of online radical feminism and the conflict with ILBE benefits from integrating the analytical tools that are typically applied separately to the two movements. While acknowledging that the two strands of literature are not usually natural "bedfellows," Megalia and Womad's online backlash and their strategy of mirroring were successful, because they could exploit and leverage the strong divisions within Korean society. Populism has thus far focused on the "people vs. the elite" and "us vs. them" dichotomies and has adopted strongly antagonistic, even vulgar strategies to have their voices heard. The Megalians mounted an attack against males and the patriarchal establishment, hegemonic

Table 1 Mirroring strategies by Megalia and ILBE

Words for Misogyny	Meaning	Mirroring Misogyny	Meaning
<i>toenchangnyō</i> 된장녀	Bean paste girl, Material girl, relying on or expecting men's financial support for luxury goods, typically a college girl who would eat cheap meals (beanpaste stew and rice) but have Starbucks coffee.	<i>kkongch'īnam</i> 콩치남	Mackerel pike man: free-rider who likes to go Dutch (uncommon in Korean society).
<i>kimch'īnyō</i> (woman) 김치녀	Korean woman judging men by their economic ability	<i>kimch'i-nam</i> (man) 김치남 <i>ssipch'īnam</i> 씹치남	Korean man judging women by their appearances; Men with 10-cm (i.e., small) genitals
<i>kaenyōmnyō</i> 개념녀	Wise women who are not like <i>kimch'īnyō</i>	<i>kaenyōmnom</i> 개념놈	Wise men who are not like <i>kimch'īnam</i>
<i>mam-ch'ūng</i> 맘충	Mummy-insect, incompetent at raising children and only good at spending money; or mother with baby-stroller and Starbucks coffee.	<i>aebi ch'ūng</i> 애비충 <i>hōsu aebi</i> 허수애비, <i>t'ūmyōng aebi</i> 투명애비	Daddy-insect, Scarecrow daddy, Invisible daddy. Man who does not do any housework.
<i>posūl ach'ī</i> 보슬아치	Taking advantage through sexuality	<i>chasūl ach'ī</i> 자슬아치	Taking advantage sexually
Dutch pay	Dutch pay	Loser pay, <i>ssipch'ī</i> pay 씹치페이	Loser pay, 10-cm pay
<i>nakt'aenyō</i> 낙태녀	Woman who has had an abortion	<i>ssach'wit'ūng</i> 사취통	Man who ran away after a woman gave birth to their child
<i>sōnggoe</i> 성괴	Plastic surgery monster	<i>sōnggoe</i> 성괴	Sex buyer
Girlsplain	Girls trying to explain things to men and pretending they know everything	Mansplain	Men trying to explain things to women and pretending they know everything

in Korean society, and deployed mirroring strategies against pervasive misogyny. Third, Korea constitutes an especially suitable and novel vantage point to explore the rise of populism beyond the West,¹⁵ both because of the manifold manifestation of populist politics and the early adoption of new tools made available to politics by technological innovation. The article uses several qualitative methods, including the analysis of media archives and audio video contents and digital ethnography. It uses data from Megalia's remaining Facebook group, websites, and other publicly available material on YouTube and social networks. Statistical data are used to provide a more general overview of socio-economic inequality in contemporary South Korea.

To be clear, I imply no moral equivalence between Korea's digital feminism, even in its radical form, and the misogynistic groups that have proliferated online and offline. I do, however, contend that an analysis of both groups in tandem is useful, as it allows us to step back from the specific, intense, but relatively short-lived online conflict between them to capture the broader, structural, and long-term processes that have engulfed Korean society and debates therein. Those developments help shed light on how Korean culture has adjusted, struggled, and transformed at a time of rapid socio-economic transformation and the often vicious debates that have emerged and spread as a result of an acceleration in digital communication.

Naturally, there are also some limitations as to what this article aims to do or can do. This is not a summary of the history of Korea's feminism. I limit my analysis to a relatively short period in time, between 2015 and 2016 and, empirically, only focus on the interaction between online misogyny and the efforts to counter it through a mirroring strategy. This dialectic approach is useful as it allows me, first, to show how neither of these phenomena should be examined as a discrete event or a stand-alone issue, but rather as a dynamic co-constitutive relationship, a form of identity politics enabled by technology and historically embedded in the neo-liberal era. And second, to highlight the effects neo-liberalism has engendered in Korean society. The article thus provides a useful context to understand the emergence of Korea's own #metoo movement, just as the conflict between ILBE and Megalia/Womad seemed to be dying down. As Korea's #metoo has received attention elsewhere, it is not included in this analysis.¹⁶

The article is structured as follows. First, it contextualizes the analysis of the interaction between early conquests by the movement for women's rights and gender equality and the social backlash they have encountered. Next, the article turns to the origins of the Megalia group and the aims of its members. The central section of the article discusses Megalia and Womad as illustrative case studies of the rise and challenges that Korea's digital feminism encountered. Two issues

are emphasized: first, globalization and the structural transformation of Korea's economy, which also called into question social norms and expectations, adds a gendered dimension to such broader processes, and second, the role of technology in deepening polarization and identity politics of which the Megalia–ILBE conflict is a case in point.

Context: The Battle for Gender Equality and Women's Rights and the Social Backlash

The Internet plays an influential role in South Korea's economy (through online shopping), social life (the KakaoTalk mobile application is virtually on everyone's phone), and politics. It has done so for about two decades, starting from the campaign that led to the election of Roh Moo-hyun as President in 2002 to the candlelight vigils in the spring of 2008 and more recently those in the winter of 2016–2017 in the wake of the Choi Soon-sil (Ch'oe Sunsil) scandal that led to the impeachment of former President Park Geun-hye. With an internet penetration of 96% in 2018, Korea is among the world's most wired societies.¹⁷ Social media applications (SNS) tie together government and the citizenry, as was shown—with success, despite concerns over surveillance and privacy—during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic crisis.¹⁸ Contact-tracing through mobile apps has become one of the crucial tools for the authorities to map the spread of the disease and keep it under control without resorting to lockdowns and allowing ordinary life (and the economy) to continue.¹⁹ Despite such a positive experience, though, a paradox is becoming increasingly apparent in South Korea: the more widespread access to information technology becomes, the more citizens feel the urgency to express themselves and share, unreflectively, freely, and in an unmediated or unmoderated manner, all sorts of views on all sorts of issues. This is certainly a positive development in cases where e-government links government and citizenry and where political campaigns recruit and mobilize those who would not otherwise take part in politics, let alone vote. However, the controversy and verbal violence that has accompanied online debates, as evidenced by the rise in fake news and hate speech online, shows a far less benign face of this phenomenon. A highly developed information technology environment offers fringe elements with radical views the opportunity to recruit like-minded people and mobilize them, while fuelling social antagonism and witch-hunting behavior against “the other,” who are viewed as illegitimate and an outsider in their supposedly “pure” and “homogeneous” society.²⁰

As I show in this section, misogyny and the battle over gender roles in Korea has gone through various phases over the past decade: an initial success of feminist groups in enacting important legislative changes was followed by a

backlash and the growing anti-feminism of certain groups of young men considering themselves as the victims of feminists' institutional achievements. This has been met and countered by a mirroring of misogyny by young feminists, many of whom were born in the 1980s.²¹ The 1980s generation started to enter university in 1997 or 1998, when South Korea's economy was ravaged by the Asian Financial Crisis and the country had to accept neoliberal policies, such as a flexible labor market and opening the hitherto protected domestic market to foreign companies. These, among other policies, accelerated the trend towards the globalization of the Korean economy and the polarization of society through widening gaps in both wealth and income inequality. This is the time when imported luxury goods became more readily accessible in Korean department stores,²² right at a time when their affordability among the more general population declined as living standards and salaries plummeted. I briefly review the beginning of the movement in this section, while the rise of Megalia is discussed separately in the next section.

Feminism in the Neo-Liberal Age: Rise and Early Conquests

The origins of Korea's feminist movements pre-date both the country's economic development and the reforms that followed the Asian Financial Crisis. However, understanding the contemporary debate over online misogyny necessitates a brief historical review of that period and the social and economic changes, which the neo-liberal reforms engendered in Korean society, as well as their gendered dimensions. South Korea's state-led economic development enabled a concentration of wealth around the large industrial conglomerates (chaebol). When those multinational corporations were mired in the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, the new progressive government led by Kim Dae-jung (Kim Taejung) implemented the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s restructuring programme.²³ Many chaebol went bankrupt or merged with other companies, such as Daewoo, Hanbo, and Kia. The restructuring programme enforced by the IMF led to mass layoffs and the introduction of a flexible labor market. Many workers in their forties or fifties took "honorable retirement"; in reality, they were fired. Younger people started to be employed on short-term contracts. Securing indefinite contracts became extremely difficult in Korea, especially for the younger generations.

It was during this time of economic crisis under the first progressive democratic government (1998–2003) that the feminist movement, and more generally the movement for women's rights, achieved a number of early victories, such as abolishing in 2000 the additional points in the government's civil service exam that Korean men had hitherto benefited from for performing military service. Further, a Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was established in 2001.

As the labor market became slightly fairer for women, competition between men became fiercer. Competition for so-called “3D jobs” (“dirty, dangerous, and demeaning”), such as cleaning public toilets or collecting trash, soared. At some point in 2001, the application ratio for these positions was 4:1, reaching up to 7:1 in cities like Daegu, with applicants including many university graduates. The trend continued up to a peak of 23:1 for positions of public cleaners.²⁴ Despite the low prestige of such positions, this form of public employment comes with job stability and various benefits including vocational insurance and a pension. While a saturated job market left limited alternatives to many university graduates, paving the way for resentment and anger, the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003–2008) introduced a new law in 2005 abolishing the family registry system, which had previously only allowed a father, a husband, or a son to be the head of a household. Before this law was abolished, women were either included in a family registry that had their father as the head of the household or, after marriage, they were moved to their husband’s family registry. The traditional family registry was the most vivid illustration of the secondary position that Korean women occupied in society. This was also the time when local women’s rights campaigners encouraged young Korean women to use their father’s and mother’s family names equally. Many feminists used both their parents’ family names followed by their first names in the early 2000s. While most of the public understood that the overall environment was becoming fairer to women, there were also nationwide demonstrations against the new law. The early 2000s were times when local feminists, and more generally the battle for gender equality, reaped a number of successes. The expressions “Alpha girl,” symbolizing students who were attaining high grades in school, and “Gold Miss,” referring to single women earning high wages and enjoying professional careers, became popular expressions in Korean society.

Misogyny and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: The Rise of ILBE

In 1999, the Constitutional Court ruled that the additional points awarded to Korean men when taking government exams was unconstitutional.²⁵ This led to a very vocal backlash by young men who felt they were being “disadvantaged” by this change. Public anger manifested itself through the increasingly widespread use of derogatory expressions towards women such as *kimch’inyō* (김치녀 kimchi woman) or *sōnggoe* (성괴 plastic surgery monster). This was the start of the contemporary wave of misogyny across society. ILBE (the “Daily Best”) was the largest internet humour community, akin to a Facebook group, created in 2010,²⁶ and would later become notorious for fomenting misogyny;

it was ultimately closed down in November 2015 by DC Inside (dcinside.com), a popular web-platform similar to Facebook in terms of its main social network functions, as its members stood accused of crimes against women.²⁷ ILBE is an example of the male-solidarity coalitions that emerged in response to the “victimization” of men engendered by legislative reform. The leader of one such NGO was Söng Chaegi 성재기 (Sung Jae-gi), a vocal opponent of the discrimination against men, enraged by—among others—the fact that Korean women had the option of female-only subway carriages or could sit in dedicated rooms in public places such as libraries. Söng’s view was that men were victims of selfish feminists. Evidence for his claims, according to him, were that men still had to do military service, were expected to be breadwinners in the family, and still had to conform to social norms demanding that men pay more for women while dating or in marriage. Söng’s group became a vocal advocate for gender equality *in reverse*. As the new victims, men had to defend their rights. A comedian on the TV programme “Manyö sanyang (마녀사냥 Witch-hunting)” commented to a colleague on the show in April 2015: “I don’t like wild women speaking loudly and thinking hard.”²⁸ This sparked a furious reaction online, as feminists demanded a response in May 2016.²⁹ The expression went viral and started appearing on T-shirts, bags, keychains, banners, and later even book titles. Due to the massive backlash, the comedian was asked to step down from the show, as his earlier misogynistic expressions in podcasts and TV programmes began to circulate. Feminist scholarship has approached these events as aggravating young men’s loss of feeling, frustration, and anger.³⁰ Söng Chaegi was very vocal about these matters online and also on TV shows, as he emphasized men’s burden in society at a time when they were suffering from financial losses over government support for the jobless and the homeless. Despite taking part in various TV programmes, Söng tweeted that he needed 100,000,000 won (just under 100,000 USD at the time), to cover the costs of his male solidarity NGO.³¹ To fundraise, he decided to stage a performance where he would jump from a bridge into the Han River in Seoul. He publicly pledged to return the sum, which he referred to as a loan. However, the performance ended in tragedy as, not resurfacing after the dive, Söng was found dead a few days later on the riverbank.³² His death rapidly became a social issue with attention focusing on the lack of funding for his NGO (and similarly minded ones) and his views of men as victims in a Korean society allegedly dominated by feminists. Söng’s views and the tragic nature of his death resonated across certain groups where young male students could not compete with their female peers at school or felt that the school environment was being run by their fellow female classmates. A teenager who considered Söng Chaegi as his personal hero declared he would join Islamic State as he “could not stand Korean

women.”³³ This is the time when the group ILBE gained popularity. The website became notorious for uploading files, photos, cartoons, memes, all displaying and fomenting misogyny. Male users interacted on the website’s forum, sharing their anger against women, and uploaded vulgar photos and pictures of naked women. The TV programme “Kkach’il namnyō” (까칠남녀) aired complaints about women’s behaviour, pointing to a number of cases where they expected men to pay for their coffee, meals, expensive gifts, and movie tickets.³⁴ Name-calling was widespread, with women referred to as *kimch’inyō*, taking advantage of men’s financial support while dating and/or after marriage.

Some users of the ILBE website uploaded fabricated stories. In one of these, a man, allegedly injured on the street, asked a lady passing by for help and whether she could give him her jumper to cover up, but she ignored him. The woman in the story was labelled as a typical *kimch’inyō*, although the real story was the opposite. The lady actually helped the injured man, giving him her sweater. On ILBE the story was distorted, creating the image of a selfish woman who only cares about her appearance and for the expensive sweater not to be ruined for the sake of an injured man.³⁵ Another infamous story that circulated widely in 2015 was about two girls traveling back home from Hong Kong and contracting MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome). The two girls were asked to take isolated seats on the airplane, but they refused to do so. Anger spread online about the two girls who were accused of ignoring public health considerations and went viral in male discussion forums, including ILBE.³⁶ This story was also fabricated. Women witnessing such cases of witch-hunting started to mobilize, paving the way to the “#Iamafeminist” movement. DC Inside was used for the creation of the Megalians’ (Megalial activists) discussion forum. As mentioned earlier, a group was opened on DC Inside combining the words MERS Gallery and Egalia’s daughters into Megalia. Megalians adopted a mirroring strategy. Whatever was “thrown at them” by ILBE activists, they “threw it back,” mirroring or reflecting it. When men used the derogatory term *kimch’inyō* to refer to women they would call men back *kimch’inam* (김치남).

In the meantime, a number of other tragic events occurred. On the illegal website Soranet, images and videos of sexual abuse were shared, as well as photos taken with hidden cameras in public toilets in 2015. Megalians raised 10 million won in a few hours to support Member of Parliament Chin Sōnmi’s legal effort to ban Soranet.³⁷ The website was finally banned following pressure from a feminist movement led by Chin Sōnmi in 2016. A femicide occurred in a public toilet near the Gangnam subway station after midnight on 17 May 2016. The murderer confessed to not having had any specific reason for his actions. The police investigation concluded that the man suffered from mental illness, although many

contextualized this episode in the atmosphere of mounting online misogyny that ended up materializing offline. The day after the body was found, thousands of people gathered at the Gangnam station to mourn the victim. They left flowers and twenty thousand post-it messages, holding a series of presentations/talks by women about their fears and complaints of the unfair treatment of women in Korean society. They also held campaigns of group walks at night. Many people joined the memorial event, commenting: “She was dead and I was lucky to survive,” and “Men are potential criminals and women are potential victims.”³⁸ At some point during the memorial event, a man wearing a pink elephant costume appeared with a message saying “Carnivorous animals are not bad, but the criminal.”³⁹ The term “carnivorous” has another meaning in Korean referring to women as food. Some added a post-it on the pink elephant saying ILBE-*ch’ung* (일베충, ILBE-insect), which was a mirroring of *kimch’inyŏ*. In the following days a group of men, allegedly ILBE netizens, also joined the memorial event with posters saying: “Not all men are potential criminals.” Eventually the two groups clashed.⁴⁰ Since then, more young women have started studying feminism and the sales of books on feminism has dramatically increased.⁴¹

The Case of Megalia

Korea’s digital feminist activism takes various forms and does not constitute a cohesive group of users or members, nor does it advance a unified, coherent agenda. Megalia is a fictional land where “traditional” gender roles are reversed.⁴² Womad, a more radical off-shoot of Megalia, is a radical feminist online discussion group, whose name integrates “women” and “nomad.” Megalia arose from the MERS Gallery group on the DC Inside platform on 29 May 2015. Users could upload their photos and video files, and other users could remake or edit them or make parodies of them and circulate them on other websites. By June 2015 the Megalia group on Facebook had been closed and reopened three times due to the use of extremely vulgar and violent language by its users. A group called Megalia 4 was formed on Facebook in September 2015. As of early-2021, the group is dormant and viewers can only access events and discussions up until 2016.

In order to understand the ILBE–Megalia conflict and the specific language that they used, it is helpful to recall the cultural origins of those terms. The expression Megalians responded to were, among others, *toenchangnyŏ* (된장녀, bean paste girl or Material girl) and later *kimch’inyŏ* and *mam-ch’ung* (맘충 mum-insect or mum-roaches),⁴³ which are, in essence, stereotypes of Korean women in slightly different periods. All three terms are related to women’s vanity, obsession with physical appearance, and reliance on financial support from men (husband,

partner, or boyfriend). The origins of the *toenchangnyō* expression is rooted in the experience of young college women who were born in the 1980s, who use the pocket money from their father to buy themselves a cheap lunch such as bean paste stew and rice (된장찌개 *toenchang tchige*), while “splashing out” by drinking coffee at Starbucks, at a time when coffee was more expensive than the meal itself. Korea’s first Starbucks coffee branch opened in the Ewha Womans University area in Seoul in 1999, soon after the Asian Financial Crisis. Before that time, most Koreans were used to instant coffee with sugar and cream. Even coffee at a café was not as expensive as a Starbucks coffee at the time. Holding a mug of Starbucks coffee became a status symbol, implying sophistication and a globalized (in fact, westernized) aura. Among the satires of the *toenchangnyō* common at the time was “A day in the life of *toenchangnyō*.” Supposedly, she routinely wears a branded dress and a LeSportsac totebag and gets on a more expensive bus to go to university. She eats breakfast at Dunkin Donuts, consisting of a donut and an Americano coffee, feeling like a New Yorker. During lunchtime, she looks down on other fellow students for eating a cheap lunch at the school cafeteria. If she can find a senior male student, she asks him to buy her lunch. The classroom is typically filled with her Chanel No. 5 perfume. After class she goes to the Lotte Department Store for some window shopping on the luxury brand floor, thinking of buying something using her father’s money. She imagines her future husband as a medical doctor driving a big, luxury sedan.⁴⁴

Kimch’inyō is the more “advanced” (age-wise), version of the young college girl in her mid-twenties and thirties. She is regarded as a free-rider, expecting her boyfriend to support her expensive taste for Chanel bags or luxury branded gifts. She typically expects her boyfriend or husband to maintain her expensive taste throughout their dating and marriage. A TV comedian captured the situation well: “Men, stand up and have a voice! I bought movie tickets. You buy a bag of popcorn. I bought you a luxury bag for your birthday but you gave me cross-stitch craft. Do not expect an anniversary gift for our 100th day of us dating. My credit card instalment has not yet paid for the last gift.”⁴⁵ Another similar expression went as follows: “Do not look down at me because I do not have a car but paid for your luxury bag. I paid for coffee but why are you collecting stamps on your customer’s card? I spent my credit card for you but you wrote a Christmas card for me. Men, stand up until women pay for their meal!”⁴⁶

Another, possibly even worse, term is *posül ach’i* (보슬아치). The word combines female sexual organs, *poch’i* (보지, vulgar term for female genitalia) and *pyösül ach’i* (벼슬아치), which indicates whoever abuses their power derived from a higher social status. The term describes a woman using her sexuality to receive some sort of benefits.

Mamch'ung is yet another term used to refer to married women not having a job but relying on their husband's financial support. A typical *mamch'ung* image is a lady pushing an expensive baby stroller with one hand and carrying a Starbucks coffee in the other. Luxury, reliance on men, and lack of a job are all captured in this expression.

Digital Populism and Feminist Movements: Never the Twain Shall Meet? Neo-Liberal Globalization as a Shared Economic and Cultural Milieu

How can we make sense of this episode of virtual social contention between Megalians and ILBE? Are populist movements and feminist activists using the same tools to reach out to fellow like-minded digital users? While political scientists and sociologists have primarily focused on populist leaders and the electoral support for populist movements and thus the term has gained widespread currency, scholars of feminist activism have resorted to expressions such as digital or cyber feminism or hashtag movements as they adopted various theoretical frameworks to make sense of specific movements and the online identities and debates.⁴⁷ Apart from a few notable exceptions,⁴⁸ there has been next to no overlap in the debates on populism and feminism in the early twenty-first century. This seems surprising, given that online users from both camps have engaged in heated debates online, often bordering on or crossing over into the legal debates that reinforce antagonistic us-versus-them dichotomies. In brief, web 2.0 and the rise of social media has reinforced “identity politics” and some of the prejudices underlying it.⁴⁹ In its own way the groupness that stems from and drives identity politics contributes to reinforcing and solidifying pre-existing divides in society: gender identities are no exception here. As noted in the pages above, I do not suggest moral equivalence between the two camps. Yet, the strategies used in the contraposition bear resemblance to each other, which makes exploring and unpacking the pushback against misogyny through the lenses of the scholarship on populism especially useful in this case. Though historically and conceptually rooted in the experiences of European and North and Latin American countries, populism's emphasis on “anti-elitism, sovereignty and homogeneity of the people”⁵⁰ and the populists' strategies in their performance using vulgar and antagonistic repertoires to provoke public resentment and grievances, new technologies, and network approaches resonate in the Korean context, too.⁵¹ This is evident in the case of ILBE, as detailed in this article. Further, and perhaps surprisingly, on closer inspection the digital populists and the online feminists

of the early twenty-first century may have more in common than either may be willing to concede and therefore a cross-fertilization between the two scholarly conversations may generate interesting insights.

The first shared aspect is the broader socio-economic environment in which the actions (and perceptions) of Megalians and ILBE users are embedded. Identity politics has thrived as the rise in socio-economic inequalities has deepened polarization. Among the central insights of the scholarship on populism is the socio-economic context that has enabled this phenomenon to grow and flourish.⁵² Among others, sociologist Rogers Brubaker⁵³ has asked why populism has gained in popularity at the current historical juncture. Populism is understood as a thin ideology that seeks to promote the general will of the people against representative politics.⁵⁴ Although it can be either left- or right-wing, Mudde and Kaltwasser contend that populist movements tend to arise in response to crises.⁵⁵ Populism also emerges when ideologies converge to the centre, as Laclau⁵⁶ and Mouffe⁵⁷ pointed out in their seminal works. Thus, a lack of polarization by representative organizations such as political parties (among others) leads individuals who often feel unrepresented to polarize. Francis Fukuyama also emphasizes this trend in his recent work, where he stresses the role of the struggle for recognition and hatred of others in contemporary populist politics.⁵⁸ Social polarization based on the seemingly irreconcilable, ontological opposition between groups leads to the group's self-articulation as victims of others (typically foreigners, religious, sexual, ethnic minority groups), with whom they see themselves as competing and losing against in a very competitive globalized and unprotected neoliberal job market. Brubaker⁵⁹ observes that populism not only emerges and thrives in times of crises. Alongside the more commonly examined vertical axis, where the people oppose the elite, Brubaker helpfully examines a horizontal axis of inter-group competition, where populists draw a line between the majority, a supposedly homogeneous group, and a set of others, typically including foreigners, migrants, and sexual minorities, who in their view benefit from privileges given them by the ruling elites. As I discuss below, both ILBE and Megalians emerged in the same environment of Korean socio-economic inequality and polarization and the cultural dislocation and insecurities that this engendered.

The second shared feature of these otherwise opposing groups includes the tools used. Hate speech has become the web's pandemic. Perceptions of injustice and victimization thrive in an era of a crisis of public information, knowledge, and expertise. While Web 2.0 does not generate fake news, per se, it spreads much faster in an environment that serves as an echo chamber. In his explanation Brubaker links the rise of populism to a broad set of structural transformations. Key to understanding this is a crisis of institutional mediation. Political

parties' role in connecting the state and the people has failed, and this failure has brought about a demand for direct democracy aided by the rapid improvement of social media, thus enhancing a digital hyper-connectivity. The mainstream media also take on a populist style through simplification, dramatization, confrontation, negativity, emotionalization, personalization, and visualization.⁶⁰ Ordinary citizens are more isolated from the collective decision-making process and feel estranged from decision-making institutions, rightly or wrongly, by some of this power having been endowed to supranational institutions.

Scholars of populism have also paid increasing attention to rhetoric and speech, the use of raw, crude, rude language, and the overall lack of civility in online debates.⁶¹ Populists refer to "common sense" as a common set of beliefs, almost a (thin) ideology that allows leaders and ordinary people to communicate with each other in a rather unsophisticated yet relatable manner.⁶² Sensational and scandalous information attracts attention, regardless of whether the information shared is factually correct or not. The currency in these exchanges is the number of likes, shares, and retweets—in what is a virtually marketized environment. The rapid flow and exchange of information does not allow for pause and reflection, consistent with the demand for immediacy. The possibility of a hidden identity and anonymity has increased the sense of protection and often impunity. Rapid advances in information and communication technology (ICT) enabled the early emergence of a networked society in Korea. Rapid and efficient e-government, the internet of things, and the success of global brands like Samsung and LG are part of Koreans' daily lives and illustrate how technology has become part of Korean society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of mobile devices and applications. Koreans developed an early social network application, Cyworld, which many compare to early versions of Facebook and Instagram. KakaoTalk, the mobile messaging service, connects Koreans across all generations.

However, there are also less savory developments associated with new technologies: fringes of radical netizens have skilfully leveraged such IT advances to further their own agendas, consolidating in-group solidarity and promoting identity politics and a horizontal us-versus-them dichotomy.⁶³

Unpacking Megalia: Radical Online Feminism in a Neo-Liberal Age

Megalia and the conflict with ILBE, I argue, should not be understood as an episodic outburst of online violence but as part of broader processes set in motion as early as the late 1990s. As examined in greater detail elsewhere,⁶⁴ polarization

in Korea emerged in the context of globalization and neoliberalism. Neo-liberal globalization has polarized society into a small group of very few very wealthy individuals in the world's top 1% or 10% in terms of wealth concentration and the 99% or 90% of the poor, including an impoverished middle class that never recovered from the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis or the 2008 global recession. Although I do not claim that other, older or younger groups were not also affected by the crisis and the changes that it engendered, the generation born in the 1980s experienced the impact most directly. With inequality and polarization came an intra-generational divide along gender lines, because the economic changes that followed the 1997 crisis also led to conflicts over social values, norms, and expectations. This issue took on a Korea-specific shape to which I now turn.

Polarization and Inequality in Hell Chosŏn

In "Feminism Reboot," Son insightfully refers to the individualization of financial disasters.⁶⁵ Since the Asian Financial Crisis, the Korean government introduced a flexible labor market which, among other things, meant extensive lay-offs of workers in their mid-forties and older, and the loss of the prospect of job security for the new entrants into the job market. Professional life would be defined by a succession of short-term contracts one after the other. This serves as a stark and painful reminder that the Korean rapid economic development was achieved at the cost of cheap labor: the 1997 financial crisis was "solved" with the IMF bail-out and the resulting restructuring in line with neo-liberal market policies, creating the vast layer of the precariat. It is in this light that the rise of misogyny can be understood. While the issue pre-existed the crisis, the outburst of frustration and anger of young men was less about women themselves and more about the structural problems that followed the financial crisis. Jobs were as scarce for men as they were for women. When women could not get a job, they had the option to marry into a better economic arrangement. Men therefore saw themselves as victims of feminist movements, which had successfully pushed through the institutional reforms mentioned earlier in the article. Young men rationalized their struggle as the result of the structural imbalance that favoured women and, in a zero-sum game, disadvantaged them. In this logic it was not women who lacked rights or gender equality, but men. Filled with frustration and anger over their decreased social and economic status, they looked for venues for airing such frustrations, and online cafés came into existence right at this time, providing them with a playground for virtually socializing and discussing shared experiences of difficulty and pain. Although the reasons apply as much to young Korean men as to women, the sources of stress were manifold. Competing with each other

to survive in a highly competitive education system first to enter high ranking universities, and later the job market, and even the “marriage market” adds considerable stress to Koreans from an early age.

Korean children grow up with their mothers urging them to work hard; their school performance is determined by how much they spend at after school private lessons, which they are pressured to attend by parents determined to send their children to the best universities so that they can later secure well-paid employment. Another reason for competitive stress is English education. With globalization, speaking English becomes an essential asset to enter university and acquire a decent job with a reasonably high income. To be “ahead of the curve,” children are sent to English-speaking kindergartens, which are three times more expensive than ordinary kindergartens. Private tuition by native speakers is designed to strengthen this competitive edge, although if all compete in the same way one wonders where the added value is. Instead, this is something that becomes expected, even routinized. Many students are then sent to study abroad, as foreign degrees are perceived to provide further advantage in the competitive job market. For all this education, the financial capability of the parents is crucial. All this existed before 1997; however, since the Asian financial crisis, economic polarization has grown deeper in Korea, while a bifurcation occurred, with the wealthy becoming wealthier and the middle class’s financial capability shrinking.

In this context, young men have become more insecure, as the uncertainties brought about by the financial crisis and its aftermath have been compounded by changes in social norms and values across Korean society. The effects of neoliberal globalization thus took on a very Korean distinctiveness. Traditionally, in Korean society men have been expected to cover large expenses. This may range from the cost of a date to a much more substantial purchase, like that of a flat or a house. Because of the peculiarity of the Korean housing system, a tenant must deposit a very large sum upfront. Monthly rents are a very new development, and still not so common, dating back to as late as the early 2000s. The deposit for renting a flat is typically two thirds of the actual housing price. As this has become increasingly difficult to afford (and thus men are becoming unable to “provide,” as traditionally expected), young Korean men have begun delaying or giving up on dating, marrying, having a family, and owning property. The nickname for this “generation at a loss” used to be *samp’o* (삼포 meaning giving up three things: job, dating, and marriage), and now it is “the N generation,” meaning giving up numerous things. Thus, along with the economic challenges brought by Korea’s integration in the global economy and global capitalism has come social dislocation resulting from a change in the social status and ability of

men and women. Stress and frustration demanded a scapegoat, and a number of young men identified this in those they saw as their direct competitors on the job market: in this case, women. While this is to some extent understandable, the indicators below show a different reality.⁶⁶ Far from “stealing” jobs and opportunities from men, women also struggled in the same precarious economic environment. According to the World Economic Forum’s 2020 Global Gender Gap index, Korea ranks 108th out of a total of 153 countries, a far from impressive performance.⁶⁷ Women’s economic participation and opportunity ranks 127th, Educational Attainment 101st, Health and Survival first, together with 38 other countries, and Political Empowerment 79th. The report insightfully ends with suggestions of how to improve the gender gap index in the report titled “The Gender Gap Country Accelerators: Female labor force participation, women in leadership positions, closing gaps in wage and remuneration, building parity in emerging high-demand skills and jobs.”⁶⁸ Other data, such as on the employment rate (Table 2), the unemployment rate (Table 3), and the rate of employment of college graduate by gender (Table 4) reinforces the message that male deprivation, if it has occurred, has been relative (to itself, declining), rather than absolute, and that women have not benefited from this.⁶⁹

Identity Politics and Hate Speech Online: Misogyny and Mirroring Misogyny

Technological advances and the emergence of web 2.0, such as the Social Networking Service (SNS, the acronym used in Korea to refer to social media), took place against the backdrop of the broader social, economic, even cultural changes discussed in the section above.

As social and economic frustrations have grown, the demand for platforms for airing them has also increased. The rapid improvement of internet technology has created digital natives and a media ecology that provided an ideal environment for the emergence of digital populism. Angry, marginalized people hid behind user anonymity to vent their resentment online and set up discussion groups of like-minded people. Actively targeting “the other” was the next step.

As briefly discussed in the previous section, when the misogynist story about female MERS patients in 2015 turned out to be fake news, female users on the platform started to react against misogyny by making a parody of the original photos and editing the original news by replacing the reference to men with women. Megalians used the original misogynistic contents from ILBE and recreated the content replacing “female” with “male” and shared it among fellow female netizens. This mirroring misogyny strategy provoked a reaction by angry male users who turned out to be ILBE users. A heated debate followed, where

Table 2 Employment rate among the economically active population (2018)

Year	Male (%)		Female (%)	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
15–19 years old	7.2	7.6	9.2	9.0
20–29 years old	62.6	63.4	65.2	64.3
30–39 years old	92.9	92.1	62.7	64.1
40–49 years old	94.2	93.3	67.4	66.7
50–59 years old	89.3	88.6	65.0	66.3
Above 60 years old	53.6	54.4	31.5	33.6
Total	73.7	73.5	52.9	53.5

Source: Statistics Korea 2020.

Table 3 Unemployment rate

	Male	Female
20–29 years old	9.7%	8.2%
30–39 years old	3.3%	3.3%
40–49 years old	2.4%	2.2%
50–59 years old	2.8%	2.2%
Above 60 years old	3.8%	2.9%

Source: Statistics Korea 2019.

Table 4 Employment of college and university graduates

	Male	Female
20–29 years old	866	1,324
30–39 years old	2,425	1,611
40–49 years old	2,248	1,341
50–59 years old	1,479	628
Above 60 years old	480	112

Source: Statistics Korea 2019.

misogynistic comments by ILBE members were not moderated or blocked on MERS Gallery. The mounting cases of misogyny during the MERS crisis encouraged digital feminists to deploy the mirroring misogyny approach more strategically and systematically. Mirroring misogyny started on MERS Gallery on the DC Inside.⁷⁰ The mirroring strategy by certain female users started to be targeted in the comments by ILBE netizens. This caused a split among the users of the platform, which eventually led to the splintering of the Megalian group off DC Inside, who then created their own website (Megalian.com) on 6 June 2015. Megalians also set up their own account on Facebook and Twitter. As some of the

messages went as far as inciting violence, the Megalian website was closed down, but it resurfaced under different names and forms on social media, including Facebook groups and Twitter accounts.

Drawing on the derogatory terms that had been used to refer to women mentioned earlier in this article (and listed in Table 1), Megalians mounted a fierce response that entailed the use of a mirroring strategy, deploying terms such as *kimch'inam*, *hannamch'ung* (김치남 kimchi man, 한남충 Korean man insect). When Megalia was warned by Facebook over the use of derogatory terms, it was accused by feminists of discrimination against Megalians, since it had allowed ILBE users to freely use the equivalent expression kimchi woman (김치녀) on their Facebook page for many years. This exposed the hypocrisy of both the social media giant and society, as suddenly the use of the term *kimch'inam* had drawn people's attention to the strategy of mirroring misogyny, which was regarded negatively, whilst online misogyny had been spreading uncensored. Some feminist users reacted to what they viewed as a discriminatory online environment where misogyny by male users was allowed but mirroring misogyny was not and they responded by taking aggressive action, online and offline. Members of Megalia moved from platform to platform, using different social media where they shared messages with hashtags, liked, and retweeted each other's messages and posts. While female naked photos are regarded as acceptable on websites, when Womad members uploaded male nude photos, including male genitalia, it immediately triggered a police investigation. Those who posted them online were arrested in the following days. This sparked further public anger, especially among women, and cemented in-group solidarity among the Womad group users. In his article, Yu Min-seok⁷¹ draws on Judith Butler's theory of speech⁷² to focus on how the use of language by Megalians was central to the group's mirroring misogyny strategy. Yu's work sheds light on the cultural and sociological context of the Megalians' actions. He highlights the gendered imbalance of power throughout history, one aspect of which is that women felt they were being silenced and unable to rebut the belittling and derogatory expressions used to refer to them. Since such violence has been pervasive and embedded deeply in society and culture, misogyny and the violence it perpetuates have become normalized, leaving women in a deeply imbalanced power relationship. For Megalians the mirroring strategy is about "talking back" and "speaking through" the pervasive misogyny.⁷³ For years women had endured derogatory terms such as *kimch'inyō* and *toenjang-nyō*. Similarly, ILBE users also repeatedly used the expression *samilhan* (once in three days), meaning "women should be beaten every three days." The Megalians finally retorted through mirrored misogyny by uttering *sumshwilhan* (숨쉬한 once every breath): "men should be beaten up every time they breathe."⁷⁴

Such parody can therefore overcome misogyny not from a victim's perspective but through a pay-back strategy, whereby the original image of misogyny is recreated and adjusted to the next context.⁷⁵ As Jang points out, Megalia's mirroring misogyny strategy articulated a strong reaction against the pervasive misogyny of Korean society. A reaction had been mounting prior to the emergence of the group, but it was only thanks to the work of digital natives that the issue was truly exposed and brought to the attention of the wider public. As unpleasant, vulgar, polarizing, and ultimately divisive as the strategy was, the mirroring strategy vividly and successfully exposed the misogynistic culture among some Korean men by "throwing back"—mirroring—the very same terminology and demeaning attitude towards them. The aim of Megalians, and of the feminist movement behind it, was to awaken the silent majority that had been aware of the issue and try and build a broader coalition with other women who felt the same way and shared the same views. They reached out to famous male politicians, newspaper columnists, and writers, asking that they identify themselves as feminists and/or out themselves as victims of gender inequality.

Jang Min-ji notes that in order to understand Megalia we need to embed it in the current configuration of the media ecosystem, defined by social media.⁷⁶ Internet culture allows digital natives to share existing content, and to create new content, which is then rapidly shared and spread by various social network systems. Thus, digital natives are not just consumers but producers and providers. Jang also points out that digital natives are the daughters of workers who were laid off in the late 1990s during and in the aftermath of the financial crisis. For them, their fathers were no longer the only breadwinners in the household. They grew up in an environment where there was less disparity in the roles of wives and husbands. Such social changes gave rise to different perceptions of gender roles than the traditional role of women in Korean society. Inequalities did not disappear though. After returning home from work, the daughters saw that it was still their mothers who were engaged in housework, not their fathers. This contradiction between public and private roles also fuelled resentment among young women growing up in the late 1990s and 2000s.

When Megalians took action with their mirroring strategy, male users started to feel uncomfortable and upset. Some even reported Megalia to the police. On Wikipedia⁷⁷ and Namuwiki,⁷⁸ Megalians and Womad are still described as criminal groups. Criticism of Megalia grew because of its perceived radicalism and the users' use of vulgar words mirroring misogyny, although similar terms, when used by men, were usually considered jokes. Jang Hyeyoung, a YouTuber and documentary film producer who recently became a member of parliament for the Justice Party in the 2020 parliamentary elections, uploaded a video where she

discussed her views of Megalians.⁷⁹ Jang contends that they contributed positively to the fight for gender equality. Structural gender inequality had been prevalent, and women could not even express their discomfort with the pervasive misogyny, but it was not until the Megalians' activities that society even noticed that such a pervasive misogyny even existed. Thus, radical feminist activism like Megalians' and Womad's belatedly brought some welcome changes. Yet it also attracted fierce criticism beyond its widespread resort to vulgar expressions. Disagreement on a number of issues caused frictions and splits among Megalians, leading to the creation of Womad as a more radical splinter-group. Specifically, disagreements over sexual minority issues arose among members. Some Megalians accepted lesbians as members but vigorously rejected and insulted gays or transgender women. Eventually, a group splintered off and formed Womad in January 2016. Womad activists were even arrested for sharing their opinions and desire to kill their sexually harassing bosses at work.⁸⁰ Some feminists started declaring that they were feminists but not Megalians. Megalians' and Womad's revolutionary anti-misogyny activities were successful in gaining attention and brought about a change in the perception of pervasive misogyny in Korean society. However, their rapid decline revealed splits inside Korea's feminist movement and also spoke to the sporadic activities typical of digital populism, with a rapid rise and similarly swift demise in online activities.⁸¹ Regardless of their short-lived nature, both groups speak to what, in her insightful work on misogyny in the era of post-feminism, Chung In-kyung has called the human desire to be recognized by others.⁸² Recognized by their "significant other" (ILBE), Megalians have been praised in this sense by many feminists and feminist researchers.⁸³ It was the Megalians who finally stood up against pervasive misogyny, making new derogatory words ending in *xx-nyō*.

Conclusion

The article has examined the case study of Megalia and its splinter group Womad as examples of radical online feminist groups active during 2015–2016. The flaring up of intense discussions and the online conflict between ILBE and Megalia/Womad was overall short-lived. However, it is illustrative of broader socio-economic and cultural divisions in Korean society.

The study of online feminism, also in a Korean context, has been typically approached by feminist scholarship drawing on insights from media and communication studies, literature and linguistics, and social movement studies.⁸⁴ In this article I have applied insights from the scholarship on populism to explain the rise and evolution of Megalia/Womad as a group that directly confronted

online misogynists. While the core issue for Megalians was the fight against the misogyny pervasive in Korean society and now the internet, I have argued that the group and its actions are best understood not in isolation or as a set of sporadic outbursts of online anger, nor as a fringe, radical and relatively short-lived online group, but rather as part of a dynamic of contention (online and offline), between different segments of Korean society. In the analysis I have focused on Megalia's mirroring strategy as an example of the intense, but also episodic nature of online feminist activism. The advantage of bringing the scholarship of populism into the study of a feminist movement was two-fold: first, Brubaker's focus on horizontal dichotomies in contemporary populism seems particularly fitting here. The article showed how the actions of Megalia and its main online opponent ILBE were in the end co-constitutive. Secondly, the article argued that the study of Megalia should be embedded in longer-term processes of structural transformation of Korean society, namely globalization and the neo-liberal policies that had undermined job security by introducing a flexible job market; the policies and legislative changes introduced by successive progressive governments that on the one hand contributed to gender equality and on the other rendered the grievances and insecurities of existing social groups even more acute.

In sum, the conflict between Megalia and ILBE was as much over gender and evolving gender roles as it was about the socio-economic issues that affected a particular generation, that of men and women born in the 1980s, who had grown up as South Korea opened up to and integrated into the global economy. The neo-liberal policies that were introduced as part of the IMF structural adjustment package shook some of the certainties of Korean society, including expectations over job security and social norms. Building on this, future research should further explore the emerging divides within Korea's feminist movement, including those that have stemmed from its ambiguous or even outright problematic attitude towards homophobia and transphobia. Another line of enquiry could explore intra- and inter-generational conflicts in Korean society and the way in which the #MeToo movement arose against a growing inter-generational divide and power abuse at work or school.

Notes

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Translating and Translation Practices in 2021: An Interview with The Smoking Tigers

This interviewer's first experience of translated literature was in childhood, through the English language version of Halldór Laxness's *Atómstöðin*. Laxness, a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1955, wrote in a way perhaps familiar to Koreanists and followers of Korean culture and political development, of a small nation stuck by dint of its geography, between two larger and assertive nations, and forced by technological and geopolitical transformations to make uncomfortable and unbalanced compromises with foreigners. Of course, I did not encounter the work in its original Icelandic, but as *The Atom Station*, translated into English by Magnus Magnusson. Magnusson held a special place in British culture, as that rarest of things, an Icelander who was an honorary Brit or Scot (he was also the presenter of the BBC's Mastermind TV quiz show for some 25 years). Originally named Magnús Sigursteinsson, his father Sigursteinn Magnússon was Icelandic consul in Edinburgh and so Magnús straddled the cultures and languages of Iceland and the British Isles, translating not only Laxness, but also the culture behind those great Icelandic works of oral and written history, the sagas, particularly *Njáls saga* and the *Vinland Sagas*. The sagas and more contemporary writing such as *Atómstöðin/The Atom Station*, told of a place, in reality geographically close to Britain (until 2008 travellers could even reach Seyðisfjörður on Iceland's east coast by ferry from northern Scotland), but so far away culturally, that its people and traditions seemed alien to those not so far to the south. Magnússon's great skill, of course, and the reason why so many decades later his translations are still in print, is that he did not translate the words as they were literally written on the page. Instead he translated the culture and the worldview that created them. The nuclear and geopolitical anxieties of 1950s Reykjavik, including that

dread sense that the certainties and traditions of the small but unique nation were under threat or dilution by a forceful, aggressive modernism, became readable and could be encountered in the Bedfordshire of the mid-1990s.

When it comes to Asia, perhaps the best extrapolation of this process of cultural translation as translation practices, for this interviewer at least, is Sho Konishi's 2013 *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan*. In this fascinating book, Konishi explores the encounter between the Japanese reading public and the legendary Russian author Tolstoy through translators such as Nikolai (Ivan Dmitrievich Kasatin). Nikolai and Japanese colleagues such as Konishi Masutarō did not so much produce direct translations of work such as *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but revisionings and reimaginings of their plots and narratives into a Japanese context. Likewise, Tolstoy himself, in conversation with Konishi Masutarō, became absorbed in East Asian literatures such as Confucian texts and Lǎozǐ's *Dao De Jing* and repurposed them into Russian with their conceptual frameworks forming elements of the theology behind what later became known as Tolstoyan religion. Such historical examples raise so many questions surrounding what translation is and what it is for, as well as who should actually be doing the translation? Is the literature of one nation and its language the exclusive property of that nation and its people with the rights to translation into other languages really only properly available to them? Or is a nation's literature and its literary output a collective, shared property of all the world, free for reconfiguration and reinterpretation from one culture to the next? If literature is shared property, can the literature of one nation or one language, having been reconfigured or reinterpreted for another, still really be its own, or does it become that of another.

Korean literature and Korean writers have been through processes of linguistic and cultural reinterpretation before. During the Japanese colonial period, literary-minded Koreans were often forced to choose, some willingly, between continuing to write in Korean about Korean matters, or to write in Japanese, the language of their colonizer but also of a particular form of modernity and a particular vision of the future, about Korea, or about what Korea was becoming or about to become. In 2021, one might say Korea and Korean literature and the literatures of many languages and cultures are in the process of appropriation and colonization of a different form and facing similar questions about how to be translated and who should be the translators. Korean stories and narratives are now global in a way that perhaps they had not been before, with films such as *Parasite* winning general category Oscars or TV dramas finding a regularly streamed home on Netflix and other digital platforms or novels such as Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* and Cho Nam-joo's *Kim Jiyong, Born 1982* achieving mainstream success with non-specialist publishers. There is a third category even of cultural production

from Korea, which is drama, narrative, and TV formats, such as the *Snowpiercer* franchise and *The Masked Singer* (originally broadcast as Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation's *King of Masked Singer* *미스터리 음악쇼 복면가왕*), but which are not actually in Korean at all.

So, 2021 brings many questions about the place of translators and translation practices in what is a burgeoning industry of offshore Korean cultural production and a boom in the number of published English translations of Korean books in the UK, the United States, Australia, and elsewhere. Translation it seems is moving even further beyond the academy, with rare translations of Korean intellectual texts into English, building on previous successes, to a much more public and popular space, as the publishing industry seeks to continue to create and develop new markets for Korean works. Translation, like so many elements of cultural production and process, runs into the huge energetic and conflicted debates around cultural appropriation, white privilege, and who gets to articulate, frame, and analyze what might be called the Global East. Early translations of Korean literature and poetry into English in the United Kingdom (and other English-speaking countries), seemed the terrain and domain of missionaries, adventurers, and gentlemen amateurs (sometimes even gentlewomen amateurs), and I am sure readers of this journal will be able to name pungent and obvious examples of such production. This must surely not still be the case, unquestioned, unchallenged, and uncontested in 2021.

The *European Journal of Korean Studies* therefore was interested to explore, through an interview of sorts, some of the issues involved in translation, translation practices, and the politics and industry that surrounds such endeavours. It was particularly interesting to do so with people who were at the forefront, or vanguard of their field and cultural sector, and so this piece is built around a remote interview done with members of a translation collective, known as The Smoking Tigers (<https://smokingtigers.com>). The Tigers are, in their own words, a “complaint of experienced literary translators working from Korean to English,” and are composed of a number of translators such as the Swedish born Anton Hur, holder of a collection of PEN, Daesan Foundation, LTI and GKL grants (<https://antonhur.com> and @AntonHur on Twitter), Sophie Bowman, once of SOAS and now a PhD student at the University of Toronto, via Ewha (<https://smokingtigers.com/sophie-bowman/> and @SophieOrbital on Twitter), and Victoria Caudle, also once of SOAS, but now of UCLA (<https://www.alc.ucla.edu/person/victoria-caudle/> and @nureonjongi on Twitter and Instagram). The Smoking Tigers will describe their activities in their own words, of course, but they have produced, or are in the process of producing a huge number of works of translation for publishing houses such as Tilted Axis, Verso, Honford Star, Penguin Random House, and many others.

