

**2016**

**EPIK YOUNG  
L E A D E R S  
CONFERENCE**

**Past and Present:  
How Do They Interact?**

**August 10, 2016  
Hotel Kukdo**

**2016 EPIK Young Leaders Conference**  
**Past and Present: How Do They Interact?**

Date of Issue | 2016. 8. 10

Edited by | East Asia Institute (HyeEun Hyun)  
Designed by | Jeong Hwa Yoo

Address | #909 Sampoong B/D, 158 Eulji-ro, Jung-gu, Seoul 04548, Republic of Korea  
Tel. | 02-2277-1683  
Fax. | 02-2277-1684/1697  
Homepage | [www.eai.or.kr](http://www.eai.or.kr)

ISBN 979-11-86226-85-8

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## What is EPIK?

Founded in August 2009, EPIK(Exchange Panel for Interdisciplinary Knowledge network) is an independent student organization comprised of both undergraduate and graduate students interested in the global issues such as international peace and security, political democratization, economic development, and environment and energy security. EPIK organizes a forum in the form of an annual academic conference, with students as panelists and professors as moderators. By creating a platform for sharing diverse perspectives and ideas, EPIK strives to offer an unparalleled opportunity for students not only to receive valuable feedback from peers and experts, but also to allow building long-lasting personal relationship and network among the participants under the name of EPIK Spiders.

EPIK values endless inquiry, initiative, and passion. EPIK encourages students to pursue an epic vision. EPIK searches for big ideas on big questions.

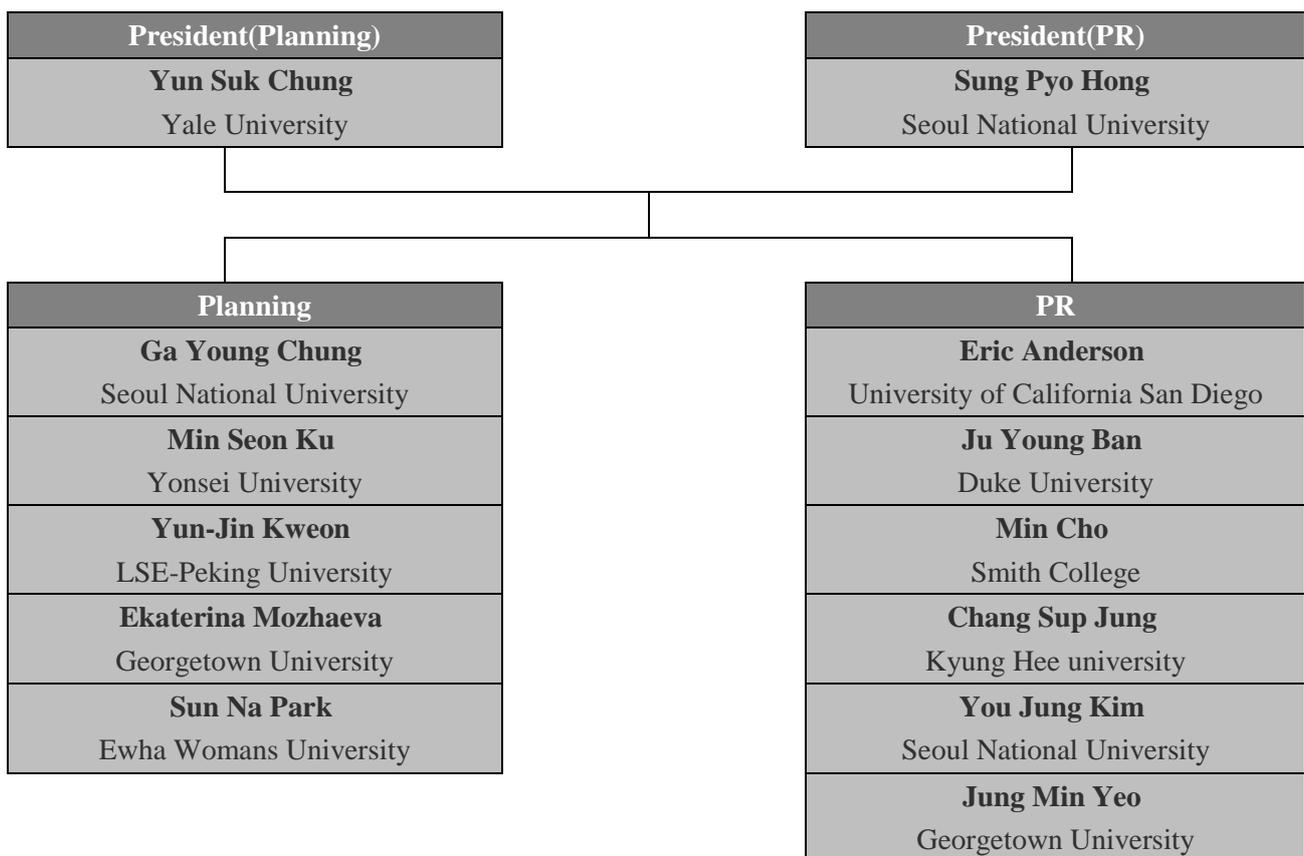




## 2016 EPIK Spiders

In the era of globalization, talented students with globalized minds are cultivated in many distinguished universities of home and abroad; however they are merely scattered throughout the world without given the opportunities to share their visions and knowledge. Their globalized insights and capabilities can only become a national asset when they are networked through a channel. In order to foster them into next generation leaders, a platform is needed where they are encouraged to ponder their roles in a diversified and globalized reality and to think comprehensively beyond their associated field of studies. In an effort to provide such platform, the East Asia Institute (EAI) supports the EPIK Spiders Program to play a pivotal role in providing a distinguished network and mentorship.

### Committee Chart



## Message from 2016 EPIK Spiders

The vision of East Asia Institute -‘Knowledge-Net for a Better World’- is rooted in the belief that knowledge and good ideas can change the world. EPIK Spiders share the vision and believe that we, as the young generation, have not only the responsibility but also the power to make such a vision reality.

In order for young leaders to stand on their own feet, a platform where we are encouraged to find our roles in a diversified and globalized world and to think comprehensively beyond our associated field of studies is a must. EPIK Spiders, former EPIK participants and EAI interns, stand at the center of such a platform to play a pivotal role in providing a distinguished network and mentorship.

Personally, over the past three years, the EPIK conference provided me two simple but critical lessons. The first was to look upside-down and to think inside-out. The education that I have received unfortunately did not require such abilities. It required me to look at what I was taught to look at and to think about what I was taught to think about. However, past questions proposed at the EPIK conference such as ‘when is conflict better than cooperation’ or ‘how should we conceptualize followership in order to understand leadership’ deconstructed my manner of thinking. It made the obvious unobvious and the usual unusual. Second is the importance of asking questions. Picasso once said, "Computers are useless. They can only give you answers." What makes humans unique is the ability to ask questions. Answers can fill in the puzzles but questions design the puzzle. This, I think, is what the 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership requires- not answers but questions that can design and guide our direction.

That’s exactly what we plan to do this year. This year’s topic - ‘Past and Present: How do they Interact?’- is another challenging but fundamental question that we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These boundaries may exist anywhere, in any form and at all levels. Any changes in boundaries may result in the restructuring of pre-existing systems and traditions. These changes will shift the way we live as well as the way we think. The three papers that will be presented provide us with a different, however, in-depth way to design the question. Most of all, discussion and the comments from the professors and the commentators will help us fill in that puzzle.

Spiders are known to produce silk during their lives. It takes days and nights to produce the silk we know as webs. These webs act as the platforms for spiders not only to survive but also to help them prepare for the future. EPIK Spiders have and will continue to fulfill their role of providing an environment to produce silk and to serve as a stepping stone for each young spider to prepare for their future destinations. I sincerely hope that we can all gain from EPIK 2016!

## Theme of EPIK Young Leaders Conference 2016

### ***“Past and Present: How Do They Interact?”***

When, in the present, do we look back into the past? Or when does the past influence the present? How do the present and past interact and give meaning to each other?

Indeed, the past can help us understand the present and anticipate events to come in the future. Likewise, our understanding of the past is often shaped by what we have come to learn in the present. Yet the past and present do not simply interact to influence our understanding of the world. The past can be used to justify or delegitimize actions in the present, just as present circumstances can act to validate or condemn legacies of the past. In this way, the past and present also interact to guide, empower or circumscribe our decisions.

Interactions between the past and the present are multifaceted and can occur at many levels, ranging from individuals to states and from interest groups to government agencies. For example, interest groups offer competing and sometimes contradictory accounts of the past in order to promote their own goals and values. The course of economic or institutional development is largely influenced by the initial decisions made by leaders based on their initial conditions. History can facilitate international cooperation, as in the European Union, or hinder it, as in the Middle East or East Asia. Cultural and social norms influence the way events are remembered, whether individually or collectively.

The 2016 EPIK Young Leaders Conference invites bright scholars from around the world in various academic disciplines to ponder upon the question of “Past and Present: How Do They Interact?” Be sure to support your argument using appropriate research methods including, but not limited to, illustrative case studies or quantitative analyses.

## **2016 EPIK Young Leaders Conference**

Emcee Jordan Marks University of California, San Diego

### **Opening Ceremony**

15:00-15:05     **Opening Address**  
Sung Pyo Hong Seoul National University;  
President of 2016 EPIK Leaders Committee President

15:05-15:10     **Welcoming Address**  
Sook Jong Lee President of the East Asia Institute

### **Session I**

Moderator     Jung Kim Professor at University of North Korean Studies

15:10-16:10     **Presentation**  
“HyangHwain to Damunhwa: Historical Analysis of Immigrants in Early  
Joseon and History Textbook of Multicultural Korea”  
Seo Jeong Moon Yonsei University

“Politics of Statue: Peace Monument and the Personification of Memory”  
Eun Ji Hwang Yonsei University

“Transient Labor: Past and Present of Young Female White-Collar Work  
Force in South Korea”  
Ye Won Hong Yonsei University

16:10-17:30     **Debate and Q&A Session**  
Ju Young Ban Duke University  
Madeleine Han Stanford University  
Sung Pyo Hong Seoul National University  
Eun Seo Kim Peking University  
You Jung Kim Seoul National University  
Jung Min Yeo Georgetown University

17:30-17:40     **General Review and Certificate Presentation Ceremony**  
Jung Kim Professor at University of North Korean Studies

## **2016 EAI Young Festival**

Emcee Aysel Ismaylzada Ewha Womans University & Ah Hyeon Jeong Korea University

- 17:30-18:00     **Registration**
- 18:00-18:05     **Welcoming Address**  
Sook Jong Lee President of the East Asia Institute
- 18:05-18:10     **Award Ceremony**  
Sook Jong Lee President of the East Asia Institute
- 2016 Next Generation Conference Award Ceremony  
2016 EPIK Young Leaders Conference Award Ceremony
- 18:10-18:30     **Speeches from EAI’s Educational Program Representatives**  
EAI Intern: Soo Bin Bae Yonsei University  
KF-EAI Korea Friendship: Williams Kyei Seoul National University  
EAI Scholarship Program: Ha Rim Ko Yonsei University  
EAI Sarangbang: Sung Woo Lim Tsinghua University  
EPIK Spiders: Ju Young Ban Duke University
- 18:30-19:10     **Performance**  
Yonsei University Band “NODAJI”  
University of Seoul Dance Team “AMICUS”
- 19:10-20:50     **Dinner and Networking Session**
- 20:50-21:00     **General Review**  
Jung Kim Professor at University of North Korean Studies  
Heon Joo Jung Professor at Yonsei University
- 21:00            **Closing**

## List of Participants

Emcee	Jordan Marks, University of California, San Diego
Moderator	Jung Kim, Professor at University of North Korean Studies
Presenters	Ye Won Hong, Yonsei University Eun Ji Hwang, Yonsei University Seo Jeong Moon, Yonsei University
Discussants	Ju Young Ban, Duke University Madeleine Han, Stanford University Sung Pyo Hong, Seoul National University Eun Seo Kim, Peking University You Jung Kim, Seoul National University Jung Min Yeo, Georgetown University

# Essays

## Essay I

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"HyangHwain to Damunhwa: Historical Analysis of Immigrants in  
Early Joseon and History Textbook for Multicultural Korea"  
Seo Jeong Moon, Yonsei University

# **HyangHwain to Damunhwa: Historical Analysis of Immigrants in Early Joseon and History Textbook for Multicultural Korea**

**Seo Jeong Moon  
Yonsei University**

## **Abstract**

This paper departed from a question “Can multiculturalism overcome the nationalism derived from the contemporary Korean identity(*minjok*)?” As the paper reveals how and why multiculturalism cannot untangle the myth of *minjok*, it demystifies the construct of *minjok* by comparative analysis of immigration policies in the early Joseon and contemporary Korea and proposes to rewrite history textbook and national history of Korea with *Hyanghwain*, the immigrants of Joseon, as a first step to an integrated society. Despite its title, multiculturalism (*damunhwa*) is practiced as an assimilation policy for immigrants based on monoculturalism and Korea-centrism. This paper reveals that multiculturalism cannot create a nonracist, accepting society because it does not engage with the concept of *minjok*. This paper examines the historical processes of construction and deconstruction of varying layers of *minjok* in contrast with the multicultural and ethnically heterogeneous Joseon in an attempt to dissuade the objective reality of exclusivity of *minjok* identity. Furthermore, the systemic comparative analysis of *damunhwa* and *Hyanghwain* illustrates how *minjok*, a relatively modern concept, frames and influences immigration policies. The paper proposes future policy implications such as the inclusion of *Hyanghwain* in history textbooks. The readjusted history education will replace the narrative of Korea as an ethnically homogeneous group descended from Dangun. Thus, the historic knowledge of *Hyanghwain* will expand the boundary of national identity and create nonracist Koreans. As a result, it can not only supplement and expedite the multiculturalism (*damunhwa*) but also endow historical legitimacy to the agenda. Simultaneously, the new history will afford greater social acceptance and sense of belonging to immigrants and non-Korean ethnic descendants.

**Keywords:** multiculturalism, *minjok* discourse, *damunhwa* discourse, multiethnicity, multiculturalism, multiethnic Korea, *minjok* history, national subject, history education

## **I. What is *Hyanghwain*?**

### a. Definition and Etymology

The term *hyanghwain* (向化人) refers to the immigrants in the late Koryo and Joseon period. The word is comprised of three letters; Hyang means “to advance;” Hwa means “to become” or “to reform by following;” in means “a person.” One of the English translations is “submitting foreigners;” Bohnet uses the translation because it implies the submission of aliens to the polity of residence and acceptance of the ideology of residence which was Confucianism in Joseon. The term originated from Zhou Dynasty China and

existed since the Three Kingdoms Period in Korea. The term was initially used for the tax category in the *Great Code for State administration (Kyŏng'guk taejŏn)* in 999 A.D. References to *hyanghwain* is found in various historical sources including Veritable Records (Chosŏn wangjo sillok), the Daily Record of the Royal Secretariat (Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi), the Record of the Border Defence Command (Pibyŏnsa tŭngnok), and Daily Record of the Office of the Custodian of Foreign Visitors. The number of Hyanghwain increased in the early Joseon. From fifteenth to seventeenth century, Joseon actively attracted and assimilated Chinese Jurchens and Japanese Was for security and economic benefit. Joseon court granted food, land, clothing, wives, surnames and exempted them from to corvees and military services.<sup>1</sup> The benefit of tax exemption was hereditary to descendants and the *Hyanghwain* later referred to those who were originally or genealogically from outside Joseon. Because *hyanghwain* does not only refer to the immigrants but also the descendants of immigrants born in Joseon, it encompasses both immigrants and members of multicultural families in contemporary Korea.

#### b. Background

For the past few decades, Korean national identity has gone under scrutiny. Postmodernist ideas such as Imagined Communities questioned the epistemological existence of minjok and nation in academia. Discourses in academia arose from the gap between the existing national identity and changing reality; the globalization brought diverse immigrants into Korea creating a society where nationality, minjok, and culture no longer align perfectly.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have historicized and criticized ethnic homogeneity (*danil minjok*) as a Korean national identity. Many scholars have dealt with historical processes to construct Korean ethnicity starting in the late nineteenth century and argued that minjok was created in resistance to Japanese colonialism and reverberated for nation building until today.<sup>3</sup> Today, the concept of *danil minjok* has been criticized to ignore the multi-ethnic origins of the South Korean population and to hinder the integration of multiethnic members into Korean society.<sup>4</sup> Those who share this view call for more open minjok nationalism.<sup>5</sup>

An attempt to find historical evidence to reconsider homogeneous national identity includes studies on *hyanghwain* or submitting foreigner status. The topic of *hyanghwain* is increasingly discussed in Korean history, social studies, and East Asian studies.

#### c. Literature Review

One of the most comprehensive study on social history of hyanghwain in Joseon society is Han Mun-Jong's article on the naturalized Japanese in the early Joseon dynasty (*hyanghwawaein*). Han examines their motives and routes of immigration and Joseon's social, political, economic treatment of *hyanghwawaein*. The

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<sup>1</sup> Han Munjong, The Naturalized Japanese and Lee Ye(李藝) in the Early Choson Dynasty, Research for Korea Japan Relations, 65-90

<sup>2</sup> Lee Sonmin, Nationalism to be forsaken today? (Samsung Institute of Economics, 2008) 13-29

<sup>3</sup> Kim Han-jong, A Pedagogical Reader of Modern Korean History (Chaekgwa Hamkke, 2013)

<sup>4</sup>United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*,A/62/18 (19 February-9 March 2007, 30 July-17 August 2007),

<sup>5</sup> Huh, Donghyun. "A Study on the Historical Formation Process of the Myth on the Ethnic Homogeneity in Modern Korea." *Journal of Northeast Asian History*, (2009.3): 7-35. Print.

study discovers that the Joseon court provided economic support for all Japanese and the forms of support varied depending on whether they receive government posts or not.

John B. Duncan uses *Hyanghwain* to debunk the concept of homogeneous Korean ethnicity (*danil minjok*). Duncan concludes that the proto-nationalism in early Joseon did not have a significant blood, or racial, component. Rather, the absent notion of Korean bloodlines in Joseon and the intermarriage between *hyanghwain* and Koreans proves the Korean racial purity to be false. According to Duncan, the disappearance of *hyanghwain* status in late Joseon was due to stronger border policies of neighboring countries. He also argues against the translation of *minjok* to a western notion of race in that Joseon had its own trajectory of proto-nationalism and the racially defined identity -in late Joseon- was “independent of and prior to Western imperialism.”<sup>6</sup>

*Hyanghwain* was presented as a counterexample to today’s ethnic homogeneity (*danil minjok*) by multiple scholars. However, many scholars are divided on the subjecthood of *Hyanghwain* status and the reason why it disappeared in late Joseon. Han Kyung-Koo explained *Hyanghwain* as culturally submitting subjects and attributed their disappearance to Joseon’s cultural supremacy. Han agrees with Duncan that the concept of bloodline was neither present nor important for nationalism in Koryo and early Joseon. However, he presents the difference between Joseon court’s attitude towards submitting foreigners of Han descent and Jurchen descent as evidence that the status of subjects depended on cultural hierarchy rather than ethnic unity. Therefore he argues the real base of nationalism today is the cultural and historical superiority and thus it is the real enemy of multiculturalism. This view is shared by other scholars who argue Joseon’s assimilation policy was premised on the cultural supremacy over neighboring countries except Ming, even if it was never racist.<sup>7</sup>

The more recent literature on *hyanghwain* by John Bohnet opposes such a view arguing the economy and security concerns, not cultural assimilation, was a main motivation for the *hyanghwain* status in early Joseon. He points out that the *hyanghwain* status was a tax category and means to control the population more than anything else. He rebuts to the existing argument that cultural superiority resulted in late Joseon’s treatment towards Ming descendants as imperial subjects. He attributes such treatment to Ming ritualism; the characterization of Ming descendants as “foreign” was to preserve their Ming identity and to elevate the legitimacy of royal family as an heir of Ming confucianism. This shows the status of *Hyanghwain* was created and readjusted for the interest of the state. According to Bohnet, the subjecthood of immigrants and their descendants was defined as means to satisfy the government’s needs to navigate the ideological and diplomatic changes in Sino-Korean relations.