The questions for this piece were created collectively (and shared on Google) by the Managing Editor of this journal and two academics and renowned translators of Korean literature: Janet Poole and Immanuel Kim. Professor Janet Poole of the University of Toronto is the author of 2014's *When the Future Disappears: The Modernist Imagination in Late Colonial Korea* for Columbia University Press, an extraordinary exploration of Korean literary and cultural lives in colonial Korea, highlighting foreshortened potential, unresolved possibilities, and complicated hope for the future. Poole is also the translator of a volume of Yi T'aejun's esoteric and ethereal essays from the 1930s entitled *Eastern Sentiments* (2009) and 2018's *Dust and Other Stories*, comprised of short stories from Yi, including some from after his settlement in North Korea in the 1950s. Professor Immanuel Kim of George Washington University is the Kim-Renaud Associate Professor of Korean Literature and Culture Studies at GWU. He has recently translated and published Paek Nam-nyong's best-selling North Korean novel *Friend* in English (Published first as *벗* in 1988 by 문예출판사 Munye Ch'ulp'ansa in Pyongyang). He is also the author of *Rewriting Revolution: Women, Sexuality, and Memory in North Korean Fiction* (2018), exploring female lives and sexuality in North Korean ideologically-minded literature and the extraordinary *Laughing North Koreans: Culture of the Film Industry* (2020), a monograph which considers that most unlikely of cultural products, North Korean comedy films. We have not identified which author asked which question, but we hope that, as a whole, this piece offers an interesting journey into a developing field that will be of interest to any Koreanist or to any others who are interested in Korean culture and literary production.

[SB] = Sophie Bowman, [AH] = Anton Hur, [VC] = Victoria Caudle

[Q]: *How did each member begin translating and what were some of the motivations for their beginning translating?*

[SB]: The first time I translated was as an intern for the Korea Scout Association in Seoul. They wanted me to translate a song they had commissioned for an event, and the process of working through stages of a literal translation and realizing that would not work at all within the constraints of timing and rhythm, etc., to finally arrive, working with the songwriter at various stages, at something quite different in terms of words but serving in the same context, was really exciting. Around the time I was doing this, applications were open for the LTI regular course. I had seen posters for the LTI around SOAS when I was a student there and didn't even dream I would ever be capable of attending. As a social anthropology student learning a language for fun, I failed the first-year elementary Korean course with

20/100. Even though I had studied Korean at-length since my days at SOAS, I was not confident in my language ability, but the creative process of translating a song convinced me that there was more to it than language, and that practice would be the only way to really learn how to translate. In terms of motivation, I think working creatively within constraints and the freedom translation gives to work independently, while still being collaborative, appealed to me.

[AH]: I worked as a translator throughout college. When I was about to graduate, a university *sōnbae* of mine who works at Samsung told me I should probably stick to translation if I had a good client list instead of joining the rat race. He said, “In the rat race, you can eventually become the king of the rats, but you’d still be a rat.” So, I kept building up my client list and did pretty well as a freelance translator right out of college. I pivoted to literary translation full-time after deciding to do so around 2016, just to see if I could. But I’d been a successful non-literary translator for a long time by then.

[VC]: My first time translating would probably be as part of two courses I took in my final year at SOAS. If you are majoring in Korean as part of your undergrad, you get to tailor your courses to your interests in the 4th year and I took an upper-level literature seminar with Grace Koh, where, for the first time, we were expected to read the source text in Korean instead of in English translation as you do for the Intro to Korean literature seminars. We worked through translating “Sonagi” and another short story as part of that course. I also took a different course where each of the SOAS Korean faculty rotated through every two weeks, and we worked on different types of translation and interpretation such as translating a sample North Korean refugee contract or interpreting for the police, as well as technical and literary translation into both English and Korean. I had always been an avid reader and a fanfiction writer in middle and high school, so I found myself very attracted to literary translation and the creativity it brought out. Like Sophie, I had seen LTI posters up at SOAS and was encouraged to apply. I had been feeling reluctant to apply straight to grad school, and, if selected, I thought that I could spend my year at the Translation Academy improving my knowledge of Korean literature, my speaking ability, and most importantly learn the craft of translation through steady practice.

[Q]: *How were the members of the Smoking Tigers trained in translation and translation practice?*

[SB]: After the initial 1-year LTI course I worked in-house for an environment research institute translating reports for a year and a half and also attended LTI

evening classes. This was when I started taking on literary translation projects, and I kept translating when I quit office work to study Korean literature at Ewha. During my MA studies at Ewha, I learned how to read better, to read closely, and what is at stake in different interpretations and ways of reading. During that time, I also took part in the translation atelier at LTI, which was facilitated by Sora Kim-Russell as a creative writing workshop. Workshopping translations there was important training, but I probably learned most from the experiences of publishing that Sora shared with us and the experiences the other translators in the group were having while we worked together.

[AH]: I've been a translator all my life and translated professionally during and after university, so I never had to "train" to be a translator. I did take the LTI Korea course, but I can honestly say I learned pretty much nothing about translation there because, like most of their students who go on to translating literature, I was a good translator going into the program, and I was a good translator coming out of it. It was much more important to receive a literary education and some guidance in close-reading, which is why attending a graduate program in literature helped me a lot more as a literary translator, especially because I did not study literature in undergrad. My practice has been built on years and years of making a living in translation, not from anyone teaching me how to do anything. I'm not knocking translation programs in schools; I think they're great actually, and I've taught in one of them. They probably save you a lot of time not reinventing-the-wheel.

[VC]: While I was taking the 1-year LTI course, I had the opportunity to apply for the ICF Fellowship for translators and got into Seoul National University's Korean Language and Literature Department. Throughout my studies there, I engaged in academic translation as well as translating works for my work research and furthered my understanding of the context of the literature I was working with. I took a year of the LTI evening classes as well, which helped to maintain contact with other people as passionate about translation as I was, and through that I had an opportunity to go to the BCLT summer school in Norwich. I enjoyed their less technical, more emotional, and creative approach to translation so much that as soon as I finished my MA at SNU, I went straight to the University of East Anglia and was trained in their literary translation MA program by Cessi Rossi, Duncan Large, B.J. Epstein, and more. The multilingual translation environment did so much to push me further in what I thought translation could be and inspired me to introduce translation workshops into my work with villagers at Concordia Language Villages' Korean Language Village, Sup sogŭi Hosu.

[Q]: *How does each translator approach a novel and how do you choose the novel?*

[VC]: If I can see the characters and feel the environment while I'm reading it, I get the impulse and even start trying to figure out how I would translate particularly juicy sentences as I read. I know a book is for me if it causes an involuntary physical reaction, like laughing out-loud in a doctor's waiting room or crying on the bus.

[SB]: The one novella that I've seen through from finding it in a library to publication in English was one that kept me up all night reading, made me laugh and cry and think about it most days for months afterwards. I think I approached it frantically at first, simply wanting to write it in English so people who can't read Korean could read it (that first draft was not good), and then after I had calmed down a bit I faced it more like a craftswoman trying to really make something with all the tools I had. In the end it's only 60 pages of the book *I'm Waiting for You and Other Stories* coming out in April with HarperVoyager, but I worked on it on and off for years and it was a pretty epic journey.

[AH]: I pick it up, and if it starts speaking to me in English, I know that it's hit the "translate" button.

[Q]: *How much research goes into each translation?*

[AH]: It's mostly a lot of Googling. I think doing Hwang Sok-yong's *The Prisoner* was the worst, because Hwang seemed to remember the names of every single fifteen-syllable pro-reunification organization he had ever exchanged two words with, and some of those organizations had official English names so I couldn't just make them up. I'm translating *Violet* by Kyung-Sook Shin right now and it's much more pleasant, more to do with plant names and flowers and things that grow in the Korean countryside. I got to nix "dropwort" in favor of "minari."

[SB]: I would agree that this very much depends on the translation (and sometimes on the translator?! Sung Ryu writes in her translator's note for the Kim Boyoung book, which we each translated parts of, that she had to research superstring theory, general relativity, genetics, Buddhist philosophy, and world mythology ... all for a 150-page science fiction novel written in the 2010s.

[VC]: I have not published as much as Anton or Sophie, but most of what I have translated has been in some way related to my academic research. Whether it is research into the context and language of the text itself, such as when I was

translating pieces of Na Hye Sök's 1930s travelogues, or research into epicene pronouns, when I was figuring out how to best feature a non-binary character while translating excerpts of Lee Jong San's *Customer*, I feel more confident and connected to my texts through research.

[Q]: *Do the members get in touch with the author? If so, how? If not, does it make a difference?*

[SB]: If I have questions, even quite small ones, I will email the author. If I am working on a particular person's work extensively I also like to meet them in person or at least try to find video of them talking to get a feel for what they are like. Also, if I found an author problematic in person or heard rumours about certain patterns of behaviour, I would choose to translate work by someone else. While translating, it can feel like the author's voice is taking over my brain, and I'm not prepared to let just anyone in for a prolonged project.

There is a certain freedom that comes from not being able to contact the author at all, for example, if they are deceased, but where possible it has always made a positive difference for me so far, with authors taking an interest in how non-gendered Korean pronouns or ambiguously gendered characters are translated into English (Djuna and Kim Boyoung), and sometimes revising re-printings of the Korean work based on minor details changed for the translation (Kim Boyoung).

[AH]: I almost never contact the author. Mostly because they've done a fine job of researching and writing and editing their works already, and the rest should be the translator's job to figure out. I think I've only had to verify two things with an author ever, and they were both timeline issues with separate authors. I work under the conviction that I have a good reading of the author's work and intent in my mind. If I'm uncertain about an author's voice or their work, I probably would never have taken on the book in the first place. Then again, if I translated more speculative fiction authors like Djuna and Kim Boyoung, I would probably ask as many questions as Sophie does, because some genres just need more clarification and definition. But that's a genre issue, not really a translation issue. Sophie is one of the most sharp-eyed translators I know. I call her "Laser Vision."

[VC]: I get very nervous about contacting authors, but have contacted them when making particularly bold decisions with a text and want to check that this choice won't be too explanatory or pull too much focus. I would like to create closer relationships with authors I work with, but it is difficult when I am not located in Korea right now, and when I feel guilty for not making progress in getting their work through to publishers.

[Q]: *What is the revision/editing process like? Is it a group effort and do you use a copyeditor?*

[AH]: It is highly collaborative, very intense, and a total group effort. First of all, if you're a translator, you're already in a collaboration—you're collaborating with the writer. Even when that writer is long dead, like Kang Kyeong-ae. Writing may be a solitary pursuit, but publishing is a group effort. I think at least ten people read my books before they reach publication, more for some works. Even before I hand in a "first draft" to an editor, I usually ask a Smoking Tiger or another Korean translator to read the whole thing and make comments. It makes a huge difference, like night and day.

[SB]: We have all done some copyediting more or less professionally at some point, but also know that this is not always the kind of input a particular translation needs. I think we're pretty good readers of each others' work in that respect. Sometimes we workshop things too, which usually means sharing and discussing a few pages at the initial stages of trying to get the voice and tone and rhythm right, or getting hivemind help with a particularly challenging passage or poem. Many of us also work with publishers that properly edit their books, and that is a whole process too, but it differs greatly with each editor or publisher and may also involve the author.

[Q]: *Do you face the issue of trying to make the translation sound "English"? Or do you try to preserve the integrity of the original Korean phrasing, culture, and style? If it is a balance of the two, then how do you negotiate that balance? What are some of the challenges of translating from Korean?*

[SB]: I think we will all answer these questions quite differently, and I think my answers change all the time and depending on the work. I like to have fun with language and see what I can get away with in terms of keeping in ideas or expressions that are part of the richness of a text but wouldn't necessarily be considered to sound "English" or need to be carried over. That said, there's always a judgement to make when it's worth it and meaningful. Sometimes preserving things can mean a story ends up sounding like an exaggerated caricature, distracting from what a work is actually trying to do.

As for the translation challenges of Korean, aside from the usual—tense, ambiguity, familial terms, polite/impolite speech, and all the rest—I'm not sure really: the heartbreak every time you have to turn a Korean word or phrase you love into an English one?

[AH]: My authors are extremely cosmopolitan. Kyung-Sook Shin, Sang Young Park, and Jeon Sam-hye read a lot of literature in translation and are actively interested in global movements in narrative, the arts, and technology. Bora Chung has a PhD in Slavic languages and literature and is a translator herself. Jung Young Su was an editor at a major Korean publisher specializing in translated literature and has probably read more books from more countries than anyone else I know. The only reason my authors are “Korean” is because of the language they write in. They are, frankly, more cosmopolitan in sensibility than most English writers, and this lends their work extremely well to translation. So, I don’t find myself really struggling with the preservation of Korean cultural style, whatever Korean cultural style is in this, the golden age of BTS.

[VC]: One of the struggles of translation is against that notion of “sounding English.” I don’t want my work to “sound English” so much as sound like the author! When you first start translating it is tempting to try and relate the voice you hear in Korean to an English voice of an author you are familiar with, but then you get a text that feels constrained by a hideous skin-suit of another person. I don’t want to be another Ezra Pound-esque white translator dismembering and reassembling a Korean text into a macabre facsimile.

One of the challenges I often face is getting across the humour that is in so much of the texts I enjoy. It’s not that it relies on some innate Koreanness of the source language, but rather a tonal quality needed in the English, a wryness or wink in the language that can be difficult to pull off. It’s hard to make yourself laugh while translating, but very gratifying if it can provoke that reaction from a reader.

[Q]: *How does the group feel about the institution of translation in Korea at the moment (i.e., LTI Korea)?*

[SB]: I think it’s safe to say we have a lot of feelings! Almost all of us have benefitted more or less from various programs run by LTI Korea. We have been invested in and been able to eat and pay rent because of various institutions employing and encouraging us. That said, there are issues. For example, the way that translations are judged, and who gets to decide whether a translation or text or translator or writer is worthy of support (this can probably be said for the evaluation of creative work in most countries/contexts). For anyone trying to make a living from translation, the perceived difference between “support” and payment for work can also be difficult: translation rates and grant amounts have been stagnant for the entire time I have known what they are, and it is difficult sometimes to stay grateful for

support and patient about delayed payments when you have years of education and experience under your belt and are working on something day and night.

There have been issues with the institutionalization of translation from Korean, such as inefficient translation funding initiatives and amazing translations hidden in plain jackets because the English-language publisher found for them didn't bother to have a unique cover designed. But, I think that as long as the arts in general (all over the world as far as my experience goes), depend heavily on government agencies, foundations and corporations, there will always be a place for robust funding schemes for literary translation out of and into Korean. Incidentally, at least to my knowledge, two of the most recent projects I did were not funded by the Korean government or organizations at all, and translators of Korean have been successful in securing translation funding and support from organisations such as PEN and arts organisations in the countries they work in.

I think it's also important to consider that well-administered support (financial and otherwise) for translators and translation has a big impact on who gets to become a translator and who can afford to keep translating literature, and to my mind that's a very good thing.

[AH]: I was at a translation conference a couple of years ago where a tenured Hufs professor publicly disputed the need for subsidized literary translation. Of course, he thinks like that, he has tenure! And he thinks we just sit on our butts and translate all day. While I wish that was my life as well—that is not my life. Bear in mind that we are paid only for translation, but we do so much more work other than translation: we have to be literary scouts and discover the books, get sample funding, network, and do discovery on markets, submit to said markets, negotiate the deals, promote the books and our authors once the books come out, deal with extremely prevalent white supremacist attitudes in publishing, and write mountains of emails. As a literary translator, I spend more hours writing emails than translating. Am I being paid for that? Of course not. LTI Korea exists in part to alleviate this market failure. Note the word “alleviate,” not eliminate.

[Q]: *So far, I know that you pitch pre-funded projects, which is what the LTI does, so how do you see your activities in relation to the LTI? Do you look for alternative projects? If so, what type and why? Do you work with LTI on collaborative projects? Or do you simply do your own thing without thinking about LTI?*

[SB]: As far as I know, as a government organization, LTI has an obligation to pitch all their (hundreds of) projects equally, making the process slow, less specifically targeted and limiting what their hardworking staff can achieve. We promote our

own projects, because they are ours: works we are eager to translate because we like them so much. Many of us take on small jobs from LTI, like translating for their magazine, etc. When it comes to our own translation projects however, we would choose our own works and then proactively apply for funding from various sources.

[AH]: LTI doesn't really "pitch" anything, and the notion of anyone from LTI Korea going around selling manuscripts to publishers is so far from our lived reality as to be laughable. Outsiders have an extremely distorted and exaggerated view of what LTI Korea does in the actual publishing sphere. LTI really isn't as proactive as you think. I once asked them in a meeting if they could name a single instance of one of their workers successfully pitching a book that made it to publication in the Anglosphere and all they came up with was a "Kindle single" published years and years ago. So, let's get one thing straight: translators make the deals, and (if you're lucky enough to have one) agents make deals. LTI Korea is there to fund projects that translators have already put in untold hours and effort to set up. LTI also does those subsidiary things that promote Korean literature as a whole: conferences, the magazine *Korean Literature Now*, their academy. But they do not "pitch" books, or not successfully anyway. I've heard from several editors—*several*—about LTI Korea sending them a stack of manuscripts with no regard for personalization of the pitch or tailoring it to address specific interests and concerns the publishing houses have. Do you know what these editors do? They press delete on these emails. This is not "pitching," it's more of a spamming campaign.

[Q]: *I'm presuming "pre-funded" means funded by the LTI? Or not? I'm curious. If so, why did you feel the need to pitch for yourselves? And do you believe that translations should always be funded by national governments? What are your thoughts on the economy and market of translation and perhaps the politics of having national governments specifically fund the translation of their languages?*

[SB]: This overlaps with the previous question. Some of the pitches that have appeared on our website were funded by Daesan also. I think Anton has the most experience with successful pitching, so he can speak to this best, but "If you want something done properly, do it yourself" is probably the short answer. Knowing the literary landscape, targeting specific publishers/editors or agents, and actually being able to really advocate for an author or book are all things translators can do better than large organizations.

As long as translators are well compensated for their work in fair and not exploitative ways I don't really mind who foots the bill, but I do think supporting

translation is a worthwhile use of government money (fund books not bombs!). There is politics in this, of course, and being free of national government funding can feel quite liberating, but I think credit is due to the way the LTI has changed its approach over the years from trying to produce some kind of canon of national literature in translation to slot into world literature, to focusing on writers, championing translators, and promoting exchange. Among other things, their efforts mean that more writers and works have a chance of being translated and published, not just authors or estates that pay out-of-pocket or those who have great agents.

[AH]: This question presumes LTI Korea pitches the manuscripts it funds and, again, I'm here to tell you that LTI Korea does not pitch its manuscripts in any meaningful fashion to Anglophone publishers. If they did, I'm not even sure Smoking Tigers would need to exist. They need to be more upfront about their role in the process so people don't give them credit for what is mostly translators' and agents' work in making deals with publishers. Also, translated literature isn't special in that it receives government funding, it's something that happens for movies, theater, music, every other art form you can think of. Why shouldn't literary translation be subsidized? If one were to make an argument against funding the translation of Korean literature, they should be able to apply it to all of the arts or somehow prove that literary translation or literature is not an art; good luck with that.

[Q]: *Where do the members of the group feel they sit in the history of translating from Korean, or more generally in the history of translation?*

[SB]: None of us were missionaries, or in the Peace Corps, and while we are all about collaboration, none of us follow what was once considered by some as the gold-standard and by others as a stop-gap method of having a Korean (usually racialized, usually female) translator doing a first draft and a "native" English speaker (usually white, often male) translator/editor re-writing or polishing. Not being any of these things isn't new, of course, but I think the ways we have come to translating literature and the ways we work independently and in collaboration with a community do impact the work we produce.

[AH]: Until the late 80s, it was very difficult for Korean children to spend time outside of Korea, and it was rare to be a Korean citizen and growing up in an English-speaking setting. My generation of Korean diaspora were also generally discouraged from learning Korean past an elementary level, so there were very few

adult-level bilinguals overseas. This meant high-functioning bilinguals were mostly Third Culture Kids, people like me or Sung Ryu, the small clutch of Korean citizens who spent time overseas as children. Obviously Sung and I are up and coming now, but I'm hoping there will be a wave of young Korean diaspora and early-age *yuhakseng* translators entering the scene; *yuhakseng* here, including non-Koreans, coming to Korea to study. Some of these younger people really have everything down: excellent Korean, literary English, sophisticated critical reading skills, and a readiness to fight. Such a contrast from the missionaries and Peace Corps dinosaurs.

[Q]: *Where do they think translation practice connected to Korea, AI, and machine learning solutions are going in the future, and how might developers and human translators have a role of embedding cultural knowledge and context into such non-human work.*

[AH]: You know, people have been saying robots will replace my job since at least the 90s—I'm still waiting for machine translation to even help me with my work. People think translation is "narrow AI" work that can easily be replicated through machine learning. But translation is actually "general AI" work, requiring a whole body of human knowledge and aesthetic sensibility to do properly, and the development of that capability is centuries in the future. This entire discussion is basically insulting to translators, because it is usually conducted under the assumption that our work is simpler and easier to do than it really is. You see it a lot with discussions surrounding translations in general, especially in academic circles. Everyone is a translation critic because our job is so easy, apparently. But you know, prove me wrong.

[SB]: Reading Anton's response is giving me horrible flashbacks of the time I was asked to look over a translation of an article a professor had commissioned to a translation agency. It had clearly been cut up into multiple parts and doled out to different workers, most of whom seemed to be using machine translation. I lost a night of sleep trying to fix the manuscript before realizing it would be much quicker to re-translate the whole thing. Machine translation for Korean seems to be getting better for set expressions, but it can still come up with some ridiculous things, and it really struggles with writing that is not utterly clear and direct (i.e., most "literary" writing). As far as I can tell, for a long time to come, even good machine translation will reproduce the difference that already exists between a human translating mechanically (this word means this) and one translating with an eye to context, setting, character, and voice when it comes to each choice of word, expression, syntax, etc.

[VC]: In 2017, there was that heavily publicized “contest” between Human and AI translators in Korea seemingly inspired by the triumph of AlphaGo in 2016, and humans won outright. Of course, those judging were human, so perhaps if a computer was asked to judge, their literary sensibilities would be taken into account and a different result given. I’m being facetious here, but the fact is that, as translators, we are putting everything into a text, not just the mechanical one-to-one replacement of words. While machine translation may be useful for some working in technical translation where consistency of terms is necessary and volume of text translated is valued over the literary quality, what is needed for translating a literary text is intimacy. AI has yet to feel a text as a translator does; it fails to convey the context and emotion that can be woven into a specific character’s actions and words. Like Sophie, I have also had the unfortunate experience of “editing” a machine-translated text, and while Papago may trump Google for Korean-to-English translation, there is still so much to be desired, and so much a computer’s processor cannot give.

[Q]: *What do you think about the politics of white privilege and cultural appropriation as it pertains to translation and translation practice? Korean for example in the UK was a language and culture introduced to the public and academic population by generally white men, though there were exceptions like Isabella Bishop-Bird and Georgina Kemp (though they were themselves privileged). Is it necessary for translators to check, consider, and encounter their own privilege in the work and act of translation?*

[SB]: This is huge, and I often wonder to what extent my name and mugshot influence how people read my work and make decisions on whether to hire or support me, and how much they are willing to pay me. When it comes to questions of cultural appropriation, I think there is a danger of this when the white translator is standing as a representative of “Korean Literature” or making themselves out to be *the* authority on Korean feminist poetry, etc., and thus speaking for an entire tradition or community. The way I see my role as a translator is more about individual writers and texts, and I like the sense of specificity that working on words and sentences and particular ideas, rather than trends or evaluations/comparisons, gives me.

Being aware of privilege is also important in terms of how you approach a text. Translation can be a method of colonizing: taking a work as your own, putting on someone else’s genius like a costume, laying claim to a discovery, taking ownership of someone who cannot talk back to your appropriation of them or their work in the language you are translating them into. I don’t have answers, but I usually feel

like I am working for the writer, the text, and a reader who could bring almost anything with them to the text. This means that I do my best to take time and care, and welcome alternative readings or translations.

Then when it comes to doing all the other bits of work a translator does ... being cisgender, being married to a man, as well as being white, are all things that mean I am often not even aware of how difficult certain things can be, how not being the way I am in one way or another would change my encounters. That said, I would not assume that a translator will necessarily have a hard time because they lack one or another kind of privilege, because there are so many different factors at play. What I can do is listen when my peers choose to talk about these things and stand by them, working with them to amplify and make changes, and champion their talent and work.

[AH]: Like Sophie said, this is a giant topic, and one that tends to go down facile avenues that end with, “Are you telling me white people shouldn’t translate literature?” White people are free to translate whatever they want, obviously. What we’re asking for is everyone, myself included, to constantly interrogate their positions of privilege and engage in perpetual dialogue with diverse voices in their practice of translation: really think about what you’re doing instead of sliding into the banality of evil. Should I be translating this? How can I translate this so it’s not appropriative of me, or is there really no other way of translating this and therefore I should hand it off to someone else? Am I being ableist here? What am I perpetuating in this instance; what am I normalizing? And that’s an unexpected benefit from being in *Smoking Tigers* right there. My colleagues often call out my problematic behaviour and help me work out critical issues in my practice, and I have no idea where I’d be without this guidance.

[VC]: As Sophie has aptly put it, it is a constant negotiation of what I want to produce with my craft and making sure that I take the time to examine my position within a wider context, of translation, and of academia. There have been many moments early in my relationship with translation where I felt myself being trotted out like a show pony, as an “acceptable” white, cisgender face of a larger operation. There are opportunities being denied to those whose image cannot be put to purpose and granted to those who possess only image and none of the talent or dedication. It is important to realize when whiteness is being prioritized and to redirect attention back to the work. I cannot speak for institutions, but in my own practice I make deliberate steps to be accountable. Listening to fellow translators, acknowledging their experiences, and supporting their work will always be the most important part of maintaining a translation community. I am

forever grateful to my fellow Smoking Tigers for creating a space in which we can celebrate our successes, vent our frustrations, and keep each other in check.

[SB]: That comment about being trotted out like a show pony reminds me that I've been called Victoria more than a couple of times. And the question Anton poses of "Should I be translating this?" works on multiple levels. While my student scholarship is taking care of living expenses, my answer to that question is most often "Well, actually, no." There have been a couple of exceptions, but being realistic in terms of how I should be spending my time and the fact that I know translators who can do as good a job as me or better and are earning their keep with translation mean that I sometimes get to act as matchmaker between a translator and a project. I hope that others with the same kind of privilege are doing the same too, particularly with projects that are properly paid. I know I have benefitted from such care in the past.

Selected Translations from Members of The Smoking Tigers

- Kyung-Sook Shin—*The Court Dancer: A Novel* (Pegasus Books)—trans. Anton Hur—2018
- Kang Kyeong-ae—*The Underground Village* (Honford Star)—trans. Anton Hur—2018
- Lee Hyemi—*Unexpected Vanilla* (Tilted Axis)—trans. Soje Lee—2019
- Bo-young Kim—*I'm Waiting For You: And Other Stories* (HarperVoyager)—trans. Sophie Bowman and Sung Ryu—2021
- Choi Jin-young—*To The Warm Horizon* (Honford Star)—trans. Soje Lee—2021
- Choi Eunyoung—*Shoko's Smile* (Penguin Random House)—trans. Sung Ryu—2021
- Bora Chung—*Cursed Bunny* (Honford Star)—trans. Anton Hur—2021
- Hwang Sok-Yong—*The Prisoner* (Verso)—trans. Anton Hur and Sora-Kim Russell—2021
- Heena Baek—*Magic Candles* (Amazon Crossing Kids)—trans. Sophie Bowman—2021

A full list of publications and other material from The Smoking Tigers can be found on their website here: <https://smokingtigers.com/news/>

Special Section: Mobility, Humanities, and Korean Studies¹

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In recent years, the somewhat unfamiliar word “mobility” has been haunting South Korea. A substantial number of companies focused on transport, particularly in the automobile manufacturing industry, used this term without translation into Korean. This unforeseen phenomenon, of course, reflects the global trend to more and more acknowledge mobilities as a significant notion for (re)conceptualizing the contemporary life-world. The so-called “new mobilities paradigm”³ has, in a sense, resulted from this perception that mobilities are substantial not only when it comes to transport but throughout modern society. Since a number of leading social scientists in Europe and North America formulated, theorized, and presented this paradigm in the early twenty-first century, studies within this framework boomed to the extent that a specific field of mobilities studies has formed.⁴

In the era of globalization, the *sine qua non* of which are mobilities,⁵ all possible kinds of mobilities have been accelerating and expanding endlessly. Confronting and dealing with this “Great Acceleration,”⁶ the new mobilities paradigm has changed the topography of social sciences and humanities by advocating a so-called “mobilities turn” that “swept through and incorporated the spatial turn within sociology but also within other disciplines.”⁷ This paradigm rearranged and redefined existing studies under a new frame of perception and thought as an interdisciplinary research program that explores various types, speeds, and characteristics of mobilities of people, objects, information, and images in the contemporary globalized world. Through this, the program driven by this frame showed convincingly that modern society’s mobilities essentially define our forms of life.

However, if this paradigm is put under scrutiny, some omissions and things lacking can be identified: for instance, an oversight of the humanities, perspectives from the Global South, and public engagement, to mention only a few. Firstly, this paradigm has originated from and is actively studied in social sciences such as “anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies, science and technology studies, tourism and transport studies, and sociology.”⁸ Of course, even prior to this paradigm’s inauguration, there was a steady and vivid interest in mobilities in varied humanities disciplines. The demand to incorporate humanities in this paradigm was well recognized, for instance, by Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, the editors of the book *Mobility and Humanities*, the first of its kind, who claimed to “challenge any easy alignment of mobilities research with a neatly demarcated realm called the social sciences.”⁹ Not only that, some renowned academic journals in this area, such as *Transfers*, have given continued attention to research on mobilities from a humanistic perspective. Furthermore, some research institutes such as the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Konkuk University in South Korea and the Center for Advanced Studies in Mobility and the Humanities at the University of Padua in Italy have put explicit emphasis on humanistic approaches to mobilities.

Despite all of this, a preponderance towards the social sciences has not yet been essentially corrected in this paradigm. In this respect, it seems desirable for research from the humanities concerned with mobilities to be more self-conscious and systematic in tackling the mobilities so that truly productive interdisciplinary approaches might be possible. As the humanities are in their nature meant to deal not only with certain social phenomena as such but with their meaning and value for human beings, “mobility humanities” in approaching “human beings from the perspective of mobility”¹⁰ need to be more clear and explicit in focusing on the meaning and value of mobilities. Furthermore, since social science studies on mobilities can be found frequently to be in need of some humanistic way of thinking, such as philosophical reflections on concepts and methodologies of mobilities studies, or theoretical and practical performance in literature and the arts in order to meditate on mobilities phenomena, transdisciplinary studies on mobilities are still required and, in fact, in this “age of motion,”¹¹ more urgently than ever.

Secondly, the oversight of the Global South’s perspective is closely associated with postcolonial issues. As Lin asserts, “current research has tended to depend heavily on Anglo-American and Scandinavian (loosely defined here as ‘Western’) experiences,” with calls for “perspectives beyond the West.”¹² Definitely, this point is not entirely unrelated to the first point referred to above, because much of postcolonial studies originated in fact in typically humanistic disciplines such as

“literary criticism—somewhat divorced from sociological debates on mobility.”¹³ Although there are several proposals for revised orientations, research is still strongly needed in this area. In this context, “Asia as method,” for example, as “an imaginary anchoring point” for further mobilizing “the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices,” might provide “alternative horizons and perspectives”¹⁴ of mobility studies.

Thirdly, notwithstanding the growing demand from society and the more or less manifest acknowledgment from the academy, the significance of public engagement seems to be, to some degree, overlooked. Public engagement can be described as one of the most effective ways to bridge the gap between the academy and society in mobility studies as well. Most mobilities scholars are enthusiastically striving for practical consequences for their work in the increasingly accelerated and consequently alienated late-modern world.¹⁵ Among others, public engagement could enable humanities scholars to present their research achievements to the public and gain feedback that might make their research more rooted in the world and practically plausible.

Given all of this, discussions around the framework of this new mobilities paradigm focused on Korea are gathered in this special section, “Mobility, Humanities, and Korean Studies.” All the contributors belong to the Academy of Mobility Humanities, which seeks to make this paradigm incorporate the humanities, a non-Western perspective, and the drive for public engagement. Contemplating and researching mobilities from a humanistic standpoint for many years, the scholars in this section present diverse approaches to mobilities in South Korea to the extent that they could supplement Korean Studies with vital aspects of mobilities.

Using islands, the place with the most delayed mobilities, as the key theme and location, Inseop Shin shows how this problem of delay is represented in Korean film. At first glance, the islands seem to be an ever static and immobile space, in other words, space that is excepted or immune against global mobilities. This paper plausibly argues, using the film “My Dream Class” as an example, that the islands are the exception that proves the rule and present more clearly how omnipresent mobilities are in the contemporary world. Jinhyoung Lee approaches mobilities in Korea from a historical and literary perspective. By analyzing the short story “To Chölllyōng,” written during the Japanese colonial period from the perspective of the new mobilities paradigm, this paper claims that not just suppression and coercion but the real possibility of resistance and emancipation, primarily through creating sociality, are lurking in highly mobile societies. Taehee Kim presents a paper treating a fairly singular geopolitical entity, the Korean DMZ. Interpreting the ambiguous but productive concept of “heterotopia” coined

by Michel Foucault in relation to issues of mobility, this speculative and exploratory paper suggests the DMZ to be descriptively and normatively a heterotopia (another place) reflecting all other surrounding places. Last but not least, Jooyoung Kim provides mobility humanities scholars interested in the more far-reaching social context of their research with the rich experiences generated by public engagement, especially civic education. This paper clearly shows that these sorts of efforts are vital for the humanities to contribute to the highly mobile and liquid society where this unfamiliar word “mobility” has gone viral, but unfortunately has left a deep gap in understanding between the academy and the general public. In sum, the contributions submitted for this special section will hopefully serve as a foothold when it comes to the novel endeavor to imbue mobility studies with a certain humanistic mindset. Not only that, they could help to expand the new mobilities paradigm’s horizon beyond its current state of affairs, as is identified by this introduction, with an expansion toward the Global South and toward the society surrounding the academy.

Notes

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Islands in Korean Movies: On the Mobility/Immobility of Isolation¹

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Abstract

Developments in mobility have brought about a phase in which people across the planet are able to partake in movement. Inhabitants of islands are no exception. The purpose of this study is to explore ways to analyze the problem of (im)mobility depicted in cinema through the example of the film *My Dream Class* (2018) that represents the common sentiment that Koreans have about islands in the twenty-first century. With a focus on illuminating issues for the understanding of the island “here and now,” this study will bring forth how our perception of islands is important to the cultural discourse in Korea.

Keywords: Islands, Immobility, Korean Movies, Isolation, *My Dream Class*, the growth narrative, Samsung Dream Class

Introduction

Since the 2000s, films have been made continuously in Korea that deal with “anti-civilization” on islands, representing typical isolated areas.³ One feature of these films is that the image of the island is used as a metaphor of isolation, a condition that can stimulate the violence of anti-civilization.⁴ In these films, the “island” is an isolated and closed space that is depicted as a place of fear. *Silmido* (2003) is one such island-related film depicting brutality, though its message is somewhat different. The film is based on the true story of the “Silmido Incident,”

an incident that occurred during the military regime in South Korea in which a group of special agents who were on an uninhabited island died during their training for the infiltration of North Korea. As the first movie to attract 10 million viewers in Korea, *Silmido* is characterized firstly by its criticism of the violence of the military regime; and secondly by its reinforcement of the “national identity of the people”⁵ by underlining the ideological issues around the division of the Korean Peninsula.

The same is true for novels. Sun-won Hwang’s novel *Woman Diver* (1956), which is set at a chaotic period on Cheju (Jeju) Island during Korea’s independence from Japanese rule,⁶ portrays the confined space of the islanders through the perspective of a writer from the mainland. This novel is a story of unresolved love between a female diver and a man who came to Cheju Island from the mainland. What is unusual about the novel is that the woman views the act of moving from the island to the mainland as being taboo. In the end, the woman murders her family for fear of the strange land and refuses to travel to the mainland with her lover. The woman’s excessive sense of isolation is derived from none other than the outsider’s gaze of the island. This is a representation of the island community through the lens of the modern nation-state and the eyes of the outsider,⁷ where the violence of anti-civilization against the isolated island is repeated.

Meanwhile, Yeong-mok Son’s *Geoje Island* (2016) is a novel about the conflict that arises from a prison camp that was built in 1950 on Kōje (Geoje 거제도) Island to the south of Korea during the Korean War. The novel depicts an island village where the indigenous people, refugees from the war, and North Korean prisoners of war live exposed to uncivilized violence.⁸ As the immobility of the prison camp symbolizes, the novel *Geoje Island* corresponds to the films discussed above in that the island’s isolation is a place of the violence of anti-civilization.

However, as John Urry argues,⁹ developments in mobility have brought about a phase in which people of the whole world partake in movement. The reason for the movement varies depending on the subject and the destination. As Peter Adey points out, although our society has grown and prospered through the agency of the sea voyage, maritime mobility has been overlooked within studies of mobility until contemporary times, when the privileged journeys of cruise ships and private yachts are favored.¹⁰ This is true in the case of mobilities in Korea as well. Recently, in Korea, island travel has recently been spotlighted as a form of leisure mobility. As people are attracted to the island as a place for leisure¹¹ and as Cheju Island in particular becomes a tourist destination frequented by Chinese tourists,¹² the traditional view of the island in Korea is changing. The perception of the island as a place for leisure is different in nature from how the island has been negatively remembered in the past. In this change, how is an island being

represented now? And can the newly represented island remove itself from its representation in the past?

This paper starts with the question of what kind of contemplation is needed for the islands of Korea, after they have gone through a history of brutal violence and ideology, to break away from the seclusion of immobility and move toward an era of mobility. To this day, a total of the 3,339 islands registered in Korea¹³ have been alienated from the mainland as backward regions, naturally leading to a negative perception of islands.¹⁴ This is partially caused by the delay in the modernizing of their infrastructure due to the disconnect of the islands from the mainland¹⁵ and partially due to the imaginary sense of “isolation.”

There is a possibility that this asymmetrical perception of islands in Korea will lead to discussions similar to Derek Walcott’s conceptualization of the issue of colonial identity and hybridity in the Caribbean Sea.¹⁶ Globally, dreaming of moving from an island to the mainland has many factors inherent in each situation, including the question of survival as people try to move to higher ground due to the impacts of climate change in lowland islands.¹⁷

However, as the narratives of exile on Cheju Island suggest, in Korea the island has been recognized as a colony within its own territory or a periphery of the mainland. In these exile narratives, being trapped on the island is asymmetrical suppression. The relationship between the island and the mainland has an irony in that, on the one hand, there is the desire of people to go out to the mainland and, on the other, the conservation of the island’s resources and ecosystems is possible.

As will be discussed later, in the case of Cheju Island, it has been transformed from a place of exile in the past to an area that has been gentrified with country houses for people living on the mainland. As the island is used as a resource for leisure, the culture of the island can change when people and capital come in. As Jonathan Pugh points out about the islands of the world, there also operates here a dichotomy of the views on land and sea, island and mainland. Regarding this, Pugh, underlining the “spatial turn,” suggests the term “metamorphosis” of the island movement as thinking about archipelagos.¹⁸

Islanders are using mobility as a means of livelihood, navigating the sea, and visiting other islands and the mainland. However, it is also true that most remote islands in Korea face difficulties due to these characteristics of mobility. In Korea, islands other than Cheju Island are characterized by isolation and narrowness.¹⁹ Except for islands connected to land, the primary means of transportation between islands and the mainland is by ship, which often causes inconvenience such as a disruption of traffic due to weather conditions. For economic reasons, public amenity facilities in underpopulated areas are likely to be insufficient, and for the same reason, educational facilities tend to be lacking. In other words, “If there are

only elementary and junior high schools on the island, students naturally go to high schools on the mainland, and after completing education, most of them do not return to the island, but go out to urban areas in search of work.”

Meanwhile, with the rapid growth of the international tourism market in this era of globalism, the island regions of Korea are spurring on the development of marine tourism under the initiative of the central and local governments.²⁰ From having been remote areas of underdevelopment, islands are now being discovered as natural tourism resources. Humanistic thinking is required for the “contemporary” perception of an island in the twenty-first century; shifted from a place of uncivilized seclusion to that of a tourist destination. When considering mobility concerning the island in the present context, we first need to look at the conflict that arises between the idea of the island viewed from the perspective of an outsider and the inherent nature of the island. To this end, this study will look at an example in which the already fixed dichotomous way of thinking, which acts as a veil to conceal the intrinsic nature of the island, is mobilized as a means of corporate politics.

The purpose of this paper is to explore ways to analyze the problem of immobility depicted in contemporary Korean cinema. This will support a consideration of how our perception of islands is important to cultural discourse in Korea. This study focuses on illuminating issues for the understanding of the island “here and now” and thus contribute to their practical analysis.

The independent film *My Dream Class* (2018) represents common sentiments that Koreans have about islands in the twenty-first century. To be sure, it is not easy to articulate this sentiment of people under the influence of complex factors such as generation, class, regionality, and gender. People living in urban areas may view islands as leisure destinations or perhaps as uncomfortably remote places. Also, people’s perception of large islands such as Cheju Island and that of small islands like Ullungdo (Ulleungdo) may be different.

Nevertheless, there are common elements. The perception of an island as a place for modern leisure is based on the premise of returning “home.” In other words, island mobility as leisure is possible only when conditions of instability such as the immobility of isolation and seclusion are completely excluded. However, alongside the image of the island as a place of leisure, its image of isolation is passed down as a collective view for the Korean people. This is maintained by various subcultures of entertainment.

My Dream Class is an outstanding piece of cinema that veers away from the binary approach to the island as either a place for leisure or as one of fear and isolation. In other words, the film delivers a warm message that when an island’s educational infrastructure is replenished, its seclusion can be relieved, creating

an environment that everyone can live in. This paper does not try to take issue with this contention itself. Perhaps it would be appropriate to fully appreciate the effort to narrow the difference between the emotions of islanders and those of mainlanders, that is, the effort not to ostracize the island. *My Dream Class* does not hold the image of the island as a place of savage violence or ideology, but neither does it characterize it as an object of leisure. This benign harmoniousness is often seen as a “reasonable” approach to the island at the present moment. Nevertheless, some productive issues are raised due to the high level of completion of the film. I would like to point out that the reclusiveness of islands, so widely internalized in Korean people, is still unconsciously expressed in this film.

Asymmetrical Relationships

When preparing this paper, I realized that I had but a vague idea of island life as a person living on the peninsula. The children’s song “Island Baby”²¹ from my childhood had become the basis of my emotional perception of the island.²² It is a song that has a melancholy rhythm, as it captures the wistful solitude of a baby left alone and the loneliness felt from a lack of care. Here, a nostalgia composed of a serene sense of immobility is conveyed to Korean children about the island. The rhyme can be found with a positive interpretation in fourth-grade textbooks of elementary schools.²³ Here are the lyrics for “Island Baby.”

As mother leaves to pick oysters in the island’s shade,
The baby remains alone, watching over the house.
With head over arms, he falls into sleep,
To the sound of the lullaby sung by the waves.

The baby is fast asleep, but mother hurries back.
She runs down the sandy path, holding upon her head
A basket not yet filled with oysters.
Her heart is aflutter from the cries of the seagulls.

Some researchers read “lyricism”²⁴ in this nursery rhyme, but it is no more than an arbitrary and privileged gaze of a person living on the mainland. As one may know after listening to this song,²⁵ it is a plaintive melody that conveys a darker story of a baby that is left alone at home. Godfrey Baldacchino points out “The insider/outsider distinction does not work all that well when it comes to islands, where hybridity is the norm.”²⁶ Above all, would island-dwellers tolerate the solitude, nostalgia, and sense of tranquility that colors the urban perspective of islands? This can be replaced by the relationship between the “people” who are observing and the “islanders” who are being observed. In other words, the

gaze and the object of that gaze are always asymmetrical in relation to human relationships.²⁷ Despite being looked upon, they are bodies locked in the physical realm of the island, and as such, they can only be visible through the filter that is the “island.”

What elementary school students imagined when they sang “Island Baby” was most likely the loneliness of alienation or exclusion itself, which could be violence in the name of lyricism. How does this power structure of the false gaze manifest in *My Dream Class*? As an example of the analysis, this paper first explores why *My Dream Class* is an island-based growth narrative. How does the film portray the island, and what message does the island embody? These questions capture the complex stance contained in this film. By posing these questions, our view of the island can be expanded into multiple layers in twenty-first century Korean culture.

The Film *My Dream Class* and “Samsung Dream Class”

In order to determine what kind of movie *My Dream Class* is, I will briefly introduce its story first. A male and a female college student, who do not know each other, travel by boat to a remote island with poor educational facilities. The film *My Dream Class* was produced based on the “Samsung Dream Class,” a social contribution education program of Samsung Electronics. *My Dream Class* was directed by Bae Jong,²⁸ and starred Byun Yo-han and Gong Seung-yeon. It is a story featuring a university student who goes to a remote island as a new English instructor of the Samsung Dream Class program. The plot shows the instructor’s development while pursuing dreams together with middle school students who are “neglected on the island” (the Samsung Dream Class is a program aimed at helping children who live in remote areas or those who lack in education due to some insufficiency).²⁹

During their stay, they teach English and mathematics to students on the island who do not have much opportunity for education, and inspire dreams and hopes in them. There is a Korean man, who has lost his wife and raised a child in the city, who has moved to the island to live as a fisherman after marrying a Southeast Asian woman; Sanggu, his son, cannot confide in his stepmother who speaks English as her mother tongue, which causes her distress.

A college student, who has come to this remote island to teach English, brings Sanggu, who has not been attending school but instead is working as a fisherman, to attend the school, and helps him to communicate with his stepmother in English. The film has a happy ending in that the English teacher not only helps a student to study, but also helps a family to live a happy life. In this plot, we notice that at least two aspects are different from the image of the island with which

we are familiar. One is why so-called “multicultural families,” which are defined here as the marriage of Korean men and foreign women, move to an island, and the second is why Samsung supports people who live under hardship, including lack of access to education.

The independent film is intended to publicize the performance of the “Samsung Dream Class” campaign,³⁰ which began in 2011 and sent college tutors to areas where the youths were marginalized from education. However, that is not to say that it is just another blatant and crude piece of corporate propaganda. Rather, the film unfolds an impressive story in a very sophisticated way: a timid young college student, who is worried about his future career given the current situation of Korea, goes to an island in spite of his seasickness. Overcoming difficulties, he eventually helps the growth of the students on the island. It has a narrative structure like a “dream,” the result of which the conflict between the problem student and his mother is also resolved.

In the process, Jeong Seok (played by Gong Seung-yeon) fosters her dreams together with the children as an educator. As the director mentions, the desire to help the “underprivileged” is shared by both Samsung Electronics and the filmmakers. “Byeolliseom Island,” which is the setting of the film, is an hour and a half away by boat from Kangwŏndo (Gangwon-do). This, however, is not the real name of the island and the film was actually shot on Cheju Island.

Isolation of the Island

The director Bae Jong said in an interview, “I wanted to say a word of warm consolation to the teenagers and youth of their 20s who had to give up their dreams.”³¹ He intended to give a message of healing. So, what kind of place is the island village in this movie?

The film begins with a monologue from the main character, capturing the silhouette of the island in the background: “Within an hour and a half by boat from Kangnŭng (Gangneung), lies one of the few volcanic islands of Korea. There was a brave man who volunteered to enter the island without knowing what was there.” The phrase “without knowing what was there” is an exaggeration of the fear of the island. It is hard to imagine that an island just an hour and a half away from the mainland could be characterized as a remote place in this day and age.

Subconscious expressions like these stem from inherited perceptions of the islands, which will be discussed later in this paper. According to this line, the purpose of going to a place that requires such bravery is summarized in the sentence: “A Dream Class instructor is the best part-time job that is satisfactory in both job requirements and remuneration.”³²

The first scene begins with the monologue, “Now I’m entering the dark tunnel of a graduate and a job seeker, which is scarier than ghosts and more savage than zombies. For Korean youths in the 2000s, graduating from college signaled a start to a fierce competition for jobs, the beginning of a greater challenge. The main character, university student Han Gi-tak (played by Byun Yo-han), goes aboard a ship to work as a part-time after-school teacher on a remote island in order to build “qualifications” for employment. Here, the “dark tunnel” is an image that the protagonist has about his future, and it coincides with his journey to the island. It is also an expression of the state in which one has not yet overcome the tunnel of growth.