## II. What is *Damunhwa*?

### a. Definition and Etymology

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<sup>6</sup> John B. Duncan(2000). *Hyanghwain: Migration and Assimilation in Choson Korea*

<sup>7</sup> Han, Kyung-koo. “The Archaeology of the Ethnically Homogeneous Nation-State and Multiculturalism in Korea.” *Korea Journal* 47.4 (Winter, 2007): 8-31

*Damunhwa* is a Korean translation of multiculturalism, an imported and appropriated school of thought and policy agenda regarding immigration and globalization. The term is mostly compounded with other nouns such as multicultural policy(*damunhwa jeongchaek*) and multicultural family or *damunhwa* family. The terms refer to the immigration policy in general and family of intermarried couple and their children -mostly born in Korea under permanent immigrant parents- respectively. Multiculturalism had become the most frequently used word in regards to immigration discussion in Korea. The term emerged in public debate to describe an abruptly increased number of permanent immigrants through marriage migration.<sup>8</sup> Multiculturalism has descriptive and normative meanings.<sup>9</sup> The former refers to the phenomenon of increasing immigration itself. The latter refers to the ideology of philosophy, to respect cultural pluralism and cultural rights of each member. However, as an ideology, the meaning of the appropriated Korean term *damunhwa* in Korean context differs from multiculturalism in western context in terms of contents, implications, philosophical and ideological origin. Multiculturalism model, represented by “salad bowl model” was coined as an alternative to assimilation model, represented by “melting pot model.” It was coined to counter the ideology that immigrants must integrate into the “native” society by adopting the cultures unilaterally and instead call for cultural pluralism. However, the *damunhwa* education in Korea is viewed as an extension of assimilation model in support of Korean culture-ethnic identity (*Munhwaminjokjoe*).<sup>10</sup>

#### b. Criticism

Korean multiculturalism has come under domestic and international criticism for many shortcomings and rightfully so.

First, due to *minjok* nationality exclusive of other ethnicities, multiculturalism is depicted as “a new phenomenon” preceded by the 5000 year history of homogeneous Korean *minjok*. Therefore, the integration of migrants is often portrayed as an invasive but unavoidable dilution of “pure” Korean blood obligated by economic needs and an irreversible anomaly to the linear history of Korean *minjok*. Such perspective owes to the fact that *damunhwa* is an appropriated word from the western concept multiculturalism. It is imperative to discuss and form social consensus on the meaning of *damunhwa* on Korea’s own terms in the future.<sup>11</sup>

Second, many argue that the propagation of multiculturalism is not fast enough to catch up with the rapid change in ethnic demographics of Korean population. They criticize *damunhwa* education as “multicultural education without multicultural citizens” because the attempt to shift national identity from *danil minjok* to *damunhwa* has been lukewarm and the public understanding of nationality lags behind the changes in reality. Some say it is because the ideology has been mostly initiated by the state, criticizing

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<sup>8</sup> Han Geon-Soo(2007). Multicultural Korea: Celebration or Challenge of Multiethnic Shift in Contemporary Korea? Korea Journal

<sup>9</sup> Kim Namuk. 2008. Development and Inclusion of Discussions on Multiculturalism in Korea, 346-347

<sup>10</sup> Kim Gihong. "A Theoretical Research for the Realization of a Multicultural Korean Society." Democracy and Human Rights, 12.3 (2012.12): 445-486. Print.

<sup>11</sup> Lim, T. (2010). Rethinking Belongingness in Korea: Transnational Migration, "Migrant Marriages" and the Politics of Multiculturalism. Pacific Affairs, 83(1), 51-71.

Korean multiculturalism as a “state-led multiculturalism.”<sup>12</sup>

Third, critiques say that multicultural discourse overlooks the non-cultural aspect of immigration policies in Korea, such as economic benefits of immigrants and a matrix of their ethnicity, race and gender. For instance, the name *damunhwa* is criticized to frame the policies for immigrants as cultural assimilation project rather than a settlement project that brings economic benefits to both South Korea and immigrants.

### III. Comparative Analysis : Hyanghwain and Damunhwa

Some scholars often draw parallels between *Hyanghwain* in Joseon and *Damunhwa* in contemporary South Korea. It is because Hyanghwain and *damunhwa* both signify the immigrant population and government policies regarding the immigrants in Korean peninsula. This paper examines the differences and commonalities between Hyanghwain and *damunhwa* and analyzes the historical background of Joseon and contemporary South Korea in order to discuss the past, present, and future of minjok, the ethnic and cultural identity of Korea.

#### a. Societies of Joseon and Contemporary South Korea

In order to acknowledge the challenges of comparing Hyanghwain as a historical mirror of *damunhwa*, it is imperative to distinguish two societies' conceptualization of native population -subjecthood of a polity - and immigrant population.

First, Joseon was different from South Korea today in that Joseon did not have a unified and homogeneous national identity even though the state ideology of Confucianism existed. The subjecthood existed only between the royal sovereign and subjects living in Joseon. In contemporary Korea, the subjecthood or citizenship assume qualitatively different layers of identities for each individual subject. Such identities are premised on the national subject's belongingness to and ownership of a nation as an united community. Moreover, in Joseon, the cultural identity differed from class to class. Therefore, Joseon did not have cohesive national identity and national culture that encompassed all subjects like citizenship of South Korea does. The Joseon court controlled population through maintaining the rigid status distinction rather than creating “Joseonians.” In South Korea, the cultural identity is tied to the “Koreanness” and often employed as a means of governance.

Second, the aim of immigration policy was initially to help the settlement, to control the population and later to elevate the Confucian authority of the court but never to culturally assimilate them to the rest of the population. The cultural assimilation of the subject was not out of the court's attention but also irrelevant to their status. The court expressed hope for their moral conversion to Confucian ideology and demanded their loyalty to the king. However, Joseon did not set traditional Joseon culture as a cultural norm and interfere with cultural practices unless it was against Confucian moral. In early Joseon, *hyanghwain* often switched cultural identity or took on an ambiguous identity for their self interest. In late Joseon, the court attempted to control

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<sup>12</sup> Hee Jung Kim

the multicultural population by *ponho* but never to assimilate them into Joseon culture.

#### b. National Identity: Minjok

The most influential factor attributable to such differences in two societies is *minjok*; the concept of *minjok* was present in contemporary Korea, not in Joseon. Because *minjok* is an identity *inherent* only to a certain ethnic and cultural group, it provides a grand presupposition of who natives are, and consequently who immigrants are, where the boundary of “us versus them” lies.

##### i. What is *Minjok*?

According to the National Institute of Korean Language, *minjok* is “a social group that was historically formed based on the linguistic and cultural commonalities within a community that sustained for a long period of time in one area.” It adds that “(*minjok*) does not necessarily correspond with a race or a citizen as a unit of state.” In Korean context, *minjok* is not only cultural and linguistic but also ethnic; Koreans identify themselves as of ethnically homogeneous lineage descended from the mythical founder of Korea, Dangun.<sup>13</sup> Such understanding had been reinforced by textbooks that assert that Korea is a nation of one *minjok* and of pure blood.<sup>14</sup>

#### c. Policy Aims: Immigration as a “Must”

Both contemporary Korea and Joseon had necessities for immigrants and benefitted from immigrants in various ways. Especially in terms of South Korea, attracting immigrants is not a choice but a “must.”

##### i. Economic benefit

The population of South Korea is aging rapidly. According to a UN report, in order for South Korea to sustain its working age population, we will have to accept many more immigrants: specifically, by 2050, 13.9 per cent of South Korea’s population would have to be p immigrants and their descendants.

Joseon attracted Japanese Was and Jurchens to employ them as farmers, salt merchants,<sup>15</sup> messengers, translators, and diplomats. Their contribution to gathering information and economic life of the region was recognized by the court in various sources.<sup>16</sup>

##### ii. Security benefit

Ministry of National Defense of Republic of Korea changed the legislation to allow the entrance of applicants from multicultural backgrounds. It was due to calculation that South Korea will be short of 30,000 military personnels by 2029 because of low birth rate. The ministry of security and public administration report, the estimated number of military personnels from *damunhwa* background background will be over 12,000 by 2028.

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<sup>13</sup> Huh, Donghyun (2009) A Study on the Historical Formation Process of the Myth on the Ethnic Homogeneity in Modern Korea. *Journal of Northeast Asian History*: 7-35. Print.

<sup>14</sup> Republic of Korea. Ministry of Education and Human Resources. (2006) Educational Aid Plan to Embrace Multicultural Households

<sup>15</sup> Bohnet, 89

<sup>16</sup> Bohnet, 59-64

In Joseon, those in border area played a vital role as defense and messenger to prevent conflicts in their regions. Moreover, even though Joseon court exempted Hyanghwain from military services, it actively persuaded Ming soldiers and Wa soldiers to migrate and “convert into peaceful inter-communicators” between Joseon and Japan.<sup>17</sup>

#### d. Treatment of Immigrants

##### i. Economic Welfare

While Hyanghwain received additional economic aid such as food, land, clothing, wives, surnames and exemption from corvees and military services, immigrants in Korea are granted the same benefit as a citizen such as social security, national health insurance. Most aid in “Multicultural Life Settlement Act” comes in a form of welfare such as education in Korean language and culture, education for children, translation services and Medicare. They can receive aid in the form of housing and cost of living in an emergency situation.<sup>18</sup>

##### ii. Cultural Assimilation

Today, most of education system for immigrants aim to assimilate them into Korean society; as it will be elaborated in discussion of *Munhwaminjokjoe*, embodiment of Korean traditional culture somehow proves their “Koreanness.” This Koreanness is recognized as the *capital* of Korean cultural identity and encouraged to accumulate by the state in order for an immigrant to become Korean. In other words, the distinct cultural difference can naturalize the social marginalization and lack of political representation even though political rights and social recognition should not be conditional on a member’s aptness in Korean culture.

Policies towards *hyanghwain* aimed at successful settlements of a new labor force rather than cultural assimilation.<sup>19</sup> Joseon did have distinction between Joseon subjects and subjects affiliated with other states.<sup>20</sup> However, it was an administrative distinction rather than a cultural one; Joseon subjects were registered and possessed household tallies.<sup>21</sup> The term Hyanghwain was used for all foreigners, those who just immigrated without speaking a word of Korean and those who were born and raised in Joseon, indiscriminate to their cultural fluency. Even after the Joseon court treated subjects of Ming descendants differently in late Joseon due to Ming loyalism, the treatment depended on the lineage, not the cultural similarity of the Ming subjects. Also, the discrimination within *hyanghwain* status did not occur in practice because Ming subjects were categorized to a new status, *Hwangjoin*.

## IV. History Education and Subject making

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<sup>17</sup> Han Moon Jong, 92-95

<sup>18</sup> Legislative Office of Korea. (2016) Report for Damunhwa Jiwon Beop

<sup>19</sup> Bohnet, Adam, “Migrant and Border Subjects in Late Chosŏn Korea,”

<sup>20</sup> Bohnet, 18

<sup>21</sup> Kwon, Naehyun (2014). Understanding of the Household Registers of Late Chosŏn Dynasty -Dispute and Tasks. Korean History Research Center (16): 19

### a. Decoupling Minjok and Ethnicity

History education has long been a vehicle for national subject making in tandem with nation building ever since the foundation of the Republic of Korea (ROK). It is a necessary process of nation building because it actualizes a concept of nation by creating communities who internalize the concept as their identities and express such identity in reality through actions. The theoretical principle is that “the formation of the nation appears as the fulfillment of a ‘project’ stretching over centuries” and that “national identity is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to the continuity of a subject” (Etienne Balibar – Em) Following excerpts from preface in Korean history textbook substantiates Balibar’s theory.

National history is a subject on life and spirit of our minjok. It functions to establish our minjok identity. In short, national history education ascertains the tradition of minjok and nurtures mentality to actively participate in the upright development of minjok history. National history education aims to cultivate pride and ability of Koreans in the 21st century by comprehensive and systematic education of the various historical paths of developing minjok.<sup>22</sup>

The equation of national history to minjok history is a result of Korean historiography that has always used the Korean minjok as a unit of analysis. However, the element of minjok has changed to suit the needs of the time. The prominent example is the bio-racial aspect of minjok. The political and ideological needs of the time influenced Korean history education to construct and reinforce the homogeneous Korean ethnicity, danil minjok, as a historical agent.

Minjok as a national identity appeared in Korean historiography for the first time in the early eighteenth century. Shin Ch’ae-ho’s Toksa Sillon first identified minjok as a historical subject saying “without minjok, there is no history; without history, minjok cannot have a clear perception of the state.” He is also the first one to equate an ethnic group (種族) as a basis for sovereignty and ownership of a nation. He writes that a nation is not a private possession of an individual but a public possession of the people and he sets descendants of Dangun as the central ethnic group (種族) of Korean people. When he discusses Buyeo’s direct lineage (嫡統) to Dangun, he argues “in terms of sovereignty” (主權上) the historian should recognize the *host* ethnic group (主人種族) and *guest* ethnic group (客人種族) rather than the right lineage (正統) of the royalty.

By endowing sovereignty of Korea to a Korean ethnic group, he built a historical framework to resist Japanese historiography of Korea and the ideology of Great Asianism. It was the beginning of the national identity defined by internal homogeneity and external autonomy.<sup>23</sup> Unlike royalty-centered historiography, minjok-centered historiography created an inclusive, and in some sense democratic, national subjecthood that transcends age, status and gender. Being Korean minjok meant a continuation of lineage that goes back to Dangun and sharing the spatiality -territory- and temporality of the history. However, it is important to note

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<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education, 7th publication of national history textbook for high school students, 2007

<sup>23</sup> Em, Henry (1999). Nationalism, Post-Nationalism, and Shin Ch’ae-ho. Korea Journal

that despite the externally autonomous minjok lineage,<sup>24</sup> Toksa-Sillon did not include racial unity as an identity of minjok. Shin Ch'ae ho introduces that the Korean ethnic group is comprised of six ethnic groups that moved to the Korean peninsula in different historical periods.

The idea of racial unity to the minjok identity was invented during the Cold War to foster anti-communist national identity. In the beginning of their foundations, the ROK and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) existed on the Korean peninsula, each competing for the sovereignty over the entire peninsula and eventually participating in the Korean War. With the presence of the DPRK on the Korean peninsula after the armistice, the South Korean Government had to employ a more exclusive and protectionist national identity. This ideology was theorized by Ahn Ho-Sang, then minister of culture and education<sup>25</sup> Ahn Ho-Sang hoped to unify Koreans by adopting the minjok history in which Korean minjok shares the homogeneous bloodline and fate of Dangun. As a result, the first Korean history textbook of Korea in the 1950s recognized Dangun as a biological father of the Korean minjok and Korean minjok as racially homogeneous. After unification of national history textbook in 1963, Dangun and the bloodline nationalism stayed as a minjok myth for the following textbooks.

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However, the concept of ethnic homogeneity (*danilminjok*) was eliminated from the new version of history textbook in 2007. The public and state discourse seems to have replaced the danil minjok rhetoric with multiculturalism. This may have owed to the fact that Korea had become no longer ethnically homogeneous and the concept of danil minjok had come under international criticism. For example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) report to the Republic of Korea in 2007 expressed its concern that the emphasis on the ethnic homogeneity may be an obstacle to “the promotion of understanding, tolerance and friendship among the different ethnic and national groups living on its territory” and that states should take “measures in teaching, education, culture, and information... including curricula and textbooks.” The UN CERD report specifically recommended ROK to include “information about the

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<sup>24</sup> Em, Henry, Nationalism, Post-Nationalism, and Shin Ch'ae-ho

<sup>25</sup> Kim Han-jong, A Pedagogical Reader of Modern Korean History (Chaekgwa Hamkke, 2013)

<sup>26</sup> Kim, 32-41

history and culture of the different ethnic and national groups living on its territory curricula and textbooks for primary and secondary schools”

This case of *danil minjok* signifies two things. Firstly, national identity is and should be malleable; even though minjok is an essential building block of South Korea, because it is a construct for the well being of the constituents, elements of minjok that no longer suits the needs of the time should be eliminated. Minjok should not remain as an objective reality<sup>27</sup> but should be readjusted and exercised through social actions. Secondly, education is an essential step to create and change minjok. Not only United Nations but also Korean ministry of education acknowledged the link between history education and social integration.

#### b. Decoupling Minjok and Culture

In minjok historiography, the cultural uniqueness of Korean minjok is an essential element for national identity. Korean culture in national identity is portrayed to be internally homogeneous and exclusively shared by Korean minjok. Korean traditional culture seems to represent one category of minjok that encompasses all who lived on the Korean peninsula in different eras and Koreans today. This supposes temporal homogeneity of minjok and ignores Korea’s multicultural past. The concept is called a culture-ethnic identity (*munhwaminjokjoe*).

*Munhwaminjokjoe* is manifested in the multicultural education curriculum today. The current state-led multicultural education program titled “Assimilation Education Policy” often equates Korean culture with traditional Korean culture in the curriculum. For example, the education policy is comprised of Korean Language and Understanding of Multicultural Society. The two books used for the latter subject are “Understanding Korean society” and “Foreigner’s guide to Korean Society and Culture.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, according to the official report from ministry of law, activities for understanding *damunhwa* include experiencing traditional Korean culture. Even before the report came out in 2008, multiculturalism had long been criticized to limit the scope of education activities to traditional Korean culture. These policies are based on two premises. Firstly, immigrants need assimilation into Korean culture in order to live in Korean society. Secondly, learning Korean traditional culture helps understand Korean culture. Such logic is affected by *munhwaminjokjoe* that Korean culture is related to Korean minjok regardless of temporality.<sup>29</sup>

*Munhwaminjokjoe* is applied to the immigrants’ origin as well. The listed multicultural education includes adding the immigrant’s traditional culture to Korean traditional culture. To assume that immigrants can contribute “their” traditional cultures because they belong to the same “minjok” with their ancestors. This comes from categorization of cultural identity based on nationality that can lead to emphasis on cultural difference and gross stereotyping. Such practice is an example of cultural aspect of minjok being typified as fixed and ethnically oriented.

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<sup>27</sup> Em, Henry, Nationalism, Post-Nationalism, and Shin Ch’ae-ho

<sup>28</sup> “Social Assimilation Program Curriculum,” Korean Immigration Office, accessed June 11, 2016, [http://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/InfoSocial02\\_kr.pt](http://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/InfoSocial02_kr.pt)

<sup>29</sup> Hwag, Jungmee, Multicultural Education without Multicultural Citizen

This does not mean minjok culture should be eliminated altogether. However, like the ethnic aspect of minjok was readjusted, the cultural aspect of minjok should be readjusted as well. The cultural identity of Korean minjok should incorporate cultural pluralism and actualize in dialogical exchange between multicultural members opposed to education of Korean culture to cultural others. Multiculturalism was adapted to Korea as opposition to ethnic and cultural homogeneity, not Korean culture itself. In other words, multiculturalism should not erase Korean traditional identity but should encourage every social member, including Koreans, has rights to their cultures. In order to achieve multiculturalism, the cultural element should also be characterized as inclusive, fluid and changing. As a result, cultural difference will no longer seem like a disqualifying character to be Korean; immigrants with distinct cultures can still constitute “Korean” culture and belong to Korean minjok.