This first symbolic scene shows that the island is thematically connected to the implications of difficulty and hardship. Going to an island for work, whether part-time or full-time, is not a leisurely trip. Rather, it is commonly perceived by urban dwellers as a regressive move. Moreover, it is noteworthy that he perceives that entering the island is for “survival.”³³

The reason why an island is considered a rough place is not simply because of the inconvenience caused by the immobility created by isolation and separation. There was a large share of this in the image of the isolated desert island represented by *Robinson Crusoe* and in the savage image of indigenous people on islands.³⁴ In Korea, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* was translated by Seok-Hoon Lee and serialized 12 times in the *Boys Chosun Ilbo* in 1939. The translator added a sentence that was not in the English original: “I think it’s a vile thing to buy and sell a human being as a ‘slave,’ even though the person is black.” On the whole, however, the translation embraced the imperialist premise of killing or subjugating indigenous people.³⁵ Ostracizing the island as a place of savagery not only exists in the logic of imperialism. Taking a step further back from the internalization of Orientalism, the historical reputation of islands as a place of exile in Korea played a large role in the marginalization of such islands throughout history.³⁶

The same goes for not only barbarity, Orientalism, and historical alienation, but also for media with narratives of escape from islands, the “islands of fantasy” often featured in stories of treasure islands, the pirate island, and those found in games. The images propagated in relation to islands are something from which life has been removed. The imagined island is represented as the Other by mainland dwellers. *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Gerald Golding also represents the island as an irrational place ruled by the fear of isolation.³⁷

In other words, the isolation of the island consists of a fear of heterogeneity in history, ideology, and culture. This multi-layered consciousness is passed on as a cultural imprint or memory, sometimes forming the basis of discrimination and alienation. The film repeatedly presents scenes in which the young man, having

entered the island, is extremely vigilant out of fear. This would be ridiculous without there being a premise that there is something horrible on the island. Ironically, although it is an exaggerated scene once again, the vice principal of Byeolli Junior High School comes out to the pier to meet him and asks sincerely, “You must have had a hard time travelling by boat?” In the background, innocent islanders greet them with applause as the ship docks and the two step on land. It is not a hostile place. What’s more, Jeon Seok, a female college student who is a math lecturer stuns the vice principal by cheerfully saying “What a fantastic place! Do pirates appear here?” It may be a joke, but it is an over-substitution of suspense focused on the island.

The Narrative of Growth and the Aims of the Corporation

As there has not been a suitable island in Korea to so far represent the leisurely openness conjured by Cebu or Hawai’i, Koreans are not used to the image of an island as a pleasant paradise resort. In Korea, Cheju Island attracts some visitors as one of the few beach destinations. Otherwise, the sea of Cheju Island is commonly known as the workplace of *haenyeo* (women divers) where the folk discourse of their joys and sorrows plays out.³⁸ This does not mean to say that it is positive to perceive the island as a paradise where nature can be exploited for multinational capital. As an ecosystem, it is ideal when humans, nature, and resources are in a state of harmony. However, the problem is that the island does not exist as an ecosystem that is an object.

Byeolli Junior High School had just six students. The vice principal is delighted to receive the opportunity for private tutoring. “As people are increasingly leaving for the land,” he equivocates, “please motivate the children so that they can at least dream.” As mentioned earlier, the general sentiment of Koreans would be as follows: coming out of the island toward the mainland is an escape, going from the mainland to the island is a retrogression. In the movie *My Dream Class*, this sentiment is revealed in a line by Sanggu, who is a fisherman and a student: “In the end, the teacher will leave, and we will be left behind to be abandoned like an island.” This is a common idea in countries such as Korea and Japan, where the population is concentrated in metropolitan areas.

In the film, the after-school English teacher Han Gi-tak applies an anti-sea-sickness patch onto his ears. Close-up shots capture the patch still in place even during class. For the moment, the road to the island is arduous. It is still a scary place, so he cannot yet take off the medicine. This is a kind of “dark tunnel,” and the film reproduces the hackneyed narrative of growth and gaining hope and courage after overcoming hardship.

However, the fact that the island is a junction at which despair becomes hope is an indication that the island is becoming romanticized. In this sense, the question is how removed must this romanticized narrative of an island be from the centralist ideology of “returning to rural life—coming home in glory” in order for it to be free. This is because there is a question as to whether one can be content even in poverty. He goes to the island to work as a part-time tutor due to financial hardship. If he matures there and returns to land to become a valuable human resource in society, the island is ultimately abandoned. This pattern only repeats the existing narrative of escape from the island.

This 35-minute independent film made by Samsung Electronics delivers a message for social contribution. The managerial scrutiny of a conglomerate on a remote island embodies the support of education and aid to the underprivileged in this narrative of growth. The corporation aims to be at the forefront of using sophisticated media to overcome social inequalities. A relief from the outdated public service advertisements, this film allows us to view a remote island from a different perspective.

In this new perception, economic discomfort stemming from the residents’ immobility is eliminated, and only pure emotional exchange remains on the island. This helps to remove the negative image of the island, and it will surely contribute to the transformation of the corporate image. The island also shows scenes of the pain and conflict endured by a beautiful foreign woman (Sanggu’s stepmother), who has migrated to Korea through marriage and fishes for a living, and how these conflicts are resolved by Samsung.

Through social contribution projects, Samsung has developed a corporate strategy to improve the image of the company³⁹ and fulfil its corporate social responsibility goals by solving social problems.⁴⁰ Here, the concept of communication in multicultural families and services that provide educational opportunities to underprivileged areas on remote islands is a very suitable theme for Samsung’s social contribution program.

However, as pointed out earlier, we need to pay attention to the fact that the island is deprived of its own function in order to contribute to the renewal of the corporate image. From a progressive perspective, Samsung exploits social contributions as a means of avoiding uncomfortable truths⁴¹—such as frequent leukemia cases in its workplace, labor exploitation, or denial of the existence of the labor union in the company. This conflicting perspective complicates the perspective of this independent film.

Sanggu’s mother died when he was two years old. The stepmother, who was the second wife to Sanggu’s father, is unable to communicate in Korean, because Sanggu’s father prevents her from learning the language. One night, the

protagonist young man happens to see Sanggu's mother praying. As she prays, she has difficulty with articulation: "Thank you for the wonderful family. Loving husband and sweet son. But sometimes I am lonely. How can I reach their hearts?"

The growth narrative has three elements: "First, in the process of growth and establishment of self-identity of the inexperienced protagonist, an internal reflection that recognizes the new world takes place. It shows the physical and mental growth through the young first-person narrator. It has an open structure in which the protagonist develops criticism of the established social order, and then internalizes it or develops it in a positive or negative direction."⁴²

The key to this film is in the way Sanggu, who had once despised the English tutor Han Gi-tak and his immigrant stepmother, matures. As a jobseeker whose future is uncertain, Han Gi-tak still lacks maturity himself in the sense that his motivation for going to the island is very weak. Surprisingly, the formation of his self-identity was through Sanggu. Sanggu's stepmother is an immigrant who met Sanggu's father while studying abroad. This reflects the multiculturalism that is spreading in Korea. Sanggu does not talk to her. He was unable to speak his mind not because she was a stepmother but because of the language barrier.

The passionate college student and teacher wishes to bring Sanggu to school, saving him from life as a fisherman, and even tries to interact with Sanggu's family by going fishing himself. The plot of the film revolves around the growth of the youth through ordeal, the students who grow together with him, and the humble fishermen who rejoice together. Han Gi-tak, who was an immature young man when he first came to the island, grows into a strong individual capable of persuading Sanggu's father to send his son to school. Sanggu opens his heart to Han Gi-tak and learns English. When his stepmother comes to class with a snack, he tells his friends, "She my mother." The film reaches a climax when the children tearfully point out the grammatical errors, as the vice principal listens just outside the classroom sobbing silently.

Conclusion

It is clear why the growth narrative in *My Dream Class* had to be set on an island. As a place where one overcomes difficulties, the immobility of the island lies in parallel with the narrative of escape from the island. It makes use of the image of the island as a place that is not only difficult to escape but also to enter. The social contribution project undertaken by the Samsung Dream Class aimed to achieve educational results (growth) by overcoming difficulties. The media often exploits the fragmentary images of the island in a predatory manner. In some

cases, they transfigure the people who live on it and even turns the island into an uninhabited place.

After the reconciliation between mother and son, Sanggu's father and mother lean on each other's shoulders at the beach at sunset in affirmation that her prayer has been fulfilled. The growth narrative turns rapidly into a family melodrama. It is for this reason that the film is lacking "an open structure in which the protagonist develops criticism of the established social order, and then internalizes it or develops it in a positive or negative direction." The decisive clue to this was in the line by Sanggu when the teacher eventually leaves, "We who remain will be discarded like an island." In response, Han Gi-tak had to leave the island without replying. At the very least, the true narrative of the island's growth could have been completed if he had left a message of regret or a promise for the future upon leaving.

The movie *My Dream Class* also appeals to a kind of lyricism of a place where the sea is beautiful and life is simpler. Unlike the "Island Baby," people express the lyricism of the sea in this film. But the kind of lyricism here is the lyricism of urban people. As the director remarked, the film shines a warm spotlight upon the underprivileged, but it does not go beyond how someone defines others. It is also worth noting that the film mobilized the island to change a corporate image, by engaging in solving social problems through the huge capital capacity of Samsung. The plot in which a savior is inserted to solve a problem but then withdraws afterwards logically does not deviate from the dichotomous relationship between the strong and the weak. Also, it is worth considering whether this is but a way to buy the trust of the islanders over the outsider's management of marine resources.

In recent years, islands have at times become the subject of border conflict over maritime resources. By becoming an issue of conflict, islands are caught in the whirlpool of establishing new international orders. The island is a multi-tiered setting with such ideological and abstract aspects as well as recreational, economic, and political aspects. In such discourses, the more pertinent question is often overlooked: an island is an ecosystem in which nature and humans live in harmony.

As long as we focus on the island as a place where someone comes to and departs from, our imagination of the island is bound to be a very limited one. In that sense, Byeolliseom Island in *My Dream Class* is a place where a young man from the outside world comes and goes, and at the same time a place where investment in the project comes and goes.

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2018S1A6A3A03043497). The early version of the article was presented at the conference at Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines.
2. Postal Address: 1102, New Millennium Hall, Konkuk University, 120 Neungdong-Ro, Gwangjin-Gu, Seoul 05029, Korea, Email Address: seoha@konkuk.ac.kr.
3. These films include *Hyeol-eui-noo (Blood Rain)* in 2005, *Paradise Murdered* in 2007, *Bedevilled* in 2010, and, although the genre is different, *Mapado* in 2005. Jung Junghoon, “Han’guk yŏnghwa esŏ ‘sŏm’ ira nŭn chinghu,” *K’ŏnt’ench’ŭ munhwa* 8 (2016): 25.
4. Jung, “Han’guk yŏnghwa esŏ ‘sŏm’ ira nŭn chinghu,” 2016, 27.
5. Seo In-Sook, “Yŏnghwa *Silmido* ŭi ideologi wa riŏllit’i e taehan pip’an-chŏk koch’al,” *Han’guk k’ont’ench’ŭ hakhoe nonmunji* 8.7 (2008): 162.
6. Following independence from Japanese rule in 1945, the people of Cheju Island suffered from violence committed by state power during the 4.3 Cheju Democratic Revolution (the Cheju Uprising), which took place from March 1, 1948 to September 21, 1954, resulting in an official death toll of 12,243. This still remains in the memory of people today (Lew Seung-Mu, “Cheju 4.3 sagŏn ŭi kujo-chŏk maengnak kwa yŏksa mit sahoe ŭi pogwŏn ŭi kwaje,” *Sahoe sasang kwa munhwa* 22.3 (2019): 55–78).
7. Hong Gi-Don, “Kŭndae chŏk minjok kukka wa t’aja ŭi sisŏn ŭro chaehyŏn toen Cheju kongdongch’e ŭi myŏnmo—1950~60 nyŏndae palp’yo toen yukchi ch’ulsin chakka tŭl ŭi 4-3 sosŏl ŭl chungsim ŭro,” *Uri munhak yŏn’gu* 59 (2018): 421–453.
8. Kŏje Island is a place where prison camps were established during the Korean War and where intense left–right conflict between prisoners occurred. It is remembered as a scar of national division engraved on an isolated island (Byun Hwayeong, “Kŏje-do’ ŭi chŏnjaeng p’oro e taehan kiŏk kwa hŭnjŏk—Son Yŏng-mok ŭi *Kŏje-do* rŭl chungsim ŭro,” *Han’guk munhak nonch’ong* 77 (2017): 337–362).
9. John Urry, *Mobility*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2007.
10. Peter Adey, *Mobility* (Second edition). London and New York: Routledge, 2017, 239.
11. Ko Ho-Seok, “Haeyang kwangwangaek ŭi ch’ehŏm-chŏk kyŏnghŏm i yŏga hwaldong ch’amga tonggi, morip, manjokcho mit chŏnhwan ūido wa ŭi kucho-chŏk kwangye punsŏk—Kyŏngsangnam-do chuyo 3 kae sŏm kwangwangji rŭl chungsim ŭro,” *Tongbuk-a kwangwang yŏn’gu* 7.4 (2011): 230.
12. Zhou Shantai and Oh Ick-Keun, “Pang-Han Chungguk-in kaebyŏl kwangwanggaek ŭi Han’guk nae sŏnho kwangwang chawŏn punp’o,” *Kwangwanghak yŏn’gu* 42.6 (2018): 142.
13. It is estimated that there are 463 inhabited islands and 2,876 uninhabited islands, but it is impossible to give an accurate number, because the government departments have varying statistical standards for islands (Kim Nong-Oh, “Uri nara tosŏ ŭi haeyang saengt’ae kwangwang chŏngch’aek mit hwalsŏnghwa pangan yŏn’gu,” Doctoral Dissertation: Jeonbuk University: 2020: 1.
14. Kim Joon, “Tosŏ chŏngch’aek ŭi sŏngch’al kwa chisok kanŭng han sŏm mandŭlgi rŭl wihan shiron,” *Kyŏngnam palchŏn* 121 (2012): 14–23.
15. Parents in the island regions do not think highly of the educational environment in the island areas. As a result, most of them desire to send their children to a larger city for elementary, middle, and high school education if they can afford it (Park Bun-Hee and Baek Hee-Sook, “Tosŏ chiyŏk adong tŭl ŭi hakkyo kyoyuk,” *Adong kyoyuk* 13.2 (2004): 53.
16. Lee Mi-ae, “K’aribŭ hae yŏngŏ-kwŏn t’al-sikmin munhangnon,” *Translatin* 15 (2011): 101–112.
17. Ilan Kelman, Robert Stojanov, Shabana Khan, Oscar Alvarez Gila, Barbora Duží, and Dmytro Vikhrov, “Viewpoint paper. Islander mobilities: any change from climate change?” *International Journal of Global Warming* 8.4 (2015): 587–589.

18. Jonathan Pugh, "Island Movements: Thinking with the Archipelago," *Island Studies Journal* 8.1 (2013): 11.
19. Park Sung-Hyun and Lee Tae-Gyeom, "Tosō chiyōk kyoyuk ūi hyōnhwang kwa chedo-chōk kaesōn pangan," *Han'guk tosō yōn'gu* 31.4 (2019): 113.
20. Kim Nong-Oh, "Uri nara," 2020, 2.
21. Written by Han In-Hyeon and composed by Lee Heung-Ryeol (1946).
22. In the 1970s, when I was in elementary school, virtually all children throughout the nation simultaneously received this kind of emotional education through the national textbook.
23. The insertion of this positive interpretation overemphasizes the character of a children's song that is supposed to purify the hearts of children.
24. Kim Sang-kyu, "Sidaepyōl tongyo-ro salp'yō pon sahoe kyōngche-chōk hamūi," *Kyōngche kyoyuk yōn'gu* 25.1 (2018): 49.
25. Listen to the song played with translated English lyrics (accessed April 1, https://search.daum.net/search?w=tot&DA=YZR&t__nil_searchbox=btn&sug=&sugo=&q=%EC%84%AC%EC%A7%91%EC%95%84%EA%B8%B0+%EC%98%81%EC%96%B4).
26. Godfrey Baldacchino, "Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies," *Island Studies Journal* 3.1 (2008): 37.
27. Lee Hyejin, "Kwahak, mom kurigo yokmang: Choji Hōbōt'ū Welchū T'umyōng ingan," *Oeguk munhak yōn'gu* 73 (2019): 221. Mimi Sheller, "Introduction: The Triple Crisis," in *Mobility Justice*, Ed. Mimi Sheller (London: Verso, 2018), 1–19.
28. Bae Jong was born in 1969 and graduated from the Visual Design Department at Hongik University. His major films include *Welcome to Dongmakgol* (2005) and *Fabricated City* (2017). Major prizes he received include the Silver Lion Award (Fast Food category) at the 2002 Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival, Best Director & Screenplay Award at the 2005 Korean Film Awards (*Welcome to Dongmakgol*), and the Audience Choice Award for Most Popular Film at the 2005 Blue Dragon Film Awards (*Welcome to Dongmakgol*).
29. "Meeting the Director Bae Jong of *My Dream Class* that Hit Over 100 Million Views", *Samsung Newsroom*, Dec. 9, 2018: "Samsung Dream Class is a social contribution program that Samsung has been carrying out since 2012 to contribute to social integration by reducing conflicts caused by polarization in education. It provides opportunities for middle school students in poor educational environments to learn English and mathematics, and scholarships are provided to these students when they enter college and rejoin the program as instructors for middle school students. As of December 2018, the cumulative number of students who participated in the program was around 73,000 middle school students and around 20,000 university students. This year, more than 6,200 middle school students and 1,550 college students are participating in the program. 185 weekday and weekend classrooms are in operation in 38 cities nationwide. In addition, 12 vacation camps (winter and summer) were opened, with around 3,300 participants of middle school students and 1,150 of university students." (<https://news.samsung.com/kr/1%EC%96%B5-%EB%B7%B0-%EB%8F%8C%ED%8C%8C%ED%95%9C-%EB%B3%84%EB%A6%AC%EC%84%ACmy-dream-class-%EA%B0%90%EB%8F%85-%EB%B0%B0%EC%A2%85%EC%9D%84-%EB%A7%8C%EB%82%98%EB%8B%A4>).
30. See the website <https://www.dreamclass.org/index.do>.
31. *Samsung Newsroom*, Dec. 9, 2018.
32. Bae Jong (Director), *My Dream Class*, 2018.
33. Historically, islands have been ignored by the government in Korea, even giving birth to the proverb, "Send people to Seoul; send horses to Cheju Island." In contrast to the desire to move up the social ladder by moving to the capital, there is a historical trauma related to the desire to escape islands and settle on the mainland. In 1485, during King Sōngjong's reign, a ban was imposed on the residents of Cheju Island to prevent entry to

- the mainland. This resulted in a severance from the mainland. The measure was taken because tens of thousands of people fled the island due to the tyranny and exploitation of the central government against the residents of Cheju Island (Cho Sung Youn, “Cheju-do haeyang munhwa chōnt’ong ūi tanjöl kwa kyesüng,” *T’amna munhwa* 42 (2013): 82–85).
34. The intruders only highlight the one-sided fear of the indigenous people and are not aware of the meaning of their intrusion.
 35. Sim Misam, “Yi Sök-hun ūi *Robinson p’yoryugi* palgul kwa sogae,” *Kūndae söji* 20 (2019): 496–498.
 36. The exile of sinners to islands such as Cheju Island, Kanghwa Island, and Chindo Island is an example of the use or abuse of immobility by law enforcement agencies. Places most frequently used for expulsion in the Chosŏn Dynasty were the island regions of Chejudo, Kōjedo, Chindo, and Hüksando (Jang Sun-Young, “Chosŏn sidae yuhyöng kwa chōldo chōngbae ūi ch’ui,” *Chibangsa wa chibang munhwa* 4.2 (2001): 188). The small island in the setting of *Papillon* also spread the image of confinement and escape throughout the world.
 37. Lee Sun-Hyeong, “Isöng kwa munmyöng, ihang taerip ūi panpok *P’ari taewang*,” *Yön’gük p’yöngnon* 69 (2013): 69. Kim Young Don, “Cheju haenyö chosa yön’gu—t’ük’i minsokhak-chök ch’ükmyön esö,” *Minjok munhwa yön’gu* 24 (1991): 27–92.
 38. Kim Young Don, “Cheju haenyö,” 1991, 27–92.
 39. Shin Ji Sook, “Sahoe konghön hwaldong ūl t’onghan Samsöng ūi sahoe-chök ch’aegim hwaldong e taehan sajök koch’al,” *Kyöngyöngsa yön’gu* 24.2 (2009): 9–43.
 40. Jung Heung-jun, Kim Joo-hee, No Se-ri, Song Min-su, Jung Young-hoon, *Ch’aegim e kwanhan yön’gu—chisok kanüng han koyong kwangye motel e taehan hamüi*, Sejong: Han’guk nodong yön’guwön, 2018, 82.
 41. Lee Jeonghwan, “Samsöng ūi monnan chit, Samsöng chisok kanüng pogosö e nün öpta,” *Midiö önül* 2014.01.13 (<http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=114249>).
 42. Lee Pyeongjeon, “Pip’an-chök munhae kyoyuk ūl wihan söngjang sosöl ūi munhwa chōngch’ihak-chök ikki yön’gu,” *Ö mullon chip* 78 (2019): 422.

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Mobile Imperialism and its Fissure in Colonial Chosŏn: Centering on Kim Namch'ŏn's "To Chŏllyŏng"¹

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Abstract

This paper explores Japanese mobile imperialism as supported by the colonial mobility system and examines an emancipatory imagination, which enables the opening of a fissure in the system, by approaching Kim Namch'ŏn's short story, "To Chŏllyŏng (Ch. Tieling 鐵嶺)," from the new mobilities paradigm. It argues that, via modern mobility technologies, "sociality," i.e., the communal ethic, can be created at the core of "the social"; ergo, Korean society, dominated by colonial mobility's rationality, constructs the colonized people as dehumanized beings while simultaneously incubating an alternative way of living, namely, "the undirected being-together." The spontaneous social cohesion that results is significant, functioning as "an affirmative *puissance*," which may undermine Japanese colonial rule.

Keywords: Colonial mobility system, Mobile imperialism, Governmobility, Colonial mobility's rationality, Communal ethic, Affirmative *puissance*

Mobility and Colonialism

This paper explores Japanese mobile imperialism in Korean, supported by a colonial mobility system composed of modern mobility technologies and infrastructures, and examines an emancipatory imagination, which enables the opening of a fissure in the system, by approaching Kim Namch'ön's emblematic short story "To Chöll'yöng" (1938) from the new mobilities paradigm. Specifically, by drawing on Michel Maffesoli's distinction of "sociality" and "the social," it argues that "sociality," or the communal ethic, can be created at the core of "the social," i.e., the social world dominated by colonial mobility's rationality, thereby functioning as "an affirmative *puissance*," which may undermine Japanese colonial rule.

In general, the "new mobilities paradigm" denotes theorizing a social world in terms of "a wide array of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures and ideologies that all involve, entail or curtail various kinds of movement of people, or ideas, or information or objects."³ Emphasized in this paradigm, thus, is "*complex mobilities* of all kinds as the basis of all forms of space," "[H]ow these political-economic relational spaces were produced in and through social and cultural practices" is to be analyzed.⁴ Within the literature, John Urry focuses on the collective "mobility system" rather than on specific modes, such as the train, automobile, road, or railway, respectively, because the former, presupposed by the complexity of mobile practices, renders various kinds of movement to be "predictable" and "repetitive,"⁵ and thus participates in the creation of such relational spaces. The paradigm, therefore, views a social world, not only created by various kinds of mobile practices, "*complex mobilities*," but regulated by a specific mobility system.

When Michele Foucault notes that "circulation, the circulation of goods, of the products of men's activity" is "the last object of police" and "the condition and development of roads" is one of their main concerns,⁶ he implicates the construction and the use of a mobility system as an exercise of governmentality, enabling power or government to regulate various kinds of movements, including that of a population, in a way that renders its members "predictable" and "repetitive." From this viewpoint, Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt characterizes this situation as "a situation where the regulation of mobilities are internalized in people's mobile practices" by devising a notion of "governmobility."⁷

At the same time, however, it must be stressed that within the paradigm, mobility technologies and infrastructures enable or suppose multiple variable movements,⁸ and consequently, social and cultural practices are not limited to creating a social world regulated by a specific power or government that tries to regulate them. Rather, they can also create different social spaces owing to the

variable usability of mobility technologies and infrastructures. The paradigm, thus, investigates the social world by considering its various mobile practices and its mobility system, the formation of different spaces in relation to them, and an operation of governmentality, i.e., governmobility, in the process of its formation.

By approaching Kim Namch'ŏn's "To Chŏllyŏng" from the new mobilities paradigm, this paper particularly examines Japanese mobile imperialism supported by a colonial mobility system through which its actors had practiced governing the colonized territory and its people. Published in 1938, the year when the construction of the modern mobility system, propelled by the Japanese Government General of Korea, was nearing completion, Kim's short story describes the accidental meeting of a nameless first-person narrator, who travels to Sŏngch'ŏn with an emigrant family moving from Yangdŏk to Sŏngch'ŏn, and to an ultimate destination, Chŏllyŏng (K.) in Manchuria, China, for a better life. The narrative's settings are situated in mobile spaces—for example, a waiting room, the side of a road, and inside the train—which behave as social, relational worlds. Therefore, the current paper's primary focus is the manipulation of such mobile spaces created through the complicated exercise of Japanese governmentality and the social and cultural practices of the colonized people. In addition, it posits and defends the resultant "affirmative *puissance*" that opens a fissure in the representation of Japanese imperialism, by analyzing different social spaces created on the variable usability of mobility technologies and infrastructures.

In this regard, it is helpful for this study to take Michel Maffesoli's argument of "sociality" into account. Contrary to "the social," built on the principle of individuation and of separation," which "favors individuals and rational, contractual associations," "the political order," "sociality" "places the emphasis on the affective, feeling dimension," "the realm of identification"; therefore, Maffesoli demands that we acknowledge the latter as an alternative principle of society to the former, which, as the modern and dominant, subjects social existence "to the injunctions of a multiform *power*," by highlighting "an affirmative *puissance*" that "confirms the '(ever-) renewed game of solidarity and reciprocity'"; thus, dwelling on the dehumanization and solitude is not as important as seeing potential for "the network of solidarity," namely "sociality," in the contemporaneous social world.⁹ In this context, Maffesoli asserts that as a carrier of an affirmative *puissance*, "the shared feelings" can encourage "the communal ethic,"¹⁰ which is not a series of *a priori* norms or principles but rather the common faculty of feeling, found in "the undirected being-together."¹¹

Considering Maffesoli's argument, as well as new mobilities paradigm altogether, Kim's work can be viewed as representing social worlds that the colonial government sought to re-organize and administer, which on the other

hand gave rise to an affirmative *puissance* lurking in the colonial mobilities; for example, a scene that plays out in a waiting room describes the dominant power of colonial mobility system over people; while action set on the road, within a social world, reflects individual interest and colonial mobility's rationality; inside the train transporting the characters, a separate social world is established where, through their reciprocity, the communal ethic is momentarily achieved.

Japanese Mobile Imperialism and Governmobility

As Japan's modernization was inseparable from the historiography of the railway,¹² Japanese imperialism propagated the development of mobility technologies and infrastructures in Korea as one of the representative testimonies for demonstrating the legitimacy of its colonial rule,¹³ as reflected by the modernization of society. Notably, the construction of the colonial mobility system, primarily consisting of railways, roads, and ports, was an essential means through which Japanese imperialism re-organized and ruled the colonized territories and people.

Historically, preceding its occupation of Korea (1910), Japanese imperialism had actively participated in constructing a network of railways in the Korean Peninsula, including the Hansŏng-Inch'ŏn Railroad, the first railway in Korea, in 1899 and the Hansŏng-Pusan Railroad, which later would link Manchuria and Japan, in 1904. Thus, just after the occupation, the Japanese Government General of Korea began constructing mobility infrastructures across the country, appropriating over 20% of its total budget per year for the work in its earliest period.¹⁴ Patterning the railways built previously, the main-line railways centered around Keijō had been laid throughout the 1910s and the 1920s, linking the four directions of the Korean Peninsula.¹⁵ At the same time, new roads were built for maximizing the effectiveness of the rail system to further connect transportation hubs where railroad stations were built and the nearby towns that lacked railroad connections,¹⁶ as well as ports established mainly to connect the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese mainland, and Manchuria.¹⁷

Alongside the expansion of railway lines as the centre of the colonial mobility system, the construction of new road infrastructure for automobiles in colonial Korea nearly resulted in imperializing the everyday movements of the populace.¹⁸ For example, by promulgating the amendment of "The Regulations for the Control of Roads" in 1921, the Japanese Government General of Korea legislated the rule of left-hand orientation both for vehicles and pedestrians by reversing the previous rule of right-hand orientation, which accorded with the rule on the Japanese mainland.¹⁹ Additionally, in response to the increasing number of automobiles and traffic accidents and crowdedness of roads, the division of sidewalks and

roadways came into existence first in the 1920s. That is, through constructing the mobility infrastructures across the country and, also, re-arranging or disciplining the movements in everyday life, the colonial mobility system was gradually established on the Korean Peninsula.

Meanwhile, while retrieving the managerial rights of the Korean railways from the South Manchuria Railway Company (Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha)—a Japanese state-run cooperation based on the northeast regions of China—in 1925, the Japanese Government General of Korea enacted a series of statutes governing the transportation industry, including “An Act of the Automobile Business in Korea (Chōsen Jidōsha Kotsū Jigyōrei 朝鮮自動車交通事業令)” (1933), which was summarized in the transfer of the managerial rights of automobile transportation business to the railway bureau. Thereby, Japanese imperialism came to establish its unitary mobility system centred on railways in the Korean Peninsula, which was controlled first and foremost by the colonial government.²⁰

Thus, it is noteworthy that “The 30th Anniversary Exposition of Administrative Policy (Shisei 30 Shūnen Kinen Hakurankai 市政 30 周年記念博覽會)” (1939), the largest event for celebrating the achievements of the Japanese colonial rule for 30 years, was opened on the premises of Ch’ōngnyangni Station, just a year after the “12-Years Plan of the Chosŏn Railway (Chōsen Tetsudō 12-nen Keikaku 朝鮮鐵道12年計畫)” (1927–1938), the biggest national railway construction plan in the colonial era, was terminated. While it propagated the notion of advanced modernization and rationalization of Korean society, in terms of a significant mobility system born out of Japanese colonialism, the event would be considered a demonstration of the stabilization of colonial rule, which rendered all movement in the colonised territories to be “predictable” and “repetitive.” In this sense, the creation of the Japanese imperial colonial mobility system can be viewed as enabling colonial government to disseminate its administrative power to every corner of the country.²¹ From this viewpoint, its governmentality can be called imperialistic “governmobility,” whereby Japan perpetually sought to expand its territory and complete its colonization by supervising the movements via developed mobilities.

Meanwhile, Japanese imperialists consistently proclaimed the construction of mobility infrastructures aimed at the development of industry and the improvement of the quality of living in Chosŏn.²² Although they were essentially used for military purposes (e.g., the expansion of Japanese territory to the other Asian regions, including China), 80% of railways in colonial Korea were constructed initially for distribution abroad, that is, for the sake of logistics and the transport of goods between Japan, Korea, and Manchuria.²³ In this respect, the railways were used mainly to take foodstuffs and natural resources out of

Korea to Japan, thereby subjugating the Korean economy to the Japanese circular capitalistic economy.²⁴ And so, for the Japanese, the development of industry and the improvement of living in Korea were not different from the capitalization of its society.

Specifically, large-scale businesses such as those charged with the construction of railways or new roads could not be conducted without developing the rationalization of society in terms of its capitalization. To this end, the establishment of a capitalistic financial system enabled the raising of large-scale construction costs and promoted the generalization of private ownership of land, thereby allowing land to be commercialized and expropriated—an action the Japanese Government General of Korea reinforced by executing the “land survey project” in the 1910s.²⁵

In addition, as one of the important effects of construction of a mobility system, the commodities produced in factories at a regional distance gradually displaced handiworks—which were made mainly in the local communities—from the local markets, relegating the Korean people, particularly tenant farmers (and proletariats),²⁶ to become wage laborers working on the railway or on new road construction sites.²⁷ Collectively, these changes intimate that through this colonial mobilities and capitalism, Japanese imperialism made an attempt to rationalize its colonial rule and promote it as collective progress.²⁸

As a result, the establishment of a colonial mobility system forced people to acclimate to changed circumstances dominated by “the social” in Maffesoli’s sense, that is, the political order as a rational association of individuals. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the so-called movement of the rationalization of living in the 1930s eventually reinforced the generalization of the capitalistic lifestyle by demanding thinking and practicing from the perspective of economic rationality, that is, the use of reason for maximizing individual interests.²⁹ Therefore, it can be asserted that through the construction of its mobility system, the colonial government endeavored to create a society regulated by “the social” via those people seeking individual interests, thereby embodying capitalistic rationality and colonial governmobility. In this sense, Japanese imperialists celebrated the foundation of colonial rule centered on governmobility, by opening the “The 30th Anniversary Exposition of Administrative Policy” in 1939.

However, colonial rule ultimately failed to completely achieve totalitarian and perpetual rule over Korean society. Because it exercised its dominion mostly via mobility technologies and infrastructures, its inherent variable usability could be considered one of the reasons of such a failure. For instance, the modern mobility system sometimes was used even by Korean activists who wanted to expand their network across the country for the independence movement. Representatively, the March 1st Independence Movement (1919) was to be spread via the railway

lines,³⁰ and the countrywide network of independence movements that occurred in the 1920s was fashioned along the country's expansive railway network.³¹

Furthermore, for the administration of independence activities in foreign countries, such as in China and the Soviet Union, the system was also a useful means of exchanging information with the other activists on the Korean Peninsula and avoiding arrest by the Japanese police.³² Drawing on Peter Adey's words that "mobility is not essentially resistance or domination; it is potentially both or either,"³³ mobility technologies or infrastructures could be used for establishing colonial rule or for opening its fissures, or for both.³⁴

Historically, the colonial government considered its rule was nearly complete in the late 1930s; correspondingly, the aforementioned usability of mobilities for resistance was inevitably reduced and, even, disappeared due to the fortified terrorization for the purpose of totalitarian-fascist rule. In this historical-political context, significantly, Kim's short story, "To Chŏllyŏng," presented an imagined, alternative usability of mobility technology against the allegedly stabilized colonial rule in the late colonial era, thereby describing a mobile space of "sociality" in Maffesoli's sense, which was created inside the train, a central component of the colonial mobility system, as per the communal ethic. Therefore, created by its variable usability, such an alternative space could be considered as opening a fissure within Japanese mobile imperialism, which sought to control and subjugate the colonized territories and their people via colonial governmobility.

Mighty Mobility Technology and Dehumanised People

Published in the year when the construction of colonial mobility system was near completion, "To Chŏllyŏng" narrates a story about a nameless narrator on his way back to Sŏngch'ŏn from Yangdŏk, Korea, who happens to meet a migrant family, led by its elderly patriarch, moving to Chŏllyŏng (Tieling 鐵嶺) in Manchuria, China. Notably, they meet twice but in different ways; when they first meet on the road, they do not converse; on the contrary, when they meet again inside the train to Manchuria, they exchange food and feelings, having a conversation. Centering on their encounters, this short story is constructed in three scenes; first, a waiting room wherein people wait temporarily for the train; second, on the road where the narrator, traveling by truck, encounters the migrant family accidentally; third, inside the train where an interaction and separation between the narrator and the family occur.

Prior to the first scene of the waiting room, this work briefly explains that the narrator has to travel to the Yangdŏk station because he overslept and missed the bus to Sŏngch'ŏn on this particular morning, so he must travel by train; as



Map 1 A migrant family's journey from Yangdŏk to Sŏngch'ŏn to Chŏllyŏng

Source: Based on "Map of the railway network of Manchukuo," https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manchukuo_Railmap_en.png

part of the exposition, the author describes the landscape outside the station in seemingly unnecessary detail. However, this introduction is indispensable to the rest of the short story because it sets up the temporal and spatial conditions of "To Chŏllyŏng," or, more precisely, the historical and political contexts of the social world in which this work is contextualized, which must be examined for an analysis and deeper understanding of the work.

The first paragraph of this short story is replete with words denoting temporality; for example, the author notes that:

... because I played till late at night and returned to the inn about 2 AM, I couldn't meet the departure time of the bus to Sŏngch'ŏn while sleeping. When I got up, rubbing my eyes, and looked at the clock, it was about 8 AM; thus, inevitably, I was about to prepare to return to Sŏngch'ŏn by taking a train, which would depart from the Yangdŏk station at 1:30 PM.³⁵

In this context, the clock evidently rules all the movements of people, functioning as a yardstick that measures and regulates them, a regulator they should follow and to which they must acclimate. Not to be forgotten is that, in colonial Korea, the clock time was recalibrated to Tokyo Standard Time, which replaced Korean Standard Time³⁶ and thus became the dominant temporality that measured the colonized people's travels. Therefore, the world of "To Chŏllyŏng" fundamentally is built not only on the modern temporality of the clock, but also on the colonial reorganization of time, which can be framed as "temporal standardization."³⁷

After presenting its temporal condition, i.e., the colonial modern temporality, this work describes the mobile landscape outside the station as featuring trucks running on new roads, and the reader is told that from this rural area, cut timbers are transported across the country and wooden pillars are delivered to Manchuria. Additionally, the narrator points out that the bus stop and garage were newly constructed by being cut out of the mountain slope, thus distinctly destroying the natural scenery. In this sense, “To Chŏllyŏng” represents the manipulating, colonial world, composed of new roads, long-distance logistics networks, and mobility infrastructures, which mobilize systems across the country and abroad, including Manchuria. It is a controlled context wherein movements are regulated by the Japanese Standard Time and the colonial mobility network.

Upon introducing the temporal and spatial conditions, the narrator paints the awkward picture of the train station waiting room. Specifically, after admiring the developed mobilities outside, the narrator feels awkward when entering the waiting room full of strangers who are waiting for the train. In the mobile space, dominated by “a railway timetable” and “a price list,” the travelers, including the narrator and his relatives, do not say anything, but stand wordlessly and inanimately. On the other hand, the mobility technologies such as the automobile and steam train make loud noises, moving animatedly, as if boasting of their power; for instance, an automobile carrying people arrives at the station with a “cough,” and a train whistles, making a steaming, chugging sound. As such, this sharp contrast of people and mobility technologies keenly reveals that, in the social world, the master is the latter, not the former.

In particular, the gigantic structure of the train, composed of an engine locomotive at the head, followed by 15 or 16 wagons carrying timbers, and one carriage at its end, robustly brings the inanimate state-of-being of the people into relief. In this work, people are most of all presented as beings equivalent or inferior to objects; more precisely, as dehumanized beings, they are just conveyed as cargo, by a vibrant, animated mobility technology, not by themselves. At the same time, as shown especially in the lifeless human interaction that takes place in the waiting area, even the narrator’s relatives—who come to see him off at the station—keep looking elsewhere with expressionless faces; nobody is motivated to have a conversation or interact with others. In addition, the disharmonious and rather random assemblage of characters—a clerk, a Korean geisha, a prostitute, a supposed testifier, and the like—underscores a lack of cohesion and intimates their alienation: devoid of commonality, they tacitly accept their dehumanized status by saying or doing nothing, waiting to be moved and conveyed towards their destinations by the mighty mobility technology.

Consequently, this scene of a waiting room shows the temporal and spatial conditions of a social world where objectified, dehumanized people exist inanimately and individually, a world constructed by the colonial, modern temporality of the reset clock and the spatiality of an imposed mobility network that Japanese imperialism has developed and constructed.

Colonial Mobility's Rationality

After boarding the train and taking a seat, the narrator spies an approaching migrant family composed of an old man, his daughter-in-law, and her children. Looking at their faces, the narrator recollects that while coming to Yangdök, he met the family on the road the previous day. In his encountering the family twice; once while he is in the automobile and for a second time on the train, there exists here a repetition and difference, because although the automobile and the train are the essential components of the colonial mobility system, two such encounters show the possibility of configuration of different social worlds due to the mutability of use of these mobility technologies.

The scene of "on the road" wherein the driver and the narrator happen to meet the family for the first time unfolds as the narrator is being driven to the train station and is signaled by the old man, leader of the migrant family, who futilely tries to hitchhike. One of the apparent reasons for not picking them up might be the fact that inside the automobile, there are not enough seats to accommodate four members of the family. However, if he truly wanted to help them, the driver could allow them to ride in the luggage space of the truck. But the driver refuses, despite the narrator's amenability and gives an account of the real reason for passing them over, justifying this behavior, as follows:

The reason for not putting them in my automobile is not the fear of the police substation. Even if I am accused of putting them in my automobile, it is no matter, because I can pay a fine of three KRW. But I once had an old man ride in my automobile and, just because of this, I had a big problem.

He continues, telling me that once, the driver made an old man ride on top of his automobile as the old man was pestering him inside the cab; the old man attempted to hop off the automobile before it stopped, slipped from it and rolled onto the road and wounded himself; as a result, the driver paid for the old man's treatment and was called to the police substation several times, so after that, he decided not to help others.³⁸

In the quotation above, based on his experience, the driver defends his unhelpful behavior, arguing that the costs of his good will might be too steep, rationalizing his position completely. The first thing to point out here is that his

justification is predicated upon such rationality as the calculation of behavior according to individual interests. In addition, as shown by the driver asking the narrator for consent, such rationality is demanded not on the personal but rather on a universal level. At the same time, such rationality is acceptable only for the driver of the automobile, not the narrator who, contrary to the driver, feels sympathy for the family. In this scene, therefore, it is important that what is dominant on the road is such a mobilized rationality that the narrator and the family members have to follow the decision and disposal of the driver of the vehicle, who reflects the automobile's rationality.

Relatedly, Urry's characterization of the automobile as "Weber's 'iron cage' of modernity, motorized, moving and privatized,"³⁹ would be helpful to examine the automobile's rationality. Drawing on his argument, drivers are excused from face-to-face interactions with others inhabiting the road and may even consider pedestrians as obstacles.⁴⁰ Thus, they lose the ability to perceive strangers beyond the car, which precludes interaction on a human level.⁴¹ In short, the automobile conditions drivers not to interact with others on the road, discounting them as obstacles, namely, dehumanized beings. It can be deduced, thus, that the automobile's rationality consists of the priority of individual interests and the dominance of mighty mobility. From this view, the space on the road in Kim's short story represents the social world in which objectified, dehumanized people exist inanimately and individually against the dominant power of mighty mobility technology.

Considering its historical context, the mobile space that the automobile's rationality dominates can also be characterised as the society of "the social," which is regulated by colonial governmobility. In other words, given the driver's real reason for passing the travelling family over as "the driver paid for the old man's treatment and was called to the police substation several times," would not be a behavior expected of him in the past, "the social" society, in fact, refers to the settlement of a colonial mobility system that was contemporaneous with the promotion of social relations centering on pecuniary interests, extrinsic discipline, and the re-organization of everyday movements by the police and the law. In this respect, the automobile's rationality, composed of the priority of individual interests and the dominance of mighty mobility, is synonymous with colonial mobility's rationality.

From this viewpoint, contrary to the driver, who is suited to the colonial society, the narrator and the migrant family can be considered the ones who, although compelled to follow colonial mobility's rationality, feel awkwardness or inanimation in the constructed social world. In other words, they are the beings obeying such rationality to use the mobilities and travel somewhere but, simultaneously,

experiencing it unwillingly. Thus, even if the colonial government oversees the whole country by using a developed mobility system, there exists the possibility of an alternative existence in such awkward or inanimate attitudes.

Shared Feeling and Communal Ethic

Inside the train, recollecting his encounter with the migrant family on the road the day before, the narrator happens to sit across from them, facing them in a narrow space. In this scene, the first thing that stands out is the description of the family members from the viewpoint of the narrator. For example, although he is barely over 50, the patriarch appears as an old man: he has a scarred face, wears excessively old hemp cloth garments and a straw hat, and is gaunt, looking much older. Just over 20, his young daughter-in-law, a widow, has an infant and a bony baby of one or two years who is suckling from her. In this scene, their shabby clothes and haggard appearances demonstrate their impoverishment and clarify they are travelling to Chölyŏng in Manchuria, China, for a better life. For them, Manchuria seems the only remaining land of hope to save them from poverty.

Manchuria itself carries symbolic meaning in the story. To be noticed first is the semantic change of Manchuria in colonial Korea. Particularly, after the Mukden Incident in 1931, Japanese imperialism enacted policy to motivate the Korean people to colonize the region. By plundering the lands in Manchuria and simultaneously establishing Senman Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha (鮮滿拓殖株式會社), a company charged with executing the planned movement to Manchuria, in 1936, the program was promoted on a large-scale, and they had encroached upon Manchuria by 1937.⁴² Meanwhile, millions of Korean people had moved to Manchuria expecting the propagated support of the colonial government, including travel expenses, farmland, and housing, but, just after arriving there, came to realize the promised resources were baseless propaganda promoting emigration. After 1938, when the fantasy of developing Manchuria began eroding, the colonial government often forced people to move there by defrauding them or coercing them with threats or violence.⁴³ Consequently, while touted as a land of abundance and hope at first, Manchuria came to be re-signified as the last and only option for escaping poverty, irrespective of its actuality.

Given this semantic shift in the referent of Manchuria, it is not difficult to discern the reason the narrator gave the food given by his friends to the family or why the narrator expressed sympathy for the emigrants who were moving to Manchuria. The reason that they had to move to Manchuria, apparently, is their obvious poverty, but more fundamental would be their aspiration to escape from their thing-like, dehumanized state-of-being in Korean society. The sympathy the

narrator feels for the family, therefore, originates from the narrator's empathy with those who, although desperate, choose to move to Manchuria, demonstrating their shared understanding that it would not be an ideal alternative to such a dehumanized life in colonial Korea.

At the same time, even more important in this scene is not the reason itself but the fact that, inside the train, they exchange food and, as a result, begin to share feelings by having a talk. Looking closely at the scene of exchanging foods, we can analyze the short conversation about the family's expected life in Manchuria, which is presented as follows:

At that time, the young widow stands up quietly without drinking a sip of cider. She stumbles among several people sitting about, goes towards her baggage, takes a biscuit from it, and returns with it. Then, after sitting still, she tears one side of the bag of biscuits and offers them to her father-in-law, silently, with the intention of giving me the biscuits which her children's aunt had bought for them. So, I felt embarrassed but, at the time, felt tears owing to her kind heart and actions.⁴⁴

After receiving the biscuits from the old man, the narrator leaves a bag of apples for the family, telling the old man that he is getting off at the next station, Sinsŏngch'ŏn, to return to his home in Sŏngch'ŏn, Korea. Thereupon, a surprised and sad expression passes over the faces of the old man and his daughter-in-law. Then, the old man says to the narrator,

"Thank you for giving us the apples, again."

He appreciates me. The train comes into the station. Once again, a handful of biscuits are given to me while I briefly look out the window. Questioningly, I gaze at the old man:

"Because of being in sorrow."

When he says so, in his mouth is laughter, but in his eyes are tears. After putting the biscuits into my suit pocket, I bowed to him, saying,

"Thank you for them."⁴⁵

In the above quotations, by repeatedly exchanging food such as cider, apples, and biscuits, the family and the narrator come to share the same feeling, sorrowfulness, thereby creating "the realm of identification." Apparently, this affective event would be an expression of their common understanding of the difficulty of survival and its pursuant experience of solidarity. On the other hand, more noteworthy is that such an understanding and experience are conditioned fundamentally by the material commonality of being "inside the train" and, despite their different destinations, they share an ontological commonality of being "on the move." In this respect, the affective event can be seen as a configuration wrought by their practice of "being mobile," which, quoting Peter Adey's words, seem

“to unlock barriers between bodies,” enable “the passing on of ideas, emotions and fellow sentiments so that a feeling can itself become mobile.”⁴⁶

In addition, by practicing the exchange of food and feelings, they succeed in activating “an affirmative *puissance*,” owing to the sharing of sorrowfulness, to create “the undirected being-together,” namely, “sociality,” which could be considered different from the way of life in Korea and Manchuria, respectively. Given that the foods the narrator gave to the family had been given to him by his friends before he took the train, notably, the semantic reading of such an affective event would be even wider beyond the narrow space inside the train. By recognizing “the ethic” as something that serves as a daily vessel for the collectivity’s feelings as Maffesoli said, thus, such affective an event can be characterized as creating “the communal ethic,” which enables people to adjust to one another and to adapt to the environment.⁴⁷ That is, despite the dominant way of living in Korean society, which is ruled by colonial mobility’s rationality, represented by the “automobile,” the realm of identification, which is reorganized by the communal ethic could be created via train travel.