In *hyanghwain*'s case, the political affiliation and tax payment to the Joseon court had more to do with subjecthood than cultural distinctiveness. In other words, cultural assimilation of immigrants was never a condition for the acceptance or support from the government. The benefit such as tax and corvee exemption was distributed to help the settlement regardless of one's cultural integration. Joseon never required cultural assimilation of *hyanghwain*. The only duty of *hyanghwain* was to pay tribute to the Board of Rites. The government never incentivized cultural assimilation either; it equally treated the newly arrived *hyanghwain* and the descendants of *hyanghwain*, who were fully integrated to Joseon society and had no memories of their ancestors foreign origin.<sup>30</sup>

Also, the historical existence of *pŏnho*, the Joseon subjects of Jurchen descendants who fled from Nurhaci to Yalu frontiers, shows that the cultural diversity and bilinguality were supported even when the state attitude towards *hyanghwain* became less welcoming. The Joseon subjects around Tumen valley were fluent in multiple languages and cultures. They functioned as messengers that exchanged information and facilitated trade in the border area and “had been of vital importance to the Chosŏn state”<sup>31</sup> Joseon court actively attracting *pŏnhos* and prevented them from border crossing. In seventeenth century, after centralization of neighboring countries, they raised concerns in Joseon court that their cultural ambiguity afforded *pŏnhos* more opportunity to cross borders. In fact, they were so fluent in different cultures and languages that they could pass as a subject of Joseon, Ming, and Wa by changing clothes.<sup>32</sup> Joseon responded to the threat by preventing people from crossing borders and refusing Qing's request to return Jurchen subjects who assimilated to Joseon. Manchu dealt with the same risk and controlled the multicultural population through mandatory imposition of Manchu queue.<sup>33</sup>

## V. Policy Implications: Inclusion of *Hyanghwain* in History Education for *Damunhwa*

One of the most important measures to expedite the adoption of *damunhwa* is to readjust history

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<sup>30</sup> Choi, Sunhye *Hyanghwain, a Cultural Minority of the Joseon Society*. Human Studies, (12), 93-123

<sup>31</sup> Bohnet, 110

<sup>32</sup> Bohnet, 52-53

<sup>33</sup> Bohnet, 121

textbooks in compulsory education. The collective memory of *hyanghwain* can change the perspective towards multiculturalism as a historical phenomenon that dates back to Joseon period. Therefore, the history of *hyanghwain* should be historicized as one aspect of Joseon history that evolved in tandem with diplomatic atmosphere, Sino-Korean relations, nation building, social and fiscal policy.

First, *Hyanghwain* redefines and expands minjok as it disentangles minjok from ethnicity. Simple deletion of *danil minjok* is insufficient to create national identity open to diversity. Even though the term *danil minjok* had been eliminated, history education has been slow to incorporate the existing heterogeneous cultural groups in Korea. The representation of *Hyanghwain* in history education can bridge the gap by incorporating them to Korea on a discursive level. In other words, history education of *Hyanghwain* can be effective state measures to propagate the new national identity. *Hyanghwain* in history textbook will radically change the way students perceive history and Korean minjok in two ways. Firstly, the existence of foreign descendants in historical ancestry will emphasize the multi-ethnic lineage will refute the sense of ethnic unity. The history of intermarriages and settlements of foreign descendants will revert the normativity in Korean-only history class and thus better embrace the multiethnic students in the classroom. Secondly, the welcoming immigration policies in Joseon and their political, economic, diplomatic benefits to Joseon will portray diverse immigrants more positively and render more social recognition to students from multicultural background.

Second, a comparative analysis of *Hyanghwain* and *damunhwa* can shed light on the non-cultural aspect of immigration policies that multicultural discourse overlooks; economic benefits of immigrants and a matrix of their ethnicity, race and gender. The critiques of multiculturalism say this “buzzword ..., (is) dominated by mere declarations of general principles and empty political rhetoric” because it focuses only on the cultural aspect and prevents deeper understanding of root causes of conflicts such as socioeconomic status and the ethno-racial differences.<sup>34</sup> *Hyanghwain* history can illuminate issues such as racism because the Joseon court did not categorize immigrants based on ethnic origins but on their political and economic status in order to apply varying settlement policies accordingly. The comparison of *damunhwa* with *hyanghwain* policies in Joseon will enrich the discussion with multifaceted perspectives. Moreover, history education of the multicultural and multiethnic Joseon society can reconceptualize the Korean ethnicity as a fluid, dynamic, and inclusive concept rather than a fixed, pure, and exclusive concept.

Third, history education must be the first *damunhwa* education without segregation of students. Critiques argue that multiculturalism in practice consolidates and amplifies the division of immigrants (*ijumin*) and natives (*naegugin*). For example, multicultural education is separated to teaching Korean culture and language to immigrants and their children and multiculturalism to natives.<sup>35</sup> Most government and civil society’s resources are focused on the former to help immigrants assimilate into Korean society. However, there is much less focus on educating the native Koreans about cultural pluralism or cultural rights. Such skewed education can be ineffective because native Korean’s perception towards immigrants is deeply

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<sup>34</sup> Han Geonsu, "The Limit of Multiculturalism and Exploring Alternatives : Experience in Korea," Daegu Catholic University Multi-Cultural Research Center,(2012.4): 41-47. Print.

<sup>35</sup> Hwang Jeongmee “Multicultural Education without Multicultural Citizen,” *Damron*, (2010,4): 93-123. Print

connected to their identity as Koreans; the unity, belongingness, togetherness, and to some extent, ownership of South Korea. *Hyanghwain* history education will create a more historically grounded discussion of multicultural past and present.<sup>36</sup> This is one step closer to creating multicultural citizens through education rather than proceeding with “multicultural education without multicultural citizens.”<sup>37</sup> As the presence of multiethnic and multicultural students grows in classrooms, teaching *hyanghwain* history engenders shared historical memory and identity to the future generation regardless of family backgrounds.

A nation’s identity must adapt to embrace its constituents and distinguish itself from the outside world. In 1908, Shin Ch’ae ho wrote Toksa Sillon in order to define Korean minjok when Korea entered modern world and faced the threat of colonization. In 2016, South Korea has become a modern nation state in a global world as Shin Ch’ae ho imagined. Unlike the beginning of the nation, the Republic of Korea no longer has to differentiate itself from colonial power or to be afraid of losing its identity to bigger categories such as Great Asia. Korean minjok must change for South Korea to survive; the aging population cannot sustain the peace and prosperity of Korea without immigration. This paper presents a new way to teach history and new minjok to create so South Korea includes immigrants as legitimate members in the political, historical and cultural sense.

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<sup>36</sup> Huh, Donghyun (2009) A Study on the Historical Formation Process of the Myth on the Ethnic Homogeneity in Modern Korea. *Journal of Northeast Asian History*: 7-35. Print.

<sup>37</sup> Hwang Jeongmee, *Multicultural Education without Multicultural Citizen*

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## Essay II

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"Politics of Statue: Peace Monument and the Personification of Memory"

Eun Ji Hwang, Yonsei University

# **Politics of Statue: Peace Monument and the Personification of Memory**

**Eun Ji Hwang  
Yonsei University**

## **Abstract**

The very purpose of statue is to bring the past into the present and even further for progeny. An effective statue as symbol generates far-reaching political power as a processor, mediator, and transmitter of memory. In this regard, this paper attempts to take an approach regarding the political meaning of the Peace Monument, in order to answer the question of “why does Japan keep on demanding the removal of the statue?” Although some say that the 2015 agreement between Korea and Japan concerning the comfort women issue marked another stage in the progress of the bilateral relationship for future generation, it sparked an angry backlash in Korea for being another humiliation of the victims and the Korean people. This paper argues that the disruptions in the current Korea-Japan relationship emanate from its unique characteristic where people are overly awash with affection rather than cognition in evaluating the statue. Because public recollections of the same historical events of Korea and Japan are anchored in dichotomized memories, the colonial memory has been crowded out in Japan but remains strong in Korea. In this circumstance, the Peace Monument lit the fuse of the sensitive issue to become a political football by the personification of memory into a tangible and sympathetic figure. Its symbol of resistance to urge for Japan’s sincere apology has been augmented by the triangular interaction of the statue, its location, and the ceaseless collective actions around the statue as the pivotal figure. As a consequence, the Peace Monument significantly contributed to the making of the politics of identity and the space for resistance.

**Keywords:** Peace Monument, politics of statue, Korea-Japan relations, comfort women, personification of memory

## **I. Introduction**

Today, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs is stuck in a Chinese finger trap; the more it tries to settle down the issue of “comfort women” who were forced to work in Japanese brothels during World War II, the more it only tightens the trap. Ever since the establishment of the Abe-Park era from early 2013, Korea-Japan relations has at times been a source of angst to the international cooperative environment in Northeast Asia. And the comfort women issue has been a significant trigger for bipartite diplomatic relations to go steadily downhill. Regardless of the agreement made on December 28, 2015, which calls upon Japan to give 1 billion yen to a fund for the elderly victims as a solution to tranquilize the heated controversy over the comfort women issue, its follow-up measures still seem to have a long way to go due to the opposition in both countries.

And there stands a statue, in the midst of the raging storm between two countries. This lifesize statue of a girl was first unveiled in 2011, standing across the street from the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, and has since been a magnet for Koreans paying tributes to the victims of sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army. The initial creator of the statue, Kim Eun-sung and Kim Seo-kyung, explained that they merely wanted to touch people's hearts by showing the suppressed emotion, grief and anger of all the victimized women, naming it "Peace Monument".<sup>38</sup> And yet, Tokyo has been particularly specific in demanding the removal of the statue from its embassy after the 2015 agreement. Furthermore, many have been inspired by the statue and even added their own interpretations on top of the initial message, thus making it a socio-political symbolic resource in constructing and reproducing the actor-specific, interactive, and interpersonal identities.

In sum, the statue has been given various meanings with regards to the changes in the political and diplomatic context. This paper thus asks the fundamental question of "why the statue?" If the Peace Monument is deemed so offensive and shameful by Japanese people that its removal has repeatedly been demanded after the agreement, one should take a closer look at why and how this bronze statue of a girl can voice a strong political message. Although there exist numerous studies and articles that have focused on the Peace Monument, their major concerns mostly capitalize on its symbolic meaning of a victimized virginal innocence to criticize Japan's half-hearted and diluted apologies. Nonetheless, in order to appreciate the Peace Monument on a new angle from impartial and objective perspective, it is important to analyze its political implication in a broader context. Taking a step further from other works related to individual case studies of statue and its symbolic representation of the political power, this paper attempts to argue that a statue not only narrates the specific memory of the past but also asserts the non-eroding connection between the past and the present by personifying collective memory. Analysis starts from the distinctiveness of the Korea-Japan relationship in order to understand the unique characteristic of the Peace Monument. This paper will then further investigate how the politics of statue is applied to this specific case of the Peace Monument.

## **II. Politics of the Peace Monument: Distinctiveness of the Korea-Japan relationship**

Statue is the epitome of the interaction between the past and the present. That is, a statue does not merely stay in the past when it was first erected; its value or message either gets overthrown or gets fortified as time passes. Taking this into consideration, this paper argues that how the public apprehends a statue can widely vary according to the following categories of conceptualization:

First of all, the value of a statue can either be universally accepted or partisan and controversial. Statue can be premised upon mutual universal and/or social value, such as the Nelson Mandela statue, where there is no or minimal dispute over the existence of the statue so that the demand for replica of the original keeps on being raised in order to spread its value. On the other hand, statue that is *not* premised upon universal agreement is very likely to face harsh criticism and controversy or to be pulled down eventually, such as the Cecil Rhodes statue.

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<sup>38</sup> Korea Joongang Daily, "STATUE: Politics and art impossible to separate," January 19, 2016.

Second, because statue itself as symbol is a powerful expression of a specific message, *by whom* the statue is built – either by the perpetrators or by the victims – is crucial in understanding its meaning. Statue of the victor consolidates the victor’s power by propagating its triumphant value and memory and by shifting the paradigm into something that is more favorable to the conqueror while successfully suppressing the defeated value. Statue of the victim, on the contrary, is bestowed a conflicting socio-political message, as for one side it is a symbol of commemoration and remembrance of the victims by alerting the audience to the calamity of violence and for another side it is an unpleasant reminder of the past misdeeds.

However, evaluating the Peace Monument is complicated in that it cannot be fully appreciated by fitting it strictly into any of the aforementioned framework. The memory of comfort women is remembered differently between Korean and Japanese publics. For Koreans, it is a statue of the victims; but it does not necessarily mean that Japanese also share the meaning of it. For the latter, it could be a statue of the victor in the sense that Koreans try to overwhelm and propagate the war on memory by erecting the replicas of the Peace Monument not only in Korea but also in other countries that are not even directly related to the comfort women issue. Therefore, one should investigate in-depth about the distinctiveness of the Korea-Japan relationship as follows.

### **(1) Evaluation by affection, lacking cognition**

Alvin Toffler commented about three kinds of power, of which being violence, financial power, and information or knowledge (Toffler 1984). However, violence cannot be the ultimatum in obtaining power. Weber contends that power is the ability to achieve one’s will in social relationship, even against the resistance of a particular group or individual (Weber 1922). Moreover, Lasswell’s approach towards the definition of power as a relational process can be appreciated in that “power is a special case of the exercise of influence, it is the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) several deprivations for non-conformity with the policies intended” (Lasswell 1950, 76). Long-lasting power thus stems from emotion that is deeply rooted in people’s mindset.

Many of the existing studies which have focused on statue as effective means of reproducing political power owe inspiration to the work of Charles E. Merriam. According to Merriam’s concept of “symbol manipulation”, because power is exhaustible, ruler is ought to seek for the most desirable way to continue reproducing the “efficient exercise of power”. Policy circulation can be one way, of which being traditional and rational way, but is risky. Merriam argues that the most desirable way a ruler can continue to reproduce his power is via symbol manipulation: one being Miranda, the symbol of identification, which appeals to emotion, the other being Credenda, the symbol of rationalization, which appeals to ratiom and persuades with reason (Merriam 1950). That being, Miranda of political power encourages people’s obedience or respect to the ruler by the establishment of rapport. “Symbols are what unite and divide people. Symbols give us our identity, our self-image, our way of explaining ourselves to others. Symbols in turn determine the

kinds of stories we tell; and the stories we tell determine the kind of history we make and remake.”<sup>39</sup>

But there is a limitation in interpreting the meaning of the Peace Monument of Korea with the aforementioned approach of understanding statue as symbol of identification because Merriam contended that Miranda is exercised especially when the public faces the chaotic social breakdown of anomie. Instead of being used for top-down manipulation of the public mass, the Peace Monument rather represents the Korean public sphere’s bottom-up confrontation with the Japanese state power, which sometimes even counters its own government. Therefore, this paper attempts to take an approach regarding the meaning of the Peace Monument on the international basis beyond the confines of Korea-Japan relationship by incorporating additional variables, while still embracing the symbolic and political meaning of statue.

The Peace Monument functions as an associate which triggers “evaluation” through “affection”. According to the definition by the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, “political culture” is the “set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system”.<sup>40</sup> Encompassing both the history of a polity and the histories of its members, one might say that a political culture has its root equally in public events and private experiences.<sup>41</sup> At the core of Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s concept of “civic culture” lies the meaning of political culture as a set of individual orientations linked to political objects, where orientation can take three forms: cognitive orientation, affective orientation, and evaluative orientation. Cognitive orientation specifies the knowledge or belief about the political system, its roles, inputs and outputs. Affective orientation highlights the feelings about the political system, its personnel and performance. Evaluative orientation involves judgments and opinions about political objects that generally stem from one’s value standards through information and feelings (Almond and Verba 1963, 14).

The comfort women issue itself is highly sensitive politically, historically and even individually due to its painful legacy of remembrance. Therefore, it appears to take on the aspect of proceeding directly towards evaluation from subjective feelings and personal or social sympathy, not from precise cognition or knowledge about the controversial matter. In other words, because the Peace Monument has been engraved with the collective identity of the Koreans including not only the victims of Japan’s wartime sexual slavery but also those who share and inherit the memory of colonial period, the implication of the statue goes beyond “narration” to “assertion”. Thus the mechanism of “Behavior = Environment + Affection” rather than “Behavior = Environment + Cognition” as is put forward by social-cognitive theory can better explain the spiral dilemma between two countries.

## **(2) Mono-memory of Korea vs. Dual memories of Japan<sup>42</sup>: the clash between “selected” memories**

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<sup>39</sup> Mary Robinson, Inauguration speech as President of Ireland, December 3, 1990.

<sup>40</sup> “Political culture,” last modified 1968, [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Political\\_culture.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Political_culture.aspx).

<sup>41</sup> “International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,” New York: Macmillan (1968): Vol. 12, p. 218 (quoted in Jo Freedman, *The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties* (1986).

<sup>42</sup> The expression of ‘Mono-memory’ and ‘Dual memories’ is a quotation from Sang Joon Kim’s paper “Korea and Japan: Colonial Memory vs. War Memory” which was presented at the conference in Warsaw, July 30, 2015, “Polish-German

Diverse identities tend to clash which undermines constructive dialogues and results in a messy process of reconciliation when memory discourse is shaped by victimhood, as is the case at the present day East Asia (Huysen 1995, 5). The politics of war memory explores “the ways in which wars can be remembered, across forms that range from public commemoration orchestrated by nation-states through to the personal testimonies of war survivors” (Ashplant et al. 2000, xi). The fundamentality behind the continuous reproduction of incongruent political and social discourses between two countries stems from the lingering clash between their dichotomized identities and memories. Colonial memory and war memory are still deeply embedded in Korea and Japan respectively, which are expected to be preserved regardless of the generation change due to the series of unsatisfactory reconciliation during the last few decades.

In Japan’s public memory of war, selective amnesia takes place: War itself is often the enemy, and the Japanese its victims (Cook 2003). First, the ordinary Japanese themselves also suffered from the war. Not only did Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombs, but some three million Japanese were killed out of a total of 74 million (Onuma 2002, 604). Second, Japan’s major allies carried out generous policies toward postwar Japan and concluded the problems of war compensations in lenient terms. Such was apparent when the U.S. took an extremely generous policy towards Japan at the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Even when Tojo Hideki, who was the general of the Japanese Imperial Army, and some other leaders were trialed and prosecuted for carrying out aggressive wars, not only the punished were few in number but ordinary Japanese people also did not regard it as a condemnation of all Japanese. To them, they were not perpetrators of war, but rather bystanders and victims. Furthermore, even though China was one of the hardest-hit sufferers by Japanese aggression, the Chinese government relinquished its claim for apologies and war compensations when Japan and China normalized their relationship in 1972. The Chinese leadership kept a firm grip on the principle that only a limited number of Japanese militarist leaders and war criminals should take all the blame, not its people. All of these factors contributed to postwar Japan’s reinforcement of self-indulgence. Even though some of the victims such as South and North Korea and the Philippines condemned Japan with harsher attitudes, Japan did not pay any attention to the voices of such “small nations” until the 1970s (Onuma 2002, 605).

Therefore, Japan has dual postwar memories – one being the cognitions of the war dead rather than that of the war brutalities which is apparently promoted by the Yasukuni shrine, and another being mixed with their own sense of victimization as the only country to have suffered an A-bomb nuclear attack. Sang Joon Kim (2005) terms the dual memories of Japan “Yasukuni memory” and “Hiroshima memory”. Of the three identities – legitimatizing identity, project identity, resistance identity – that Manuel Castells categorize at the social level (Castells 1997, 7-9), the author argues that the Yasukuni memory promotes “legitimizing identity” by juxtaposing a number of Japanese wars from the Sino-Japan war, Russo-Japan war to the Pacific war, while the Hiroshima memory reinforces “projective identity” which promotes Japan’s postwar identity as a peace-loving and peace-keeping nation (Kim 2005).