Accordingly, the train, a form of communal mobility, seems superior to the automobile, i.e., individual mobility, as in their initial phase, railways symbolized a kind of ideal technology that brought people together both temporally and spatially.⁴⁸ However, not to be forgotten is that the train (especially) and automobile both are the essential components of the colonial mobility system. From this viewpoint, the practice of “being mobile-together” and, subsequently, the creation of the communal ethic in fact should be recognized as by-products of the colonial mobility system. As such, the dominant way of living in colonial Korea simultaneously conditions the alternative way of “being mobile-together,” which then enables the communal ethic to be created. Ironically, these processes emanate from Japanese governmobility in that they all are conditioned ontologically and technologically by its mechanisms.⁴⁹

To sum up, while the colonial mobility system functions as a power construct managing the colonized territories and people, it can effect “an affirmative *puissance*” for creating an oppositional opportunity against the colonial, rational, and individual, way of living, thereby working against its initial intention, ostensibly, the completion or stabilization of Japanese colonialism.⁵⁰ Therefore, what is essential in this work is the presence of “an affirmative *puissance*” which, by lurking within the colonial mobility system itself, can undermine Japanese mobile imperialism from within. Ironically, just by the colonized people sharing feelings and exchanging food in its center, “an affirmative *puissance*” can be activated and thus weaken the allegedly complete domination of Japanese imperialism and cause colonial governmobility to malfunction.

Conclusion: Opening the Fissure of Imperialism

Written by the time Japanese mobile imperialism was about to complete the establishment of its colonial mobility system in Korea, Kim's short story, "To Chŏllyŏng," describes the social microcosms of a station waiting room, the open road, and the inside of a train, all of which, in principle, are governed by colonial mobility's rationality, and thereby represent the colonized people, who are on the move somewhere seeking a better life. Meanwhile, inside the train, it also creates an alternative way of living, that is, "being mobile-together," which is conditioned by the communal ethic, suggesting that Manchuria would not be the proper option as an escape from their dehumanised existence in colonial Korea. Notably, such creation could activate "an affirmative *puissance*," which might open a fissure in Japanese mobile imperialism from within, by using mobility technology in an unintended, ungoverned way.

About the work's time of publication in 1938, about 30 years after the Japanese occupation of Korea, Japanese Imperialism was sure of the stabilization of its rule in colonial Korea to the extent of preparing its next war, the Pacific War, in 1941. To this end, it outlawed the public activities of the labor and student organizations or groups that had been lawful up to then, by promulgating a variety of policies of regulation and mobilization after 1937—the year when the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out—including "National Mobilization" as a fundamental law for the mobilization of human and material resources for military purposes; thereby, at that time, the independent movements in colonial Korea were carried out by small-scale, illegal organizations or groups, i.e., "secret organizations," but their conditions were generally oppressed and depressed.⁵¹ In addition, as reflected in the emigrant family in Kim's short story, the colonised populace's living condition became poorer, as a consequence of the mobilisation of such resources for the Imperialist wars. This situation was supposedly considered a success of the Japanese colonial rule by the imperialists.

Therefore, Kim's short story can be viewed as a desperate attempt to excavate and present an alternative to the colonial way of living, while simultaneously suggesting to colonial society that there might not be any feasibility for a better life for the colonized people. In other words, it is significant that at a time when there seemed to be no way of escaping colonial rule, an emancipatory imagination emerged, enabling a possible escape from the circle of colonial governmobility to be created by activating "an affirmative *puissance*"—even though it could not be realized materially. What Walter Benjamin called "a *weak* Messianic power"⁵² might be at work in activating "an affirmative *puissance*," which would wordlessly dwell among dehumanized, inanimate people, waiting for its materialization in the future.

Notes

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15. Chŏng Chaejŏng, *Ilche ch'imnyak kwa Han'guk ch'ŏldo (1892~1945)* (일제침략과 한국철도, 1892~1945) (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 1999), 147.
16. Cho Pyŏngno, "Ilche singminji sigi ūi toro kyot'ong e taehan yŏn'gu (I)," *Han'guk minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 59 (2009): 9.
17. Just after acquiring administrative authority over Korea, the Japanese Government General of Korea founded Chŏsen Yŏsen Kabushiki Kaisha (朝鮮優先株式會社), a company which was given an exclusive managerial right of the coastal routes in the Korean Peninsula, to regulate them unitarily for its economic and military purposes (Ha Jiyoung, "1910 nyōndae Chosŏn usŏn chusik hoesa ūi yŏnan hangno Kyŏngyŏng kwa chiyŏk," *Yŏksa wa kyŏnggye* 109 (2018), 204–206).
18. In this regard, by a curious coincidence, automobiles were imported into Korea from Japan for the first time in 1911, just after the Japanese occupation, and in principle were categorized as military materials by the colonial government. Their total number peaked at 10,000 in about 1940 (Son Jŏngmok, *Ilche kangjŏmgi tosi sahoesang yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Iljisa 1996), 335–340).

19. After the liberation of Korea from Japanese occupation in 1945, the rule of the left was switched to the right (Ibid., 368–369).
20. Cho Pyŏngno, Cho Sŏngun, and Sŏng Chuhyŏn, “Ilche singminji sigi ūi toro kyot’ong e taehan yŏn’gu (II),” *Han’guk minjok undongsa yŏn’gu* 61 (2009): 271–274.
21. Yun Sangwŏn, *Tong asia ūi chŏnjaeng kwa ch’ŏldo* (Seoul: Sŏnin 2017), 125.
22. Chŏng, *Ilche ch’imnyak*, 1999, 151.
23. Chŏng, *Ilche ch’imnyak*, 1999, 635–642.
24. Chŏng, *Ilche ch’imnyak*, 1999, 151–166.
25. T’aeŏk Kwŏn, *Ilche ūi Han’guk singminji-hwa wa munmyŏng-hwa (1904–1919)* (Seoul: Sŏul taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 2014), 86–87.
26. Kye hyŏng Lee and Pyŏngmu Chŏn, *Sutcharo pon singminji Chosŏn* (Seoul: Yŏksa konggan, 2014), 200–201.
27. From the late 1920s, the Japanese Government General of Korea carried out the civil engineering project as a kind of policy of the relief of the poor, a countermeasure against unemployment (T’aeu Ko, “Chosŏn ch’ongdokpu t’omok haengjŏng kwa t’omok kwallyo ūi ‘Chosŏn kaebal’ insik”: 292–293).
28. The rationalization and justification of colonial rule through the construction of colonial mobility were not specific solely to Japanese imperialism. For example, the railway in British India served both as the means of British colonial rule and its justification, based on the rhetoric of development like education, institutionalizing capitalist production and wage labor through the expansion of markets and the circular flow of good, as well as producing “a new collective identity,” the colonized India, through uniting different religions and castes in the railway space. As a symbol of modernity, the railway was comprehended in terms of an object that secured the colonial authority and enactment of social change (Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India’s Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 4–15).
29. Cheuk Kong and Kŭnsik Chŏng, *Singminji ūi ilssang, chibae wa kyunyŏl* (Seoul: Munhwagwahaksa, 2006), 28–34.
30. Chaejŏng Chŏng, *Ch’ŏldo wa kŭndae Sŏul* (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 2018), 532–535.
31. Sangwŏn Yun, *Tong asia ūi chŏnjaeng kwa ch’ŏldo*, 139–144.
32. Ibid., 144–148.
33. Peter Adey, *Mobilities* (2nd) (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 152.
34. Similarly, in terms of politically variable usability of “mobility,” David Atkinson handled the Italian fascist colonialism in the half of the 20th century specifically, a little differently by focusing on a series of military engagement. David Atkinson discussed the Italian seizure of Cyrenaica and the Sanussi-Bedouin’s anti-colonial resistance from 1923 to 1932, questioning mobility and movement. According to his arguments, the Italians had to establish a series of bases for highly mobile, mechanized patrols that criss-crossed the country to respond the Sanussi-Bedouin groups’ nomadic strategies, i.e. their guerrilla tactics based upon unregulated mobility, finally imprisoning them into the concentration camp (David Atkinson, “Nomadic Strategies and Colonial Government”. In *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance*. Ed. by Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo and Ronan Paddison (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)).
35. Kim Namch’ŏn, “To Chŏllyŏng,” in *Sonyŏnhaeng* (Keijō: Hagiyesa 1939), 131.
36. Kyŏngsu Pak, “Kŭndae ch’ŏldo rŭl t’onghae pon ‘singminji Chosŏn’ mandŭlgi,” *Ilbonŏ munhak* 53 (2012.6): 261–263.
37. In her book, *Tracks of Change: Railways and Everyday Life in Colonial India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Ritika Prasad elucidated the processes that the colonized people in British India became modern and rational through the lens of temporal standardization which presumed colonial difference, articulated “binaries of colonial versus metropolitan time-sense.” (135–147).

38. Kim, "To Chölllyŏng," 140.
39. Urry, *Mobilities*, 120.
40. *Ibid.*, 123.
41. *Ibid.*, 129.
42. Wönsuk Yu, "1930 nyöndaŏ ilche üi Chosönin Manju imin chöngch'aek yön'gu," *Pudae sahak* 19 (1995): 632–644.
43. Chubaek Sin, "Hanin üi manju iju yangsang kwa tongbuk asia — 'nongöp imin'üi sönggyök chönhwan üi chungsim üro," *Yöksa hakpo* 213 (2012): 248–253.
44. Kim, "To Chölllyŏng," 146.
45. Kim, "To Chölllyŏng," 148.
46. Adey, *Mobilities*, 207.
47. Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes*, 20.
48. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey—The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2014), 70.
49. Jinyoung Lee, "Singminji mobillit'i sisüt'em kwa sai konggan üi saengmyöng chöngch'i," *Kubo hakhoe* (구보학회) 23 (2019.12): 103–104.
50. In his work on Nazi evacuation's lexicon, concept, and practice, Peter Adey presented the two versions of mobility, broadly as follows: "a pathway of protection from the Allied air raids and fire bombings," albeit forbidden to Jews, and "a roadway of deportation for imprisonment, forced labor, or mass killing to purify and cleanse the homeland," which were performed "by using the same infrastructure" (Peter Adey, "Evacuated to Death: The Lexicon, Concept, and Practice of Mobility in the Nazi Deportation and Killing Machine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110, no. 3 (2020): 822). Thus, as an infrastructure for protection and deportation, the train is deemed "the perfect symbol for the contradictions of evacuation within the Nazi concept" (819). In this regards, the train in Kim's short story can be similarly considered the symbol for the contradictions of mobility within the Japanese imperialism, but that is differently composed of a base of colonial rule and its possible fissure.
51. Ūnjin Pyön, *Ilchamal hang-Il pimil kyölsa undong yön'gu* (Seoul: Sönin, 2018), 45–47.
52. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 254.

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From Immobility to Mobility: The Korean DMZ as a Heterotopia¹

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Abstract

While the current developments in the peace processes allow us to imagine the Korean Demilitarized Zone will acquire more thriving mobilities in the future, this article seeks to characterize this unique space as an absolutely different place; a “heterotopia” as suggested by Michel Foucault. In the course of the discussion, which focuses on (non)human (im)mobilities within the framework of the “new mobilities paradigm,” some main characteristics of the DMZ as a heterotopia are identified. Firstly, as its descriptively most prominent characteristic, the DMZ is considered a borderland between two fiercely antagonistic power politics, a borderland that comes to be realized as fluid and irremovable. Secondly, considering criticisms of this notion of heterotopia to be negligent of real power-knowledge relations, the article suggests that the DMZ as an inaccessible and immobile space controls the mobilities of all other spaces. Lastly, the article proposes that the DMZ be developed into a heterotopic space that mirrors and critically reflects the other prevailing spaces. These characteristics of the heterotopic DMZ, i.e., a fluid and irremovable borderland, an inaccessible and immobile space in power-knowledge relations, and a critically reflecting space, are put under scrutiny with the metaphors of the river, the airport, and the mirror, respectively.

Keywords: Demilitarized Zone, Mobilities, Heterotopia, the New Mobilities Paradigm, Michel Foucault

Introduction

The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) cutting the Korean Peninsula's waist is a space that symbolizes Korea's division in the aftermath of the Cold War in the post-World War II era, representing one of the most fortified areas in the world with severely hindered mobilities.³ Meanwhile, recent political and diplomatic developments around the Korean Peninsula under the influence of the Inter-Korean summits and North Korea–United States summits in 2018 and 2019 have made it possible to vividly re-imagine the DMZ as a representation of peace and reunification of two Koreas.

“In the division system, in which one side's legitimacy is predicated on the negation of the other”⁴ in contemporary Korean history, the DMZ has been mostly represented as a fortification against each side's anticipated military provocations. It is reminiscent of the fact that the tragic Korean War has not officially ended but merely been interrupted. Meanwhile, such dystopian representations in grey tones are partly changing to utopian ones onto which all kinds of dreams are projected.⁵ What is dreamt of rests upon who is dreaming: developmentalists are dreaming of a profitable space, whereas pacifists or environmentalists a peace park or a bio-sanctuary.⁶ They visualize their future utopia based on mobilities regained under the general notion of “the peaceful use” of the DMZ area.⁷ Reflecting on these utopian imaginations, I would like to delve into the overall potential of re-imagining the DMZ as a heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense.

Now, some theoretical and methodological issues are to be mentioned. First of all, by considering the DMZ as a heterotopic space within the theoretical framework of the “new mobilities paradigm,”⁸ I will observe this unique space through the so-called “mobilities lens.” In this framework, the concept of mobilities is not confined to the mere physical movement but consists of movement, representation, and practice.⁹ As John Urry claims that mobilities require immobile and infrastructural moorings,¹⁰ this concept of mobilities encompasses “the constitution of a system in which some movements are made possible, some movements made political, and immobilities are rendered unproblematic—even in the absence of actual movement.”¹¹ Further, following many mobilities scholars who claim that “mobilities are contingently relational,” and also that “faster mobilities in the dynamic sense are only faster in relation to slower forms of mobility,”¹² the focus is laid on the “politics of mobility” or “relational politics of (im)mobilities,” as Tim Cresswell or Peter Adey put it respectively,¹³ evidenced by, for instance, airports which consist of the “continual ambivalence between mobilities and relative immobilities.”¹⁴

The DMZ is an excellent example of such an understanding of the concept of mobilities. This *terra nullius* is what “the politics of obduracy, fixity, and friction”¹⁵

have been paradoxically enough transforming into a heterotopic space with fluid and fluctuated (im)mobilities of sundry human and non-human agencies “across a swarm of various and variegated vibrant materialities.”¹⁶ In this space, “what is ruptured and catalyzed by frictions enacted through power geometry, austerity and disruption”¹⁷ as a part of the relational politics of (im)mobilities from the Cold War era is, nevertheless, not completely sterile and stagnant but “alive with the potential of being other than this.”¹⁸ In this regard, I follow the argument that “spaces like the Korean DMZ should be considered normative rather than exceptional to the contemporary planetary predicament.”¹⁹

Dealing with the DMZ within the framework of the new mobilities paradigm, I adopt the notion of heterotopia since it seems to have broad implications for mobilities. First of all, even though the notion of mobilities refers not only to a spatial displacement but to a range of changes and fluidity in a broader sense, the notion of the place or space has essential significance in mobility studies, insofar as the mobilities in their primary meaning are dynamic configurations in a spatial coordinate. In this sense, “the new mobilities paradigm grew out of and extended emerging theorizations of space” and the so-called “mobilities turn” is often claimed to be furthering “the spatial turn.”²⁰ In this respect, Marc Augé’s concept of “non-place” has been “a common point of reference for academics discussing spaces of travel, consumption and exchange in the contemporary world,”²¹ because it could disclose descriptively the marked complications of the “placeness” and the “placelessness” in highly mobile societies. However, as Peter Merriman pointed out, this concept is related to “a rather partial account of these sites” insofar as Augé “overstates the novelty of contemporary experiences of these spaces” and “fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks bound up with the production of non-places/places.”²² More crucially, this concept is meant to address the descriptive features than the normative potential of this kind of placeless place to the extent that alternatively, the concept of heterotopia seems to bear, at least in this respect, more implications for mobility studies to reconceptualize the place and space in the highly mobile societies. This normative critical reflection functions as the heterotopia’s “feedback capacity in terms of multiple, ‘mirroring’ codes” that “mirrored and inverted their host societies”²³ and will be examined below.

Engaging in both descriptive and normative reflection on this unique space, I will adopt a specific metaphorical approach, which I assume is not altogether unjustified, since metaphors are regularly employed “to theorize any social or spatial process,” giving rise to defining the boundary of and shaping that theory itself. By “an examination of the metaphors particular theories use,” the preoccupations on which those theories were built can eventually, by reverse engineering, if you will,

be revealed.²⁴ In mobilities studies, “appropriate metaphors” are mobilized as useful tools for developing “a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility, and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order”²⁵ to the extent that “metaphors of flow, fluidity, liquidity and the nomad have particularly gained momentum.”²⁶ In the same vein, while with different nuance, I suggest the metaphors of river, airport, and mirror to portray the DMZ as a fluid, singular and irremovable borderland, a space in power-knowledge relations, and a reflective and critical space, respectively.

At first glance, these metaphors seem to be arbitrarily selected and unrelated to each other. On the other hand, they are selected due to their intuitiveness to represent the DMZ’s main features and their productivity to locate these representations in a broader context. Therefore, their mutual relations derive from the relations between these features of the DMZ. First of all, these characteristics of the DMZ share heterotopic features with their distinctive (im)mobilities, as identified and clarified below. Notwithstanding, while both the characterization of the DMZ as a fluid and irremovable borderland and as space in power-knowledge relations are by and large descriptive, its characterization as critically reflecting space is appropriated preferably for normative purposes. Besides, unlike the river or the airport, the mirror per se does not represent a place or space capable of accommodating (non)human mobilities. As a genuine metaphor that moves (*phérō*) from the non-spatial over (*metá*) the spatial dimension, it suits the mirroring function of a heterotopic “place” or “space.” Thus, I attempted, with this metaphor, to give a normative claim that the DMZ ought to be a mirroring and critically reflecting site.

In sum, conceptualizing the DMZ as a heterotopia within the new mobilities paradigm, it is possible to re-imagine it as space critically mirroring the other surrounding and prevalent spaces. This article introduces the diverse (im)mobilities within and around the DMZ as the clue to and the background knowledge for further discussions. Then, after the notion of heterotopia is clarified regarding the six principles as conceived by Michel Foucault, the DMZ is discussed as a heterotopia with ambiguous (im)mobilities, relevant characteristics of the DMZ to our discussion. Then, employing a river metaphor, the DMZ is looked upon as a fluid and irremovable borderland. In the following section, I try to reconceptualize the DMZ as a space in power-knowledge relations through the airport metaphor conceived by Paul Virilio’s artwork on the DMZ and his theory of the city. With the last metaphor of the mirror, I suggest that the DMZ be remodeled as an absolutely different heterotopic space whose crucial function is to be an unoccupied space mirroring and critically reflecting other spaces. In concluding

remarks, I will explain the significance of this discussion for the imagination of the future of the DMZ.

One thing to bear in mind is that this article is not meant to be an empirical study that makes concrete proposals for the “peaceful use” of the DMZ. Nor does it intend to “bridge the gap” between “the space of the philosophers and the space of people who deal with material things,” as Henri Lefebvre puts it.²⁷ A more modest aim of this article, drawing on Foucault’s somewhat speculative reflections on heterotopia and projecting onto this notion the new mobilities paradigm’s problematics, is to serve as a starting point for further discussions about the future of the DMZ.

The Korean DMZ with Diverse (Im)mobilities

In the wake of the Korean War Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953, the DMZ was set up along a border stretching 248 km (155 miles) in length and cutting 2 km (1.24 mile) into both North and South territories along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). It aimed at preventing an accidental armed conflict between the two Koreas. First of all, the DMZ is a hostile “border region” and, consequently, both a “marginal area” where mobilities of humans are markedly restricted and a “conservation area” where an “involuntary park” arises²⁸ fostering the mobilities of non-human wildlife.²⁹

It has been for nearly 70 years a token of military confrontation and divisiveness on the Korean peninsula. Considering the intense “border militarization,”³⁰ the DMZ has become a misnomer since it has never been a demilitarized zone but a de facto heavily militarized zone with about a million soldiers and more than two million landmines within and around it. Though armed forces should not officially occupy the DMZ, both South Korea and North Korea have built many fortifications within the DMZ in Guard Posts (GPs) for armed personnel. In this respect, the DMZ seems a liminal space³¹ between two radically hostile territories or a literal in-between non-place “which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity”³² with severely impeded and controlled mobilities of people, goods, and imaginations.

Yet, the DMZ has never been a region of totally homogeneous and invariable immobility; there are various kinds and degrees of mobilities within and surrounding the DMZ, pertaining, most distinctly, but not exclusively to human mobilities. For instance, human mobilities vary in different areas: the Demilitarized Zone in the proper sense, the Civilian Control Zone, and the Contact Zone, which are altogether commonly called “the DMZ area” or “the DMZ region,” “a South Korean bureaucratic invention.”³³

First, the DMZ in the proper sense in South-Korean territory is the region from the MDL extending up to 2 km on the southern side along the MDL. Contrary to common representations, the MDL itself is not marked by an iron fence but by 1,292 concrete piles planted every 200 meters. The iron fence often represented in the media is, as a matter of fact, installed alongside the southern boundary of the DMZ. Within the DMZ, the mobilities are strictly prohibited, except for the patrol of the DMZ Military Police on the military bases of the Observation Posts (OP), the everyday movement of residents in Taesöngdong maül, the only village within the southern part of the DMZ, and probably a few cases of “extremely dangerous and rare”³⁴ mobility of defection across the DMZ from both sides of the border, proving the unlooked-for porosity of this harsh borderland.

Secondly, the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ) is the southern area adjacent to the DMZ, established as an additional buffer zone to the DMZ within a distance of 5 to 20 km (3.1 to 12.4 mile), from the Southern Limit Line (SLL) of the DMZ. The purpose of limiting and controlling civilians’ entrance into this area is to protect and maintain the security of military facilities and operations near the DMZ. Unlike the DMZ, specific mobilities such as licensed civilian farming activities and security tourism are allowed in this region. In comparison with the only village within the DMZ in the proper sense, several towns within the CCZ have less tense regulations and restrictions, therefore more or less brisk mobilities. More importantly, as conditions on mobilities within and around this region are gradually easing, the Civilian Control Line defining the boundary of CCZ moves northward. Consequently, the CCZ is steadily diminishing in size.

Thirdly, the Contact Zone (CZ) is a region within about 25 km from the CCZ, including parts of 15 cities and some counties. This region is lagging economically and culturally due to the political and military tension that has amounted to more or less limited human mobility. To address this, the South-Korean government has enacted the Special Act on the Supporting of CZ in 2011, seeking ways to help develop these contact areas, improve residents’ quality of life and systematically preserve the natural environment.³⁵

Apart from the non-human mobilities such as “the flight of cranes,” which “are enrolled as main characters in the state’s symbolic resignification of the DMZ as the PLZ [Peace and Life Zone],” precisely “because they literally transcend geopolitical borders,”³⁶ there are differences between the three regions regarding the concentration of human mobilities. The nearer you are to the MDL, the sparser human mobilities are. Last but not least, the boundaries between these regions have been continuously fluctuating and changing over time. For example, the actual area of the DMZ in the proper sense has shrunk because the soldiers of the two Koreas push the northern and southern boundaries of the DMZ toward

the MDL to secure favorable military spots alongside the border. According to an announcement of the Green Korea United, a Korean environmental NGO, in July 2013, the DMZ's total area decreased by 43% from 992 km² in 1953 to 570 km² in 2013.³⁷ These severe violations of the Armistice Agreement can lead to a tremendous military crisis, but both sides implicitly tolerate and let this ominous tendency continue. There are very few sections with a full 4 km breadth, and some areas have dwindled to a range of only 700–900 m.

Therefore, the DMZ area's mobilities are not only diverse but also changing. The tension in and surrounding the DMZ has come somewhat loose due to the recent political and diplomatic developments. By virtue of the Inter-Korean summits in April 2018 and North Korea—United States summits in June 2019 dramatically held for the first time at Panmunjom, the Joint Security Area within the DMZ area, the Korean people's perception of the DMZ has drastically changed. At the Panmunjom Declaration on 27 April 2018, the two Koreas' leaders committed to transforming the DMZ into a peace zone in a genuine sense. In this process, the two Koreas' governments agreed to cooperate on minesweeping projects, excavating remains, and reducing military mobilities within the DMZ. The decision of the two governments in 2018 to dismantle 20 GPs out of the entire 220 GPs within the DMZ as a symbolic act of Inter-Korean reconciliation is the first step to turn the DMZ into a genuinely peaceful and demilitarized space true to the name. Furthermore, in 2019 the South Korean government permitted, albeit to a moderate extent, civil mobilities within the DMZ by officially opening some areas to the civilians as a part of the project known as the DMZ Peace Trail, a hiking trail planned to cover a total length of 550 km along and within the DMZ by 2021.³⁸

The DMZ's mobilities are, by and large, more multi-layered, ambiguous, and fluid than generally conceived of and a far cry from any other spaces around the DMZ in the Korean peninsula. This exceptionality in terms of mobilities makes allowances for the theoretical endeavor to do justice to this stark difference or otherness by introducing the concept of the heterotopia, the other place, within the framework of mobility studies.

Foucault's Notion of Heterotopia

The geographer André Ourednik describes heterotopia as “modern territory's little secret, as foul as Guantanamo, as dark as Fritzel's cellar, as tense as the Korean DMZ, as old as Mount Athos, as well-guarded as the bank vaults of tax havens.”³⁹ Among these diverse, neither consistent nor necessarily positive reasons, why the

Korean DMZ is considered as a heterotopia is because it is “tense,” to the extent that the mobilities of people are overly restricted and controlled.

Heterotopia literally meaning an “other place” (from the Ancient Greek words ἕτερος “other, another, different” and τόπος “place”), is in its primary sense “a medical term referring to a particular tissue that develops at another place than is usual”; it “is not diseased or particularly dangerous but merely placed elsewhere, a dislocation.”⁴⁰ This medical term is borrowed by Michel Foucault, initially on the linguistic and discursive dimension in *The Order of Things* (1966), where the Chinese encyclopedia in the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges is referred to as a heterotopia.

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’ ... [H]eterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.⁴¹

Then, in two radio broadcasts, “Heterotopia” (1966) and “The Utopian Body” (1966), and in a lecture “Of Other Spaces” (1967),⁴² the implication of this term was extended beyond the context of mere language and discourse toward a real space. It was described in contrast to utopias created to confront, forget, or even erase one’s body.

My body: it is the place without recourse to which I am condemned. And actually, I think that it is against this body (as if to erase it) that all these utopias have come into being.⁴³

Here, one’s body is interpreted as a colligated concept of one’s real existence or innate destined conditions in stark contrast to the utopia. In this respect, heterotopia could be construed as a place that exists in a close relationship with one’s body. While utopias are “fundamentally unreal spaces,” heterotopias refer to “a sort of effectively realized utopias.”⁴⁴ That is to say, Foucault’s heterotopia is a real space where the desires projected onto utopian dreams are embodied, and these embodied desires are embedded in real, existing social and physical environments.⁴⁵ However, the way a heterotopia exists is inherently “outside of all places,” representing, contesting, and inverting these places.

There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias

in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable. Since these places are absolutely other than all the emplacements that they reflect, and of which they speak, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.⁴⁶

To be sure, the notion of heterotopia proposed by Foucault refers to relatively small-scale spaces. It is “narrowly focused on peculiar micro-geographies, nearsighted and near-sited, deviant and deviously apolitical.”⁴⁷ However, Foucault’s reference to the history of spaces “from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat”⁴⁸ and Edward Soja’s proposal to expand the concept of heterotopia⁴⁹ may offer a possibility of considering the DMZ as a relatively large-scale space as a heterotopia either. Regarding mobility issues, I pursue this possibility to move beyond “a dominating interest in, if not even fascination with, the micro-sociology and phenomenology of mobile practices” in mobility studies towards addressing the “macro issues” or “how these [mobile] practices are involved in making societies.”⁵⁰ Simultaneously, cautions are required against disregarding “the dynamic co-constitution of mobile subjects and the deep structure of mobility.”⁵¹

As Soja indicates, Foucault’s heterotopology is, beyond question, “frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent.”⁵² Notwithstanding, “this intentional ambiguity” keeps the heterotopia of Foucault “open and inclusive rather than confined and securely bounded by authoritative protocols.”⁵³ In the same vein, “despite, or perhaps because of, the fragmentary and elusive quality of the ideas, the concept of heterotopia continues to generate a host of conflicting interpretations and research across a range of disciplines”⁵⁴ to which this article belongs.

To consider the DMZ a heterotopia, we can rely on the six principles of Foucauldian heterotopia: diversity, plasticity, hybridity, heterochronism, inaccessibility, and relatedness.

1) Diversity

There is probably not a single culture in the world that does not constitute heterotopias. That is a constant in every human group. But heterotopias obviously take on forms that are very varied, and perhaps one would not find one single form of heterotopia that is absolutely universal.⁵⁵

While this passage brings our attention to both the universality of existence and the diversity of forms heterotopias assume, the latter seems to be more relevant to the discussion on the Korean DMZ in this article.

2) Plasticity

In the course of its history, a society can make a heterotopia that exists, and has not ceased to exist, function in a very different way; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.⁵⁶

Here, Foucault points to the diachronic plasticity of each heterotopia, even in a single society. He illustrates this aspect in terms of the cemetery, which has hugely been different from ordinary cultural spaces and whose function has undergone substantial changes over time until the development of modern secularized civilisations in Western culture.

3) Hybridity

The heterotopia has the power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible.⁵⁷

While the second principle identifies heterotopia's diachronic plasticity, the third principle describes synchronic hybridity as heterotopia's inner constitution. In a heterotopia, varied places occupied by all kinds of heterogeneous things overlap. Therefore, a heterotopia that is in itself a borderland holds within its periphery various borderlines and borderlands between several heterogeneous spaces.

4) Heterochronism

Heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time—which is to say that they open onto what might be called, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronisms. The heterotopia begins to function fully when people find themselves in a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.⁵⁸

Albeit heterotopia is a concept that primarily has spatial denotation, it also connotes temporal significance. It is not only “other space” but also “other time” apropos the rest of the place and time. In this respect, some heterotopias are linked either to “indefinitely accumulating time” (museums and libraries), or to “time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival” (fairgrounds and vacation villages). In case the above-mentioned hybridity principle is applied to this context, the heterotopia of permanence and festivity do not exclude each other; they can be juxtaposed even in a single space.

5) Inaccessibility

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, one does not access a

heterotopian emplacement as if it were a pub. ... One can only enter with a certain permission and after having performed a certain number of gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification. ... There are others, on the contrary, that look like pure and simple openings, but that, generally, conceal curious exclusions. Everybody can enter into those heterotopian emplacements, but in fact it is only an illusion: one believes to have entered and, by the very fact of entering, one is excluded.⁵⁹

Foucault describes heterotopias as closed and isolated sites in so far as they are not freely accessible like public places: though seemingly “pure and simple openings,” they “conceal curious exclusions.”

6) Relatedness

They [Heterotopias] have, in relation to the rest of space, a function.⁶⁰

At first sight, this last principle of the heterotopia is belated. Logically, this principle referring to the heterotopia's general functionality should be placed prior to the second principle of diachronic plasticity and the third principle of synchronic hybridity, both referring to the heterotopia's specific functions. However, the emphasis is on the relatedness of heterotopia to the rest of the space. A heterotopia exists not as a self-contained entity but in relation to the outside; to be precise, this relatedness is what makes a space function as a heterotopia.

Still, is it not to be taken for granted that every space in a society has a specific function in relation to the outside? That granted, what is the peculiarity of a heterotopia's function? Heterotopias are “singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others.”⁶¹ A heterotopia's functions, specially mentioned, are associated with creating either a space of illusion (brothels) or a space of compensation (colonies). The former “exposes all real space, all the emplacements in the interior of which human life is enclosed and partitioned, as even more illusory.” Meanwhile, the latter creates “another space, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy,” as the Jesuit Colony in South America, particularly in Paraguay.⁶² This illusion has ironic connotations. In Paraguay, the Jesuit Colony was, in reality, an illusionary space presumed to be a perfect place but where violence and injustice were committed. Thus, the heterotopia of illusion and compensation conceptually distinguishable but practically compatible. A heterotopia is a curious place capable of offering an illusion and compensation concerning other ordinary places.

Re-Imagining the DMZ as a Heterotopia

So far, I have introduced the notion and principles of heterotopia to explore the possibilities to apply these to the DMZ. Before rushing into the discussion, however, I will make a short detour through the morphological classification and enumeration of the heterotopia by Foucault, which serves as a prerequisite for the DMZ's characterization.

Though insisting on the diversity and singularity of the forms of heterotopia in each society, Foucault pointed out two types of heterotopia, viz. heterotopia of crisis in which individuals live "in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." and heterotopia of deviation in which individuals "whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed."⁶³ Nevertheless, based on Foucault's actual descriptions, at least six kinds of heterotopia are identified: heterotopia of crisis (the boarding school, military service, honeymoon trip), deviance (rest home, psychiatric hospital, prison), permanence (cemetery, museum, library), festivity (fairground, vacation village), illusion (brothel), and compensation (colony). Foucault's classification and enumeration are on no account exhaustive nor clearly understandable. The DMZ eludes this classification, granted it is barely plausible to neatly classify the DMZ as one of these six kinds of heterotopia. Henceforth, I proceed to scrutinize the possible application of heterotopia's principles to the DMZ with these in mind.

First, regarding the first principle of the heterotopia's diversity, how to verify the empirical truth of Foucault's abrupt and thrifty statements relies, to some extent, upon how to define this term "heterotopia." Again, the absence of an exact definition in Foucault's seminal conceptualization of heterotopia is one of the most awkward problems. For the time being, let me accept that, for reasons to be described subsequently in this article, it is neither absurd nor impossible for the Korean DMZ with its extremely controlled mobilities to count as one of the diverse forms of heterotopia.

Second, from the perspective of the diachronic plasticity, the DMZ's function also undergoes considerable changes over time. In its historical transition, the Korean DMZ has fulfilled different functions. In the past, the DMZ designed to fulfill the function of preventing military conflicts had been held opaque and almost suppressed in South Korean people's (un)consciousness, except for political or propagandist use against North Korea, such as visiting underground tunnels dug by North Korea. However, since the 1990s, the discussion on the DMZ has boomed in South Korea due to the fall of the Iron Curtain. Since then, the DMZ in these discourses has been functioning not only as a topic of national security or anticommunism but also in developmental, ecological, or pacifist discussions.

Though essentially the same physical entity, the DMZ as a social construction altered in tandem with the changing social circumstances. From this history of the general perception of the DMZ in South Korean society, it follows invariably that the DMZ will have another unprecedented function in the future. Thus, refraining methodologically from the varied preconceived notions of pacifism, ecologism, or developmentalism among others participating in brisk discussions about the future “peaceful use” of DMZ with their “multiple political imaginaries of ‘peace’ including state-centric discourses,” “progressive environmentalist discourses,” and “a more complex notion of ‘biological peace’”⁶⁴ and from making concrete suggestions for future “use” of the DMZ at all, I will attempt to reflect on how the DMZ will and should function in the future.

Third, the DMZ is regarded as a heterotopia in terms of the principle of hybridity as well. It is not defined as an articulate space with a single function but as an ambiguous one with multiple functions at a time. The DMZ has always been a hybrid space with various characteristics and functions, some of which are even incompatible. For instance, it is “at once a site of military skirmishes as part of the ongoing war and a postwar emblem of peace and life.”⁶⁵

Fourth, in the sense of heterochronism, the DMZ has been imagined as being apt to performing either the function of eternally preserving the collective memories of history or the function of experiencing fleeting time. For example, on the one hand, there are proposals to build an ecological museum, a museum for war and military, and a historical museum within the DMZ.⁶⁶ On the other, according to other suggestions, the DMZ can function as a place where all possible festivities and events can occur, demonstrating the temporality, volatility, and vulnerability of the *status quo*. As Polynesian villages Foucault regards as an example of coming together of these two types of heterotopias, the DMZ is being re-imagined as a site where both dissolution and rediscovery of temporal flow take place.

Fifth, as for inaccessibility, the DMZ has been a place of draconian exclusion of almost all kinds of human mobilities and is expected to remain a place of limited accessibility and mobility which, though seemingly “pure and simple openings,” “conceal curious exclusions.” Even if the DMZ in the future could be perceived as a place where everyone is by default entitled to enter, it may be that “in fact it is only an illusion.” This prospect is especially plausible, given, according to the report of ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines), more than 2 million landmines are laid within the DMZ, which make the Korean DMZ one of the most heavily mined areas in the world as a consequence of the stern militarization of the space.⁶⁷ Even recently, in 2015, North Korean soldiers allegedly planted wooden-box mines near one of the South’s GPs within the DMZ to maim two

South Korean soldiers. The “rogue infrastructure,” “the volatile materiality of mines,”⁶⁸ has been (mis)used by the state “to limit human mobility and agency” in “the ambiguous heterotopia of the South Korean DMZ.”⁶⁹ These landmines will, apparently, “result in an unintentional remaking of nature in a post-conflict phase.”⁷⁰ Considering the tremendous difficulties in removing landmines to soothe the anxiety and instability of potential dwellers and travelers, the DMZ will remain an area where mobilities, while generally allowed, are cautiously controlled.

Sixth, regarding the heterotopia’s relatedness objecting to the ordinary spaces by its absolute otherness, the DMZ can be imagined both as a space of compensation and illusion. The DMZ, however, would function as a heterotopia of compensation, precisely in the opposite sense to the Jesuit Colony. It is a “disorderly, ill construed and sketchy” place, offering compensation to the ordinary real places that are supposed to be perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged. Further, the DMZ as a heterotopia of illusion reveals the other places, arrogating the visage of perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged places, as “even more illusory.”⁷¹

A single, concrete, and clear definition that describes the heterotopia’s “essence” is not found. Though, drawing on Foucault’s descriptions, some “family resemblances” are shared by various forms of heterotopia. Applying these features to the DMZ, it can be characterized as one of the many possible forms of heterotopia (diversity) with unique functions in relation to the outside (relatedness) that are diachronically changeable (plasticity) and synchronically heterogeneous (hybridity), with different temporalities from other spaces (heterochronism) and a system of opening and closing (accessibility).

These principles bespeak “an ambition to encompass a vast variety of space types, which lends to the concept of heterotopia an almost Borgesian character of paradoxical juxtaposition.”⁷² They seem admittedly too abstruse for practical application to the actual social problems beyond mere philosophical speculations. Drawing on these principles, however, I attempt to reflect on the future of the DMZ, keeping in mind that “heterotopias always remain connected to the dominant order; thus as heterotopias clash with dominant orders, they simultaneously produce new ways of knowing.”⁷³ To give prominence to that contrast to the dominant orders, we could use certain metaphors, the first of which is one with the river contesting the dominant representations of the border as a static and eventually removable borderline.

The DMZ as a River: Fluid and Irremovable Borderland

Contrary to common belief, the DMZ has never been a static area with absolute immobility; its mobilities have been heterogeneous, diverse, and changing. As a borderland, the DMZ is “a complex spatial condition that emerges from a series of continuous spatial negotiations,” in other words, it is more a “process” than an “object.”⁷⁴ As a fluid yet irremovable borderland, it has been “a complex crossing space of territoriality and mobility”: a borderland conceived as “a social product that has been created and re-produced through complicated interactions among, and dynamic practices of, various forces and actors who have been living and operating along the borderline on the Korean peninsula.”⁷⁵

To make sense of this fluid borderland, it can be helpful to draw an analogy, in some respects, with a river, which is, though being a possible physical basis for longitudinal mobilities, for example, by a tourist boat or a cruise ship, a physical barrier to transverse mobilities. First, both the DMZ and the river are, rather than borderlines, borderlands with a certain width in consequence of which they come to be unique places, possibly offering experiences of singular quality. A border counted, traditionally, as a line or, more sophisticatedly, as a mathematical line, which has its origin in the Greek way of thinking. According to Aristotle’s theory of the border developed in *Physics*, a limit (πέρας) such as a geometric line does not possess a size. Subsequently, it is not a part of either of the two areas divided by this limit.⁷⁶ A limit or a border is not a part of, hence cannot be integrated to either of two regions. This notion is relevant concerning our discussion of the DMZ. However, neither a river nor the DMZ is a limit strictly in this mathematical sense since they have a specific width and cover a particular area. Such understandings of a border will not remain without consequences to our discussion since it implies that those who are crossing over or staying within a river or the DMZ, “moving through a temporary scape, in and of itself generative of perceptions and affects,”⁷⁷ are subject to singular phenomenology of movement and mooring with particular temporality, perception, and affect.

Second, just as a river functioning as a borderland is subject to constant natural changes, the DMZ is not a static and rigid area with zero mobility but a dynamic and fluid area that has continuously been appropriated by various mobilities. But, how do the mobilities appropriate the river? To put it differently, what do we do to cross a river? Even if there are diverse ways of negotiating a river, we mainly build a bridge for transverse mobilities as one of “those immobile infrastructures that organize the intermittent flow of people, information, and image.”⁷⁸ Rather than filling the gap, viz. removing the river in any way, we construct a bridge and occupy a space above the river to enable mobilities. We do not fill the gap but bridge the gap.

So, what is the moral of these analogies for the DMZ? Kyung Park, a renowned architect and the curator of the exhibition “Project DMZ” held in New York in 1988, challenged artists to “imagine how the DMZ might be adopted for non-military and anti-political uses,” more importantly, “with the preliminary notion that the area must be occupied rather than simply eliminated.”⁷⁹ Then, the question is how to bridge the gap without filling the gap or how to occupy the DMZ without eliminating it, that is to say, without turning it into a utopian space that meets dreams of developmentalism and ecologism. To give a more full-fledged answer to this question, we better turn towards how a heterotopic space such as the DMZ is, in reality, functioning in power-knowledge relations. This consideration leads us to the metaphor of airport, relying on Virilio’s artwork and theory of the city.

The DMZ as an Airport: Space in Power-Knowledge Relations

By the characterization through heterotopia’s principles and the metaphor of the river, the DMZ is seen as one of the assorted forms of heterotopia and as a hybrid and plastic borderland concerning its function. However, it is not merely a borderland between two extremely antagonistic nations and between a capitalist and a communist regime: it is, beyond all of these kinds of antagonism, a borderland excluding all rigid social regimes and spaces.

Yet, there has been some severe criticism against this Foucauldian notion of heterotopia, which would be relevant to the DMZ as conceived by us. For example, David Harvey questions “the existence of protected spaces (dubbed ‘heterotopic’ by Foucault) within which daily life and affective relations can function without being dominated by capital accumulation, market relations and state powers,” asserting that it is “erroneous and self-defeating to presume the existence of some heterotopic or segregated ‘lifeworld’ space insulated from (even if in the long run in danger of being penetrated and swamped by) capitalist social relations and conceptions.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, taking into consideration the “trialectic of power, knowledge, and space”⁸¹ that Foucault is always and thoroughly aware of, a heterotopia should not be regarded as “a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of physical forms to be phenomenologically described in all its resplendent variability,” but as “another space, what Lefebvre would describe as *l’espace vécu*, actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices,”⁸² as suggested by Edward Soja.

Considering both Harvey’s criticism and Soja’s vindication of Foucault’s heterotopia, we come to the awareness of the necessity for considering the DMZ as a

space embedded in the relations of power and knowledge. After all, the DMZ with an area of circa 1,000 km² can hardly be isolated and encapsulated outside of the relations of power and knowledge.⁸³ How could such a vast land ever be a vacuum of power and knowledge relations in the middle of the Korean peninsula?

In order to re-visualize the DMZ as a heterotopia within the power-knowledge equations, it is possibly helpful to use an artistic concept as a clue. In the previously mentioned exhibition “Project DMZ,” the philosopher of dromology, the science of speed, Paul Virilio (alias Paul Valeilla), collaborated with Avant Travaux Studio and submitted an artwork that depicts an imaginary, inaccessible airport in the DMZ.⁸⁴ Awaiting their function, a tower of this airport as an immobile infrastructure enabling mobilities “directs people’s visions, trajectories, approaches, flights.” Simultaneously, the terminal acts as a “permanent detector” that is “able to measure the space between dreams and reality.” This artwork explicitly contextualizes the separation of the two Koreas alongside the analogous separations of (at the time) East and West Berlin, Belfast, and Lebanon, which Virilio thought could create “a new urban entity.”⁸⁵

In this enigmatic and paradoxical artistic representation of the DMZ housing an inaccessible airport, the DMZ remains an ambiguous place, exclusively determined neither by mobility nor by immobility. The artwork imagines the DMZ as an inaccessible and immobile infrastructure, yet serving for mobilities. It is remarkable that it does not easily fall into utopian dreams of mobilities but permanently measures the space between dreams of mobilities and the reality of immobilities.

How is the DMZ occupied by an inaccessible airport able to create “a new urban entity”? Is it possible for this new urban entity to be free from all of the power-knowledge relations? How can we conceive of the DMZ as a new urban entity that is not integrated into the two Korean regimes’ homogeneous space but remains a heterogeneous space subject to the power-knowledge relations?

To answer this question, we can detour through Virilio’s philosophical contemplation on the airport in his theory of the city or the urban entity. The concept of the global city introduced by Saskia Sassen refers to “a sort of urban glamour zone, the new hyperspace of international business” consisting of “airports, top-level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants.”⁸⁶ For Virilio, this global city is, in fact, an “anti-city,” which is “a form of desire for inertia, desire for ubiquity, instantaneousness—a will to reduce the world to a single place, a single identity.”⁸⁷ This kind of a space of inertia, ubiquity, and instantaneousness, abolishing “the classical oppositions of city/country or center/periphery,”⁸⁸ and this kind of a non-place of stickiness, “an inherently ambiguous substance, in-between liquidity and solidity,”⁸⁹ is counted as a sort of an immense airport

governed by “airport politics”⁹⁰ that controls the opening/closing or mobilities/immobilities.

Supposing the airport is a crucial metaphor for pondering over the urban entity in Virilio’s theory of the city, could we assume that the inaccessible airport in Virilio’s artwork has a similar implication to the airport in the global cities? In this sense, the depiction of the DMZ as occupied by an airport that is, in turn, a symbol of anti-city or a representative of non-place is not necessarily positive, since the airport politics regulating the immobile infrastructure fostering mobilities will have “the tragic character of the extermination camp.”⁹¹ In this regard, even in the heterotopic DMZ, questions like “who has the power?” and “how does that power circulate?” are crucial.⁹²

The heterotopic DMZ can be re-imagined with the metaphor of the airport, “the trick” of which is “to present immobility as mobility, stagnancy as efficiency, and incarcerations as freedom.”⁹³ In airports, “passengers are often made relatively immobile, encouraged to dwell and stay within specific areas of the airport space.”⁹⁴ Such places can qualify “heterotopia, both in terms of the isolation of the rites of passage of entry into and exit from the territory of the state, and in terms of the containment of deviant, mobile subjects.”⁹⁵

Thus, these immobile mobilities or mobile immobilities in the inaccessible airport occupying the DMZ are considered in the prevailing power-knowledge relations. Airports do not enable smooth mobility in which “a common experience marked by homogeneity, ambiguity, and anonymity, transforms multiple spaces into a sense of singular place.”⁹⁶ Likewise, the DMZ is and will be a place that demonstrates accessibility and inaccessibility corresponding to power-knowledge relations.

Even though the airport is, in the sense of Virilio’s work, symbolic of the universal global urbanization as anti-city, conceiving it as a heterotopia or a counter-space is not entirely ruled out. In this conceivable possibility, the DMZ as an inaccessible airport should be, as it were, an anti-anti-city resistant to the anti-city. We may further pursue this analogy by identifying the normative function of mirroring other spaces the DMZ as a heterotopia should assume.

The DMZ as a Mirror: Reflecting and Critical Space

Harvey makes a case that Foucault’s evaluation of heterotopia leads us to erroneously think that “whatever happens in such spaces of ‘Otherness’ is of interest and even in some sense ‘acceptable,’ or ‘appropriate.’”⁹⁷ Indeed, we cannot overlook that, as Harvey points out, “the cemetery and the concentration camp, the factory, the shopping malls and Disneylands,”⁹⁸ or as Ourednik exemplifies, Guantanamo

and Fritzel's cellar as heterotopias can hardly be "acceptable" or "appropriate" spaces.