In addition, Japan is a country where religion takes a huge part in their everyday life, including their socio-political activities. Its political and social practices and belief systems have been influenced and sanctioned to the great extent by Shinto, an indigenous Japanese religion of nature and ancestor-worship. Whereas many of the other countries separate religion from state by commemorating the deceased war dead in a separate space such as the National Cemetery in Daejeon of Korea and Arlington National Cemetery of the United States of America (hereinafter U.S.), Japan has substituted the problem of the War by their religious belief, both nationally and individually. Because the commemoration of their war dead during the World War II is in their private realm, the fact that other countries that are urging Japan quit visiting the Yasukuni shrine or apologize for the past wrongdoings that their ancestors had done is something that is not within their authority to interfere. Taking this into consideration, perhaps to Japan, the Peace Monument is merely an aggressive propaganda to create international misunderstandings of Japan, rather than a symbol that represents the past victims who vanished under violence and the future hope of mutual understanding of peace, the need for sincere apologies and avoidance of any kind of similar violence from ever happening again.

This phenomenon is largely due to Japan's peculiar statecraft and value system. According to Karel Van Wolferen, Japan's structural system is a truncated pyramid where "a complex of overlapping hierarchies" with "no peak" exists so that no one is ultimately in charge (Wolferen 1990, 5). For centuries it has maintained a balance between the shared powers by semi-autonomous groups such as the bureaucrat-LDP-business triad, the press, the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives (Wolferen 1990, 41) and several other semi-self-contained, semi-mutually dependent bodies (Wolferen 1990, 42). Furthermore, he points out that "understanding" (*wakaru*) in the Japanese context connotes the meaning of "agreeing", in that true mutual understanding requires both parties to accept each other the way they are, as long as neither one of them is strong enough to change the structure (Wolferen 1990, 10-11). In this regard, this paper argues that the Peace Monument can only arouse the "shame" among the Japanese of not being internationally understood of their own victimized memory, for the existence of the Peace Monument demonstrates the international society's permanent lack of understanding of Japan.

On the other hand, Korea does not share Japan's war memory but is overwhelmed by the mono-memory of Japan the colonizer. Because the colonial memory is difficult to be dug up voluntarily at its roots by the suppressed due to its pain and shame, "details" of the colonial memory have been eroded away while leaving behind mere "image" of the memory. For example, the name-changing campaign in 1940 as means of the assimilation policy under the Japanese Colonial Government made it mandatory for all Koreans to change their names to Japanese ones. As a result, 80.3% of the Koreans voluntarily replaced their original name and the remaining 19.7% also had their name changed by the exercise of the Japanese Government General of Korea's authority (Koo 2005). Although near 100% of the colonial generation of Korea had such experience of indignity, it is one of the shameful taboos that no one dares to bring up in today's Korean society. Consequently, particular memories have been selected by the Koreans as an effective tool to demand Japan incorporate Korea's colonial memory into Japan's war memory, one of them being the comfort women issue.

Nevertheless, room for Korea's mono-memory to settle in Japan's war memory is small and cramped.

Breakthrough in the bipartite dispute over the comfort women issue and other historical problems seems yet to come. Unfortunately, neither country could have had an earnest endeavor to bridge the gap between the two nor did each side try to talk about the issue under the spotlight within their public sphere. Like spinning a top, both countries are now whipping their own selected collective memory of the past, which is making the present controversy ever more heated.

### **III. The Peace Monument and its Personification of the Memory**

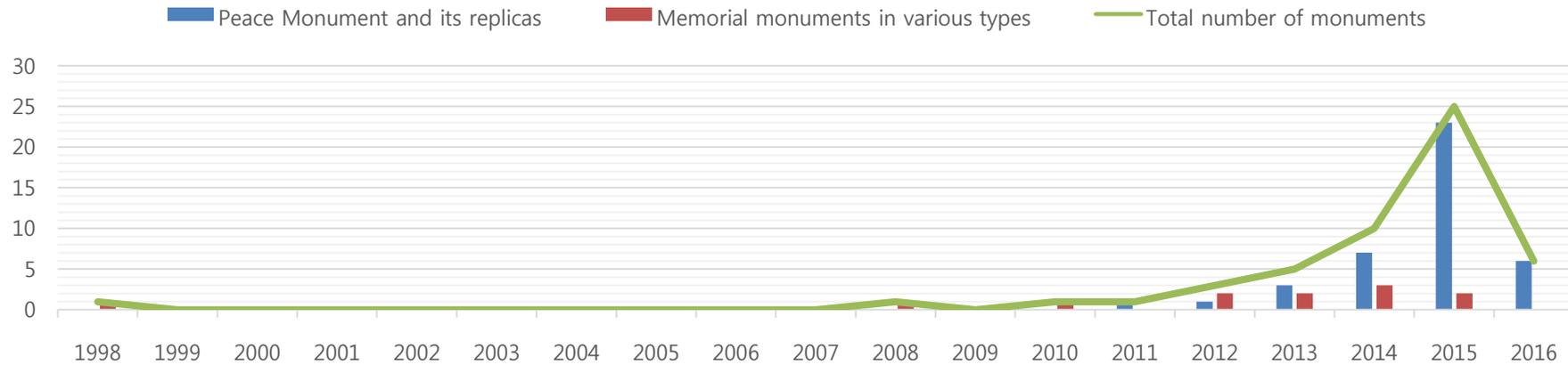
One should distinguish between “statue as art” and “statue as symbol”. It is difficult to bestow socio-political identity on a statue as an artistic sculpture because of its exclusiveness. Nowadays, 3D scanning technologies allow art objects to be easily conserved, digitalized and reproduced. But in this case, making replicas of the original artwork faces the problem of copyright, doubt on quality and authenticity of the scan, and controversy over cultural theft. For instance, the 3D model of Nefertiti bust created storm over cultural theft between the German museum authorities and two German artists who secretly scanned the statue at the Neues Museum and released the data to the world.<sup>43</sup> As a result, the simplified accessibility has made the bust at the museum lose the uniqueness of the statue and its location where it is currently being displayed. On the other hand, the Peace Monument, of which its existence itself is composed of many symbolic meanings, is ceaselessly being encouraged to be reproduced not only in Korea but also in various places around the world.

Statue as symbol can be a powerful political tool in that it makes the audience identify other with self by personifying the memory. The Peace Monument in the heart of the capital city of Korea not only endows the spatial characteristic with the statue, but also invites the crowd to sit beside the girl and think about the past misdeeds and brutality exercised upon the victims of wartime sex slavery. In this sense, the Peace Monument does not confine itself to a mere sculpture that is simply designed to console and remember the victims of sexual slavery. And yet, it is the tool for the localization of the specific memory: it is the visualization and embodiment of the tragic case at one point of the history of mankind while at the same time is the symbol that localizes its prominence in the present and in the future. The localization of memory can be a powerful political tool in that it attracts people to a totality of thoughts regardless of whether or not they are associated within the corresponding memory group (Halbwachs 1992, 53).

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<sup>43</sup> International New York Times, “Swiping a priceless antiquity,” March 3, 2016.

# Comfort Women Memorials around the World



<Graph 1> Comfort Women Memorials around the World

# Memorials in Korea and Abroad



<Graph 2> Memorials in Korea and Abroad

In this regard, this paper argues that the Peace Monument's successful personification of memory intertwined with the participatory experience of the weekly Wednesday demonstrations and its locational characteristic accentuates its political function and its representation of resistance to the international audience. The symbolic meaning of the Peace Monument has been maximized together with its location. The original statue was installed at the site in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to commemorate the 1,000<sup>th</sup> weekly rally, and immediately turned its stage into the representational space of resistance. Spatial representation of resistance is important in that it narrates the intensity of the event and carves it into the public memory as a symbolic landmark (Chung 2013, 104). The symbolic meaning of space can be easily understood when considering the example of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 in China or the Egyptian revolution of 2011 at the Tahrir Square.

As can be seen in <Graph 1>, the number of replica of the original statue has exponentially increased as time passes. As a result, the memory which used to be almost only specific to the actual victims until the point when the statue was built began to proliferate in the country. Whether or not the memory is old or more recent one, statue as symbol arouses either sense of kinship or sense of animosity. In other words, because the Peace Monument exists as if it is personified by being given a collective identity of the specific group and of those who retrieve its remembrances and connect themselves to the same memory, it is treated either like a comrade or like an enemy, depending on to which group of memory the person belongs.

Nobuyuki Suzuki, a member of a right-wing Japanese political group, was indicted for vandalizing the original Peace Monument by hammering a stake which read "Takeshima belongs to Japan" on June 19, 2012. The angry comfort women victims and Korean civic organizations confronted the incident with filing a case on July 4, 2012, but Suzuki never responded to the prosecutors.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the prosecution continues even until nowadays, as the comfort women victims sued Suzuki again in May 21, 2015, for defamation and libel. The case of Nobuyuki resulted in attracting great public attention to the Peace Monument, transforming it into a medium that reminds people of the memory of the comfort women and boosts the public's emotional affection by making the issue more personal (Chung 2013, 111). When the Peace Monument was once again struck with hammer on June 3, 2016, it aroused a storm of public indignation in Korea. Furthermore, not only a policeman who held an umbrella over the statue on a rainy day made headlines, but people also have adorned the statue in keeping with the season, treating it like a real girl.

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<sup>44</sup> Japan Daily Press, "Japanese political activist charged with vandalism of South Korean comfort women monument," February 19, 2013, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://japandailynews.com/japanese-political-activist-charged-with-vandalism-of-south-korean-comfort-women-monument-1923583/>.