Leaving the discussion aside on whether heterotopia, in general, performs positive or negative functions for the society, the mirroring function viz. the tacitly reflective and even critical function is the heterotopia's *raison d'être*. After all, in a heterotopia as "a sort of counter-emplacement," "all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted."⁹⁹ In a heterotopia, "a bit of the social world," organized "in a way different to that which surrounds them," is "to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things."¹⁰⁰

Thus, "the sociotemporal aspects of the heterotopia" are nothing but "the mirroring, distorting and unsettling qualities" of this space.¹⁰¹ In this sense, heterotopias' unique role in society lies not in individual heterotopias' specific functions. It lies in their absolute differentness per se, which makes them places where things are done in an alternative way. In this counter-emplacement, "there might be a sort of mixed, in-between experience, which would be the mirror."¹⁰² Even though heterotopias remain "in relation with all the other sites," these relations serve "to suspend, neutralize, or invert the sets of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them."¹⁰³ In this sense, heterotopia has a function of mirroring, reflecting, and tacitly criticizing the normal and normative ordering of the social world surrounding it.

The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there.¹⁰⁴

The mirror is a heterotopia par excellence; or vice versa, the heterotopia is a mirror through which other places are perceived. But how can this mirroring function of heterotopia be realized in a social space that seems, overwhelmed by the apparently omnipresent and omnipotent power and knowledge relations, not to grant any fissure, let alone a spare space, in these relations? Faced with such a perplexing question, we come to engage in contemplation of the mirror's nature. Namely, to fill itself with a reflected image, i.e., to mirror something other than itself, a mirror is not to be preoccupied with its own images. Not being preoccupied with the normal and normative ordering of the social world surrounding it, a heterotopia can be the mirror that functions as a *tabula rasa* or a void where all kinds of games can be played, and all sorts of work can be accomplished. As Foucault's fascinating passage depicts, a heterotopia is just like a parent's bed for children.

This is the attic or rather the Indian tent in the attic. And that is—on Thursday afternoon—the parents’ bed. On this bed they discover the ocean because they can swim between the blankets. But the bed is also the sky because they can jump on the springs. It is the forest because they hide in it. It is the night because they become ghosts under the sheets. And finally it is delight, because when the parents come back they will be punished.¹⁰⁵ (own translation)

The DMZ is and ought to be a heterotopic “big bed” in the same vein where we could play all imaginable games and accomplish all possible works. When the parents come home, the place where children play all possible games transforms back into a bed with prescribed functions; the bed is supposed to be a merely temporary heterotopia for children. Likewise, each specific “use” of the DMZ is supposed to be provisional and temporary, while the DMZ as a whole remains as a place of “unworking (*désœuvrement*),” a term Jean-Luc Nancy coined to describe “that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension.”¹⁰⁶

Concluding Remarks

Even though the Korean Peninsula’s ongoing peace processes have been undergoing some complications and delays, the expectation that the general tendency toward peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula will continue has by no means crumbled. Suppose peace and reunification would be achieved after many probable twists and turns in the future, the DMZ would allow more residential, industrial, or tourist mobilities for people on the two sides. If that is the case, this peculiar space will take on a new shape due to the transition from immobility to mobility. However, what this shape will be like is difficult to imagine.

With this mid to long-term expectation in mind, this article attempted to reflect on the heterotopic features of the DMZ, particularly within the framework of the new mobilities paradigm. After attempting to re-conceptualize the DMZ penetrated by diverse (non)human (im)mobilities as a heterotopia, an absolutely different, ambiguous, and paradoxical space, this article attempted to give a normative claim that the DMZ be a critically reflecting place, which in itself represents a place of “unworking” enabling all the workings at the outset.

“The fragmentary and elusive quality”¹⁰⁷ of the concept of heterotopia makes, to be sure, this article’s discourse on the heterotopic DMZ fragmentary and elusive as well. Representing the DMZ as a place of unworking by the metaphor of mirror is marked by “interruption, fragmentation, suspension.” However, the idea of the heterotopic DMZ as a place of pure unworking is something of a “regulative idea” in

the Kantian sense. It is unlikely to be materialized but still functions as a postulate guiding our actual “working,” since in civilisations without heterotopias, “dreams dry up, espionage replaces adventure, and the police the pirates.”¹⁰⁸ Guided by the regulative idea of the heterotopic DMZ, some activity will still be feasible and even desirable to realize the utopian dreams: dense human habitations, profitable industrial areas, traffic routes and hubs, peace parks, bio-sanctuaries, museums, theme parks, and so on. The principle of the heterotopia’s hybridity tolerates the coexistence of even incompatible spaces within it. However, they are to be of a partial and transitory nature. Projecting one’s desires and dreams indiscreetly onto this “terrain vague,” this ambiguous, “empty, abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place,”¹⁰⁹ would be nothing but “introducing violent transformations, changing estrangements into citizenship, and striving at all costs to dissolve the uncontaminated magic of the obsolete in the efficacy.”¹¹⁰ The Korean DMZ is supposed to remain an unworking and unoccupied space to mirror the other spaces, allowing us to reflect upon and, if necessary, upturn the power and knowledge relations producing spaces of inertia, ubiquity, and instantaneusness.

Now, I will conclude this article by reviewing the notion of governmobility, seemingly a promising conceptual tool for the further discussion about the DMZ and, more generally, about the heterotopic places within the framework of mobility studies. The concept of governmobility, combining the insights from both mobilities studies and Foucauldian study of governmentality, challenges us “to rethink what borders include.” Focusing on “the technologies of circulation and connection, materially constructing societies, governed through mobility,” governmobility is particularly manifest around “the borders or ‘gates’ that limit, channel, and regulate movement or anticipated movement.”¹¹¹ Applied to the DMZ, which has been and, more importantly, should remain a borderland in a proper sense, this conceptual tool can present how “the passages and circulation of people, things and information around borders” or the DMZ shall and should be ruled “through the material designs of technologies and environments.”¹¹²

Furthermore, governmobility, meaning “ruling through connections—mobilising mobilities,” is functioning “through bodily, technological and institutional forms of self-government, which are enacted relationally and embedded in systems.”¹¹³ This internalized regulation of mobilities in people’s mobile practices are critical for the (im)mobilities in and around the heterotopic DMZ. It is through subjects’ embodied experiences that the pervasive governmobility can determine and control “the production and complex entwined performativities, materialities, mobilities and affects of *both* human embodied subjects *and* the spaces/places/landscapes/environments which are inhabited, traversed and perceived.”¹¹⁴ Thus,

a study on the governmobility not only as a regime both restricting and enabling the human and non-human mobilities but also as internalized and embodied practices might be an essential desideratum of this article's discourse concerning the heterotopic DMZ.

Notes

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Considerations for the Direction of Mobility Humanities Education: Focused on Study Cases of the Mobility Humanities Education Center of Konkuk University¹

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Abstract

This paper attempts to find ways to utilize the new mobilities paradigm in the field of education in Korea by presenting the case of the Mobility Humanities Education Center established by the Academy of Mobility Humanities of Konkuk University. Education of mobility humanities enables people to realize how mobility shapes and changes culture and the promotion of humanistic knowledge. This kind of education based on the mobility humanities can be valuable in convergence-based Liberal Arts education and life-long learning in this era when the Fourth Industrial Revolution has given rise to many conflicting ideas and considerations in the field of education.

Keywords: Mobility, Mobility Humanities, Academy of Mobility Humanities, Mobility Humanities Education Center, Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures

Introduction

This paper is the first attempt to introduce the paradigm of “mobility,” which has emerged in Europe and the U.S. over the last ten years, and to find ways to utilize it in the civic education field in South Korea (hereafter Korea). This also means opening a new chapter in humanities education for those living in the “Era of High-Mobility.” Such practice, an example of which can be found in the social activities carried out by the Center for Advanced Studies University of Padova, may have a different direction but the purpose is the same.³

We might say that the era of high-mobility started when mobility technology became part of human culture, not a mere condition or means to live life. Studies on mobility originated from areas of social science, such as transportation geography, human geography, etc., but are now expanding with implications in disciplines which include philosophy, aesthetics, culture, and literature.⁴ Further, academic interest in the topic is also expanding geographically from European and Northern America to Asia. In Korea, the Academy of Mobility Humanities of Konkuk University (hereinafter referred to as AMH), is now leading the studies on mobility. In particular, as a separate education institute for the general public, AMH has established the Mobility Humanities Education Center (hereinafter referred to as MHE), specializing in mobility humanities education.

The MHE pursues theoretical exploration and experimental practice focusing on “education on mobility humanities.” In Korea, the term “mobility humanities” sounds unfamiliar and is a new concept even to the academic community. Further, education on mobility humanities has been attempted before. However, education is a very important area when it comes to shaping mobility, one of the terms used in the automotive sector, as a new agenda for humanities and social science. To this end, the MHE has dedicated itself to developing an education model while making efforts to define the concept of mobility humanities education and raise awareness of why it is necessary. In hopes of laying the foundation stone for starting a new chapter in civic education, this paper sets out to introduce this educational attempt.

Background and Necessity for Mobility Humanities Education

Mobility Paradigm and Liberal Arts

Mobility humanities is a study that considers substantial and virtual movement of humans, things, and relations, enabled by the development of mobility technologies including train, cars, aircraft, internet, and mobile devices, from

the perspective of “co-evolution between human beings and technologies.”⁵ It suggests answers to present and future challenges caused by advanced mobility from the viewpoint of the humanities, aiming to create a mobility-empowered society where life, thinking, and culture coexist in harmony.

The book *Mobility and the Humanities*, edited by Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, introduces in detail the reason why research on mobility is required in humanities.⁶ In particular, Peter Merriman, one of the editors, argues that “historians, historical geographers, literary theorists, philosophers, art historians, architects, and art practitioners” have had a long-standing interest in “mobility,” and it is closely related to “Philosophical Approaches that Value Movement, Flux, and Change.”⁷ Twenty-first century scholars studying mobility strive to establish a new paradigm through the mobility turn. Sheller and Urry’s “New Mobilities Paradigm”⁸ discusses a trans-disciplinary field of mobility; Peter Adey suggests a way to break down the position of the mobility turn,⁹ and David Bissell applies mobility to the trajectory of life.¹⁰ These analyses show how useful it is to identify a social change and which social classes would experience changes in life through mobility.

To the general public, mobility is simply a term that is widely used in the automobile industry in the context of autonomous vehicles, transport systems based on the sharing economy, and mobile industry, and the concept is only considered in relation to technologies. This is because it has not been long since mobility became a research subject in humanities. However, this is a time when academic research is translated into people’s knowledge faster than ever.¹¹ Therefore, the research achievements need to be instantly converted to civic education, and this will be emphasized once again with reference to the Fourth Industrial Revolution to be discussed below. In Korea, where mobility-related research started later than in other countries, people rarely identify themselves as moving subjects even though they actually live in a hyper-connected, highly mobile society. On 25 March 2019, *Chosun Ilbo*, a Korean daily newspaper, published an article entitled “I Move, therefore I am ... Mobility became a Hot Topic in Humanities,” shedding light on the Academy of Mobility Humanities of Konkuk University. This may be the first major newspaper article that acknowledges mobility as a subject in the humanities domain.

The current widespread outbreaks of COVID-19 clearly show why mobility is essential to human life. Infectious diseases recorded as apocalypse, wars, deportation, terrorism, and the destruction of transportation, as symbolized by the sinking of the Titanic, are some negative examples of suppressed mobility. These are repeatedly reproduced through a variety of media such as news, documentaries, photos, novels, movies, paintings, comics, music, etc., giving rise to various

subcultures. In other words, mobility has already played a role in our lives by being recorded as a clear phenomenon and being presented in discourse. *The Plague*, written by Albert Camus, would serve as the best example of literary culture for the current COVID-19 situation. This negative perception on mobility is based on the problems related to the distribution of mobility capital and power issues, like countries' use of fossil fuels that has led the world's economic development in modern times or ecological problems such as the environmental damage caused by plastics.

Then, why do people not recognize these as mobility phenomena? This is because, whether historians, writers, or media makers, thought leaders and influencers only focus on the results of a disaster, are not able to recognize the causes, or are ignorant. In other words, people ignore the cause, which is mobility. Therefore, we should concentrate on investigating the principle of mobility when it comes to education in mobility humanities as Liberal Arts.¹²

On the other hand, there is also the concept of mobility for leisure such as travel and romantic mobility for exploring an unknown world.¹³ People experienced modern times through travelogues, developed a spirit of adventure listening to the stories of Columbus' explorations,¹⁴ and never forgot the moment of landing on the moon.¹⁵ A chance encounter during a journey may change life itself.

The fact that we can move using means of transportation is a special cultural feature given only to human beings, and capitalism¹⁶ was created as we acquired the ability to move. Crops are transported so that people around the world can enjoy a cup of coffee and petrochemicals are today produced without oilfields. The new transportation technologies of human beings, who discovered fire (energy) while using animals (horses) as a means of transportation, however, turned into a threat to the earth due to the excessive use of fossil fuels. Here, we need to realize that the main cause of environmental issues these days is the movement of people. It also explains why electric cars, car-sharing, and bicycle-riding are bound to increase. Hence, education in mobility humanities has to emphasize providing awareness of how mobility affects human culture so that people can be conscious participants of their historical life.

However, interests in mobility also draw our attention to immobility, a state of not being able to move around.¹⁷ Immobility occurs in areas where the right to move is prohibited or limited. The restricted movement between South Korea and North Korea is an important example of immobility and another example is that of refugees' inability to cross borders. The relocation of ethnic groups under Stalin's notorious forced migration policy or Hitler's concentration camps are noteworthy illustrations of immobility. There are also various cases of immobility that we are not conscious of but which are present in many forms in our daily lives: stairs,

the use of a wheelchair, and being unable to pay a toll (cars, trains, buses). In some areas with crossing gates, we also experience immobility if we (or our cars) are not authorized to enter. This suggests that we are going to realize more and more immobile situations in our daily lives. In this sense, education in mobility humanities should be an opportunity to show the value of human rights and lives.

The general public knows that mobility is selected as the theme of the Dubai Expo and that cycling movements are gaining popularity across the world. Further, we are living in an era where travel has become one of the most powerful recreational activities. In this paper, raising the level of the public's knowledge from mere awareness to a state of logic and realization will be examined as the fundamental framework for mobility humanities education.

Backgrounds of Mobility Humanities Education in Korea

There are no precedents in Korea for studies in mobility humanities education, but the diastrophism in education related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution can be used as reference. The paradigms of education have rapidly changed under the influence of the unprecedented, revolutionary changes brought about by “the 4th Industrial Revolution,” as Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum mentioned at the 2016 meeting of the Forum. Schwab suggested that “nowadays, we are at the door of a revolution that fundamentally changes our life, work, and personal relation,” and stressed that we are now experiencing a historical change in terms of velocity, breadth, and depth, and systems impact.¹⁸ Mobility humanities explore what the ways of life might be in a hyper-connected society based on mobility technology, focusing on mobility technologies such as the “Internet of Things (IoT) and unmanned transportation,” among technologies related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including big data analysis, AI, robotics, IoT, unmanned transportation (unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned vehicles), 3D printing, and nanotechnology.

Unlike the past when knowledge was created, transferred, and used for a long period, today knowledge is easily created, reproduced, distributed, and consumed and the amount of knowledge produced is also astronomical. Further, there are almost no constraints of time and space when it comes to the distribution of the produced knowledge. The loss of historical origins and overflow of fragmented information make it difficult to get information that will improve the quality of life and also rapidly shorten the life of information, the period during which the information is useful.¹⁹ “The great explosion of information that is constantly produced at the speed of light requires restructuring of contents of education,”²⁰

which means that we, as subjects living in this era, are in a situation that demands continuous innovation through education.²¹

Article 4 (Ideals of Lifelong Education) of the “Lifelong Education Act” in Korea specifies that “(1) All citizens shall be guaranteed equal opportunities for lifelong education, and (2) Lifelong education shall be conducted based on learners’ willing participation and voluntary study.” This article guarantees the basic principles and rights about general education stipulated in the Constitution and more specifically the Framework Act on Education. Lifelong education guided by openness, diversity, and autonomy is essential today as we are in constant need of the knowledge to understand social change.²²

The general public needs to find lifelong education centers to continuously update their knowledge. Here, media offers us an important opportunity to “involve, affect, and utilize 24/7 in every corner of our lives.”²³ Therefore, it is desirable to use media for education by complementing the merits and demerits of classroom lectures, on-site participatory lectures, and online lectures. The MHE utilizes these three types of lectures in its education programs so that anyone can participate in learning as a part of lifelong education. In particular, the MHE plans to offer online lectures in English for people around the world to join the education. These modes will be exhibited at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2021.

On the other hand, we need to be alert to the fact that economic thinking based on technocentrism is deeply entrenched at the center of the change in educational trends that started from the shock of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In particular, it is necessary to pay attention to the criticisms about “a harmful consequence of technocentrism and addiction to growth”²⁴ regarding Korea’s response. Given the importance mobility technology has in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it is essential to align human values with cutting-edge mobile technology. Now, human beings are facing a common enemy: “mass unemployment and job instability, increased labor intensity, workaholism, mental and physical exhaustion, poverty and violence, surveillance and control by the ‘Big Brother,’²⁵ and impeded human capability (autonomy, sensations in the hands, memory, observation, concentration, etc.).”²⁶ In response to this, it is desirable to introduce education of a twenty-first century character to enhance the value and extend the identity of human beings.²⁷ Given these considerations, it is necessary to interpret mobility technology from the perspective of humanity studies in Korea and educate people on the correlation between mobility and human life. As Simon Cook explained how people in London cannot help but become immigrants for educational and economic reasons, Koreans, especially those living in Seoul, also do not recognize that they are moving like Londoners. This is because Koreans are not motivated enough to identify themselves as moving subjects. Education in mobility humanities,

therefore, is a process of finding the answers as to how we, as humans, have enjoyed mobility technologies throughout history and how we can preserve our humanity as we continue developing mobility technologies in the future.

With these considerations in mind, let us examine the goals of the actual educational contents that are currently developed. We now live in a “convergence-based world”²⁸ that is complicatedly intertwined. What is needed at this time is fundamental sophistication to understand the convergence-based world, the ability to interpret the current state, and the capability to solve problems using these. The MHE aims to accumulate knowledge necessary for the convergence-based world and to establish human sciences that enable skills of interpretation problem-solving through mobility humanities education. People can prepare for the future society only when they have life-cycle learning capabilities that include self-directed learning attitude and aptitude, understanding of changes in science technology, ICT capability, and interests in life-long learning.²⁹ In this sense, continuous life-long learning, a goal of mobility humanities education, is an education of humanities that is required at this period of time to understand a society driven by mobility technology. The MHE designed the curriculum by classifying the subject for education as Humanities Dream Class (Youth),³⁰ Humanities Happy Class (the middle-aged),³¹ and Humanities Hope Class (the underprivileged)³² so that “continuous life-long learning” is available to local communities. For instance, education sessions can be prepared for elementary, middle, high school, and college students separately considering their academic levels. In particular, the Humanities Hope Class is run for the vulnerable classes who find it difficult to get proper education, which include the elderly, immigrants, the mobility restricted, and the disabled who have difficulties in coming out to receive education sessions. However, the MHE did not further divide the class because such subdivisions can lead to a kind of discrimination or differentiation. The “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” was designed in terms of life-long education, by letting instructors give lectures that considers students’ levels of achievement and interests at the site of education after developing a common sample course.

The Reality of Mobility Humanities Education

Planning and Operating the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures”

The goal of studying mobility humanities is to consider how mobility affects our lives, how it forms and changes the culture, and how it leads the discourse on humanities. In what ways, then, can such academic study contribute to the formation of knowledge in civil society? Hypothetically, education of mobility humanities has

to demonstrate how mobility affects our lives in terms of considerations employed by the humanities. It also has to help people realize how mobility shapes and changes the culture in order to promote humanistic knowledge through this.

The mobility humanistic education carried out by the MHE as a pilot project is an educational model designed to face the present and prepare for the future; it is an attempt to find a new methodology to connect mobility research and mobility education. At the same time, it suggests a meaningful vision for “life-long learning” in Korea’s Liberal Arts education in this era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In this regard, the MHE has planned and run the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures”³³ which offer lectures that are 100 minutes in duration. The basic setting for “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” is a classroom lecture but online courses using YouTube are also available for those who cannot personally attend the classroom. In order to help the general public to develop humanistic knowledge through “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures”, the MHE has developed curriculums and carried out civic education sessions according to the following directions:

- 1) Provide an understanding of the principle of mobility: analyze the development of mobility that has been the destiny of mankind to find the cause, process, and effect and understand the principle. (Knowledge)
- 2) Encourage participants to recognize themselves as a subject of mobility: recognize oneself as a historical subject of mobility who appears as a distinct phenomenon in human history. (Reason)
- 3) Provide expanded awareness of the ethics of mobility society: realize the ethical calling in the global high-mobility era and proactively join the efforts to solve social problems. (Ethics)

The three directions above are organically converged with each other to serve as a central axis penetrating the basics of “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures.” The “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” are divided and operated into three categories: Knowledge, Reason, and Ethics.

The following presents the contents of research and education courses, which are classified into seven areas: 1) Digital contents, 2) Technology, 3) Gender, 4) Environment, 5) Justice, 6) Art, and 7) Space, and these will be modified and supplemented as further research is conducted. Lectures have their specialized areas, but they are closely related to each other and are not separated from each other.

The first category is “Knowledge.” The “Mobility of Crops and World History” consists of the following five lectures: 1) Pepper: The Oldest Crop in Latin America, 2) Tobacco: Is it a Gift from God or Smoke of the Devil?, 3) Sugar, the “White Gold”: Sugar Changes the World, 4) Corn: Religion & Culture of Mesoamericans,

Table 1 Curriculum of Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures (77 out of the target 100 lectures are developed)

	Knowledge	Reason	Ethics
Digital Contents	Understanding Mobility through Spatial Theory and the Development of a Digital Culture Map (10 lectures)	Cinema Paradiso of Mobility—Focused on Netflix (1 lecture)	Digital Citizenship in a Mobility Society (3 lectures)
Technology	Efficient Use of Smartphones (5 lectures)		Mobility Technology and Civic Participatory Politics (5 lectures)
Gender	Mobility in Literature: Movement and Border Crossing of Women (3 lectures)	The Changing History of Digital Contents (3 lectures)	Mobility Transition and Gender—"Gender" beyond Gender (5 lectures)
Environment	Mobility of Crops and World History (5 lectures)		Mobility Ecological Humanities for the Real Grown-Up (10 lectures)
Justice		Career Exploration for Youth and Mobility—a Journey to Find Me of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (3 lectures)	Social Philosophy for Urban Communities in the Era of Mobility (10 lectures)
Art	Understanding Mobility from the Perspective of Korean Dance (3 lectures)	Mobility in Art History: Edward Hopper who Depicted Modern Life (3 lectures)	Ecole de Paris: Foreign Painters in Paris (3 lectures)
Space	Reading the Space of Mobility (1 lecture)	Mobility in the City (1 lecture)	Mobility and Design Psychology, Synesthesia Modality, and Mobility (3 lectures)

and 5) Potato: a Crop that Witnessed the Development and the Rise and Fall of the Inca Civilization.

This lecture covers the global impact of the mobility of crops produced in Latin America through an exploration of world history. By looking at the origins of pepper, tobacco, sugar, corn, and the potato, crops that are widely consumed around the world, and how they spread to the world, it provides an understanding of the historical and sociocultural issues of Latin America. Through this knowledge course, learners examine mobility formed in Europe, Asia, and Africa through crops of Latin America to acquire the ability to think of mobility from “the southern” or “non-western” point of view.

The second category is “Reason”. Take “The Changing History of Digital Contents” as an example. This consists of three lectures: 1) Mobility in Media Seen through the Rise and Fall of the Film Industry, 2) Feminity and Gender Mobility Reflected in Korean Movies, and 3) Reproduction of Women’s Labor in Korean Films and Mobility. Example questions covered in this lecture are as follows: How is the gender of women realized and consumed in modern Korean films? How are the change and difference of gender reproduction reflected in Korean movies related to gender mobility? And in what way does the reproduction of women’s labor show hierarchical mobility? This Reason course helps learners to recognize the social issues regarding hierarchy in mobility through mobility reproduced in the media, so that they can reflect on their problems as a subject of recognition.

The third is the “Ethics” course. For example, “Digital Citizenship in Mobility-enabled Society” deals with the way the advancement of communication technology reconstructs the mobility society, and consists of three lectures: 1) The Development of ICT and the Appearance of Mobility-enabled Citizens, 2) Mobility-enabled Citizens, and 3) Characteristics and Future of Mobility-enabled Citizens. In the traditional industrial society, the mobility of material goods and people was important, but in the information society, mobility of the so-called information goods is emphasized and the information goods and people show converged mobility between online and offline modes. Focusing on these phenomena, this course explains the concept and characteristics of citizens who newly appeared in the ICT-based mobility-enabled society and suggests ethics for them. In particular, the “Ethics” course emphasizes how mobility technology is connected with cultures and affects our lives. What is important here is to provide an understanding of the conflicts between technological determinism and social constructivism through the philosophical concept of coevolution and to encourage learners to make an independent decision about an ethical way of living.

The Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lecture Series covers various topics regarding mobility humanities education, so some may point out that each lecture has different characteristics. However, given that the Lecture Series is the first mobility education contents developed in Korea, it was thought desirable to have variety. Further, unlike typical curriculums pursued at undergraduate or graduate schools, diverse subjects are required to meet various preferences, since this course is to be delivered to unspecified learners.

The example lectures above are categorized by the character of the course, not level of difficulty. For instance, to help understand the basics of mobility, the MHE creates video clips of 2–3 minutes’ duration and offers them on YouTube. These are about the basics but not too easy to understand.³⁴ That means, the courses in

mobility humanities offered as civic education in the form of “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures”: 1) have goals set for each level, 2) offer educational contents that are available online and offline, and 3) are delivered to learners of Humanities Dream (youth), Humanities Happy (the middle-aged), and Humanities Hope (the underprivileged) classes. The focus of these contents is on enhancing the learners’ ability to think, but there is room for improvement in the sense that continuity of learning is not guaranteed.

Out-of-Classroom Lectures and Online Lectures

As an out-of-classroom lecture, the participatory education section of the MHE offers the “Mobility Humanities Week Events” that are held regularly once a year and “Mobility Humanities Fairs” that are held frequently. The MHE also offers a variety of events that citizens can participate in for a week under the “Mobility Humanities Week Event” banner. On the other hand, the “Mobility Humanities Fair” consists of visits to historical sites of mobility through walking mobility programs such as “Exploring my Neighborhood” and “Mobility Humanities of Walking,” essay contests, and lecture meetings, etc.

- 1) Mobility Humanities Week Event: Under the program the MHE sets a week as Mobility Humanities Week and invites local residents to the university to conduct exhibitions and participatory education sessions that aim to promote mobility agenda. Citizens can learn and share their understanding about practical mobility by exhibiting or displaying their artworks related to mobility, participating in film festivals, book concerts, or speech contests, and taking part in an event called Campus Walking Mobility.
- 2) Mobility Humanities Fair: As a humanities-related event that is open to citizens all the year-round, the following events are held: “Exploring My Neighborhood”, “Mobility Humanities of Walking,” “Essay Contests on Mobility”, “Seminar”, etc.

In particular, “Exploring My Neighborhood” is a program to raise understanding of mobility humanities by having participants visit historic sites in the region where they live to experience history and culture. The purpose of this program is to give an opportunity to recognize the humanistic value of the region again through the historical humanities assets of the relevant area, such as ancient palaces and old roads. The event “Mobility Humanities of Walking” does not concentrate on a specific place like “Exploring My Neighborhood,” but rather focuses on the act of walking itself and observing the present and future of our society and considering the reason why we need to walk while walking

together with citizens. These kinds of participatory programs were presented in the Korean media and promoted to not only the citizens who participated but also all over the country, contributing to enhancing awareness of mobility humanities.

In order to share the research achievements in mobility humanities with society and the general public, the MHE developed online lectures of the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” using a channel on YouTube and started a streaming service in February 2020.³⁵ The MHE is planning to develop up to 100 lectures by next year, and the titles of the current 31 lectures that are streamed online are as follows.

- Mobility and Films I
- Mobility and Films II
- Mobility and Films III
- Mobility and Platformization
- Mobility and Smartphone
- The Paradigm Shift of Mobility Films
- Mobility Society and Information Revolution
- Offline-based Movement of Information
- Information Power of Future Mobility Society
- Advantages and Disadvantages of ICT-based Mobility Society
- ICT and Coevolution of Mobility Citizen
- Characteristics of Mobility Citizen
- Mobility in History I: “Hill”, a Geographical and Humanistic Boundary
- Mobility in History II
- Mobility in History III
- Human Evolution and Mobility: The First Family Photo taken in the Serengeti
- Human Evolution and Mobility: Fire, the Condition of Human Migration
- From Africa to the End of the World
- Wheels that changed Mankind to Tourists
- Mobility Revolution and its Limitations
- Femininity and Gender Mobility Reflected in Korean Movies
- Reproduction of Women’s Labor in Korean Films and Mobility
- Mobility in Media Seen through the Rise and Fall of the Film Industry
- Mobility by Value Design: Mobility
- Mobility by Value Design: Value Design
- Mobility by Value Design: Digital Transformation
- Pepper: The Oldest Crop in Latin America
- Tobacco: Is it a Gift from God or Smoke of the Devil?
- Sugar, the “White Gold”: Sugar Changes the World

- Corn: Religion and Culture of Mesoamericans
- Potato: a Crop that Witnessed the Development and the Rise and Fall of the Inca Civilization

In-Classroom Lectures and Statistical Analysis

As mentioned above, the representative mobility humanities education carried out by the MHE is the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures,” which is an open lecture system available online and offline. It offers both traditional in-class lectures and online lectures using YouTube services. The classroom here means a space equipped with teaching aids and materials for the lecture, and the best example is classrooms of elementary, middle, and high schools. The merit of in-classroom lectures is that both teachers and learners can intimately relate to the common topic. As the focus of this type of lecture is to communicate knowledge, however, it is not easy to open a lecture unless there are interesting topics as well as citizens with a strong desire to learn. Therefore, in-classroom lectures need to be prepared with interesting topics that are tailored to the level of learners.

In Korea, the elementary, middle, and high schools offer co-curricular activities through “After School Programs”³⁶ other than the regular curriculum. The MHE sends its instructors to the “After School Programs” and offers mobility humanities lectures for young students. In addition, it also offers lectures in municipal education institutes such as the Seoul Science Center, providing education to middle-aged and older citizens.

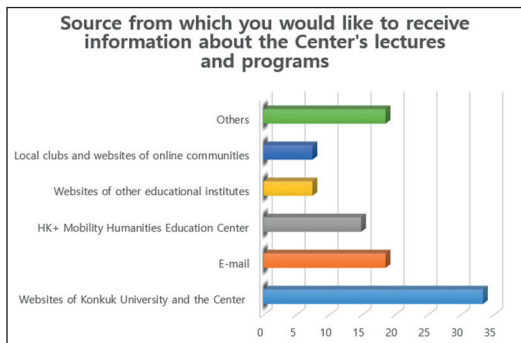
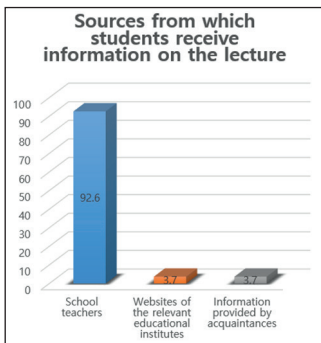
In 2019, the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” offered 21 lectures (22 lectures last year, 43 lectures in total) at the Seoul Science Center, Seongdong Foundation for Arts & Culture, High School Attached to the College of Education, Dongguk University, Konkuk University Middle School, etc., and conducted a survey to check the lecture conditions.³⁷ The results of the survey (conducted on 25 July 2019) on the “The 4th Industrial Revolution Technologies in the Era of Mobility” delivered as an after-school program in the High School Attached to the College of Education, Dongguk University located in Seoul are as follows: In a sense, it is difficult to arrive at a well-rounded quality evaluation of the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures” based on these survey results, which were dependent on analysis of short-term statistical data. Nevertheless, it is expected that these survey results can make meaningful contributions in terms of data accumulation and future predictions regarding the early stages of mobility humanities education in Korea.

Out of the total 27 male students who attended the lectures, three (11.1%) were from Gwangjin-gu, where Konkuk University is located, 16 students (59.3%) lived in Seoul other than Gwangjin-gu, and eight (29.6%) were from areas other than

Seoul. The time required to reach the school was as follows: 13 students were within 10 min. (48.1%), nine students within 20 min. (33.3%), one person within 40 min. (3.7%), and four within 50 min. (14.8%).

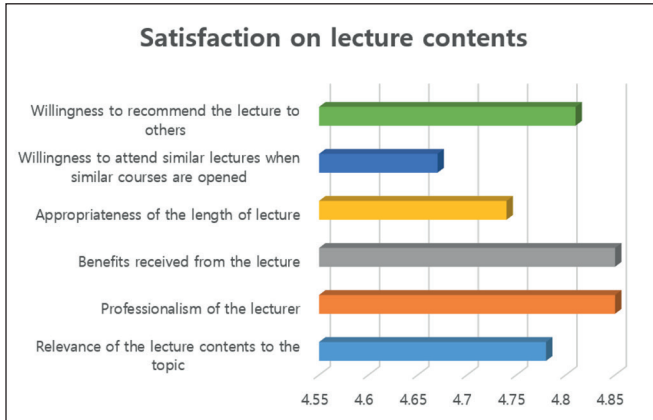
To the frequency analysis on the awareness of the MHE, the organization that offered the lectures, 22 students (81.5%) responded that they “didn’t know” about the existence of the MHE. And 25 students (92.6%) heard about the lecture and its contents through their teacher. However, one student (3.7%) learned about the lecture through the MHE website, one student (3.7%) heard about the lecture from his acquaintance, and one student (3.7%) learned about it from both the website and his acquaintance.

When asked how they would like to acquire information on the lecture, nine students (33.3%) said they wanted to learn through websites, five (18.5%) preferred e-mail, four (14.8%) wished to receive leaflets from the MHE, two (7.4%) selected websites of other educational institutes, two (7.4%) opted for online community websites, and five (18.5%) selected others. These figures are meaningful as they reflect that 33.3% of learners are very actively interested to get information about the lecture, and 18.5% wanted to have the information through e-mail, which can be interpreted as they are also somewhat active. This means that the lectures received positive responses in the sense that 48.8%, almost half of all students, became interested in the lectures. However, answers from those who wanted to acquire the information from sources like websites of other educational institutes that are not directly related to the MHE can be interpreted as an indirect refusal, meaning it is necessary to come up with plans to engage the other half of students more positively.



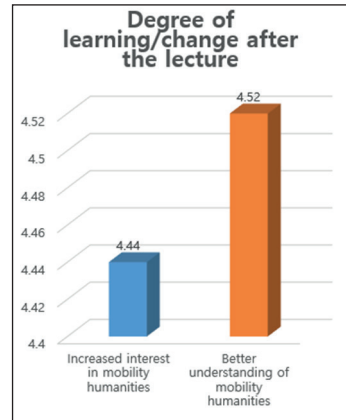
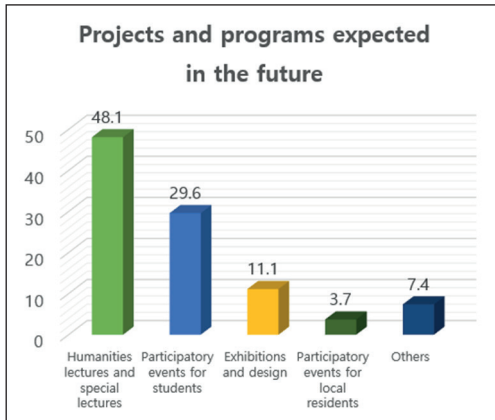
The following are the results of analyzing the “Lecture Satisfaction Survey” on a scale of five points with six items. The overall satisfaction on the six items was 4.78 points on average, which is 94.6 when converted to 100 points. The

satisfaction on the benefits of the lectures was the highest, which means the significance and necessity of mobility humanities education were well understood by the students. Further, when it comes to the intention to recommend the lecture to others, the responses scored 4.81, which was high. However, when asked if they would attend a similar lecture, the responses scored 4.67, suggesting that improvement is required in this area.



In an analysis on the opinions for the direction of the Center's future programs, almost half of them, 13 students (48.1%), expected lectures on humanities and special lectures, eight (29.6%) said they wanted participatory events for students, three students (11.1%) wanted exhibitions and design-related events and one (3.7%) wanted participatory events for local residents. Two students (7.4%) selected other options, which include "fun" and "visual approach of youth to the future-oriented technology." These results reflect that the MHE's approach to learners is in line with the participatory model for students or local residents, which will be reviewed later.

Next we present the results of a technical statistical analysis on the degree of learning or change after taking the lectures of the "Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures" on a scale of five against two items. The average score was 4.48 or 87.0 when converted to 100 points. The scores for all items were over 80 points: the score for "Increased interest in mobility humanities" was 4.44 on average or 86.1 point out of 100, and that for "Increased understanding of mobility humanities" was 4.52, which is 88.0 when converted to 100 points. Given that this lecture dealt with a topic that was unfamiliar to students who were new to mobility humanities, this is a good result.



In order to identify the correlation of satisfaction on lecture contents, on lecturers and the learning environment, the overall satisfaction, and the degree of learning or change after the lecture, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. As a result, it was established that the satisfaction on lecture contents was positively (+) correlated with the satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment ($r=.74$, $p<.001$); the correlation between the overall satisfaction was also positive (+) ($r=.47$, $p=.014$); and regarding the degree of learning or change after the lecture, it showed a positive (+) correlation ($r=.83$, $p<.001$). The satisfaction on the lecturers and the learning environment was not positively correlated with the overall satisfaction, but it showed a positive (+) correlation with the degree of learning or change after the lecture ($r=.76$, $p<.001$). Further, the overall satisfaction did not show a positive correlation with the degree of learning or change after the lecture.

Multiple regression analysis was also performed to verify the impact that the satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment had on the degree of learning or change after the lecture. It showed that $F=32.90$, which means the significance probability was proved to be fit. The R-squared value was .73, which means that the satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment could explain about 73% of the degree of learning or change after the lecture. As a result of significance test on the regression coefficients, it was verified that the satisfaction on lecture contents had a positive (+) effect on the degree of learning or change after the lecture ($\beta=.57$, $p=.001$), and the satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment also positively (+) affected the degree of learning or change after the lecture ($\beta=.34$, $p=.040$). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the degree of learning change increases with greater satisfaction on lecture contents, lecturers, and the learning environment. When comparing

Table 2 Correlation between the satisfaction and changes after the lecture

Unit: r(p)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Satisfaction on lecture contents	1			
2. Satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment	.74 ($<.001$)	1		
3. Overall satisfaction	.47 (.014)	.24 (.233)	1	
4. Degree of learning or change after the lecture	.83 ($<.001$)	.76 ($<.001$)	.26 (.187)	1

Table 3 Effect of satisfaction on degree of learning or change after the lecture

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Coefficient	T	Significance Probability
Degree of change after the lecture	Satisfaction on lecture contents	.57	3.68	.001
	Satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment	.34	2.18	.040
F=32.90(p<.001), R ² =.73				

the standardized regression coefficients of the two variables, the effect of the satisfaction on lecture contents on the degree of learning or change after the lecture was greater than that of the satisfaction on lecturers and the learning environment.

The results of verification with the above statistics are as follows:

1. Public relations for the 'Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures' are required.
2. After the lectures, about 50% of learners showed an active interest in the lecture contents, but it is necessary to find ways to engage the other half more positively.
3. There were some achievements as most of the learners were satisfied with the lectures and their understanding of mobility humanities was changed in a meaningful way.
4. It is necessary to expand the base for mobility humanities by proactively and continuously providing the "Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures." Apart from this, it is confirmed that there is a need for participatory learning.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed education focused on mobility humanities using the case study of the Mobility Humanities Education Center of Konkuk University in Seoul. The case of mobility humanities education is significant in that it opens a new chapter in Liberal Arts education that is necessary for the era of high-mobility by establishing an education model in the early stage. The education on Liberal Arts by the mobility paradigm will be a good example as it can be used in convergence-based Liberal Arts education and life-long learning in this era when the Fourth Industrial Revolution has given rise to many conflicting ideas and considerations in the field of education. As is well known, mobility technology and systems have rapidly evolved, as seen through the development of driverless cars and air taxis. Now, we need to reconsider whether the development of mobility technology will make our lives happier. The HK+ Mobility Humanities Education Center (MHE) will offer people opportunities to think about how mobility development will be involved in human lives. Also, knowledge and information spread through mobility humanities education will enable people to reflect and express their thoughts and opinions on decisions regarding future mobility technology made by the government and companies with a stake in these developments.

To this end, I would like to define mobility humanities education as a subject of Liberal Arts education that promotes human rights and raises awareness on the importance of life in this high-mobilities era as it establishes the principle of mobility and trains learners to recognize themselves as subjects of history in the process of the development of mobility. This education on Liberal Arts applies the three directions of knowledge, reason, and ethics to the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures.” The curriculum for this has been developed and operated in seven areas: 1) Digital contents, 2) Technology, 3) Gender, 4) Environment, 5) Justice, 6) Art, and 7) Space.

In addition, it offers lectures to those who demand this education according to the life-cycle, enabling “continuous life-long learning” in local communities. These classes are classified as Humanities Dream Class for the youth, Humanities Happy Class for the middle-aged, and Humanities Hope Class for providing equal educational opportunities, letting instructors determine the level of lectures considering learners’ level and interests at the site of education. Based on the evaluation of effects of mobility humanities education, the MHE will request financial support from the Korean government so that mobility humanities education will be firmly established as part of the liberal arts knowledge of our civil society. This feedback on the benefits of mobility humanities education will lead to the development of new courses and educational contents, providing opportunities for Korean

society to contemplate the advancement of mobility technology and its impact on human lives.

The results of the survey administered to the learners of the in-classroom lecture suggest that the lecture was partly successful. This is based on the finding that half of the learners consistently showed interest in mobility humanities education. One of the difficulties that the students had in understanding the educational agenda in the early stage might be that they were unfamiliar with the concept, but it was also observed that there is still room for improvement. The respondents of this survey were not forced to attend the lectures, but because of the lack of choice in the framework of “After School Programs,” it was difficult to motivate them to voluntarily choose it. Most of the students attended the class based on a recommendation from their teacher, not by the information they obtained on their own. However, this will be resolved as lectures on mobility humanities are increased in the future, and for this, more promotion strategies should be prepared.

Although it appears that the lecture contents received positive feedback, it is necessary to develop contents and teaching methods that could attract the other half of the learners who did not express continued interest. Regarding this, a workshop for instructors of mobility humanities was held on 16 January 2020, and like learners, instructors also pointed out that it was difficult to motivate learners due to a lack of publicity. Instructor K said that “some learners showed interest in the lecture but more than half of them were tired of learning.” To improve this problem, there were suggestions that: “instructors should prepare a lecture that is easier to understand and more fun,” and “need to use humor when explaining the contents.” Instructor P suggested that: “teachers should use more teaching aids and prepare more digital contents.” In short, in order to develop quality lectures for the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures,” 1) promotional strategies, a factor to draw attention from the learners, should be established, 2) lectures that are tailored to the level of learner need to be developed so that they have continued interest in taking the lectures, 3) workshops for instructors should be held on a regular basis so that they can exchange information on education, and 4) more surveys are required to get feedback from learners.

Lastly, the effects of online and offline lectures should be verified separately as online lectures have been developed for the “Mobility Hi-Story 100 Lectures.” However, it has not been long since commencement of the online lectures, and hence a survey on the online lectures will be performed later. Moreover, although the survey and the analysis of feedback on the out-of-classroom participatory learning programs have been completed, the results will be announced through a separate paper as the amount of data is very substantial.

In developing the curriculums for mobility humanities education, emphasis needs to be placed on the relationship between mobility and subjects under the humanities domain even in the area of natural sciences or digital studies. Such an approach is essential to enhance humanistic thinking in the long term. For example, MHE developed a textbook titled “Mobility Ecological Humanities” for the lectures on ecological humanities. The book’s cover has the phrase “Literary observation and scientific appreciation,” which shows the ultimate purpose of this lecture, viz. an analysis of ecological humanities from the perspective of literature and science. Further, its contents also help learners to understand concepts of ecology through literary texts. This approach is also evidenced by “Mobility and Films,” a book written as an extension of a course on mobility and movies. This book covers the history of films from cave paintings to theaters, explaining the moments when mobility cultures that developed in America and American theaters came to be involved in human life. This is part of efforts to help the public understand the role of mobility in humanities through an organic cycle of humanities lectures, online lecture contents, liberal art books, etc., and will be supplemented with more various and specific educational contents in the future.

Notes

1. This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2018S1A6A3A03043497). Early versions of the article were presented at seminars in London and Lancaster.
2. Postal Address: 1101, New Millennium Hall, Konkuk University, 120 Neungdong-Ro, Gwangjin-Gu, Seoul 05029, Korea Email Address: jooyoki@konkuk.ac.kr.
3. “Mind travelling with the Museum of Geography,” “Site-specific art installation at the railway station of Padua,” “VenetoNight 2019—Researchers’ Night” (<https://www.mobilityandhumanities.it/social-activities/>).
4. Peter Merriman & Lynne Pearce. “Mobility and the Humanities,” *Mobilities*, 12–4 (2017), 493–508.
5. Lee Jin-Hyoung, “Sae mobilitt’i paerödaim kwa mobilitt’i t’eksüt’ü yön’gu pangböp üi mosaek.” *Taejung sösa yön’gu* 24.48 (2018): 382.
6. It is understood that the sociologists found mobilities an important element of a society and established an academic system first. However, mobility, once a topic under the social science field, is now studied under the humanities field.
7. Peter Merriman, “Rethinking Mobile Methods,” In *Mobility and the Humanities*, Ed., Lynne Pearce & Peter Merriman (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 167–187.
8. Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “The new mobilities paradigm,” *Environment & Planning A* 38 (2006): 207.
9. Peter Adey, *Mobility* (Second edition), London and New York: Routledge, 2017.
10. David Bissell, *Transit Life*, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2018.
11. If you think of the difficulties experienced in daily lives when you do not know the new terms introduced by advancements in smart phone technologies, you will recognize how rapidly a technology spreads and is applied to the people (Chung Seung Ho and Kim Won Taik, “Noin sayongja üi sumat’ü p’on sayong e taehan kaesön pangan yön’gu: sinch’ae

- inchi-chök t'üksöng kwa kaenyöm, yongö, kisol ihae üi öryöum üi chungsim üro." *Tijain yungbokhap yön'gu* 13-2 (2014): 277-295).
12. See an analysis of the Mobility crisis by Fujita Emi and Kim Joo-Young, "Mobillit'I wiki rosö üi wönjön chaehae chiyök üi t'onghae pon puhüng kwa chaehae üisik: Fukushima wa Fukushima üi puhüng." *Ilbon-ö munhak* 79 (2018): 395-421.
 13. Shin Ji Sun, "Köllibö yöhaenggi pönyök e nat'anan kyoyuk-chök mokchök üi pyönhwan koch'al." *Tonghwa wa pönyök* 11 (2006): 171.
 14. Lim Su-jin, "K'ollombösü hanghaerok: sönggong han 'hanghae' wa silp'ae han 'palgyön' üi kirok," In *Humanities in Travel Journal*, Ed. by Korean Cultural History Geography Society. Seoul: Pulungil, 2018, 228-254.
 15. Chae Yeonseok, "Illyu üi mirae rül hyöksin-chök üro pakkun Ap'ollo 11 ho üi tal t'amsa," *Chisik üi chip'yöng* 27 (2019): 1-2.
 16. Gimm Gong Hoe, "Marük'üsü üi 'segye': kaenyöm üi hyöngsöng kwa suyöng kurigo chönmang," *Marük'üsü chuii yön'gu* 5.2 (2018): 20.
 17. Mimi Sheller, "What Is Mobility Justice?" In *Mobility Justice*, Ed. by Mimi Sheller (London: Verso, 2018), 20.
 18. Klaus Schwab, *K'üllausü Syubap üi 4 ch'a sanöp hyöngmyöng* (Schwab's 4th Industrial Revolution). Ed. by Song Kyung-Jin, Seoul: Mekasüt'ödi buksü, 2016, 10-13.
 19. Son Donghyun, "Saeroun kyoyuk suyo wa kyoyang kich'o kyoyuk." *Kyoyang kyoyuk yön'gu* 1.1 (2007): 108.
 20. Paek Seung Su, "4 ch'a sanöp hyönmyöng sidae üi kyoyang kyoyuk üi panghyang mosaek." *Kyoyang kyoyuk yön'gu* 11.2 (2017): 18.
 21. Paek, "4 ch'a," 2017, 19.
 22. "Life Education Act," The National Law information Center, accessed April 2, 2020, <http://www.law.go.kr/%EB%B2%95%EB%A0%B9/%ED%8F%89%EC%83%9D%EA%B5%90%EC%9C%A1%EB%B2%95>.
 23. Ahn Jongbae, "4 ch'a sanöp hyöngmyöng esö üi kyoyuk p'aerödaim üi pyönhwa." *Midiö wa kyoyuk* 7.1 (2017): 33.
 24. Kang Sudol, "Kwahak kisol üi chöngch'i kyöngjehak pip'an." *Inmul kwa sasang* 221 (2016): 101-105.
 25. Kang, "Kwahak," 2016, 90.
 26. Kang, "Kwahak," 2016, 90.
 27. Paek, "4 ch'a," 2017, 27.
 28. Paek, "4 ch'a," 2017, 28.
 29. Ahn, "4 ch'a," 2017, 30.
 30. The Humanities Dream Class was named so in the sense of pursuing a mobility class that cultivates hope for the future. These classes are for elementary, middle, and high school students until they become college students and can attend professional Liberal Arts lectures.
 31. The Humanities Happy class is for the middle-aged or the elderly who want self-improvements after graduating from college. The MHE sends its instructors to night classes established at life-long education institutes.
 32. The Humanities Hope Class is for underprivileged learners in a blind spot of educational opportunities and is developed considering their circumstances.
 33. Hi-Story is a newly-coined word which is a combination of two words, "story" and "history." The rapid development of mobility technology and the consequent advancement of movements of humans, objects, and relations in the high-mobilities era break down the distinction between time and space and require modern society and future society to be in a state of continuity (Hi-story). Therefore, Mobility Hi-story is a term that presents a timely request to create a high-quality story by cultivating humanistic literacy appropriate for the

- high-mobility era (KU Academy of Mobility Humanities HK+ Mobility Humanities Education Center. http://www.mobilityhumanities.academy/12_lectures/history_list.html?lang=EN).
34. The titles of the total 10 lectures are as follows: 1) Mobility: Understanding of the Concept of “Mobility,” 2) New Mobility Paradigm: Understanding of the Mew Mobilities Paradigm of John Urry, 3) Placelessness: Understanding of the “Placelessness” that Appears as Mobility Advances, 4) Irony of Mobility: Conflicting Functions of Mobility in Different Situations and Contexts, 5) Automotive Mobility: The Past and Future of Mobility of Automobiles that have Dominated Mobility in the Modern World, 6) Mobility and Gender: Gendered Mobility and its Outcome, 7) Mobility of Immigrants and Refugees: The Crisis of Global Mobility in the Era of High-mobility, 8) Homo Mobilicus and Smartphone: How Smartphones Enable “Homo Moveness”?, 9) Mobility Justice: Introduction of *Mobility Justice* by Mimi Sheller, and 10) “Transit Life”: Introduction of *Transit Life* by David Bissell. The titles themselves already imply the professional contents of each lecture. Each title implies that the professional contents are summarized in each lecture.
 35. AMH Konkuk, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyHieWcE1Y8qL2pmvhGrGOW>.
 36. In Korea, the “After School Program” has been actively carried out in schools after the regular curriculum ends, since the Education Reform of 13 May 1995. Soodong Kim, Jumyoung Young, Yeongmo Jeong, “A Study on the Current Status, Problems and Development Strategies of After-School,” *Asia-Pacific Journal of Multimedia Services Convergent with Art, Humanities, and Sociology* 7–2 (2017): 855–864.
 37. The survey was conducted by the author, the director of the Center, and the director of AMH, the parent organization of MHE, provided approval to use some part of the data in this paper.

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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mimetic Desire and *Ressentiment* in the Case of the Japan–South Korea Trade Dispute¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explanatory account of the role of emotions in the trade dispute between Japan and South Korea which started in July 2019. Building on an integrated approach to the study of emotions in international relations, it argues that the collective experience of emotions in situations of conflict has to be understood in relation to the moralities assumed by the parties involved. It proposes a theoretical framework combining the concepts of mimetic desire and *ressentiment* coined by René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche, respectively, in order to problematize the dialectic of power-justice underlying the processes of legitimation and self-justification by the two countries. In this sense, the strong emotional reactivity between both elites and people in South Korea and Japan can be attributed to the contradictions between the desires for superiority and equality channelled by nation-state-centred narratives. It concludes that ending the cycle of emotional reactivity requires both parties to move toward commitments to justice and empathy at the domestic and international levels.

Keywords: Mimetic Desire, Ressentiment, IR, South Korean Trade Disputes, Emotion in IR

Introduction

In July 2019, the Japanese government announced its decision to impose restrictions on the export of semiconductor materials by ending South Korea's special status as a trade partner. Since then, the two countries' bilateral relations have considerably deteriorated, and remain charged with a degree of hostility and distrust. This situation does not only involve official inter-state relations, but also the citizens of both countries. As a form of popular retaliation, many Koreans decided to boycott Japanese products and refrain from travelling to Japan, to which Japanese people responded with a mix of surprise and incomprehension.² One year after the conflict started, 72% of Koreans were still participating in the boycott movement.³ The strong and lasting reaction from the Korean side can be imputed, on the one hand, to the damaging effects that the decision is believed to have on the Korean economy, and on the other hand to the different views assumed by each party regarding the motives behind the decision. The two countries' colonial history has left a vivid and painful memory, which taints the relations between Japan and South Korea, and this memory is conspicuously linked to the present conflict. This paper argues that it is necessary to look further into how and why it has persisted for such a long time, and why it continues to arise in issues that do not seem directly related, in this case Japan's decision to end a mutually profitable agreement on trade relations based on alleged security concerns. Therefore, the main question that this paper attempts to address is the following: How can we explain the tensions between the two countries in the context of the trade dispute by looking beyond the factors that are immediately visible and the claims made by both parties?

By addressing this question, this paper seeks to contribute to the research agenda put forward by Korean IR scholars, mainly Eun Yong-soo⁴ and Min Byoung-won,⁵ for a non-Western approach to International Relations (IR). As a challenge to mainstream IR, this agenda proposes theoretical and epistemological innovations while at the same time avoiding the traps of parochialism and essentialism. Rather than a rejection of Western scholarship, it is thus a critique of its Eurocentric attributes and an attempt to build "interim" theoretical and analytical solutions to reconcile Western and non-Western perspectives.⁶ This can be done by promoting pluralism within the discipline: rather than creating different disciplinary cores which IR borrows from while keeping their insights on the margins of its mainstream scholarship, there is a need to bring what has been kept on the margins into the core of the discipline. An example of the latter is the lack of engagement with new psychological approaches which, as Eun (2013) remarked,⁷ have gained in depth and can significantly enrich the study of international politics

if taken more seriously. Accordingly, this paper focuses on a particular area in psychological approaches: that of emotion studies, which is used to shed light on Japan–South Korea relations while keeping a balance between cultural particularity and universal aspects of social organization and inter-group relations.

This requires, on the one hand, a conceptualization of emotions at the collective level, and on the other hand a problematization of their role in political behavior. With regards to the former, this paper builds from recent work by IR scholars who have integrated such dichotomies as reason/emotion, physiology/cognition, and micro/macro-level. It further suggests that the conceptualization of emotion should take into account the moral grounds of the behavioral choices made by the agents involved in those relations. The latter task will be approached using the contributions of René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche to moral philosophy, namely mimetic desire and *ressentiment*, as hermeneutic tools for the understanding and interpretation of emotions at the collective level. Based on this framing, the key argument of this paper is that the rising tensions that characterized the political as well as wider social response to the Japanese government's decision can be explained by an unresolved duality of desires: that of the elites for power and that of the grassroots for justice. However, it also highlights that these two objects of desire may work in opposite directions due to a deeply seated *ressentiment* in South Korean society, delaying the resolution of the fundamental moral conflict with Japan and obstructing emotional reconciliation.

The rest of this paper is divided into four main sections. Section two provides a selective review of the literature on emotion studies in IR and proposes a theoretical framework that accounts for the moral values underlying emotions. Section three clarifies the methodological approach used in this paper and delineates the latter's scope and limitations. Section four undertakes an empirical application of the proposed conceptual framework through a case study of the trade dispute between South Korea and Japan. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the paper's aims and argument.

Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Emotions in IR

The ancient dichotomy between the rational/enlightened and irrational/primitive human being⁸ has long remained at the heart of what we know today as the realist school in international relations. While research undertaken by realists does not exclude emotions from its scientific purview, its theorization of human behavior tends to be heavily influenced by the theory of rational choice. As Freyberg-Inan (2003) pointed out,⁹ the rational choice framework reduces behavioral motivation

to the pursuit of power, premised upon a calculative human nature, and driven by constant cost-benefit analysis of interests. Interference of emotions in this process is considered to have destructive effects and, consequently, they remain subordinate and detrimental to the primary power-interest nexus. However, in doing so, realists defeat their very “objectivist” and “realistic” aspirations. Developments in psychology and neuroscience have demonstrated that, as far as the empirically observable indicators of human decision-making at the neurobiological level are concerned, emotion is not only indissociable, but also *indispensable* to rational thinking.¹⁰ In the words of Damasio, what were previously considered as the “lowly orders of our organism are in the loop of high reason.”¹¹

Encouraged by this scientific turn, alternatives to the traditional treatment of emotions in politics have been put forward. Research by constructivists shows the importance of collectively shared memory, identity and experience,¹² trauma¹³ and humiliation¹⁴ in explaining the emotional dimension of international politics in a range of different contexts. Some of the alternatives also emerged from the neo-realist school itself: by engaging with the concepts of identity and shared values and beliefs borrowed from social psychology and constructivism, they explored the role of collective phenomena such as national loyalty, identity-based conflict between states, and emotional display in the conduct of diplomacy in explaining political behavior.¹⁵ However, their innovations are meant to better defend their basic argument of the self-interested actor. The world is still a competitive and power-driven arena, but one where rational actors need to navigate a complex set of symbolic and emotional parameters, in order to better protect their interests. As Lebow (2005) argued,¹⁶ this is an ontological assumption that is shared by “thin” constructivists.

On the other hand, “thick” constructivists’ ontology has been criticized for its rejection of a notion of human nature and any fixed or essential characteristics of experience and behavior. Yet in this ontology where emotions, identity, and other attributes are purely semiotic and arise in an inter-subjective fashion, it becomes difficult to coherently link materiality and meaning (Ringmar 2016).¹⁷ Additionally, while this constructivism has taken important steps toward disproving erroneous beliefs held by classical philosophers, its avoidance of defining human nature obstructs the study of international politics as praxis, that is to say, its value for the conduct of politics rather than simply as a tool for explanation and prediction. In this respect, it is useful to look at the scholarship that adds depth to constructivist insights on emotion with a focus on its intersection with moral and ethical dimensions. For instance, Hutchison and Bleiker (2008) emphasized how feelings of injustice can impede reconciliation in post-conflict societies, arguing that positive emotions of empathy and compassion

are more likely to lead to constructive outcomes.¹⁸ Bilewicz (2016) found that “historical defensiveness,” a strategy through which perpetrators deny responsibility for the wrong done by “downregulating” or containing moral emotions of guilt and shame, constitutes a key factor in situations of failed post-conflict reconciliation.¹⁹ Jeffery (2011) combined the notion of “moral sentiment” with recent findings in psychology and neuroscience to make a compelling suggestion: given that cognitive processes of moral deliberation are inclusive of emotions, we have to understand the rational analysis of real “facts” as an effort to assess the *constraints* to our moral behavior, and not as the justification for considering them as fixed knowledge of the world on which to build our morality.²⁰ From her perspective, “in order to be meaningful, ‘oughts’ must reflect actions that can, in fact, be enacted. A moral principle that requires individuals to do something that is functionally impossible for human beings to perform is effectively meaningless.”²¹ This argument is important to the theorization of emotion in a manner that takes into consideration both the universal conditions of its functioning, which are embedded in the lived reality of human societies, and the particular aspects of its meaning and role in historically constituted social relations.

Following from the above, the main challenge for contenders to the mainstream treatment of emotions in international politics has been to offer a convincing ontological account of emotions at both personal and collective levels of analysis. On the other hand, there is also a need to theorize the role of emotions without disregarding the moral dimension of politics. These challenges can be addressed through an integrated approach to the task of defining emotion through a set of basic assumptions that can be universalized, while leaving space for contingent and particularistic social and historical formations.

Conceptualizing Emotions

Due to rising conviction that emotions play an important role in world politics,²² some proposals for an integrated approach have been put forward.²³ While Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) called for combining insights from micro and macro-level approaches to theorize “social emotions,” others have suggested specific concepts to understand how the latter are formed.²⁴ Mercer (2014) suggested that, insofar as emotions are as much cultural as neurobiological phenomena, it is through individuals’ identification with common cultural norms and values that emotions become “contagious” within a group, and lead to a common reaction to certain events.²⁵ It is in this capacity that a state, although it is not an embodied entity, can “experience” emotion: through the in-group identifications that are always emergent rather than reified and fixed. In the same vein, Crawford (2014)

saw the contagion process as one of institutionalization, whereby emotional categories are derived from the dominant knowledge frames in a group and become part of “chains of belief, action, and response, [which] may confirm or heighten initial emotional reactions.”²⁶ In this sense, she stresses the importance of power in the functioning of social emotions. Fierke (2014) added the dimension of intentions and their link to the emergence of emotions within and in-between groups.²⁷ Emotional experiences in response to certain public actions may depend on how they were communicated through the media, and the intentions to which those actions were attributed. Ling (2014) stressed the vital role of linguistic codifications of culture in shaping the connotative meanings of emotions, such as the divisions between “winners” and “losers” or “masculine” and “feminine” figures, to which particular emotions are associated.²⁸

Recognizing the value of these contributions to emotions studies in IR, Eun (2018) put together a comprehensive proposal which unifies these insights into a theory of collective emotions at the national level.²⁹ It holds that collective emotions are made possible through the same processes as collective identification. The collective experience of emotions is reinforced by the existence of another group deemed exogenous, and whose identity is different. The sharper this difference is, the more likely is the indigenous group to create what he called a “superior identity” (우위 정체성) tied to its national narrative. The proposal can be summarized as follows:

1. The more internally coherent and strong this superior identity is in terms of adherence to its narratives and symbols, the likelier it is that a collective emotion corresponding to it will arise.
2. The presence of an external “other” whose narratives and symbols contradict or belittle the “native” superior identity makes it likelier for emotions like anger and hate toward that other to arise.
3. If the master identity of the other is different from the native’s master identity, it is likelier that negative emotions will arise.
4. The collective emotions corresponding to the superior identity of a group are made experientially “perceptible” to the majority of its members through the mass media. This communicative process is more likely to be successful if it is triggered by an actor termed “collective emotions entrepreneur” (집단감정 주창자) who diffuses emotions and may at the same time instrumentalize them.

However, this proposal does not explicitly address the collective memory of a group and the dimension of moral conflict. Building on this framework, the rest

of this paper will focus on how to account for the moral conflict between the desire for power and the desire for justice, and how they shape the normative basis for the collective emotions of a “superior identity.” To do this, I contend that there are two additional theoretical advances to be made. First, there is a need to ground the notion of morality in a definition of the human. This is not meant to essentialize it; rather, to put it in terms of Crawford’s (2009) argument, it is to fully accept the complexity of human nature and its irreducibility to one or a few characteristics.³⁰ Then, this definition is seen through the lens of the relational specificities of the emotional category of “*ressentiment*.”

Mimetic Desire as the Basis of Human Nature: Linking Morality and Emotion

In his “Definition of Man,” Burke (1966) distinguished human beings from animals through their linguistic ability, but for him the importance of this ability resides in the invention of “hortatory” speech: the language of right and wrong or morality, the very basis of social and political life.³¹ Yet when it comes to determining the source of morality and its organizing principles, one is at a loss for a fixed answer, which is why early philosophers approached this problem by adopting a stance on human nature. For instance, Hobbes and Rousseau appear to have radically different conceptions on human nature, but they both started from the assumption that all motivation of human social behavior is primarily influenced by that which they desire. For Hobbes (2002), humans act out of fear of death, desire for life, and hope to obtain the object of their desire.³² Their “passions” are “diversely called from the opinion men have of the likelihood of attaining what they desire,”³³ and therefore their perceptions of things are shaped by the relationship between the thing and the achievement of one’s desires. In this sense, what is good or moral is what is desirable, and what is evil or immoral is the undesirable. Rousseau (1889) took one step further by arguing that one must recognize which desires “spring from nature itself, and which of them from opinion,”³⁴ emphasizing that the distinction between inborn and acquired desires is vital for human education or, in other words, for enabling ethical life. He thought that desires come either from a natural order independent of human judgment or a human system of valuation generated within a society. For Girard, it is this idea that desires are socially “acquired” that constitutes the core of human attitudes and behavior in mimetic theory. Mimesis is the process through which human desires are mediated, enabling humans to construct their conception of what they want:

Humankind is that creature who lost a part of its animal instinct in order to gain access to 'desire,' as it is called. Once their natural needs are satisfied, humans desire intensely, but they don't know exactly what they desire, for no instinct guides them. We do not have our own desire, one really our own. The essence of desire is to have no essential goal. Truly to desire, we must have recourse to people about us; we have to borrow their desire.

This borrowing occurs quite often without either the loaner or the borrower being aware of it. It is not only desire that one borrows from those whom one takes for models; it is a mass of behaviors, attitudes, things learned, prejudices, preferences, etc.³⁵

Girard is in this sense extending his explanatory endeavor beyond the starting point taken by Burke,³⁶ reaching the initial stage in the formation of a subjective experience through social interaction, which precedes the development of any moral judgment. The notion of "good" then acquires its meaning through the reference frame of desirability, and the latter is constructed through mimesis. Although many scholars have proposed an explanation of human behavior through mimetic interaction with an "other" (e.g., Taussig 1993; Bhabha 1984; Benjamin 1996; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Albers 2008) understood as an individual or a group,³⁷ Girard's theory is distinctive due to its consideration of desire itself as the object of mimicry, rather than the visible behavioral effects ensuing from the pursuit thereof.

This process of acquiring desires is initially a mirroring of the other's desires that can be called "pre-rational" and "pre-cognitive,"³⁸ in which case a subject's idea of the desirable emerges *while* striving to obtain the same object, eventually engaging in what Girard calls mimetic rivalry. The latter is characterized by reciprocity and escalating tension, reinforced as "the appearance of a rival seems to validate the desire, the immense value of the object desired. [...] In imitating my rival's desires I give him the impression that he has good reasons to desire what he desires, to possess what he possesses, and so the intensity of his desire keeps increasing."³⁹ Thus it is through the process of imitation and competition that a moral rationality legitimating the desire is developed by the parties involved, and this morality of mimetic rivalry may in turn lead to conflict and violence.

Considering the applicability of mimetic desire and rivalry to colonialism reveals aspects that fulfil the theoretical assumptions above. Taking the example of European colonialism, the colonial mentality of nineteenth-century Europe can be seen as induced by the emergence of mimetic desire between nations competing for the same objects of desire, namely: territory, resources, and manpower. The widespread thesis that capitalism and the drive for wealth accumulation was the initial trigger for colonial and imperial projects⁴⁰ would view these as necessities emerging out of a changing mode of production, and therefore as objects

of economic utility contributing to the maintenance of social life, which is itself reducible to the biological needs of individuals. Girard's mimetic theory would view utility as the effect of colonialism rather than its impetus, the latter being the desire shared between European nations to possess what their rivals possessed.

Yet the mimetic rivalry is transferred to the dominated subject as well, which eventually leads to the validation of all the prejudices underpinning the relational dichotomy of "master-slave" invented in the course of legitimating colonial projects, precisely when the colonized adjust their desires to those of the colonizer. When the colonized desire what their colonizers possess, they strive for liberation and independence through "nationalism," the creation of an identity that appropriates the ethno-centric discourse of the colonizer and its associated notion of sovereignty and metrics of socio-economic progress. However, this process is not an exact reproduction of behavior by the subject performing the mimesis, but involves creativity:

Mimesis is no longer simply a mirror in which the Self confronts the Other, nor a process for the appropriation of the power of the Other, but a process by which social and cultural features of the Other are internalised in a negotiation of the confrontation between two cultures, a process which ultimately empowers the borrowing culture, allowing it, paradoxically, while changing, to nevertheless remain 'traditional.'⁴¹

By appropriating the desires of the colonial other, the colonized subject also borrows the latter's mechanisms of fulfilment of the acquired desire, but the rationale behind this is found in the subject's system of moral reference, which will portray the same object in a different light and create different justifications for its desirability. For instance, nationalist movements resist colonialism and claim the right to build an independent society, while using the colonizer's territorial, administrative, political, and ideological legacy to do so. This is present in the dualisms of Enlightenment thought: although it established the narrative of progress underpinning the civilizing mission of colonialism, it was also the source of claims to human freedom and equality that produced narratives of liberation.⁴² Mimetic desire thus fulfils the function of anti-colonialism and resistance and subsequently the achievement of independence, becoming in a sense a strategy. Another example is that of theories of development adopted by colonies and which carry out the desire for reaching equal status with their former colonizers. As Kim Du-jin (2019) observed, capitalist-driven modernization has often carried a story of linear progress originating from the West (in the case of Korea acquired through the intermediary of Japan) and adopted as part of a "colonial modernity."⁴³ This point of view has greatly influenced state policies aiming at "catching up" with the more "developed" capitalist countries. Eventually, this line of thinking aims to

justify the attempt to become *like* the colonial other. As Walker (2005) wondered, “does not subversion through mimesis owe something to the magical properties of copies of the Other? Might a copy, through ‘contagion,’ acquire the power of the Other?”⁴⁴ But this strategy is inseparable from the moral dichotomy corresponding to the master-slave relationship, the effects of which survive in collective memory. It is precisely this dichotomy, as well as the attitudes and emotions that result from it, which will be discussed below through Nietzsche’s concept of *ressentiment*.

Conceptualizing Ressentiment: Desire, Power, and (In)justice

Ressentiment was understood by Nietzsche as an emotion forming out of a master-slave relationship and arising from the moral position adopted by the “slave” either in a literal or figurative sense. The latter condemns as Evil what Nietzsche depicts as natural strength and dominance. Out of desire to compensate for his own vulnerability, the slave takes on the role of the victim and constantly struggles to obtain justice. Nietzsche explains this through the historical example of the opposition between Rome and Judea, arguing that the Judeo-Christian tradition, which praises the intrinsic virtue of the weak, the victimized and the exploited, lives in expectation of the great triumph of justice with the coming of the Lord’s kingdom, symbolizing the reversal of positions whereby they would become the “masters.” For Nietzsche, “priests make the most *evil enemies* [...] because they are the most powerless. Out of this powerlessness, their hate swells into something huge and uncanny to a most intellectual and poisonous level.”⁴⁵ By extension, *ressentiment* is the perception of a suffered wrong, a wounded identity, indignation about the acts perpetrated by the other that prevent access to the resources for equal and prosperous life; an “affectively charged desire for revenge that arises in response to a perceived injury.”⁴⁶ In the context of colonialism, one may argue that it is violence and dispossession that cause the most rancorous sentiments against the oppressor, but neither of the two is an exclusive feature of colonialism and they are far from being absent in colonized societies prior to the intervention of an external power. *Ressentiment* in colonial relations can be understood as the continuation of mimetic desire: the feeling of injustice is triggered by the inability to obtain the object of desire coveted both by the self and the other.

The Korean concept of *han* 恨 (恨) is very similar to that of *ressentiment*, and is commonly invoked by scholars, artists, and critics to explain the feelings of resentment that have formed out of Korea’s experience of colonialism. It “encapsulates how collective trauma and individual hardship can create a complex feedback loop within the social imaginary.”⁴⁷ If *han* contains the explanatory

elements for the Korean experience, then one might wonder why a concept from Western philosophy is used. The answer resides in the purposes of critical inquiry, which is to advance a framework that has explanatory usefulness beyond parochialism and essentialism. In other words, a concept needs to have a certain degree of universal applicability in its most basic formulation and to be non-reducible solely to the interests and attributes of a particular human group. In this respect, *ressentiment* as an emotional category with a wide range of possible applications allows one to avoid the trap of cultural essentialism. *Han* is often presented as an exclusive emotion that cannot be fully comprehended by individuals outside the Korean ethnic community. If one assumes that *han* is more suitable to explain the pattern of reactivity that South Koreans have demonstrated in their relations with Japan, because it corresponds to their unique cultural traits, then there is a significant risk of reproducing the exclusionary and subordinating practices of Eurocentrism. As Murray (2020) observed, “adding ethnicized or culturalist representations of non-Western traits will never deliver a global or post-imperial IR,” and this is because “a fuller and more complex picture of humanity is denied in favor of stereotypes.”⁴⁸ Emotions are an inherent aspect of human relations, and as this paper contends, they are intrinsically linked to the human sense of morality and how individuals and groups act upon it. For instance, Lind’s (2008; 2011) work on the role of apologies in post-conflict regions revealed a correlation between the way in which politics of remembrance were conducted by aggressors and threat perception from the victims.⁴⁹ Unapologetic remembrance of past wrongs breeds mistrust and tensions, and conservative backlash after an apology can undermine previous efforts of reconciliation. It is clear that all “countries observe each other’s remembrance and regard denials as a signal of hostile intentions.”⁵⁰ Similarly, even though the present study is limited to the case of Japan–South Korea relations, its aim is to enable plausible claims to be made about the conduct of international politics more generally, based on assumptions about human relations.

Consequently, it is important to avoid alienating the study of international relations in non-Western regions, in this case East Asia, from the purposes of social science, and at the same time to overcome the functional limitation of *han*. Whereas the literature defines it as an emotive concept that directly represents the pain, injustice, and sorrow collectively felt by the Korean people (Lim 2019), its primary function appears to be that of giving hope and not of inducing calculated, reactive actions in the name of justice.⁵¹ Nietzsche’s version allows the analyst to go beyond these limitations, especially, as argued in this paper, if seen as compatible with the concept of mimetic desire, which applies to humans in general and not a particular ethnic group. In this sense, as rivalry emerges between two

subjects in a non-equal relationship as is typical of a colonial relationship, *ressentiment* evolves in tandem with a morality of virtuous resistance for the sake of the good and the achievement of retributive justice, enabled by a persistent and calculative behavior. This behavior aims for the “revaluation of the values of the dominated,”⁵² and the wound and suffering caused by perceived injustice is never completely healed unless the dominated party is able to completely reverse the roles of master–slave or predator–victim. When the power asymmetries fail to be addressed, the victimized ends up “hitting upon a new evaluative framework that allows him to remove his pain or discomfort by making possible either self-affirmation or mental mastery over the external source of pain.”⁵³

Although Nietzsche’s moral philosophy claims to be a critique of morality itself, it is clear from his *Genealogy of Morality* that he is not taking a neutral, value-free stance. For him, the “slaves” corrupt the moral dichotomy of good and bad: here, the “bad” is what the noble “masters” think of those of lower rank, who are naturally inferior, because of their inability to assert themselves. This corruption reverses the perspective and substitutes “evil” for “bad,” making the evil other a target of hatred, and Nietzsche is keen to express his disapproval of this process. Reactive attitudes and emotions are condemned, denying the victim a mechanism of retaliation. Portraying the slaves’ reactivity as laden with falsity and bias, he contends that: “the active, aggressive, over-reaching man is still a hundred paces nearer to justice than the man who reacts; he simply does not need to place a false and prejudiced interpretation on the object of his attention, like the man who reacts does.”⁵⁴ However, in mimetic theory emotion arises from the process of desiring, and desire itself is acquired through confrontation with another and intensified through the “reactivity” of rivalry. In the context of colonial aggression, the political identity formed by a (formerly) colonized subject upon independence, during the phase that one may refer to as “post-colonialism,” is an inter-subjective or collective reality created through the emotional reaction to the injustice caused by the other. This process consists of “performing identities through appropriation of colonial Otherness.”⁵⁵ Post-colonial nations therefore may engage in a political strategy that denounces the colonial other as responsible for the lack of status, privilege, or resources necessary to their desired national outcomes, while remaining bound by the contemporary framework of international law. *Ressentiment* is also expressed through the affordances of the international system, and former colonial powers can also use these to resist the process of moral subversion.

Methodology

This paper is grounded in the epistemological claim that it is possible to demonstrate the underlying psycho-emotional patterns through observation and description of their symbolic manifestation in the form of language and action.⁵⁶ This is a primarily interpretive work that recognizes the fluid and dynamic character of meaning and the impossibility of capturing a stable truth about social reality.⁵⁷ Therefore, its attribution of moral values and emotions to agents whose cognitive and affective states cannot be accessed directly is incompatible with positivist measures of validity and replicability. Positivists would criticize the attempt to establish a link between philosophical concepts and the manifestation of psychological phenomena without setting verifiable standards of measurement. However, within the hermeneutic epistemology that underpins this research, interpretation cannot be separated from the subjective point of view of the knower and his or her mental categories.⁵⁸ In accordance with these assumptions, to demonstrate the applicability of mimetic desire to this case study, contextualization is used to find indications of desire by one of the parties involved to reproduce the political ambitions and policy approaches of the other, by tracing the two countries' shared history and its relevance to the present case study.

To analyze *ressentiment*, emotions are treated as “reaction patterns” inferable from their meaningful effects.⁵⁹ An analytical procedure can be built on Koschut's (2018) proposal of “emotion discourse analysis” (EDA), which can be executed in three steps.⁶⁰ First, the researcher undertakes a selection of “canonical” texts issued by “charismatic authorities” at “foundational or transformative moments or crises,”⁶¹ although it must be acknowledged that they cannot represent the whole group or population from which they were extracted. Second, the textual material is mapped according to its micro and macro-level semantic elements and the emotional meaning they encode. Third, the interpretation is undertaken according to the “emotionalizing effect” or the emotional categories that are diffused at the social and political level, and the extent to which these are confirmed or contested. Correspondingly, the text which will be analysed in this study is President Moon Jae-in's address delivered at the Emergency Meeting held on 2 August 2019. This speech is considered as the most relevant primary source for the purposes of this paper, as it is the most clearly articulated reaction to the Japanese government's decision to remove South Korea from its list of most trusted trade partners. As a figure of authority, Moon represents a collective emotions entrepreneur, and his speech was reproduced and cited through all types of media. The text will be analyzed in terms of how it demonstrates the presence of *ressentiment*. This can be done by looking for the verbal indicators of this emotion in accordance with

its description by Nietzsche. Thematic analysis is used to build themes around credible criteria.⁶² The following six criteria are borrowed from Wolf's (2013) adaptation of Nietzsche's concept to the study of emotions in IR:

- 1) Accusations of “unfair” status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility;
- 2) Principled calls for rectifying “unfair” policies;
- 3) Justifications of retributive measures taken against those policies;
- 4) Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor (in particular accusations that seem farfetched);
- 5) Satisfaction expressed about minor setbacks experienced by that actor (*schadenfreude*);
- 6) Articulations of revenge fantasies.⁶³

These (micro-level) criteria are considered in the “registers” of their expression (macro-level), i.e., the type of collective consciousness (e.g., historical, national) that they draw upon or invoke, and of “functions” that they serve in the particular setting of their articulation. This is combined with an inductive reading of the text that extracts statements corresponding to articulations of desires and emotions, along with the socio-cultural identities and relations that it constructs.

The Case of the Japan–South Korea Trade Dispute

After more than two hundred years of isolationism, Japan was bluntly forced to open its doors to the United States in 1853. In the aftermath of the Opium Wars, the colonial fate that China had been reduced to under the guise of the Open Door Policy seemingly left no other choice to the Japanese but to yield to the pressure.⁶⁴ Although the formal colonization of Japan did not take place, this confrontation may well have marked the beginning of the mimetic desire of Japan *vis-à-vis* the Western other, precisely as the object of desire was no less than the societal, scientific, and technological advances of the time commonly labelled as “modernization.” By 1868, the decentralized warlord caste system, considered the cause of the country's backwardness, was overthrown and a centralized modern state partially modelled according to Euro-American standards was established with the so-called Meiji Restoration. Under the rule of the reinstated emperor, Japan began a massive importation of European and American administrative and technical reforms for the country's modernization project, under the famous slogan of *Wakon yōsai* (和魂洋才) or “Japanese Spirit, Western Technology.”^{65,66}

Fear of Western colonialism was the initial impetus to “catch-up” with the West to ensure the protection of its national sovereignty, but soon a mimetic rivalry emerged between a fully militarized Japan and the US and European powers such as France and Great Britain, and this is an inseparable element from the formation of the Japanese colonial mentality and imperialism. The “renaissance” of the belief in a Japanese “spirit”:⁶⁷ a set of quintessential characteristics of Japan’s ethnic community, accompanied with the belief in the superiority of its national identity, played a significant role in steering the state’s policies at the time. One of the mottos coined by the Meiji government during its liberalization process: *bunmei kaika*, commonly translated as “civilization and enlightenment” strikingly reproduces the European moral discourse of the civilizing mission.⁶⁸ From then onward, the Japanese imperial state placed itself in the position of the “master” *vis-à-vis* its non-modernized neighbors, as the ambitious Pan-Asian territorial expansion to Taiwan, Manchuria, Korea, and the South Pacific islands was morally justified as “protecting” Asian countries from Western greed and guaranteeing their rights.⁶⁹ Yet the same discourse that claimed emancipation as a goal witnessed a turn from *bunmei kaika* to *kōminka*, i.e., the policy of imperialization whereby colonial subjects were to be transfigured from savages to loyal subjects of the Emperor.⁷⁰

The discourse of racial nationalism that justified Japanese imperialism was invented as a moral reference for the fulfilment of the desires for progress and power through mimetic rivalry with the West. It deprived the colonies of their sense of agency as their contribution to modernization was denied, excluding them from the dominant narrative of progress.⁷¹ It is not surprising, then, that the ensuing relationship between Japan and its colonies would lead to the accumulation of strong feelings of anger, humiliation, and disempowerment that generate *ressentiment*. For many centuries, both Japan and Korea⁷² had been part of the Chinese sphere of influence, operating under a combination of Confucian ideology and the Chinese tributary system. Although there had been previous Japanese invasions of Korea,⁷³ which certainly contribute to the convoluted colonial memory between the two countries, the 1910 annexation of Korea probably had the most damaging effect. By alienating itself from the two countries’ shared cultural legacy and creating a hierarchy based on the values of Western civilization, Japan had imposed itself as a model for mimetic desire in the region, establishing a relational inequality that would haunt the development of the two nations long after liberation. The post-war period saw long and excruciating debates on the nature and extent of the crimes committed by Japan in the course of its imperial ambitions,⁷⁴ and these are still not entirely settled today. Indeed, the revisionist stance adopted by the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan since the early 2000s⁷⁵ sparked the return of tensions and distrust between

Japan and its former colonies, as it was characterized by a provocative denial of responsibility and patronizing leadership over the region.

As Hundt and Bleiker (2007) remark, Japan and South Korea ended up becoming similar in many ways: “Both countries are liberal democracies. Both have made remarkable economic progress over several decades. And both have close political and security ties with the United States.”⁷⁶ Yet those similarities are overshadowed by the history of slavery and exploitation that continues to hinder “normal” diplomatic relations between the two “modern” countries—especially as they remain a strong reminder of the injustice suffered in the name of modernization. They also involve a master-slave dichotomy: real enslavement occurred through the practice of forced labor by the Japanese *zaibatsu*, major industrial companies such as Mitsubishi who used Korean workers to support wartime effort during the Second World War and abused their basic human rights. Many of them were also exposed to the Hiroshima atomic bomb in 1945.⁷⁷ Won-soon Park (2006) documents the atrocities that forced workers went through in crude detail:

Under brutal police control, management surveillance, and debilitating working conditions, the Korean laborers suffered from hunger, fear, torture, and murder. Many responded with escape attempts, violent group sabotage, or boycotts and sometimes group revolt and suicide. A 30 per cent runaway rate was reported in the worksites, nearly 60 per cent in the case of the Hokkaido coal mines. The runaway rate jumped after the laborers’ original two-year contracts were forcibly extended by managers who threatened to withhold unpaid wages and compulsory savings.⁷⁸

In addition, thousands of women were forcefully recruited as “comfort women” during the war, a euphemism for sexual slavery for the Japanese army.⁷⁹ The 1965 Basic Relations Treaty marking the normalization of diplomatic relations provided compensation for war damages in the form of monetary aid towards the economic development of South Korea, but it ignored the victims’ suffering. A series of public statements by the Japanese government offered apologies to South Korea, including PM Miyazawa’s 1992 public statement that acknowledged Japan’s war crimes and the 1993 Kono statement recognizing and apologizing for the comfort women issue. However, these apologies were not considered genuine enough in the long term. The Kim Young-sam administration, which was initially eager to improve relations with Japan, underwent what You and Kim (2016) called a “rollercoaster change” in the mid-90s.⁸⁰ This was due to Japan’s foreign policy activism, namely her provocative claims over Dokdo island and the controversial claims by members of the Japanese government regarding the annexation of Korea as legal and even beneficial. The distrust and tensions intensified in the 2000s due to the ways in which Japanese history textbooks were revised to

suppress Japan's moral responsibility.⁸¹ Since 2012, PM Shinzo Abe's revival of territorial claims and historical revisionism further damaged the relationship as his attitude toward the past cast suspicion on the sincerity of previous apologies, which came to be seen as meaningless "political rhetoric."⁸²

In December 2015, South Korean president Park and PM Abe agreed to provide financial compensation to the victims of sex slavery and considered the case closed, but the harsh criticism and indignation of South Korean civil society proved that the issue was far from being solved.⁸³ Forced factory labor, on the other hand, has been the subject of ceaseless judicial battles for the plaintiffs at the Japanese and South Korean supreme courts, aiming at the achievement of transitional justice.⁸⁴ These culminated in the rulings by the South Korean Supreme Court finding Japanese giant companies Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal and Mitsubishi guilty of exploiting Korean labor during wartime and ordering the payment of monetary compensation to individual victims in November 2018. The moral conflict is evident in many ways, starting from the fact that the Japanese government considers the 1965 pact to be a final settlement and its occasional atonement as sufficient for maintaining good relations with its neighbor, superseding the tumultuous colonial past. Similarly, it expressed incomprehension at the South Koreans' persistent pursuit of the issue, ignoring the feeling of injustice harbored by the victims and worsened by Japan's reluctance to assume legal responsibility. The clash of moral views is also palpable when it comes to the criticisms of the Tokyo trials of war criminals by Korean *zainichi* (Korean residents in Japan) as taking into account "war responsibility" but not "colonial responsibility," the latter being altogether different as it refers to the prejudice made against an entire civilization rather than an episodic wartime abuse.⁸⁵

This situation must be understood in relation to the approach that was taken by Japan *vis-à-vis* its past wrongs in East Asia more broadly, including forced labor, massacres, and other forms of abuse in China, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Even when issues of financial reparations were addressed by Japanese companies and the Japanese government funds, the most significant obstacle to reconciliation between the former imperial power and its former colonies stems from the inconsistency of the Japanese position towards its past. Japan has failed to show full repentance and recognition of its violent past, because it assumes a legal model characterized by "monetary damages centralism" instead of an "atonement model." Japan did not fully engage with further means of moral reparation, for example through "1) history education, 2) construction of memorials [...] 3) symbolic actions of apology in front of victims themselves [...] 4) return of remains to relatives, or 5) rituals for tragedies and genocides, because of their importance for the consolation for the victims' damaged feelings."⁸⁶ Furthermore, "new nationalist"

movements associated with the right-wing organization Nippon Kaigi and other public displays of “Japano-centrism,” such as visits to the Yasukuni shrine, undermined reconciliatory efforts.⁸⁷ The attempt to escape full repentance induces the resurfacing of *ressentiment* following major disputes involving South Korea or other communities who have a shared memory of the painful colonial past.

The moral conflict and its emotional repercussions are further complicated by the entanglement of colonial history with post-war economic reconstruction. As a consequence of the 1965 treaty’s provisions for economic cooperation, South Korea has known a long era of dependence on foreign capital, especially investment and loans from Japan, for the sustainment of its developmental strategy.⁸⁸ Foreign capital along with technology transfer fuelled the construction of its semiconductor industry, the most important achievement of the Korean economic miracle, which also gave way to the emergence of the *chaeböl*, large industrial corporations such as Samsung and LG. However, the South Korean semiconductor industry was also dependent on foreign components imported from Japan and, despite its import-substitution policy—which it had to give up by the 1960s in favor of the export-promotion policy under the pressure of the U.S.—the dependency was never overcome.⁸⁹ Thus, *ressentiment* is aggravated by the perception by the Korean government and people that Japan’s intention is to perpetuate developmental inequalities and prevent the pair from fully addressing the dominant-dominated relationship induced by colonialism. Against this background, the decision by the Japanese government to remove South Korea from its list of trusted trade partners,⁹⁰ which imposed tighter controls and restrictions on the supply of necessary semiconductor manufacturing materials, was *perceived* as a deliberate act to prevent South Korea from reaching equal economic development *vis-à-vis* its former colonizer and to maintain its superiority. However, this interpretation is questionable. According to a study by Yeo (2019), due to the declining competitiveness of Japanese electronic components manufacturers for at least a decade, the decision comes as a delayed response to the changing division of labor in the sector and is more taxing for the Japanese economy than the Korean economy.⁹¹ It is interesting, therefore, that the government’s official discourse has taken the direction of anti-Japanese sentiment by insisting on understanding the decision in the light of the persistent historical tensions between the two countries. While Japan invokes “concerns on national security” due to suspicions that South Korea might be secretly supplying North Korea with sensitive materials, South Korea interprets the move as a direct retaliation against the court rulings on forced labor,⁹² and followed up with a retaliation of its own, downgrading Japan’s status as a trade partner and declaring its will to scrap the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) signed in November 2016 under the Park administration.⁹³

In-soo Kim (2020) draws attention to an important element in this context:⁹⁴ because of the structural change in economic relations between the two countries, shifting towards more “coupling” between Korean and Chinese industries, the Japanese decision is more likely to be driven by its own perception of Korea as no longer a country to be underestimated and a rising threat to its economic competitiveness. Accordingly, the Japanese decision is also induced by its emotional reaction linked to a “sense of crisis.” This is more credible since the South Korean government’s formal position has been that it can achieve autonomy *vis-à-vis* Japan and has launched a campaign along these lines.⁹⁵ A notable instance that “set the tone” for the official interpretation of Japan’s action was the speech given by President Moon Jae-in at the Emergency Cabinet Meeting on 2 August 2019, in reaction to the announcement of Japan’s decision to downgrade South Korea as a trade partner. In this case, the government can be seen as a “collective emotions entrepreneur” that has the capacity to influence public opinion and provoke a particular emotional experience by drawing from the people’s shared repertoires of memory and identity. The following section attempts to examine these emotional repertoires in Moon’s speech.

Interpretation of Ressentiment in Moon Jae-in’s Emergency Cabinet Meeting Address on 2 August 2019

Interpretation of President Moon’s speech in the light of the concept of *ressentiment* using the analytical procedure outlined in the methodology section yielded four thematic registers and functions, corresponding to the criteria previously listed. For a visual organization of the excerpts from the speech, please see the appendix.

Four thematic repertoires have been identified:

- **Colonial legacy:** Throughout the speech, the evocation of the colonial legacy is used to evaluate the present with regards to the past, as well as to project an image of the future that transcends the known reality of both past and present. This is done by contrasting the attitude and behavior of Japan and South Korea on this historical axis. The references to the Japanese government suggest a sense of continuity in terms of its evil intentions, as it is accused of deliberately seeking to “hurt,” “attack,” and “retaliate” against the Korean government as well as of behaving in a “selfish and destructive” manner. The image of Japan as an aggressor is also maintained by alluding to its abuse of power against South Korea through “technological hegemony,” drawing an analogy with the Japanese use of superior military technology to subdue its colonies in the twentieth

century. On the other hand, the description of South Korea suggests discontinuity, as the speaker asserts “the Republic of Korea of today is not the Republic of Korea of the past.” There is a move towards self-affirmation by referring to South Korea’s sovereign power and its state capabilities, including capacities for retaliation.

- **Universal or international standards:** An effort to legitimate the South Korean position as opposed to the Japanese position is made by invoking international law and universal standards of value judgment. The Japanese government’s decision is described as a violation of “universal human values,” and so what makes it morally unjustifiable is not only the subjective perception of the South Korean government but universal morality and common sense. Moon reminds his counterpart that “the old order in which one country can dominate another by using force is merely a relic of the past,” which suggests that South Korea can count on diplomatic support, unlike the political isolation it had suffered from at the time of the annexation. He adds that “an international community aware of the facts will never tolerate” Japan’s aggressiveness again, which gives a subtly threatening tone to his discourse.
- **National identity:** Throughout the speech, Moon consistently attempts to invoke a collectively shared Korean national identity as well as a sense of cohesiveness and rapprochement between the government and the people, which places him in the position of a representative of the people’s will. He uses the pronoun “we” to refer to the government, the business sector, and the people. This “we” represents a “superior identity” (우위 정체성), which can be associated with good intentions in contrast with the Japanese evil intentions directed toward it. For instance, the statement “we have come this far today by overcoming countless hardships” constructs the Korean identity as that of the wronged party, while metaphorically connecting it to the collective mission of safeguarding and achieving a just cause. Thus, the Korean people are now ready to “cross” the “mountain” separating them from complete liberation and prosperity. Moon also reminds the people of the special meaning of the year during which the crisis was taking place: the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the Independence Movement.
- **Economic agency:** This register is used in the speech as a way to demonstrate irrationality in the behavior of the Japanese government, which is contrasted to the legitimacy of the South Korean position. On the one hand, it serves to further enhance the image of Japan as a rule-breaker who has

taken “unilateral and unwarranted measures” that not only “impair[s] the longstanding economic cooperation” between the two countries but also “wreak[s] havoc on the global economy.” On the other hand, it is used to strengthen the agency of South Korea as a stronger economy than it has been in the past, as the government “has countermeasures with which to respond.” Both moves reinforce the moral and political position of South Korea and attempt to mobilise trust in the government. This is expressed in the statement: “if Japan intentionally strikes at our economy, Japan itself will also have to bear significant damage.”

Four emotional functions can be distinguished in the text. Although there is certainly a degree of overlap, passages from the text were classified in terms of the strongest and most evident characteristics that they fulfilled. The emotions identified are: blame, distrust, rancor, and self-assertion. Together, they constitute an ascending movement both in terms of strength but also in terms of the evolution of *ressentiment*. Blame marks the beginning of the confrontational process, as an identity for the self is constructed by reacting to the other: Japan is represented as having assumed the position of dominance in the pair’s relationship, and to pursue evil intentions. Japan carries the “clear intention to attack and hurt,” inflicting harm to South Korea, who on the other hand had sought to “solve the problem” in a pacific way and has now no choice but to hold Japan accountable for her misdeeds. Blame serves to reevaluate the moral dichotomy between the two countries in a manner that reaffirms the binary of “evil” and “good” in an advantageous way to the victim.

With the identity of the “good victim” thus created, a profound distrust of Japan is shaped through denunciation of her acts, the contradictions in her behavior, and her unreliable character as a trade partner. Japan is “selfish,” seeks to dominate rather than cooperate, and is “refuting the free trade order” that she has endorsed before the international community. There is also emphasis on the South Korean government’s cooperative attitude while discrediting its Japanese counterpart. The following step in the emotional discourse is the construction of rancor, which encapsulates an array of interconnected feelings of injury, suffering, anger, and indignation, probably best illustrated by the powerful statement “we will never again lose to Japan.” *Ressentiment* against the former colonizer is here apparent and invokes the memory of humiliation and oppression to subvert the inherited relations of power in favor of the victimized self. Japan is judged guilty of having subjected Korea to “hegemony,” “aggression,” intimidation through its “great economic strength,” of “reopening the old wounds,” and using trade as a weapon. However, Moon insists that the South Korean government will not overlook these crimes, because it can subvert its *ressentiment* into a strategy for gaining power

and defeating Japan. Lastly, the natural culmination of such emotional ascension is the transcendence of inequality enabled by self-assertion. A self-assertive mood translates a politics of empowerment typical of the “activist” tone, where Moon promises that the South Korean people can stand up in the face of adversity to “triumph over Japan,” that the South Korean economy “can surpass Japan’s.” The means to achieve that are claimed to be found in a combination of “trust in the capabilities of the government and businesses” and belief in “the great power of the people.” The peak of the emotionalizing effect of the discourse is the moment of symbolic reversal of the dominant-dominated relationship which, regardless of any genuine intention to enact it, is a primarily imaginative act that pre-empts the reward for the patience and diligent work of South Koreans. In this sense, *ressentiment* has an instrumental aspect in Moon’s moralizing discourse.

The Japanese Reaction

The Japanese government held a distant, rationalizing discourse. Two press statements by Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono summarize the official position of the Japanese government and its justification. The first one is a condemnation of the South Korean government’s failure to comply with the provisions of the 1965 treaty that “settled completely and finally” the problems of property and claims related to the colonial period. In a nutshell, South Korea has breached her previous agreements with Japan as well as international law and must face the consequences. The second one is a comment on the South Korean government’s decision to withdraw the intelligence sharing pact between the two countries. Amounting to no more than a list of five bullet points, it restates the facts of the situation and describes the South Korean government’s response as a “total misapprehension of the current regional security environment.” It then laconically denies the accusations made against the Japanese government of using economic retaliation by asserting that “the two issues are of totally different nature,” before urging the other party to reconsider its behavior. The legal and factual language used in these statements seems deliberately aimed to give an objective tone to the accusation and projects a belief in the moral irreproachability of Japan in the conflict. There has been little investment in articulating a full verbal response to the situation, and Prime Minister Abe’s remarks in particular have been dismissive, such as his description of the two countries’ relations at the end of his policy speech at the opening of the 200th Diet session, criticized by the Japanese newspaper *The Mainichi* as “altogether too brief.”⁹⁶

The general attitude and line of conduct adopted by the Japanese government, by appealing formally to the rule-based world order, corresponds to the morality

of the “master” in that it normalizes its own position and construes it as lawful despite its inconsistency, in contrast to the subjective approach taken by the South Korean government in reconsidering its previous decisions in the light of contingent developments. However, Japan as one of the champions of free trade refuses to acknowledge her own deviation from the rule to serve her interests. This is illustrated through the use of “national security” as an exception to the rule, justifying the demotion of South Korea from her list of most trusted trade partners as an “active” act of compliance rather than a reactive act destined to discipline her former colony. This in turn can be interpreted as a morality based on mimetic desire whereby the colonizer utilizes the moral dichotomy of the colonized to construct its own identity of righteous strength, whereas the colonized mimics the colonizer by constructing an identity of righteous weakness that can be transformed into strength.

There are also external factors influencing the relationship between Japan and Korea. If one considers the conditions in which the colonial period ended in 1945 for both countries, one immediately realizes that the influence of the United States has not been minimal. The end of the war officially brought an ambivalent independence to Korea, but at the same time meant a humiliating surrender for Japan, announced by the revered Emperor himself, the highest symbol of the nation’s sovereignty and imperial prestige. It has been suggested that under the Allied Occupation (1945–52), the Japanese “saw themselves both as former colonisers with regards their former territories and as a colonised or semi-colonised people by the United States.”⁹⁷ The damaging effect of an external domination dictating internal policy (and even the constitution of the modern Japanese state itself) was enough to trigger an attitude of self-assertion in order to elevate its status *vis-à-vis* the U.S., and in this sense one can see Japan’s experience as one of *ressentiment* as well. Moreover, the U.S. has in many ways become Japan’s target of mimetic rivalry: Shinzo Abe’s government seems to borrow from U.S. policy, both in terms of trade (retaliation under the guise of “national security” concerns) and more generally in seeking regional leadership by adopting the “Japan is Back” slogan⁹⁸ and placing the interests of the nation above all else. The Japanese conservative government is in this sense dealing with the unresolved injustice of the Japanese collective memory, by adopting a “master” moral position borrowed from its Western “other.” This position legitimates Japan’s economic strategy and her aspirations for leadership, but it fails to address the lingering *ressentiment*, and to enable a change in the interpretive frames sustained by the collective memories and identities of her former colonies. Ultimately, it patronizes the morality of resistance and subversion that underpins the tone adopted by Moon.

State–Civil Society Relations and the Instrumental Use of Ressentiment

The strong emotional response to the Japanese decision was overwhelming from the perspective of civil society, with the relapse of popular sentiment into anti-Japanese movements, illustrated by incidents such as public self-immolation⁹⁹ and the reproval of a TV commercial judged offensive to victims of forced labor.¹⁰⁰ The most important wave of protest was the consumer boycott of Japanese products or “boycott Japan” (보이콧 재팬) as a popular response to Japan’s trade restrictions.¹⁰¹ Boycott movements had arisen in previous years, for example in 1992 after the comfort women issue was publicly acknowledged, in 2001 and 2006 due to the history textbook distortions, and in 2013 and 2015 in the context of the territorial disputes. However, the degree of solidarity and participation in 2019 had the most dramatic and enduring effects on public sentiment toward Japan: the boycott targeted every kind of economic activity linked with Japan, from cars and electronics to travel or cultural products. The strength of the movement was amplified by its coincidence with the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of Korea’s Provisional Government. The movement was explicitly interpreted by some participants as a revival of the March 1st movement’s or *samil undong* 3·1운동 spirit of resistance against the Japanese. They adopted a provocative slogan that juxtaposes Japan’s current actions with its past imperialism: “I could not take part in the liberation movement, but I do take part in the boycott movement (독립운동은 못했어도 불매운동은 한다).”¹⁰² This involved a wider informational campaign on Korean history through online YouTube channels and conventional publications; these did not simply have an anti-Japanese tone but also reflected the lingering bitterness about issues such as pro-Japanese collaborators who are still considered unpunished by a large number of the Korean people.¹⁰³ While this indicates the presence of a shared emotional experience of *ressentiment* triggered by the recent incident, its meaning in this contemporary context is more complex.

Analyzing consumer campaigns using semantic network analysis, Song (2020) found that the meaning of the anti-Japan campaign as expressed by online participants can be broken down into five major attributes:¹⁰⁴ 1) the participation of consumers as well as small businesses was considered as a matter of independent beliefs and personal conviction; 2) it was directly associated with a patriotic attitude linked with the memory of the liberation movement; 3) participation was perceived as a natural behavior, which brought satisfaction as an opportunity to express discontent; 4) it was thought to spring from individuals’ “free” decision making; and 5) it was understood as a way to realize social justice by reducing dependency on foreign products. In other words, there is an amalgamation

between different elements of a “superior identity.” It is clear that communication through traditional and new mass media has played a role in the spread of collectively shared symbolic representations of emotions in Korean society. Moreover, one can immediately see the congruence between the shared meanings of the boycott Japan movement’s campaigners and those expressed in the president’s speech. It is not possible to establish direct causality between the speech and the campaign; nevertheless, the correspondence between the recurrent themes in popular discourse and the registers of colonial legacy, national identity, and economic agency invoked by Moon indicates their mutual reinforcement.

The link between the state and civil society responses is clearly present, but it is not an easy task to fully grasp its significance. On the one hand, participation as part of a patriotic agenda is linked to the shared narratives and symbols of national liberation, which are defined against Japan as an external other. On the other hand, participation for the purpose of reaching social justice is connected to the shared desires of the people for self-empowerment and, more simply, for a better life. This ambivalent emotional experience is anchored in Korean history and the nature of its collective identity, which was formed both through conflict and harmony between state-led narratives and social movements. In this regard, Dudden’s (2008) analysis of the issues of memory and apology in East Asia brings an important aspect to take into consideration.¹⁰⁵ She observed that, at several points in Korean history, the state failed to represent the interests of citizens, most notably under President Park when the 1965 basic relations treaty was signed, which accepted financial aid for development as compensation for Japan’s crimes and excluded individual claims. Furthermore, contrasting South and North Korea’s official interpretations of Japanese rule as “colonial occupation” and “military occupation,” respectively, she points out that the South Korean state’s choice facilitates the public targeting of Japan as an object of blame and “cathartic release” of people’s suffering. Yet at the same time, it diverts attention from the Korean state’s own responsibility in the crystallization of social injustice and its collaboration with the U.S., which still operates military bases on Korean soil. It was under President Rhee, for instance, that the territorial dispute over Dokdo and fishing rights in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) became a public matter, as the U.S.-backed leader tried to instrumentalize it to “secure his claims to control Korea.”¹⁰⁶

In other words, the Korean state crafted the narrative of “illegal Japan” as a strategy of self-legalization, to which it has then grafted the genuinely painful stories of Japanese abuse, exploitation, and victimization of Koreans. In a similar vein, the dictatorial regimes from Rhee to Chun have been considered as illegal, but they are part of the genealogy of the contemporary Korean state and this is

the source of a continuous tension between state and civil society. A significant element to consider here is that the quest for justice with regards to Japanese abuse was made possible through relentless popular activism; a good example of this is the issue of the comfort women. Since the late 1980s, a number of non-governmental, grassroots organizations representing women in South Korea, North Korea, and other East Asian countries have been involved in carrying the victims' voices to an international audience, with one particularly notable instance being the Women's International Tribunal in Tokyo in 2000, which posthumously found Emperor Hirohito responsible for the sexual enslavement of women by the Japanese military.¹⁰⁷ Yet, these women not only had to face hurtful comments from Japanese officials more than a decade later representing them as willing prostitutes,¹⁰⁸ but also betrayal by greedy politicians at home such as the issue of fraud by Yoon Mee-hyang, a member of the Democratic party, charged with embezzlement and misuse of funds dedicated to supporting the victims.¹⁰⁹ The role of civil society has been prominent in pursuing collective justice, while the commitment of the state has been less forthcoming.

For the above reasons, it is difficult to disentangle sincerity from instrumentality in the collective emotion of *ressentiment* that erupted from state and civil society in the context of the 2019 trade dispute. Moon was elected in 2017 after Park's impeachment as a long-awaited democratic and visionary leader, with the ambitious promises of tackling major challenges such as the increasing socio-economic divides and the task of reconciliation with North Korea.¹¹⁰ As a political and human rights activist with a long history of involvement in opposition and anti-corruption protests,¹¹¹ he was a promising candidate for addressing social injustice but he had to face the challenge of a minority government, and in this sense it is not implausible that he resorted to populist strategies to promote his party's political agenda. The way in which his background and political position informed his choice in terms of policy towards Japan suggests that his passionate rhetoric on, and condemnation of, Japanese decisions could be another variety of the well-trodden path of mobilizing support by re-animating hatred of the "enemy," as one newspaper has suggested.¹¹² Along these lines, Moon was accused by a Japanese journalist of playing a "split personality" trick in his dealings with Japan, alternating between the committed activist and the rational statesman in an effort to manage complexity at home.¹¹³

By the same token, it is important to remember that both the 1965 basic relations treaty and the 2015 agreement on the comfort women issue were signed under two controversial and unpopular presidents: the first one was Park Chung-hee, a dictator whose rule famously undermined human rights in South Korea, and the second was his daughter Park Geun-hye who was later found

guilty of abuse of power, corruption, and fraud. Moon's decision to discard the 2015 agreement and his denunciative discourse can be seen as a way to distance himself and his administration from those infamous regimes, in order to give more credibility and support to his own party and political agenda. Hence, neither of the following can be excluded: that Moon might be genuinely trying to stay faithful to his agenda by representing the people's "voice," and that he might be attempting to manipulate public opinion while maintaining a reasonable prospect of cooperation with Japan due to the nature of the trilateral alliance between the two countries and the U.S. and the need to safeguard the potential of future trade relations. Moon has encouraged the resurfacing of collective *ressentiment* by denouncing the injustice of the Japanese government's decision and defending the moral position of South Korea, while maintaining an open window for future normalization. The strategic shift towards overcoming dependency on the supply of materials, conquering the global supply chains, and becoming able to compete for regional leadership, is another reason for which popular support is sought.

On the Japanese side, too, the need for a strategy to mobilize support has risen, especially after the 2011 nuclear disaster and the economic decline known as the "lost decades."¹¹⁴ With the second accession of Prime Minister Abe to power in 2012, the "Japan is Back" rhetoric played a key role in creating political consensus and reinforcing the power of the conservative party in the face of challenging domestic, regional, and global conditions and concerns over military and economic security¹¹⁵—whether the latter are real or imagined. It has been argued that the LDP has been using the populist-nationalist card to manage factional divisions and divert attention from the growth of elitism.¹¹⁶ Thus, taking a hard stance against South Korea by imposing trade restrictions is not an unlikely option to add to its political repertoire both for the purpose of domestic support and regional self-assertion (see Kim Wan-joong 2019).¹¹⁷ In addition, China's continuous rise as a regional power is not without effect on the intensification of the Japanese elite's sense of crisis and mimetic rivalry within the Japan-US-China triangle.¹¹⁸ The pursuit of "leadership" amid a tense climate of regional trade and security has impacted foreign policy choices made in recent years as well as increased pressure at home. As Packer (2018) argued:

Japan's mimetic response to the West in the Meiji era; its imperial expansion that led to war; the "sacred" pall left by the atomic bombings; and the relentless postwar "catch-up" competition—these phases confirm many of mimetic theory's figures. And they are very similar to the dynamics appearing now in the historic situation facing China and the United States.¹¹⁹

The moral qualities of the "master" described by Nietzsche, his "active" attitude and guiltless greed, should not be dissociated from the political agenda of great

power players in the contemporary world. The unpleasant term of “master” denoting a position of dominance has been conveniently replaced by the more palatable “leader”: one who directs, rather than controls others, for the mutual benefit of “allies,” but the power dynamics are not very different. Reflecting on the role of U.S. leadership, Eun (2020) stressed how much of a deep and lasting impact on East Asian and Korean politics it has had.¹²⁰ The very processes of Korea’s Liberation, the North–South division, and the ensuing U.S.–Japan and U.S.–ROK alliances, have considerably narrowed down and limited the scope of the South Korean government’s security policy to the threats identified by the U.S. and diverted attention and energy away from completing the task of decolonization. He refers to this situation as “hybrid coloniality” (혼종 식민성), in which the indigenous culture and exogenous (Western) culture have merged through the “re-territorialization” (재영토화) of the latter in the indigenous space. Accordingly, the formation of the Korean political right and left (conservative and progressive), has occurred through a hybrid process whereby there is a general understanding of the right as “pro-U.S.” and the left as “anti-U.S.,” while in fact their very existence ensures the continuation of coloniality. This is because South Korea as a sovereign nation-state decided to delegate its security to the U.S. and continues to make decisions with the U.S. as a referent, creating another relationship of subordination underlying the power asymmetries of the military alliance, referred to as “epistemic subordination” (인식적 종속), which permeates the conduct of political and social affairs. The solution, for Eun, is to move towards an “empathetic pluralism” (공감적 다원주의), which shifts the focus from nation-state-centered security toward the everyday needs of the people.

Superposed onto the Japan–South Korea relations is this very nation-state-centrism, which, as Bong-jin Kim (2011) argued, has sustained dichotomous thinking by opposing colonialism and anti-colonialism, the illegitimacy of the former and legitimacy of the latter, and obstructing reconciliation.¹²¹ It is more important to acknowledge the factors that have shaped the history of East Asia more broadly, such as U.S. intervention: its role in the division of the peninsula as well as in shaping the Cold War regional power structure and establishing a great power logic of regional “threats” such as North Korea or China. This logic legitimates nationalist movements and perpetuates tension, concealing the “complicity” of states involved in the status quo and enabling Japan to deny its share of responsibility just like the other parties. This echoes the problem of mimetic rivalry and the way in which it perpetuates conflict through the mirroring of each others’ desires. In this case, the mimesis is mediated by the cognitive frames established by nationalist narratives. As Shin Gi-wook (2019) argues, there is a sort of left-wing chauvinistic populism underneath the South Korean position in the trade dispute and which obstinately clings to an anti-Japan stance, spearheaded by Moon’s

party.¹²² *Ressentiment* between the people of South Korea and Japan is due to the construction of their identities around their opposed national narratives on the (im)morality of colonialism, which essentially serves to legitimate national agendas and power claims, not to achieve justice. The latter requires a de-centering of history away from the strictly “national” version, acknowledgement of the various causes of conflict in the region, and a move away from the Cold War structure built on threat perception and move toward trust-building.

More than anything else, justice has to begin at the domestic level before it is realizable at the international one. Yang et al. (2018) deplored how much Korean society is still suffering.¹²³ It had suffered due to its collective mobilization for the goals of economic growth until the 1990s and has continued to suffer afterward as there is little investment in well-being and much more emphasis on competition as a national creed. This is a historical pattern that Kim Hong-jung (2018) termed “survivalist modernity,” whereby South Koreans are interpellated by the ruling elites into self-sacrifice for the sake of national development.¹²⁴ The fact that this pattern has been carried into the twenty-first century may be the greatest barrier to reconciliation that underpins every polemic in Japan–South Korea relations. It is through a participatory, open, and democratic process in *both* societies that progress can be made. This requires overcoming the instrumental morality of populist nationalism, the politics of *ressentiment*, and moving toward empathy and recognition of plural experiences at the individual and collective levels. This is the task left to political elites and civil society activists in both countries.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of emotions in the tense relationship between Japan and South Korea. It has drawn from the existent research on emotion studies in international politics and attempted to integrate works from moral philosophy into its agenda, namely those of René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche. These two scholars have coined, respectively, the concepts of “mimetic desire” and “*ressentiment*” to describe the psychological processes characterizing human beings’ attitudes, emotions, and behavior in relation to their desires for superiority and equality, and how such desires affect the construction of their moralities. These concepts were proposed as a theoretical framework to understand the role of emotions in international relations through a case study of the trade dispute between Japan and South Korea.

First, it has argued that in the context of colonial relations, desire for superiority can be seen as a mimetic process whereby collective social entities, such as nations, enter into a relationship of rivalry, mirror each other’s desire for

power, and compete for subduing and exploiting less powerful entities as a way to enhance their status *vis-à-vis* the other(s). These acts of power in turn lead to a reactive attitude from the part of the subject upon which it has been exercised and the emergence of the moral dichotomy of “master-slave” or “dominant-dominated.” The latter is characterized by a desire to transcend inequality by means of emotions contained in *ressentiment*, which allows, in a Nietzschean sense, to subvert its structural inferiority through claims of moral (il)legitimacy. Second, the paper has proposed a way to demonstrate the relevance of mimetic desire and *ressentiment* in the case of the Japan–South Korea trade dispute through an overview of the relations between the two countries and by interpreting South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s address at the Emergency Cabinet Meeting on 2 August 2019. This text was considered as a symbolic manifestation of *ressentiment* and at the same time as an instrumental communicative act that diffuses the emotion and encourages people to embrace and sustain a certain pattern of belief and reaction. Lastly, the paper has examined the manifestation of *ressentiment* in civil society’s response to Japan’s decision and how it relates to that of the state, proposing that despite congruence between the two, there are indications that the intentions or motives behind the reaction do not align with the same object of desire. While state leaders have conventionally aimed to increase Korea’s national status and power *vis-à-vis* Japan, the Korean people have aimed to obtain justice and equality. Addressing the people’s *ressentiment* requires that the state make a bold move away from narratives of great power politics, which perpetuate the glorification of a superior national identity, to narratives that account more fully for ordinary people’s suffering and desires.

Appendix: Emotional Discourse Analysis of Resentiment in Moon Jae-in's Emergency Cabinet Meeting Address on 2 August 2019

Functions and Criteria	Registers	Colonial Legacy	Universal/International Standards	National Identity	Economic Agency
<p>Blame/moral re-valuation Criterion 1 Accusations of "unfair" status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "These moves by the Japanese Government carry the clear intention to attack and hurt our economy" "The Japanese Government dismissed the Korean Government's proposal to put our heads together to solve the problem diplomatically" "The Japanese Government is responsible for having made the situation worse by ignoring the Korean Government" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Japan's action also violates such universal human values" "The Japanese Government will be entirely held accountable" 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Japanese Government's decision is "a very reckless decision" "The Japanese Government must withdraw its unilateral and unwarranted measures"
	<p>Distrust/discrediting the Other Criterion 2 Principled calls for rectifying "unfair" policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Japanese Government's decision is undeniable trade retaliation against our Supreme Court's rulings on Korean victims of forced labor during colonial rule." "The action contradicts the Japanese Government's own stance expressed in the past that individual victims' right to claim damages had never been waived." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The old order in which one country can dominate another by using force is merely a relic of the past." "The Japanese Government through its action is refuting the free trade order it championed at the G20 Summit." 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The step taken by Japan today is something that impairs the longstanding economic cooperation and friendly partnership between our two countries" "It is a selfish, destructive act that will cripple the global supply chain and wreak havoc on the global economy."

Functions and Criteria Registers	Colonial Legacy	Universal/International Standards	National Identity	Economic Agency
<p>Rancor/subversion Criterion 4 Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We will never again lose to Japan." • "[We will] ensure that the country will never again be subjected to technological hegemony" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If Japan, the aggressor, reopens the old wounds after so long, an international community aware of the facts will never tolerate it." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We will never overlook such circumstances where Japan, the instigator of these wrongs, is turning on us." • "This year in particular, we committed ourselves to another 100 years while commemorating the centennial of the March First Independence Movement" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If Japan-even though it has great economic strength-attempts to harm our economy, the Korean Government also has countermeasures with which to respond"
<p>Self-assertion/symbolic reversal of dominance Criterion 6 Articulations of revenge fantasies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I appeal to the public to have trust in the capabilities of the Government and our businesses" • "The Republic of Korea today is not the Republic of Korea of the past. [...] We have the potential to fully overcome any difficulty" 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We have come this far today by overcoming countless hardships [...] we will in fact turn adversities into opportunities to leap forward." • "We can fully triumph over Japan. Our economy can surpass Japan's." • "This is a mountain that we must eventually cross" • "The Government will lead the way, believing in the great power of the people." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Although it is something we never hoped for, the Korean Government will resolutely take corresponding measures in response to Japan's unjustifiable economic retaliatory measures" • "If Japan intentionally strikes at our economy, Japan itself will also have to bear significant damage."

Selected statements in Korean

Functions & Criteria Registers	Colonial legacy	Universal/international standards	National identity	Economic agency
<p>Blame/moral re-valuation Criterion 1. Accusations of "unfair" status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility</p>	<p>“일본 정부의 조치가 우리 경제를 공격하고 우리 경제의 미래성장을 가로막아 타격을 가져왔다는 분명한 의도를 가지고 있다는 사실입니다.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “외교적 해법을 제시하고, 막대한 길로 가지 말 것을 경고하며, 문제해결을 위해 머리를 맞대자는 우리 정부의 제안을 일본 정부는 끝내 받아들이지 않았습니다.” “우리 정부와 국제사회의 외교적 해결 노력을 외면하고 상황을 악화시켜온 책임이 일본 정부에 있는 것이 명확해진 이상 [...]” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “‘강제노동 금지’와 ‘3관본림에 기초한 민주주의’라는 인류 보편적 가치와 국제법의 대원칙을 위반하는 행위입니다.” “앞으로 벌어질 사태의 책임도 전적으로 일본 정부에 있다는 점을 분명히 경고합니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “대단히 무모한 결정” “멈출 수 있는 길은 오직 하나, 일본 정부가 일방적이고 부당한 조치를 하루속히 철회하고 대화의 길로 나오는 것입니다.”
<p>Distrust/discrediting the Other Criterion 2. Principled calls for rectifying “unfair” policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “무슨 이유로 변명하든, 일본 정부의 이번 조치는 우리 대법원의 강제징용 판결에 대한 명백한 무언보입니다.” “개인청구권은 소멸되지 않았다고 일본 정부 자신이 밝혀왔던 과거 입장과도 모순됩니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “힘으로 상대를 제압하던 질서는 과거의 유물일 뿐입니다.” “일본이 G20 회의에서 강조한 자유무역질서를 스스로 부정하는 행위입니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “일본의 조치는 양국 간의 오랜 경제 협력과 우호 협력 관계를 훼손하는 것으로서 양국 관계에 대한 중대한 도전입니다.” “글로벌 공급망을 무너뜨려 세계 경제에 큰 피해를 끼치는 이기적인 민폐 행위로 국제사회의 지탄을 면할 수 없을 것입니다.”

Functions & Criteria Registers	Colonial legacy	Universal/international standards	National identity	Economic agency
<p>Rancor/subversion Criterion 4 Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다.” “다시는 기술 패권에 휘둘리지 않는 것은 물론 제조업 강국의 위상을 더욱 높이는 계기로 삼겠습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “이제 와서 가해자인 일본이 오히려 상처를 헤집는다면, 국제사회의 양식이 결코 용인하지 않을 것이라는 점을 일본은 직시하기 바랍니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “가해자인 일본이 적반하장으로 오히려 큰소리치는 상황을 결코 좌시하지 않겠습니다.” “우리는 올해 특별히 3.1 독립운동과 임시정부 수립 100주년을 기념하며, 새로운 미래 100년을 다짐했습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 비록 일본이 경제 강국이지만 우리 경제에 피해를 입히려 든다면, 우리 역시 맞대응할 수 있는 방안들을 가지고 있습니다.”
<p>Self-assertion/symbolic reversal of dominance Criterion 6 Articulations of revenge fantasies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “정부와 우리 기업의 역량을 믿고, 자신감을 가지고, 함께 단합해 주실 것을 국민들께 호소 드립니다.” “오늘의 대한민국은 과거의 대한민국이 아닙니다. [...] 어떠한 어려움도 충분히 극복할 자력을 가지고 있습니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “우리는 수많은 역경을 이겨내고 오늘에 이르렀습니다. [...] 우리는 역경을 오히려 도약하는 기회로 만들어낼 것입니다.” “우리는 충분히 일본을 이겨낼 수 있습니다.” “우리 경제가 일본 경제를 뛰어넘을 수 있습니다.” “압박가는 넘어야 할 산입니다. 국민의 위대한 힘을 믿고 정부가 앞장서겠습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “결코 바라지 않았던 일이지만 우리 정부는 일본의 부당한 경제보복 조치에 대해 상응하는 조치를 단호하게 취해 나갈 것입니다.” “우리 경제를 의도적으로 타격한다면 일본도 큰 피해를 감수해야 할 것입니다.”

Original Speech in Korean

(Source: <https://www1.president.go.kr/articles/6886>)

우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다 「제31회 임시 국무회의」
2019-08-02

[임시 국무회의 모두발언 전문]

제31회 임시 국무회의를 시작하겠습니다.

비상한 외교·경제 상황에 대응하기 위해 긴급하게 국무회의를 소집했습니다.

오늘 오전 일본 정부는 우리나라를 백색국가에서 배제하는 결정을 내렸습니다.

문제해결을 위한 외교적 노력을 거부하고 사태를 더욱 악화시키는 대단히 무모한 결정으로, 깊은 유감을 표합니다.

외교적 해법을 제시하고, 막다른 길로 가지 말 것을 경고하며, 문제해결을 위해 머리를 맞대자는 우리 정부의 제안을 일본 정부는 끝내 받아들이지 않았습니다. 일정한 시한을 정해 현재의 상황을 더 이상 악화시키지 않으면서 협상할 시간을 가질 것을 촉구하는 미국의 제안에도 응하지 않았습니다.

우리 정부와 국제사회의 외교적 해결 노력을 외면하고 상황을 악화시켜온 책임이 일본 정부에 있는 것이 명확해진 이상,

앞으로 벌어질 사태의 책임도 전적으로 일본 정부에 있다는 점을 분명히 경고합니다.

무슨 이유로 변명하든, 일본 정부의 이번 조치는 우리 대법원의 강제징용 판결에 대한 명백한 무역보복입니다.

또한, '강제노동 금지'와 '3권분립에 기초한 민주주의'라는 인류 보편적 가치와 국제법의 대원칙을 위반하는 행위입니다.

일본이 G20 회의에서 강조한 자유무역질서를 스스로 부정하는 행위입니다.

개인청구권은 소멸되지 않았다고 일본 정부 자신이 밝혀왔던 과거 입장과도 모순됩니다.

우리가 더욱 심각하게 받아들이는 것은 일본 정부의 조치가 우리 경제를 공격하고 우리 경제의 미래성장을 가로막아 타격을 가하겠다는 분명한 의도를 가지고 있다는 사실입니다.

우리의 가장 가까운 이웃이며 우방으로 여겨왔던 일본이 그와 같은 조치를 취한 것이 참으로 실망스럽고 안타깝습니다.

일본의 조치는 양국 간의 오랜 경제 협력과 우호 협력 관계를 훼손하는 것으로서 양국 관계에 대한 중대한 도전입니다.

또한, 글로벌 공급망을 무너뜨려 세계 경제에 큰 피해를 끼치는 이기적인 민폐 행위로 국제사회의 지탄을 면할 수 없을 것입니다.

일본의 조치로 인해 우리 경제는 엄중한 상황에서 어려움이 더해졌습니다.

하지만 우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다.

우리는 수많은 역경을 이겨내고 오늘에 이르렀습니다.

적지 않은 어려움이 예상되지만, 우리 기업들과 국민들에게 그 어려움을 극복할 역량이 있습니다.

과거에도 그래왔듯이 우리는 역경을 오히려 도약하는 기회로 만들어낼 것입니다.

정부도 소재·부품의 대체 수입처와 재고 물량 확보, 원천기술의 도입, 국산화를 위한 기술개발과 공장 신·증설, 금융지원 등 기업의 피해를 최소화하기 위해 할 수 있는 지원을 다하겠습니다.

나아가 소재·부품 산업의 경쟁력을 높여 다시는 기술 패권에 휘둘리지 않는 것은 물론 제조업 강국의 위상을 더욱 높이는 계기로 삼겠습니다.

정부와 기업, 대기업과 중소기업, 노와 사, 그리고 국민들이 함께 힘을 모은다면 충분히 해낼 수 있는 일입니다.

정부와 우리 기업의 역량을 믿고, 자신감을 가지고, 함께 단합해 주실 것을 국민들께 호소 드립니다.

한편으로, 결코 바라지 않았던 일이지만 우리 정부는 일본의 부당한 경제보복 조치에 대해 상응하는 조치를 단호하게 취해 나갈 것입니다.

비록 일본이 경제 강국이지만 우리 경제에 피해를 입히려 든다면, 우리 역시 맞대응할 수 있는 방안들을 가지고 있습니다.

가해자인 일본이 적반하장으로 오히려 큰소리치는 상황을 결코 좌시하지 않겠습니다.

일본 정부의 조치 상황에 따라 우리도 단계적으로 대응조치를 강화해 나갈 것입니다.

이미 경고한 바와 같이, 우리 경제를 의도적으로 타격한다면 일본도 큰 피해를 감수해야 할 것입니다.

우리 정부는 지금도 대응과 맞대응의 악순환을 원치 않습니다.

멈출 수 있는 길은 오직 하나, 일본 정부가 일방적이고 부당한 조치를 하루속히 철회하고 대화의 길로 나오는 것입니다.

한국과 일본, 양국 간에는 불행한 과거사로 인한 깊은 상처가 있습니다.

하지만 양국은 오랫동안 그 상처를 꿰매고, 약을 바르고 붕대를 감으며 상처를 치유하려 노력해왔습니다.

그런데 이제 와서 가해자인 일본이 오히려 상처를 헤집는다면, 국제사회의 양식이 결코 용인하지 않을 것이라는 점을 일본은 직시하기 바랍니다.

국민 여러분께도 특별히 말씀드립니다.

우리는 올해 특별히 3.1 독립운동과 임시정부 수립 100주년을 기념하며, 새로운 미래 100년을 다짐했습니다.

힘으로 상대를 제압하던 질서는 과거의 유물일 뿐입니다.

오늘의 대한민국은 과거의 대한민국이 아닙니다.

국민의 민주 역량은 세계 최고 수준이며, 경제도 비할 바 없이 성장하였습니다.

어떠한 어려움도 충분히 극복할 자력을 가지고 있습니다.

당장은 어려움이 있을 것입니다.

그러나 도전에 굴복하면 역사는 또 다시 반복됩니다.

지금의 도전을 오히려 기회로 여기고 새로운 경제 도약의 계기로 삼는다면 우리는 충분히 일본을 이겨낼 수 있습니다.

우리 경제가 일본 경제를 뛰어넘을 수 있습니다.

역사에 지름길은 있어도 생략은 없다는 말이 있습니다.

언젠가는 넘어야 할 산입니다.

지금 이 자리에서 멈춰 선다면, 영원히 산을 넘을 수 없습니다.

국민의 위대한 힘을 믿고 정부가 앞장서겠습니다.

도전을 이겨낸 승리의 역사를 국민과 함께 또 한 번 만들겠습니다.

우리는 할 수 있습니다.

정부 각 부처도 기업의 어려움과 함께한다는 비상한 각오로 임해 주기 바랍니다.

Notes

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Book Reviews

Hyung-A Kim, *Korean Skilled Workers: Towards a Labor Aristocracy*

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Kim Hyung-A's new book, *Korean Skilled Workers: Towards a New Labor Aristocracy*, offers a fascinating and rich historical analysis of South Korea's class of skilled workers and their role in the country's heavy and chemical industrialization (HCI) programme. The book charts their emergence as patriotic "industrial warriors" (*sanŏp chŏnsa*, 산업전사) in the 1970s under the auspices of Park Chung-Hee's developmental state, their transition into the militant "Goliat" workers of the late 1980s, and in particular, their subsequent evolution into a so-called "labor aristocracy" (노동귀족, *nodong kwijok*) enjoying superior wages, job security, and even hereditary employment for their children. As Prof Kim, argues, this latter development occurred largely at the expense of a growing class of irregular (비정규직, *pijŏng kyujik*) workers, who remained stuck in forms of precarious and insecure employment.

The book begins by addressing a lacuna in existing accounts of the South Korean developmental state, which by and large focus on the state's extractive capacity, bureaucratic autonomy, and on its dense network of ties with firms. Relatively neglected, however, is the question of how the Park regime fostered the emergence of the skilled manpower needed to achieve its HCI programme. As the analysis shows, the state facilitated the training of over two million young skilled workers from poor rural backgrounds in the years between 1972 and 1987. This was achieved principally through the state-led reform of the education sector, through for example the High School Equalization Policy (고교평준화정책, *kogyo p'yŏngjun hwa chŏngch'aek*) in 1974, which signalled a shift away from the traditionally elitist education system towards greater educational opportunities for students from lower-class families. The reforms also involved the promotion of technical high schools and the establishment of the National Technical Qualification System (국가기술자격제도, *kukka kisul chagyŏk chedo*) in 1973. In

the corporate sector, the state also mandated the establishment of a vocational training system for the purpose of upgrading workers' technical skills. As such, the developmental state's efforts to create a class of skilled workers were both extremely effective and constituted a critical though oft-neglected element of the country's industrial modernization.

In contrast to many existing studies of labor under the developmental state, Kim sees these HCI workers as the beneficiaries of Park's HCI policy. However, their social contract with the state came under pressure in the late 1980s as the democratic aperture gave way to the Great Workers' Struggle (노동자대투쟁, *nodongja taet'ujaeng*) of the summer of 1987. In the immediate term, this outburst of labor militancy was a result of HCI workers' growing dissatisfaction with the Chun Doo-Hwan regime's highly repressive labor laws. At a deeper level, however, it can be seen as the outcome of the process whereby rapid industrialization had brought forth the existence of working-class communities and the emergence of class consciousness alongside greater workplace bargaining power. Though they had been largely docile during the 1970s and early 1980s and somewhat at a distance from the labor-student solidarity of the Seoul-Kyöngin region, HCI skilled workers in the south-eastern industrial regions of Ulsan and Changwön came to play a key role in the militant labor struggles of the late 1980s through their resistance to workplace despotism. More broadly, their struggles represented a shift in the leadership of the labor movement away from the predominantly female-led struggles in the light industrial sector towards HCI workers.

By the early 1990s, however, many of these struggles were defeated, and activists began to speak of the "crisis of labor" facing the country's labor movement. Economic recession meant that workers became increasingly fearful of losing their jobs, and with the democratic transition, many leading activists had migrated from the radical *minjung* movement towards the newly emergent moderate civil society organisations. The *chaeböl* also launched a so-called "Corporate Culture Movement," which took the form of a neoliberal management strategy aimed at re-establishing hegemony over the workforce by means of management rationalization. Drawing on aspects of the Japanese management model, the Corporate Culture Movement emphasized harmonious relations between management and workers along with the notion of "burden sharing." As hitherto militant workers increasingly signed "no-strike, no dispute" deals with their employers, there was, according to Kim, a broad shift towards a form of class consciousness characterized by materialism and individualism. As a result, skilled workers underwent a transformation into a privileged group enjoying unprecedented wage increases and improved working conditions. As a result, they were increasingly viewed by irregular workers and by South Korean society more broadly as a "labor

aristocracy,” one that was overwhelmingly preoccupied with its own parochial economic interests rather than broader issues of concern to the working class as a whole

This dualism in the South Korean labor market was intensified by the economic crisis of 1997 and the IMF-mandated structural adjustment programme. The flexibilization of the country’s labor laws played a key role in helping to further cement their position as an emerging labor aristocracy. Enterprise union bylaws were also strengthened to exclude non-regular workers, thereby deepening the polarization of the South Korean working class. These changes were contemporaneous with a broader transition from the developmental state to a *chaeböl*-led accumulation regime characterized by low levels of investment and limited creation of new quality jobs, leading to an employment crisis in the country. The subcontracting arrangements that underpinned this emerging dualism even became part of HCI workers’ collective agreements, suggesting that irregular workers had become an expendable buffer that served to guarantee regular workers’ jobs and working conditions.

Overall, the book provides a detailed historical account of the emergence of HCI skilled workers as well as the subsequent emergence of polarisation in the labor market in the post-crisis era. One potential criticism, however, is that there is little explicit theoretical reflection on the notion of “labor aristocracy” itself, which is surprising given that it is the central analytical concept deployed in the book. Despite its long history, the concept is here largely taken uncritically from its recent mainstream usage by the South Korean media and by the irregular workers themselves. The term is not an uncontroversial one, however. For example, it risks discounting the possibility that wage differentials between large HCI enterprises and small to medium enterprises might in part at least be a result of divergent productivity levels, a possibility that the book does not explore. More importantly, the emphasis on the notion of the labor aristocracy runs the risk of understanding neoliberal capitalism in terms of relations of exploitation between different fractions of the working class rather than between capital and labor. Indeed, income differentials between HCI and irregular workers are minor compared to that between the *chaeböl* and the working class as a whole. As noted, Kim does also draw attention to the *chaeböl*-driven accumulation regime and points out that the *chaeböl* are sitting on an “exorbitant pile of cash reserves with minimal trickle-down effect” (p. 145). Yet, the overwhelming focus on skilled workers as a “labor aristocracy” arguably misidentifies the fundamental cause of South Korea’s increasing social polarization. Indeed, in its uncritical usage, the term might more accurately be viewed as a rhetorical device deployed as part of the state and capital’s divide-and-rule strategy against labor as a whole, rather than as a substantive analytical concept.

Nonetheless, this book fills an important gap in the history of South Korean development and sheds new light on the significant socio-economic challenges of the contemporary era. Students and scholars of the country will find much of interest here.

David Fedman, *Seeds of Control: Japan's Empire of Forestry in Colonial Korea*

2020, University of Washington Press, 292 pages, ISBN: 9780295747453

Lisa Brady, Boise State University¹

In *Seeds of Control* David Fedman presents the first environmental history monograph in English detailing Japanese colonial forestry policies and practices in Korea. The book is deeply and widely researched—incorporating archival, published, and scholarly sources in Korean, Japanese, and English—and is engagingly written. The book proceeds chronologically and is divided into three parts: “Roots” (chapters one and two) focuses on Meiji-era developments and Japanese perspectives relevant to Korea’s forests; “Reforms” (chapters three through six) details efforts by colonial administrators and institutions to improve Korean land use practices; and “Campaigns” (chapters seven and eight) addresses ideological and geopolitical influences on the application of colonial-era forestry mandates. These three parts are bookended by an introduction and conclusion. Fedman expertly connects the ideas and developments presented in each chapter across all chapters, thereby providing readers with a sweeping, yet intimate perspective that allows them to see both the forest and the trees.

One of the main strengths of Fedman’s book is its structure. The introduction provides historiographical context, sets up Fedman’s argument, and outlines the structure of the book. Chapters one and two set the stage theoretically and historically, focusing on Meiji-era modernization efforts and on Japanese perspectives on the state of Korean forests on the eve of colonization. The following six chapters build on that foundation and all conform to a similar organization: identify the problem (as described by Japanese colonial administrators), explain the solution (as determined by colonial powers, whether Japanese or Korean), and reveal the implications (as experienced by Koreans in aspects of their every-day life). Chapter 3 examines colonial-era efforts to rationalize Korea’s forests and land tenure system in order to improve forest health and output. Chapter 4 analyzes scientific developments as applied to Korea’s forests and agricultural lands. Chapter 5 turns to the vast forests of the Yalu River basin and the rise of industrial-scale forestry in Korea’s north. Forestry organizations are the subject of

Chapter 6, which perfectly balances discussion of top-down policy directives and bottom-up responses. Chapter 7 analyses “forest-love thought,” which Japanese officials offered as the salve to heal Korea’s forest wounds and the balm to ease Koreans’ transition into the imperial polity. Fedman draws on Rob Nixon’s concept of “slow violence” and Micah Muscolino’s notion of military metabolisms in Chapter 8 to explore the critical role forests played not only in Japanese war aims, but also in the daily lives of Koreans, who faced shortages, restrictions, and sacrifices. Fedman concludes his book with a brief exploration of forest issues after liberation, with special attention to the Park Chung-hee administration’s efforts to green Korea anew and to more recent contradictions in Korea’s and Japan’s “green” reputations and their less than admirable practices of externalizing deforestation to Indonesia and elsewhere.

Beyond its immense value as a chronicle of colonial-era forest history developments in Korea, Fedman’s book exemplifies environmental history practice, incorporating all three levels of environmental analysis—material, political, and cultural—into every chapter. Moreover, Fedman seamlessly integrates environmental analysis with political and social developments, demonstrating the centrality of nature to daily life, policy debates, and imperial machinations. For these reasons, *Seeds of Control* should be read by all environmental historians as a model to be emulated. It should be included in graduate level seminars on environmental history as well as those focused on Japan and Korea. Upper-division undergraduates would benefit from reading it, though depending on the course, it may be too narrowly focused to justify asking them to spend \$40.

Fedman’s book is not without its flaws. Some may find his frequent puns and plays on words distracting (e.g., “Seeding like a State,” p. 7; burial disputes coming “back from the dead,” p. 92; the “cold calculus” of setting restrictions on *ondol* use, p. 202). Others may question his application of ecotourism to Mount Kumgang holidays (pp. 191–192) as anachronistic. I was certainly surprised to see that Fedman cited only two of the five contributions to the 2018 *Journal of Asian Studies* special forum on war and environment in Korea, especially when one of the omitted articles specifically deals with the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency and its forestry programs, which Fedman discusses on page 228.

These issues aside, Fedman’s book is an important contribution to the historiographies of modern Korea, imperial Japan, forest history, and environmental history. It deserves wide readership and will undoubtedly become a classic.

Note

1. lisabrad@boisestate.edu.

Immanuel Kim, *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films*

2020, Lexington Books, 168 pages, ISBN: 9781793608291

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“Dark Humor is like food in North Korea.
Not everyone gets it.”

(from Reddit’s r/pyongyang thread)¹

North Korea is of course not funny, and North Korean matters are generally not laughing matters. Much public and professional discourse around North Korea and the North Korean issue is worthy, earnest, concerned, serious; focused on the deprivation, misery, oppression, and lack, which mark the nation in so many global minds as both an anachronism and dangerous basket case. North Koreans either end up portrayed as the heartless, ethically rootless elites of the 돈 주인 *ton chuin* and Korean Workers Party hierarchy, the agency free drab peasants of the countryside and periphery, at times forced to scabble in the dirt or pick at tree bark in a desperate effort to extract calories from the most unlikely of substances, or the shadowy, sub-human unpeople of the prison camps and incarceration zones. None of these categories of North Korean can be imagined as being likely to head to the cinema, or to pick up a DVD (or even to do a bit of online streaming) to watch a comedy film and have a good laugh. Having a good laugh is not something we can genuinely imagine North Koreans are capable of, and that is in spite of the fact that laughter is a huge part of media discourse and political information from Pyongyang. Kim Jong Un is often pictured in *Rodong Sinmun* and elsewhere laughing uproariously, along with those with him. Other North Koreans are regularly seen completing tasks, engaging in state or institution-directed activity, or simply going about their lives laughing as they do so, or being amused or jocular at circumstances or events occurring. So North Korean’s can laugh and can find things funny, but the country’s ideological or political peculiarities beg the question, is this laughter and jocularity real or is it directed or performative?

In many ways, questions of the reality of North Korean humor or comedy echo questions that have been asked of North Korean art and more classical representative forms of cultural production. Yes, there are paintings, drawings, collage, sculpture, textile work, and craft traditions from North Korea and North Koreans, but are they actually art, since it is impossible, seemingly, for creative outputs to be free from political and ideological imperatives under Pyongyang’s remit. Essentially if art can only be political, is it actually art, since our understanding of art is that for it to be truly authentic it must be free of impulsion or direction.

There is extensive work on these questions in relation to North Korea (particularly interesting work has been written by Koen De Ceuster),² some of which touches on film and cinematic productions.

Film and cinema from and in North Korea is, of course, in a sense an unlucky medium, unlucky, because it was not just of political interest and use, as it has been in many other autocratic governments and political systems, but it was an obsession of Kim Jong Il, the Dear Leader. Kim Jong Il's 1973 "Yŏnghwa yesullon 영화예술론 (*On the Art of Cinema*)" lays out in great detail his thoughts, ideas and concerns on both theoretical and practical levels on cinematic creation, down to the level of what the role of the assistant director should be. There was much in Kim Jong Il's work and in the philosophical underpinnings (such as they are), of Juche and other North Korean ideological elements that demands a collapsing of the layers and distance between creative producer and audience. According to the Juche approach, authenticity is marked by a commitment to realism which is supposed to mean the audience can see themselves in the film, and the landscapes and situations in the film might be ones they recognize or inhabit. Kim Jong Il asserts that this is also the case when it comes to comedy films:

"The laughter in a comedy must not be the actor's; it must always be the laughter of the character or laughter derived from the plot. If the actor uses a ridiculously exaggerated manner of acting, laughing first and forcing the audience to respond, they will find it very difficult to laugh and if they do, it will be the laughter of embarrassment. The actor can only make people laugh or cry naturally when life is depicted honestly in the performance."³

It should not be controversial to say, of course, that in many comedic traditions, it is the exact opposite being true, which makes the comedy or is the humorous element; the impossibility of the situation, the lack of honesty from the character, the unlikeliness of experiencing the characters in one's own life. So North Korean comedy is likely to be very different from traditions with which a reader might be familiar, but how different? Immanuel Kim's *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films* is part of a developing field of study and writing focused on North Korean cinema, following the fascinating introduction provided by Johannes Schönherr's *North Korean Cinema: A History* in 2012.⁴ But Immanuel Kim's study is one of the first to delve deeply into a particular genre, and certainly the first to explore comedy films. Essentially, in a five chapter monograph Kim takes the reader through some complex analyses of what comedy, humor or frivolity might be in a North Korean cinematic context, using particularly important films from the country's history, famous stories and favourite characters and actors. While Kim Jong Il's love of James Bond was apparently ruined by the hostile North Korean story line in 2002's *Die Another Day*, spy dramas and action films were apparently

a favourite for the Dear Leader. Given the tendency throughout North Korea's history to engage in espionage, extra-judicial, and semi-licit state activities it might be potentially hard to imagine a North Korean comedy film involving spies or secret agents. In the chapter "I Spy a Spy," however, Kim considers the 1970 film *사랑끝에 있는 일* *Boasting Too Much* and its traversing of the anxieties of the late 1960s surrounding Pyongyang's geopolitical position, by what is essentially a spy film/farce with a premise that a spy cannot be found, because there was never a spy. It is a spy film that casts as its lead Kim Se-yŏng, an actor who will become hugely famous in North Korea, renowned for a familiar ability to barely manage his responsibilities and day to day life (the author suggests he is comparable to "Leslie Nielsen in the *Naked Gun* series and Ricky Gervais/Steve Carrell in *The Office*").⁵

Immanuel Kim continues with the work of Kim Se-yŏng in the following chapter "Taming of the Chief," which follows the *우리 집 문제* *My Family's Problem* series. In a UK or US context we might call the series a franchise. Kim Se-yŏng and his problematic family, according to Immanuel Kim are comedic foils for exploring humorously the complicated and uncomfortable relationships between genders in North Korea. North Korea is regarded as an avowedly unreconstructed society when it comes to gender roles, in spite of the assertions of its aspirational and foundational political documents and treatises, which would have it that women can do anything that men can. Kim Se-yŏng in *My Family's Problem* has his masculinity satirized and made ridiculous through comedic techniques such as constantly being interrupted and no more than a ventriloquist's dummy for his wife's assertions (55–56). Kim Se-yŏng is playing the Chief of a Post Office and ends up at an important moment relaying commands from his wife on the telephone as she stands behind him. Audiences are meant to have the phrase "his master's voice" in their minds, only without Nipper the dog: "the chief does not reprimand the wife for interfering in the business of men, but simply reiterates her words. He doesn't recognize that his wife is speaking for him and in his place as the authoritative figure."⁶

Beyond gender relations and the complex politics of the home, Kim in chapter four considers 1978's *유원지 의 하루* *Day at the Amusement Park*, directed by Kim Tŏk-gyu and again starring Kim Se-yŏng. Readers and those familiar with North Korean politics will know that one of the fundamental grounding points asserted by its ideology is that it has moved beyond traditional Confucian influenced practices of manners and social organisation, particularly anything connected to social hierarchy or formalism. In *Day at the Amusement Park*, Kim recounts how, in a landscape most unsuited to traditional Korean manners and social practices, and replete with the infrastructures of mechanized twentieth century fun and games, families attempt to arrange a marriage in a respectable and almost traditional way, yet the landscape behind those mannerisms make it impossible to conclude

an arrangement. Kim Se-yŏng's character also then doubles down on the comedic elements by performing the role of a courtly or aristocratic gentlemen, so far as his clothes are concerned at least, in an entirely inappropriate and ridiculous way.

In the final chapter of *Laughing North Koreans* Immanuel Kim considers the potential for North Korean romantic comedy (or perhaps more realistically comedy in romance), through films such as 도시처녀 시집와요 (*Urban Girl Comes to Get Married*, 1993); 금강산으로 가자 (*Lets Go to Mt Kumgang*, 1987); 마음에 드는 청년 (*The Favourite Young Man*, 1988), and 푸른 주단우에서 (*On the Green Carpet*, 2001). The comedic potential for these films and the content revolves around unlikely suitors and unlikely situations, often resolved by the abandonment of foreign influences and a submission to more authentic Korean customs. In particular the chapter addresses the required transformation of a leading character in 우리의 향기 (*Our Fragrance*, 2002). In this film, the female protagonist Sae-byŏl, played by Kim Ŭnyŏng, literally cannot resolve her relationship positively unless she abandons the western fashion she wears as a tour guide for foreigners in Pyongyang and dresses in traditional Korean clothes. Her boyfriend's grandfather also literally cannot see that she is a beautiful woman until she dresses in traditional Korean clothes, and becomes, in some way, ideologically sound and authentic. However, Kim flags up right at the end of the chapter perhaps the most extraordinary comedic element of the film, and one which sits uncomfortably with the ideological purity of the rest of the humor. Essentially, the domestic landscape of Sae-byŏl's very authentically Korean grandfather is littered with western goods and modern conveniences (including a Panasonic television). Whether any of the audience in Pyongyang discussed the irony is of course another matter.

Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films is ultimately a fascinating and extensive study of a subject seldom covered in this way. Immanuel Kim draws the reader into a cultural space where unexpectedly there are stars like Kim Se-yŏng and franchises such as the *My Family's Problem* series, which North Korean audiences really could have engaged with and followed through the years. Kim's analysis is thought provoking, especially where he finds or traces comedic elements or humorous spaces in contexts that might not at first be apparent, or would otherwise missed. He also has some interesting and, at times, sharp things to say about other scholarship. Just as North Korean comedy appears self reflexive and intricately linked through story, cast, and production, so writing on North Korean comedy can be linked together as part of an emerging discipline. The book has much to say on the history of comedy and humor in relation to North Korean politics and ideology; one of the most intriguing moments in its pages is when Kim Jong Il essentially outlaws clowning in the circus in 1971.⁷ There is not a huge amount of clowning around in this book, at least not in an overt manner,

but readers will be more than satisfied with Kim's careful analysis of these films and the legacies and histories they leave.

Notes

1. Reddit. 2015. r/pyongyang thread, "What's the Best North Korea Joke You Know." https://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/2q0hkw/whats_the_best_north_korea_joke_you_know/.
2. Koen De Ceuster. 2011. "To Be an Artist in North Korea: Talent and Then Some More." In: Rüdiger Frank (Ed.) *Exploring North Korean Arts*. Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst. 51–71.
3. Kim Jong Il. 2013. *On the Art of Cinema*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Press, 267.
4. Johannes Schönherr. 2012. *North Korean Cinema: A History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
5. Immanuel Kim. 2020. *Laughing North Koreans: The Culture of Comedy Films*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, 37.
6. Kim, *Laughing*, 2020, 46.
7. Kim, *Laughing*, 2020, 125.

Alexander Bukh, *These Islands are Ours: The Social Constructions of Territorial Disputes in Northeast Asia*

2020, Stanford University Press, 232 pages, ISBN: 9781503611894

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Readers of Alexander Bukh's *These Islands are Ours* might feel disappointed over his not providing more information as to who "ours" is, as suggested in his title. His purpose is not to decide possession rights over the islands of the three case studies he examines. Nor does Bukh review the somewhat tiresome discussions that trace possession claims over the centuries: whether the islands were included on maps or in statements by leaders in centuries past. His approach, however, is perhaps more valuable in focusing attention on how the territorial disputes emerged and evolved in the postwar period. Bukh discovered in this study that the "territorial disputes [on which he focuses] are socially constructed, namely, that the meanings associated with these disputed territories and the narratives around them, emerged as a result of sociological processes" (p. 4). Specifically, Bukh considers three case studies: the Russian controlled "Northern Territories" (*Hoppō ryōdo*), the Dokdo/Takeshima islets that frustrate Korean and Japanese relations, and the Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu islands that are claimed by both China and Japan. He devotes two chapters to the second case study where he examines the dispute from the Japanese, and then the Korean, perspective.

One of the more interesting findings that this monograph reveals is the prominent role that local non-government groups have played in all three of the disputes. Japanese local groups assumed important roles in bringing the Northern

Territories to national attention, as they, along with Korean groups, did in the case of the Dokdo/Takeshima issue. Regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu issue, it was Taiwanese overseas students who assumed this role. The three cases also share the history of the controversies being a product of wartime decisions made by the United States. The Cairo and Potsdam Declarations included parts relative to these discussions. The Cairo Communiqué of December 1943 declared that “Japan would be expelled from all territories which she has taken by violence and greed,” many of which were “stolen” from China by the two Sino-Japanese wars. The July 1945 Potsdam Declaration limited Japanese territory to its four main islands and “such minor islands as [the Allies] determine.” The United States, however, had even earlier begun to determine ownership of “minor islands,” in February 1945 at Yalta, when in a separate secret agreement, President Franklin Roosevelt promised Stalin islands off the coast of Hokkaido in exchange for his promise to enter the Pacific War. The Dokdo/Takeshima islets did not receive much attention until the Korean War, when in July 1952 a U.S.–Japan Joint Commission agreed that they be used for bombing practice (p. 66).¹ The Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu issue exploded in 1969, after the United States deemed that the islands would eventually be returned to Japan as part of the Okinawa island chain. Another interesting point raised here was how central governments often tacitly turned a blind eye to allow foreign access to waters, even as they publicly criticized the policies of the opposing state. Local public activism often pressured the central government into raising the issue to a national level.

Bukh’s first chapter considers the Northern Territories, specifically the Kurile Islands and Habomai/Octposa and Shikotan. Japanese activists, who consisted of previous residents of the islands and local fishermen, had economic interests in mind when they initiated their movement. These interest groups were “scattered across Hokkaido” with several groups establishing headquarters in Sapporo, the island’s capital and largest city. These groups, Bukh notes, “differed greatly from one another in terms of their size, membership, demands, and the nature of their activities” (p. 27). What united them were the economic gains that they expected their efforts to secure, either through their regaining property lost when they were forced to evacuate the islands, and/or access to the surrounding waters for fishing purposes. Their efforts began soon after Japan’s surrender. In December 1945, the group calling themselves Entreating the Return of the Islands Attached to Hokkaido centered in Nemuro directly petitioned General Douglas MacArthur at SCAP headquarters in Tokyo. This initial attempt apparently went unanswered, but a second petition gained a response, albeit a negative one: the worsening U.S.–Soviet relations over German issues rendered it difficult for the two states to negotiate the return of the northern islands (pp. 32–34). This appears to have been a legitimate

reason for U.S. unwillingness to negotiate on Japan's behalf. However, might the U.S. have also been concerned over its position over islands at the opposite end of Japan, in U.S. controlled Okinawa, should it have approached the Soviets on this issue? The Hokkaido Prefectural Government adopted the northern islands issue in 1950. The islands officially assumed the name "Northern Territories" in March 1957, after which their return became an "official mission" of Japan (p. 44). The previous year, however, the Soviet Union did offer a compromise settlement—the return of two of the islands (Habomai/Octposa and Shikotan)—within the context of peace negotiations with Japan. This offer encouraged the movement to demand the return of all four islands or nothing, thus killing the deal (p. 44).

Takeshima/Dokdo differed from the Northern Territories in that neither the Japanese nor the Koreans had ever inhabited the territory to any significant level. That the islets were ignored in postwar possession discussions may have been due also to their small size. Similar to the Northern Territories, though, the food resources in the waters surrounding the islets provided greater practical value than the largely symbolic issue of the land itself. These islets became an issue around the time of the US–Japan Joint Commission mentioned above, at which time Korea joined Japan in heated discussion over their ownership. The "Peace Line" that Republic of Korea President Syngman Rhee drew to protect Korean waters from Japanese vessels incorporated this territory thus preventing, often by use of military means, Japanese fish trawlers from entering the area. Japan retreated from the issue amidst violent altercations in which Japanese and Koreans engaged over this Line. The two states did not resolve their feud with their signing of the 1965 normalization treaty, but they tacitly agreed at that time to a "non-solution [being] a solution" approach. This meant that although Korea would continue to administer the islands, both sides would maintain their official positions that protested the other side's claim to the islets. However, they would tacitly share access to the waters. By this arrangement, Japan and Korea strove to avoid having the issue escalate into confrontation (p. 69).

Local voices in Japan from Shimane Prefecture, however, continued to demand that Takeshima/Dokdo be recognized as territory lying within its prefectural borders, both while Korea prohibited Japanese vessels from crossing the Peace Line and even after the treaty of normalization had "erased" the Line. The Prefecture's tone on the issue intensified in 2005 when its legislature designated February 22 as Takeshima Day, the day in 1905 that the Japanese assumed possession of the islets through the Second Japan–Korea Pact (in Korea known as the Eulsa Treaty). Bukh notes that Korea's fierce reaction to Shimane Prefecture's brazen declaration gained wide media coverage and "elevated the territorial issue from near oblivion to the fore of Japan public discourse" (p. 92),

forcing the Japanese central government's otherwise reluctant participation. From 2006 the issue came to be included in Japanese textbooks; in 2012 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs doubled its "territorial integrity" budget to promote Japan's appeal for its claims over the islets (p. 93).

Bukh next directs attention to the Korean side of this issue, suggesting that here, too, it emerged initially as a local issue before quickly moving to the national level. Tourists, he notes, do not have to attempt the cumbersome and costly trip to Dokdo/Takeshima to appreciate its importance to the Korean state and its citizens. They are hit with Dokdo-is-Korean advertisements while riding the train coming into Seoul from In'chŏn Airport, and are peppered with reminders of this message as they ride the subways, on message boards, as well as through miniature models of the islets scattered throughout the city (p. 1). Less detailed maps of Korea may not show some of the country's larger islands, but include a dot in the East Sea that represents Dokdo/Takeshima. Korea's original intention was, like the Japanese central government, to maintain a low profile on the issue. The islets drew attention at the time Korea signed fishing agreements with Japan, after which the central Korean government negotiated financial settlements with local fishermen to compensate them for losses incurred by the agreement. He sees the movement to "protect" Korea's claim to possession of the islets appearing around the zenith of the democratization movement in 1987. This movement, appropriately called "Protect Dokdo," criticized the Korean government for not taking a more active stance on the issue. Later, the Dokdo/Takeshima issue gained the symbolic significance of the country's national survival. In 2000, the movement argued that the loss of Dokdo to the Japanese would be synonymous to a contemporary Eulsa Treaty. This sentiment Bukh found in a letter addressed to the Kim Dae-Jung administration where the writer, Kim Bong-u, warned that "[w]ithout Dokdo, ... the future of Korea was gloomy, and economic recovery was impossible to achieve" (p. 107). Bukh sees the "Dokdo crisis" as motivating two developments. First, it was an issue around which all Koreans, those of the north, the south, and overseas, could unite. Second, it presented Koreans with the "opportunity to rid themselves of flunkeyism and achieve a true and proper national consciousness" (p. 108). It was, however, actions by Shimane Prefecture, and those later adopted by the Japanese government, that gained the issue national attention in South Korea. In 2005 President Roh Mu-hyun increased Dokdo funding in the Maritime Police Agency. In March 2006 he proposed in a speech he gave at an International Hydrographic Organizational conference that Korean names replace those Japanese place names that lingered in the islets' vicinity (p. 113). The Dokdo/Takeshima issue grew from a local movement in both Japan and South Korea that evolved into a national one. It is clear, however, that its presence in Korean society far surpasses that of Japanese society in South Korean activists and even the state

adopting the issue as a national issue, perhaps due to the support it draws from other contested colonial-related issues that continue to disturb bilateral relations.

The third, and arguably most challenging, case study that Bukh addresses is that of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai/Diaoyu islands situated between Okinawa and Taiwan in the East China Sea. The division of China, and the fact that both Chinas claim ownership to the eight islands, makes this a case of three states competing for their ownership and the rights that accompany it. Japan acquired the islands in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. Administered as a part of Okinawa Prefecture, the Chinese claim that the Cairo Communiqué directed that China will eventually reclaim all territories that were “stolen” by Japan in war, both the earlier confrontation as well as the one in which the states were currently engaged. Here Bukh limits his discussion primarily to the Baodiado movement initiated by the Taiwanese people that later spread to the Chinese mainland. This movement is unique among his other two case studies in its first emerging overseas, by students then studying in elite U.S. universities, rather than more locally in Taiwan. He separates the movement into two critical junctures. The first occurred in an atmosphere of protest through the 1960s and early 1970s in the United States, at a time that also saw U.S. rapprochement with Mainland China, at Taiwan’s expense. The second juncture took place in the 1990s as a “political tool of pro-unification parties” who saw it, similar to the “Protect Dokdo” movement in Korea, as an issue that potentially could “re-create Chinese national unity” (p. 129). Natural resources influenced action toward ownership of these islands as well, especially when gas and oil deposits were discovered in their vicinity in 1968. This first wave of protests was initiated by Taiwanese students at Princeton University who in 1970 initiated the Defend the Diaoyutai Islands Action Committee, an effort that quickly spread to other universities (p. 133). Taiwan being under martial law at the time prohibited a more local movement from developing.

The second wave of Chinese activism toward the islands was initiated in the late 1990s by Japan’s insistence that Taiwanese citizens obtain a visa to visit the islands and a Japanese government declaration of a two-hundred-mile exclusion zone around the islands. Additionally, the Japan Youth League made efforts to repair a lighthouse on the islands. Demonstrations broke out in Hong Kong that gathered up to 20,000 participants. Mainland China responded in 2010 by claiming three of the islands and sending trawlers into the waters. These anti-Japanese actions encouraged the then nationalist Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro in 2012 to attempt to purchase the islands and incorporate them into Tokyo proper, against the opposition of the Democratic Party-led central government (p. 131). The Chinese answered by organizing more anti-Japanese protests and by sailing more ships, some military, into the surrounding waters.

Alexander Bukh's *These Islands are Ours* approaches the issue of East Asian territorial dispute from the unique direction of tracing the social and political developments that the movements took over the decades that followed the Pacific War. His efforts, like most research of significance, elicits questions. At the regional level, it might be interesting to consider in greater detail the extent that these territorial issues are dependent on other unresolved issues to survive? To what extent do they draw support from other colonial and wartime issues that remain unresolved in Chinese and Korean minds? And, while Mainland China has fully entered the dispute over the East China Sea islands, has North Korea voiced a position on the Dokdo/Takeshima issue? At the global level, it would be interesting to learn of the similarities and uniqueness that these disputes share with territorial issues in other parts of the world. Also, comparing these failed attempts at resolution with a relatively successful one, the U.S. return of Okinawa to Japan, might help explain the role that global politics contributes to the continuity of these disputes. I address these questions not as criticism but as issues that came to mind while reading Alexander Bukh's interesting monograph. I found *These Islands are Ours* to be a work that provides challenging discussion regarding Japan's territorial issues with Russia, South Korea, and both Taiwan and Mainland China to novices, but also one that informs the veteran scholar of East Asian regional studies. Similarly, students of territorial possession issues in general may also find his discussions engaging and valuable contributions to their own studies on similar issues in other parts of the world.

Note

1. During one of the North Korean missile tests, a graduate student who was also working in Japan's Defense Ministry mentioned that a joke going around the office suggested that it would be convenient if the North Koreans used the islets as targets for their missile tests.

Seung-kyung Kim and Michael Robinson, eds.,
*Peace Corps Volunteers and the Making of Korean Studies
 in the United States*

2020, University of Washington Press, 251 pages, ISBN: 9780295748139

James Grayson, University of Sheffield

This is a very unusual book to be reviewed in the *European Journal of Korean Studies* in that it is not strictly speaking an academic book, and yet it is a book packed with interesting and thoughtful chapters by well known academics in the area of Korean Studies. I was gripped by the observations in the book because all but

one of the writers is well known to me, and we are all of the same “age cohort” in anthropological terms. The book is a collection of papers offered at the conference held in 2016 at the University of Indiana to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Peace Corps under the title “Peace Corps Volunteers and the Making of Korean Studies in the US.” The substantive papers are given by Don Baker, Edward W. Baker, Donald N. Clark, Carter J. Eckert, Bruce Fulton, Laurel Kendall, Linda Lewis, Michael Robinson, and Edward J. Shultz, with extensive reflective comments on the papers by non-Peace Corps volunteers Okpyo Moon and Clark W. Sorenson.

This review cannot go into detail about every paper, but generally the book is interesting for two reasons. First, the presenters reflect on the way in which being in Korea as a Peace Corps volunteer changed their lives. The essays well reflect the social and political issues gripping America at that time (the Vietnam War, race riots, and movements for racial equality), and how these (at that time), young graduates dealt with them. For male presenters, the draft into the US Army loomed large as a moral issue. Bringing with them a sense of idealism and also their middle-class American values when they went to Korea meant that they had to adjust in surprising ways to the new cultural circumstances in which they found themselves.

While these comments may sound slightly “romantic,” the two women volunteers who write in this volume, Laurel Kendall and Linda Lewis, “bring us down to earth” with their comments about being a woman in Korea and in the Peace Corps at that time. Kendall’s paper I found to be particularly “haunting.” She asks, “Did women have a Peace Corps-Korea experience?,” and one has to say, “Yes,” but it was a very different one, and one in which women volunteers and wives of volunteers were certainly not equals or peers. And, unfortunately, this discrimination followed them into their careers in the US.

Second, the intercultural experience not only widened their perspectives, but for many it made them change academic direction towards the intensive study of some aspect of “Korea.” As a former American Friends (Quaker) Service Committee workcamper in Korea and American Methodist missionary, many of the points, observations and experiences made by these authors resonated with my own, and about which I wrote in a paper published in *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies* (“From Workcamper to Missionary: A View of Korea from 1965 to 1987,” *Papers of the British Association for Korean Studies*, v. 14 (2012), pp. 35–49).

A word which comes up again and again in these reflections is “empathy”—how these young Americans came to understand in an empathetic way their relationship to individual Koreans, and the nation as a whole. This empathy with the nation and its difficult economic, political, and geo-political circumstances

led them to become politically activist in various ways upon returning to the US. The conflicting issues brought about by this involvement led to some thoughtful comments by the two writers who were not volunteers—Moon and Sorenson. It is this empathy which led all of the writers to become involved in developing academic programmes and pursuing academic research about Korea which would enhance American understanding and appreciation of a “distant” country about which few of their compatriots had any significant knowledge. Reflecting on my own experience in living and working in Korea and then being involved in the development of the academic discipline of “Korean Studies,” I could see many parallels, especially empathy. This characteristic must be the key for anyone living and working in a country with a culture very different from the one in which they were raised.

The book makes for an interesting read in many ways—reflections on trans-cultural living and how that experience led to career changes and changes in world view. However, there is one final way in which this book is interesting and useful. It is a collection of essays which are a form of “auto-ethnography.” These observations of cultural adjustment, and American understanding of Korea during the 1960s to the 1980s are an important source of information for future scholars examining American attitudes to East Asia at the end of the twentieth century.

Keith Howard, *Songs for “Great Leaders”: Ideology and Creativity in North Korean Music and Dance*

2020, Oxford University Press, 360 pages, ISBN: 9780190077518

Pekka Korhonen, University of Jyväskylä

Emeritus professor of music Keith Howard’s newest book on music and related visual artistic spectacles created in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, from now on North Korea), is a tough work. It is a distillation of over two decades of research, topping his numerous earlier books and articles on the subject. Seen in light of Reinhard Koselleck’s classification of research, in the English language area Howard’s work belongs to the category of *Aufschreibung*, where a specific field of research is written open. It is a pioneering position, where not only basic empirical information is presented, but also crucial analytical concepts and perspectives towards the field are established. As it is not possible to acquire comprehensive information on any aspect of North Korean life, North Korean studies have required the painstaking collection of small pieces of information based on personal observation, interviews of artists, and archival work with careful source criticism, as well as their reasoned placement within

an analytical matrix. The result is a ground-breaking work on the subject area, something which all other researchers should interact with in their own research. Their position would be that of *Fortschreibung*, adding pieces of new information and refining points here and there. The possibility for *Umschreibung*, turning the research field to a completely new position, appears currently to be rather distant, as it would imply a political change in the international system, free access to North Korean information, unhindered archival work, and extensive interviews of musicians and art administrators, not only in Pyongyang, but also elsewhere in the country. Thus, for the current generations of researchers of North Korean music politics, *Songs for "Great Leaders"* appears to be a seminal work.

The book deals with various categories of North Korean songs, such as those requiring more artistic skill (songs *for* the people), thus meant to be performed by professionals on stage, and those meant for the people to sing (songs *of* the people). Another analytical category involves the temporal origin of songs: there are ancient melodies, some date to the colonial period, many of them based on colonial Korean, Japanese, or religious originals, and then there are various layers of songs made during the existence of the DPRK, displaying different varieties of Soviet, Chinese, and international influence. Whatever the category, Howard's argument is that all North Korean songs are political, either explicitly or metaphorically eulogizing the party, the nation, and ultimately the current great leader, constantly repeating the same ideological content, while songs simultaneously are in a prominent position in domestic totalitarian propaganda, forming a constant element of people's daily lives. This establishes a sort of eternal return of the same, though not exactly in a Nietzschean sense. For this reason, the lyrics are always regarded as the most important element of songs, because in them lie the ideological "seeds," meant to grow in people's minds. Nevertheless, as there also has to be an element of the exceptional in even North Korean propagandistic art, there is variation in melodies, arrangements, and artists. Thus, also composers and other music professionals are important.

Howard also deals extensively with instruments in two chapters. The discussion is mainly technical, but Howard presents here well the North Korean tortuous relationship with the non-North Korean world. The nationalistic *juche* ideology emphasizes the importance of domestic achievement over anything foreign, while at the same time what the majority of human kind has been able to achieve often naturally surpasses the domestic. In the case of musical instruments the tension is created by the fact that Western instruments, especially when grouped into an orchestra, create a fuller and mightier sound than traditional Korean instruments, making Western instruments eminently suitable for propaganda performances. From this situation followed decades of the improvement of national instruments

in order to fit them together with Western instruments, while simultaneously retaining their traditional timbre. As a result traditional instruments could be placed into orchestras mainly using Western instruments, but emitting “traditional” Korean sounds.

After these chapters follow three chapters on North Korean revolutionary operas, from the most well known “Sea of Blood” and “Flower Girl” to three less often mentioned, namely “A True Daughter of the Party,” “Oh! Tell the Forest,” and “The Song of Mount Kūmgang.” All five were supervised during 1971–1973 by Kim Jong Il. What made them revolutionary was that their scenes were set in various ways in the anti-Japanese struggle, exposing Kim Il Sung as the great liberator of his people and a builder of the North Korean utopia. Also a few other operas set in other time periods were produced, but after the middle of the 1970s, interest in producing more of them apparently diminished. Some of these operas were preceded or followed by film versions, a few viewable nowadays on YouTube. These chapters provide Howard with the opportunity to discuss the *juche* idea in more detail and find more of the propagandistic everyday sameness that already became apparent in North Korean songs. Also, Howard discusses several technical aspects of the operas, such as the style of singing, use of instruments, engagement with the audience, or the *pangch’ang*, an off-stage chorus, supposedly a creation of Kim Jong Il, which explains through song the developments of the plot, emotional movements of the characters, and plants the necessary ideological seeds in the minds of spectators.

One chapter is devoted to dance. It discusses mass spectacles involving tens of thousands or even 100,000 dancers simultaneously in one location, which in P’yōngyang usually means the central Kim Il Sung Square or sports stadiums, as well as folk dances and smaller artistic performances by professional dancers on stage. Spectacles naturally involve complicated logistics, from selecting and educating the dancers to the choreography, music and backdrops, such as children with a book of card pages creating changing visions and messages. As with music itself, the spectacles are meant to reinforce the leadership cult and are thus arranged around suitable stories. They are also occasions for chosen participants to display their loyalty by rehearsing their movements in groups for a long time before the event. An interesting element of the chapter is discussion of the North Korean notation system for dance, because the chosen choreography had to be transmitted to enormous numbers of participants. It also was developed under the guidance of Kim Jong Il on the basis of various foreign examples. The specific artist introduced is Ch’oe Sūnghŭi (1911–1969), born in colonial Korea, who studied dance in Japan in the 1930s, settled in North Korea in 1946, was active until the 1960s, and had considerable influence on the forms that North Korean dance developed.

Then the book moves to composing. Composers of old Korean folk music tended to remain anonymous and mainly the modern history of Korean composing starts during the early twentieth century when Western art music started to arrive, first directly by missionaries, and a bit later, through Japanese interpretations. After 1945 Soviet and Chinese influences were added to the mix. Howard's main argument here is that North Korean composing is not so much about creation: the *juche* ideology demanded clear popular melodies linking songs with the leadership and forming tight boundaries within which composers had to work. Assembling together familiar melodic elements and the arrangement of songs thus became the central activity of composers. Howard introduces a few composers active mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, devoting most space to Isang Yun (1917–1995), who is the internationally best known Korean composer. He was, however, a South Korean from aristocratic descent, who fused traditional Korean court music with Western avant garde music, and since the 1950s lived in West Germany, becoming a German citizen. For political reasons he created an allegiance with North Korea. He was in a sense adopted by the North Korean leadership and celebrated as a famous North Korean composer, but his influence on North Korean composition was negligent.

The final chapter deals with North Korean pop music, with which Howard apparently means music that cannot be categorized as high art—even though artistic music was supposed to be both popular and *juche*. Essentially, in this chapter, Howard deals with the North Korean music scene during the past forty years from the 1980s to 2018, when he finished writing the book. This chapter is somewhat problematic, but helps us to understand the genre aspects of the book. All authors face the same problem: when you concentrate on something, you cannot concentrate on something else. One can say only one thing in a single book. Howard's gaze is strongly on old North Korea, in the time period from 1945 to the 1970s, i.e., in the artistically active periods of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, and he has only ephemeral interest in later developments. This is, of course, understandable in the sense that the basic ideological characteristics of the country and its music scene were established at that period, and if everything in North Korean music is about everyday sameness, analyzing one period is logically equivalent to analyzing all of them. Then again, most North Korean musical products available for listeners on YouTube, Youku, Uriminzokkiri, and other sites date from much later periods, and it is a pity that so little is said of later composers, orchestras, and songs that actually can be heard and watched easily. Three chapters on the slightly marginal phenomenon of opera and one short chapter on four decades of popular music creates a slightly lopsided structure for a book dealing with “songs for ‘great leaders.’”

Thus, for whom has the book been written? The answer clearly is that the central *auditorium* is composed of Howard's colleagues: other musicologists, who also happen to have some kind of interest in North Korea. This is, of course, rather natural in academic literature; you write on what you study. Narratives of daring escapes by North Korean individuals through dangerous terrain to a South Korean haven are for general readers. However, the book is fruitful reading also for researchers interested in North Korean politics, ideology, and general culture, who can easily skip some technical aspects of improved musical instruments. Howard has observed North Korea for a long time and as the subtitle announces, this is also a book on ideology. Howard makes many useful and sharp observations on the intersection of music and politics.

On the other hand, Howard's narrative mode is often satirical, which is a bit tiring in repetition, though wholly understandable as a literary strategy and quite often used in analyses of North Korea. In Northrop Frye's sense, the plot of practically all North Korean art production is romance or the telling of an endless struggle towards a utopia by a heroic nation under the leadership of exalted leaders, and satire is the natural antidote to that. Admittedly, if one reads a lot of literature published under Kim Jong Il's name and becomes saturated with its endless boasting of *juche* originality, the irresistible temptation may well be to answer with satire and find in North Korean art merely the copying of elements of foreign models and their incessant recycling in subsequent productions. However, creativity is always a matter of interpretation. Any creator of something new is always inspired by earlier models and only adds some small twist or turn into them. Besides ideology, the subtitle announces also creativity in North Korean music and dance, but Howard does not find much of it. Perhaps there indeed is nothing to find, or perhaps he is not interested in finding it. Notwithstanding, Howard certainly is a better and more balanced read than some North Korean focused outlets, where the satirical mode is the only one ever used.

The final chapter is problematic also in other ways. Howard becomes careless. On page 257 he tells us of a certain song "composed by Yun Tugün and setting lyrics by Kim Munhyök," but in reality the former is the lyricist, very famous in North Korea with tens of well-known song lyrics to his credit, and the latter is the composer. Howard also refuses to use full names for the popular ensembles. For instance, instead of Ŭnhasu Orchestra (은하수관현악단) he writes only "Ŭnhasu," which in English means the Milky Way, but the Milky Way is not known for making any music. He treats similarly other ensembles. Most problematic are his references to "Moranbong," which means Peony Hill, and is a hilly park in P'yöngyang. With this vague reference, Howard creates confusion between an older female singing group called Moranbong or Moranbong Chorus, which

started recording with the Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble, and a much newer and bigger group, the Moranbong Band (모란봉악단). Chang Söngt'aek was not Kim Jong Un's uncle (p. 264), but the husband of his aunt. Clearly the final chapter drives home the point that Howard is not particularly interested in North Korean music of the past 40 years, and does not feel the need to be careful in writing about it.

A final critical comment concerns the use of languages. In the case of European languages, such as French or German, Howard gives specific terms in original languages—although his “*Korpurkultur*” is a misspelling of *Körperkultur*. However, in the case of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese terms, every term in those languages is presented only in the Latin alphabet, a remnant of times when the production of original characters was difficult. Because the book is not directed at the larger public but is for professional researchers with Korean and more widely East Asian interests, and because nowadays there are no technical obstacles in printing original characters, this omission is lamentable.

Despite some problems towards the end of this *magnum opus*, it is really a remarkable achievement in its own field and genre. It is certainly recommended reading for researchers interested in North Korean music and politics.

Hyug Baeg Im, *Democratization and Democracy in South Korea, 1960–Present*

2020, Palgrave Macmillan, 220 pages, ISBN: 9789811537028

Inga Kim Diederich, University of California, San Diego

The 2017 peaceful ousting of South Korean President Park Geun-hye (Pak Künhye) from office and election of a new administration raised the profile of South Korean democracy on the global stage and returned the subject to the center of scholarly debate. How, in a single generation, had South Korea transitioned from an entrenched system of military authoritarianism to a democracy confident enough to disinter the daughter of its most famous dictator?

Social scientists have long debated how to understand the interlinked trajectories of economic development and political organization in South Korea. In the field of political science, Korea emerged in the late Cold War decades as a popular case-study of the relationship between economic conditions and political systems, particularly in comparison to Latin American countries with similar histories of “late-development,” authoritarian governance, and US intervention. Before the 1987 election that ended military rule, political scientists looked to South Korea to conceptualize the relationship between authoritarianism and

rapid industrialization. After democratization, scholarly inquiry turned to the causes and sustainability of South Korea's democratic transition, as well as its potential effect on economic performance. In the following decade, following the peaceful democratic turnover from the ruling party to the opposition and back again, social scientists have become convinced of the durability of democracy as a political system in South Korea and focused their attention on the consolidation of democratic norms and customs in Korean society.

Hyug Baeg Im's study of democratic transition and consolidation in South Korea chronicles a lifetime's work in the trenches of social scientific inquiry into and analysis about democracy, authoritarianism, and socio-economic development in Korea. A collection of Im's publications from the 1990s through 2011, the volume curates a career devoted to grappling with the place of democracy in South Korean politics and society, concentrating particularly on how it came about (democratic transition) and how it can best be maintained (democratic consolidation). The publication of three-decades of related essays together in a single book brings out the key objects of concern in Im's repertoire, such as his struggle to conceptually balance the fatalism of predictive models with the contingency of agentive paradigms. For the most part, each essay is presented without significant alteration from its original form and little context. The choice to maintain the original texts lends each chapter a sense of immediacy and builds a sense of change over time across the volume, not only of shifting local conditions but also Im's major scholarly concerns. As the volume moves from Im's game theorizations of democratic transition in the 1990s through his cataloguing of supports and hurdles for democratic socialization in the 2000s, it chronicles an evolution towards an increasingly confident focus on South Korea for its own sake.

The study is organized chronologically into three sections addressing South Korea's transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance, the consolidation of democratic norms in South Korean society, and evaluations of the quality of South Korean democracy. The chapters, too, are mostly arranged in the order first published. Early chapters reflect Im's engagement with comparative political models in Latin America and are devoted to distinguishing Park Chung Hee's Yusin regime from Latin American bureaucratic authoritarianism while also undermining nostalgic myths that Park's dictatorial development was "historically necessary" for Korean economic progress. Chapters in the second section focus on the consolidation of democracy during the so-called "Three Kims Era," when political power turned over to the opposition party led by Kim Young-sam (Kim Yŏng-sam) and Kim Dae-jung (Kim Tae-jung) while Kim Jong-pil (Kim Chong-p'il) assumed control of the conservative party. Finally, two concluding chapters written after the "second turnover" of power back

to the conservative faction assess the quality of South Korean democracy by surveying the supports and challenges presented by “pre-modern” legacies and “post-modern” potentialities.

While the text traverses three-decades of drastic change in South Korean political life and social scientific analyses of Korean democratization, Im’s sustained attention to the balance between preconditions and volition in democratic transition, as well as Korea’s position in the “stages” of modern democratization, is a constant trajectory. Throughout, Im seeks to strike a balance between transition models that are governed by historical necessity and those more attentive to historical contingency. While his review of social scientific scholarship outlines ongoing debates on the relationship between capitalism, authoritarianism, and democracy, however, his own position is not always consistent—reflecting an evolution in his own thought and analysis from the earliest to the latest chapters. For example, in later essays he maintains that “Authoritarian industrialization and liberal industrialization is a matter of choice, not a matter of historical necessity” (pp. 248–249). But earlier chapters rely on progressivist language from modernization theorists describing “stages” of development and the danger of “regression” for young democracies. Meanwhile, Im proposes that the trajectory of South Korean democracy is unique in that “different historical times [traditional Confucian society, modern industrial governance, and postmodern neo-nomadism] have synchronically coexisted” (p. 207). Such progressivist terminology might reflect the time of first publication and Im’s engagement with the neo-modernization thesis propounded by his graduate mentor, Adam Przeworski. In terms of framing a theoretical intervention into the field of transitology, while some of the essays accept and some reject western-centric norms of modernization theory as applicable to South Korean democratization, ultimately for Im, while authoritarianism in South Korea was not a historical necessity, democracy has been the natural historical outcome of “ideal conditions”.

The book offers a wide overview of Korean democratization and a lengthy scholarly career committed to understanding it. The ambitions of the project and editorial decision to leave the chapters largely unaltered from their original forms does lend them a sense of immediacy, and we can track the development in the writer’s thoughts from earlier impassioned proclamations on the nature of Korean history and society to engagement with the advancing field focused on the Korean peninsula of the present in later chapters. This multi-faceted volume could serve many academic audiences from political science to Korean Studies and overall the book is a fine testament to a productive career and promises future contributions to our understanding of recent developments in the course of democracy in South Korean politics and society.

Kim Gooyong, *From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Groups: Cultural Politics of Developmentalism, Patriarchy, and Neoliberalism in South Korea's Popular Music Industry*

2019, Lexington Press, 151 pages, ISBN: 9781498548823

Keith Howard, SOAS, University of London

Kim's catch-all title suggests a volume of interest not just to those intrigued by K-pop and the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), but also to those concerned with Korean development. Running through the volume is the argument that women have become crucial to the labor market but, because of patriarchal codes and practices inherited from Confucianism, they remain subservient to men. The volume is primarily a cultural or critical and media studies product, laden with theory that at times assumes greater importance than discussion about K-pop itself—Foucault is prominent, joined by an assortment of familiar gender studies and feminist scholars.

The first three chapters have been previously published as journal articles and are heaviest in terms of the use of theory. Collectively, they examine the success of female idols in the K-pop industry during the last two decades. Chapter 1 identifies in K-pop a neo-liberal aspect of developmentalism, extending from a normative understanding of how the Korean economy evolved during the centrally-planned industrialization process that began in the 1960s during the administration of military dictator Park Chung Hee. Kim argues that female factory workers were essential to the earlier industrial model. After the economic crash of 1997, the service economy continued to subjectify and exploit women, including as K-pop idols, and the government encouraged this through its investment in popular culture. Kim skims over the reasons for the economic crash, preferring to echo a popular South Korean conspiracy theory that damns the IMF for imposing extreme conditions on its bail-out funds that constituted an assault on national identity. Chapter 2 adds Confucian patriarchy into the mix: the K-pop idol manufacturing machine infantilises and sexualises female bodies as commodities to satisfy the sexual desires of a primarily male audience. In so doing, it forces women to remain cute and submissive, and this demonstrates the continuing persistence of Confucian "norms." Since the cultural industry is designed to make profits, Kim makes a link, somewhat simplistically, to the female factory workers who in previous decades were docile, disposable, and unwed contributors to the economic development of Korea. Indeed, factory girls did receive low wages; they were prohibited from joining unions, and they could be legally fired prior to 1987 if they dared to marry, but Kim tells us nothing of this: plenty of research has been published that could

usefully have been cited (by, for example, Robert Spencer¹ and Seung-Kyung Kim).² Arguably, systems for exploiting women's labor trace back further in Korea at least to the Japanese colonial period (and the initial legislation that allowed this was imported from Japan). Kim does not dwell on Confucian patriarchy, beyond a couple of citations to Martina Deuchler's³ celebrated book and a good number of references to a brief article by Taeyon Kim that was based on her MA dissertation written at SOAS.⁴ Chapter 3 extends Kim's argument by casting neoliberalism as cultural hegemony, using fairly standard ideas to argue that K-pop recirculates and reproduces American forms. This allows Kim to question whether such surrogacy undermines claims of cultural difference. Kim mostly focuses his attention on the group Girls' Generation, but apart from the introduction the group is always referred to as 'SNSD' without telling us why ('SNSD' is an abbreviation of the Korean name, *Sonyō sidae*).

Chapters 4 to 6 shift to a more micro level, keeping much of the same theoretical frame. First, Kim offers a taxonomy of the successive generations of female idols, dividing 1997–2007 (when cuteness and innocence ruled) from 2007–2010 (when videos and dances began to feature much more overt sexualization) and 2011 onwards (when explicit sexualization became common). Kim regularly refers to the explicit nature of this last period as “pornographic.” Seen from a neoliberal perspective, the first generation matches the post-IMF bail-out structural adjustment period, the second the Free Trade Agreement with the US, and the third began with the 2010 Seoul G20 summit. To most other writers, the first of these is differentiated as “K-Wave 1,” the period when Korean pop production companies began to explore East and Southeast Asian markets, and the second and third as “K-Wave 2,” where they began to penetrate global markets. Chapter 5 zooms in on a single idol, Suzy Kim, finding it “ironic” that she is explicitly sexual but also manages to conform to the Confucian gender norm of innocence and purity. Girls' Generation returns in Chapter 6, where Kim erects a scaffolding to prove that K-pop promotes a discourse of resilience: if on the one hand female empowerment is championed, on the other hand it comes with the message that happiness requires devotion to what a woman should be—nurturing, homely, conservative. The author marshals a body of literature that finds feminist potential in neoliberalism, rationalising how the oppressed can triumph in a world of increasingly precarious labor relations based on individual achievement rather than social or class compacts.

Finally, Chapter 7 moves into markedly different territory, discussing the resurgence of 1990s pop music in television shows, in particular MBC's “Saturday, Saturday is Singers” (rather like “SNSD,” after the first mention, this is referred to simply as “ToToGa” without telling readers this is an abbreviation of its Korean title, “*Toyoil* [Saturday], *Toyoil* [Saturday], *Kayo* [Song].” Seen as embodying,

navigating, and repackaging nostalgia, such shows confer new meanings on the period before the 1997 crisis, which, as I have argued elsewhere,⁵ was the time when K-pop came of age, escaping the pan-Asian sentimental ballad form and assimilating rap, reggae, and hip hop. However, the female idols of Kim's account emerged after the 1997 crisis, and the earlier period is not part of Kim's account; he admits that his "exclusive focus on female idols sacrifices many important developments, issues and contributions ... rendered by male idols" (p. 124).

Commentators routinely state that 90% of today's K-pop fans are female, mostly teenagers or young adults, and that the first idol groups in the 1990s were male—the most famous being Seo Taiji & Boys. There is, then, a risk that in developing his theory, Kim will miss the bigger picture. In his conclusion, there are hints that he recognises this: he states, bluntly, that he "takes the risk of not listening to 'female idol' voices and thoughts," "does not examine what audiences get out of the idols' staged sexual expressions," and "does not consider how female audiences actually negotiate the media content in their everyday lives" (p. 124). This is worrying because he states he is the first to offer an adequate account, and criticises others for not properly investigating the K-pop phenomenon. To him, the German musicologist Michael Fuhr⁶ is "naïve" and "short-sighted," suffering from a "conceptual misunderstanding" that makes his argument "completely erroneous" (p. xxii); the Berkeley sociologist John Lie⁷ "does not successfully examine" the cultural industry as he fails to "shed enough critical light," and does not adequately "investigate" his topic (pp. xxiii–iv); JungBong Choi and Roald Maliangkay,⁸ in an edited collection of 10 contrasting accounts, "fail" because they "neglect[s] an intellectual vantage [point]" while "throwing out vague terms ... without providing any definition" (pp. xviii–xx). Why not just state one's approach is different to others? The unwarranted criticism of others is made worse because of lapses of grammar and poor editing throughout Kim's text. Indeed, the Foreword, by the distinguished UCLA professor Douglas Kellner, is in need of editing, opening with: "I first met Gooyong Kim in fall 2006 when I invited him as my PhD student at UCLA after several years of not having adopted a new student, and he then began his works in Cultural/Media Studies, which was successfully concluded in his dissertation." To be honest, I struggled to get beyond this sycophantic eulogy.

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Notes for Submission of Manuscripts to the *European Journal of Korean Studies*

The *European Journal of Korean Studies* is a fully peer-reviewed, on-line journal that has been published since 1991 (formerly the *Papers of the British Association of Korean Studies*). Volumes 1–18 are available free for BAKS members from www.ejks.org.uk or by emailing Robert Winstanley-Chesters (treasurer@baks.org.uk).

The journal accepts manuscripts for articles within any area of the arts, humanities, and social sciences that examine Korea in either contemporary or historical times. Submissions that include a comparative discussion of issues in other East Asian nations are welcome.

Persons submitting manuscripts for consideration must note the following requirements:

1. Manuscripts must be submitted only in English, using American spelling conventions.
2. The body of the manuscript should normally be around 5,000 words in length. Endnotes, bibliography, and other additional material are excluded from this word count.
3. All style matters are determined by *The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th Edition* or later versions. The manuscript must use endnotes, carry a list of references, and follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* for endnote, reference, and other matters of writing style. For example, endnotes are placed after punctuation; all quotations must carry double quotation marks, except when a quotation contains an embedded quotation, and then the embedded quotation carries single marks; the use of single quotation marks for “figures of speech” is not acceptable. “Figures of speech” must carry double marks. Sentence endings or transitions (e.g., periods or commas) must be inside quotation marks, even when there is no punctuation in the quoted material. Authors must use the serial comma. Centuries must be spelled out. Authors must never use *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*, or any other Latin abbreviation. When citing a work initially in an endnote, a full citation is required; when citing the work again, authors must state: author’s surname, first few words of the title, date of publication, and page number. If an ordinary or common noun (not a proper noun) is not found in standard reference dictionaries (e.g., *Merriam-Webster* or the

Oxford English Dictionary), it is foreign. All foreign nouns must be italicized. Note that, according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, endnotes and references are constructed differently, and authors must adhere to these different styles. Only references actually cited in the manuscript are listed under “References.” Inline citations indicating page numbers are acceptable only for book reviews.

The following offer a few examples of **Reference** styles. Note the order of the information in the entries.

- **Pre-modern book** (title is italicized)

Yu Söng-yong 柳成龍, penname Söae 西厓. *Chingbirok* (懲毖錄) (first printed 1633). In Taedong Munhwa Yöng'uwön, Sönggyun'gwan Taehakkyo 大東文化研究院, 成均館大學校, ed. Söae munjip (西厓文集). Seoul: Tongguk Munhwasa, 1958.

Note no translation of premodern book titles.

- **Modern book**

Choi, Jang-jip 최장집. *Minjuhwa ihu üi minju chuüi: Han'guk minju chuüi üi posu-chök kiwön kwa wigi* (민주화 이후의 민주주의: 한국 민주주의의 보수적 기원 과 위기 Democracy after democratization: The crisis and origin of conservative democracy in South Korea). Seoul: Humanitas, 2002.

Yow, Valerie Ralieggh. *Recording oral history: A guide for the humanities and social sciences*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005.

Note translation of modern book title.

- **Electronic book**

Nydam, Ronald J. *Adoptees come of age: Living within two families*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999. <http://www.netlibrary.com> (accessed 8 July 2005).

- **Chapter in a modern book**

Chi, Tu-hwan 池斗煥. “Chosön chöngi sahoe-kyöngje wa Pusan (조선전기 사회 경제와 부산 The social economy of early Chosön and Pusan).” In Pusan chikhal-si sa p'yönc'h'an wiwönhoe 釜山直轄市史編纂委員會, ed. *Pusan-si sa* (釜山市史 History of Pusan City), vol. 1, Pusan: Pusan Chikhal-si, pp. 606–632, 1989.

- **Journal article**

Han, Yöng-guk 韓榮國. “Ho-sö e silsi toen Taedongböp: Taedongböp yön'gu üi ilch'ök (湖西에 實施된 大同法 (上) — 大同法研究의 一齣 — Implementation of the Taedongböp in Ch'ungch'öng Province: One installment in a study of the Taedongböp),” *Yöksa hakpo* (歷史學報) 13 (1960.10): 77–107.

Banks, William. “A Secret Meeting in Boise.” *Midwestern Political Review* 6 (1958): 26–31.

- **Electronic journal or newspaper article**

Carbado, Devon W. “Black Male Racial Victimhood.” *Callaloo* 21.2 (1998): 337–361. <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed 8 July 2005).

The following offer a few examples of **Endnote** styles. Note the order of the information in the entries.

(a) First appearance:

1. Valerie Raliegth Yow. *Recording oral history: A guide for the humanities and social sciences* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005), p. 32.
2. Han Yŏng-guk. "Ho-sŏ e silsi toen Taedongbŏp (part one): Taedongbŏp yŏn'gu ūi ilch'ŏk," *Yŏksa hakpo* 13 (1960.10): 100.
3. Devon W. Carbado. "Black Male Racial Victimhood," *Callaloo* 21.2 (1998), <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed July 8, 2005).
4. Ronald J. Nydam. *Adoptees come of age: Living within two families* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), <http://www.netlibrary.com> (accessed 8 July 2005).

(b) Second appearance:

5. Yow, *Recording*, 2005, p. 33.
 6. Han, "Ho-sŏ, sang," 1960, p. 101.
 7. Devon, "Black male," 1998 (accessed July 8, 2005).
 8. Nydam, *Adoptees*, 1999 (accessed 8 July 2005).
4. Romanization of East Asian names, place names, and terms must follow the McCune–Reischauer system for Korean, the modified Hepburn system for Japanese, and pinyin for Chinese. Words should be parsed in Korean and Japanese about every two syllables and particles should stand alone.
 5. Where appropriate, the use of Chinese characters and indigenous scripts following the initial occurrence of a term is encouraged. Use Batang font for Korean, MS-Mincho font for Japanese, and Malgun Gothic font for Chinese. For articles addressing pre-twentieth century topics, simplified Chinese characters must never be used, except for Japanese names and terms. Articles addressing contemporary topics may use simplified Chinese characters for Chinese names and terms. When using Chinese characters for Korean names and terms, never use simplified characters. Never put any East Asian script into italics.
 6. The manuscript must be submitted as a Microsoft Word file attachment and must be written in double-spaced, Times Roman, 12-point font. This rule applies to both the text of the article and its section headings. Do not use bold font anywhere in the manuscript. All endnotes must be in Times Roman, 10-point font. All inserted East Asian characters must be in 11-point font in the text, and all East Asian characters in the notes must be in 9-point font.
 7. The page format must be set for A4 size with left-hand justification only.

8. The manuscript must have a separate cover page that gives the full name of the author(s), academic affiliation(s), and full postal and email contact details of the author or the corresponding author. The cover page must also have a one-paragraph summary of the contents of the article and five (5) key words.
9. The first page of the text of the manuscript must have only the title of the article at the top. The name of the author(s) must NOT be included.
10. All materials must be submitted to the Managing Editor, Dr, Robert Winstanley-Chesters at r.winstanley-chesters@leeds.ac.uk

If the manuscript is submitted without adhering to these guidelines, it will be returned for re-submission without reconsideration. The Editorial Board intends that an author should know within two months of the submission of an article about the success of his or her submission.

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