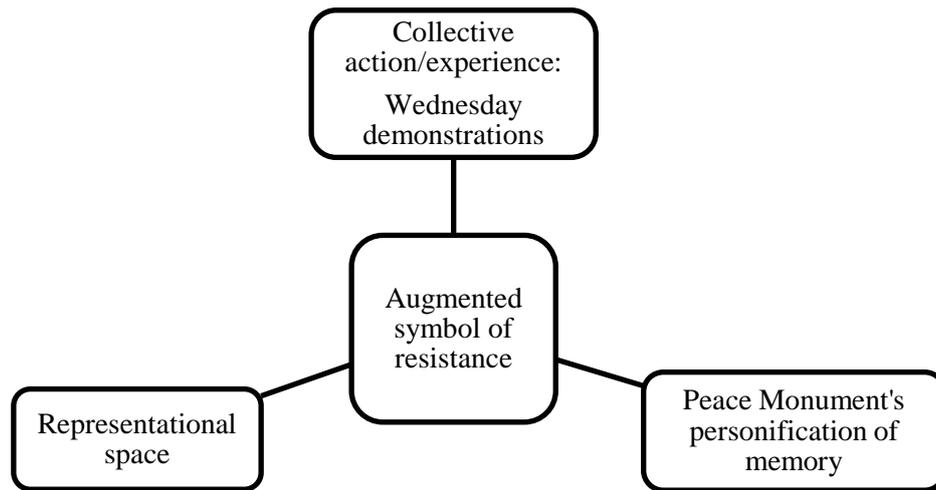


Figure 1. Augmented symbol of resistance by the triangular interconnection of three factors

As a consequence, the Peace Monument has become a powerful political symbol which propagates Korea's particular war memory. As can be seen in <Graph 2>, controversial reactions to the Peace Monument have also been reproduced even outside Korea as its replicas began to emerge overseas immediately after the installation of the original statue in 2011. As such, the propagation of value by reproducing a statue is to a great extent political in that it extends the value far beyond the boundaries of its specific interest group. Another example can be the statue of the Goddess of Democracy which was first unveiled during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 in China in order to assert the struggle for democracy under the communist rules. The Goddess of Democracy soon became an icon for the democratic movement against communism. Replicas and tributes to the statue have cropped up in other countries, one of which being the U.S., in San Francisco's Chinatown and at the Victims of Communism Memorial. In the case of the Peace Monument, the phenomenon where civic organizations mostly take the lead in proliferating the Peace Monument has made it even more difficult for Japan to accuse the Korean government as an only responsible actor of the spread of the statue within the public sphere.

The political function of the statue has continuously been reaffirmed whenever Japan responded with expressions of fierce resentment towards the existence of the Peace Monument and with a firm attitude towards its removal. The Internet campaign of 2012 by Japan to pressure the U.S. to remove the statue in Palisade Park, New Jersey, and to stop the "international harassment" of Japanese people (Kim 2014) was one example. Moreover, the Japanese opponents filed a lawsuit against Glendale in order to remove the first Peace Monument to be installed overseas in Glendale Park, California, in July 2013. Japan also has been arguing that the Peace Monument violates international law and diplomacy for it retains an ostentatious display of outrage on view near an embassy, "which Japan cites as a symbol of South Korea's reluctance to settle down the issue".<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup>The Korea Herald, "Japan officially apologizes, offers funds: Questions remain over Tokyo's stance on taking

In this regard, the Peace Monument is not just a statue of the victims; because the memories are dichotomized between two countries, it leaves a room to be criticized that it is a statue of the victors in the sense that Koreans try to overwhelm the war on memory. However, this paper contends that even though the majority of Japanese consider themselves as victims of war as well, it is difficult for those who are against the value of the Peace Monument to negate its message or to create a statue of their own because the aggressor image is more prominent in the global society regarding the comfort women issue as well as its misdeeds during the colonial period. Thus the Peace Monument will continuously play the pivotal role of the comfort women issue as long as both sides keep stressing the value of their own memory as a victim.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The very purpose of statue is to bring the past into the present and even further for progeny. An effective statue as symbol generates far-reaching political power as a processor, mediator, and transmitter of memory. Although some say that the 2015 agreement marked another stage in the progress of the bilateral relationship for future generation, it sparked an angry backlash in Korea for being another humiliation of the victims and the Korean people. The disruptions in the current Korea-Japan relationship emanate from its unique characteristic where people are overly awash with affection rather than cognition in evaluating the statue. Because public recollections of the same historical events of Korea and Japan are anchored in dichotomized memories, the colonial memory has been crowded out in Japan but remains strong in Korea. In this circumstance, the Peace Monument lit the fuse of the sensitive issue to become a political football by the personification of memory into a tangible and sympathetic figure. Its symbol of resistance to urge for Japan's sincere apology has been augmented by the triangular interaction of the statue, its location, and the ceaseless collective actions around the statue as the pivotal figure. As a consequence, the Peace Monument significantly contributed to the making of the politics of identity and the space for resistance.

Nonetheless, in spite of the Japanese government's official apologies and compensations, severe backlashes and disputes over the removal of a statue in Japan have continuously been raised. As a result, it made the Koreans question the sincerity of Japan's apology and the efficacy of the government's diplomatic talks, which only strengthened the symbol of resistance of the Peace Monument as an unofficial channel to propagate the colonial memory of Korea. The failure of mutual understanding between two countries is because the burden appears to be mostly imposed upon Japan to rectify its memory myopia while the contrite party does not understand the importance of sharing the counterpart's memory. In this sense, Lind's argument can be appreciated in that the historical remembrance of a state is crucial in having emotional effects on observers in the opposing state and in other countries; the denial and distortion of a state's past revisionist behavior can fuel doubts about its current intentions and hostility between the countries (Lind 2008; cited in Glaser et al. 2009, 338-339). Of course, many states have been able to reconcile without apologies for past aggression such as Japan not having apologized to the U.S. for attacking Pearl Harbor. However, Lind (2008)

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responsibility for wartime sex slavery," December 28, 2015, accessed June 5, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20151228000889>.

argues that intentions matter; states assess others' intentions which in turn influences their policies. Therefore, this paper highlights the importance of appreciating the Peace Monument as a momentum for both Korea and Japan to more thoroughly question how the past matters and to endeavor to bridge the gap between each side's self-referential views of the past in order to reduce the chance of regressive tit-for-tat reactions.

## Appendix I)<sup>46</sup>

The memorial statues abroad are shaded with gray.

Date	Title	Location	Creator
August 14, 1998	Comfort Women Memorial (못다핀꽃)	The House of Sharing, Gwangju, Korea	Professor Yoon, Young-suk
September 8, 2008	Comfort Women Memorial (아리랑비)	Miyako(jima) Island, Okinawa, Japan	-
October 25, 2010	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기념비)	Palisades Park, New Jersey, United States of America	Korean American Voters' Council
December 14, 2011	Peace Monument	Japanese Embassy in Seoul, Korea	The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan
May 5, 2012	Peace Monument	War&Women's Human Rights Museum, Seoul, Korea	The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan
June 20, 2012	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기념비)	Veterans Memorial in Nassau County on Long Island, New York, United States of America	Korean American Public Affairs Committee, the Government of Nassau County, Gwangju city
December 1, 2012	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기념비)	Garden Grove AR Galleria in Orange County, California, United States of America	Civic organization (미주위안부기념비건설위원회)
March 8, 2013	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기념비)	Memorial Island, Bergen County, New Jersey, United States of America	The Government of Bergen County
April 6, 2013	Comfort Women Memorial (정의비; 正義碑)	Tongyeong, Korea(남양산공원)	Civic organization (일본군위안부피해자정의비건설위원회)
May, 2013	Peace Monument	Goyang, Korea(일산문화광장)	Goyang city
July 27, 2013	Peace Monument	Glendale Central Park, California, United States of America	Korean American Forum of California
September 4, 2013	Peace Monument	Seocho high school, Seoul, Korea	Seocho high school
November 12, 2013	Peace Monument	The National Women's History Exhibition Hall, Goyang, Korea	Kim Eun-sung and Kim Seo-kyung
January 17, 2014	Peace Monument	Geoje Arts Center, Geoje, Korea	Civic organization (거제일본군위안부피해자추모비추진위원회)
January 19, 2014	Comfort Women Memorial	Veterans Memorial in Nassau County on Long Island, New York, United States of	Korean American Public Affairs Committee, Gwangju city

<sup>46</sup> Map of the Comfort Women Memorials.

<https://fusiontables.googleusercontent.com/fusiontables/embedviz?q=select+col1+from+1Ph8o36500AemIo5dbWXmRFoqADqDrxAAWak2QMjS&viz=MAP&h=false&lat=35.88298632590236&lng=126.53483447031249&t=1&z=7&l=col1&y=2&tplt=2&hml=GEOCODABLE>.

	(위안부결의안기림비)	America	
April 15, 2014	Peace Monument	Seongnam, Korea	Seongnam city
May 3, 2014	Peace Monument	Olympic park, Suwon, Korea	Civic organization (수원평화비건립추진위원회)
May 28, 2014	Peace Monument	Anseong, Korea(유무상통마을)	Oroji Welfare Institution
May 30, 2014	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기림비)	The Comfort Women Memorial Peace Garden, Government Center in Fairfax County, Virginia, United States of America	Civic organization(워싱턴지역정신대문제대책위원회) in partnership with the Fairfax County Government
August 4, 2014	Comfort Women Memorial (위안부기림비)	Liberty Plaza, Union City, New Jersey, United States of America	Union City
August 14, 2014	Peace Monument	Dongtan Central Park, Hwaseong, Korea	Civic organization(화성시평화의소녀상건립추진위원회) in partnership with Hwaseong-si
August 16, 2014	Peace Monument	Korean Cultural Center, Michigan, United States of America	Korean Americans in Michigan, Civic organization (소녀상건립위원회)
December 24, 2014	Peace Monument	Seoul, Korea(대현문화공원)	Civic organization (평화나비네트워크)
March 1, 2015	Peace Monument	Boramae Park, Daejeon, Korea	Civic organization (대전평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)
March 1, 2015	Peace Monument	Ulsan Park, Ulsan, Korea	Civic organization (평화의소녀상건립을위한울산시민운동본부)
March 2, 2015	Peace Monument	Mokchon High School, Cheonan, Korea	Mokchon High School
August 5, 2015	Peace Monument	Gangneung, Korea	-
August 11, 2015	Comfort Women Memorial (여성인권수호기원상)	Cheongju, Korea	Civic organization (충북여성단체협의회)
August 12, 2015	Peace Monument	Dongguksa Temple, Gunsan, Korea	Civic organization (군산평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)
August 13, 2015	Peace Monument	Jeonju, Korea	Civic organization (평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)
August 14, 2015	Comfort Women Memorial (나비의소원)	Gwangju Citizen's Woods, Gwangju, Korea	Civic organization (착한사람들의모임)
August 14, 2015	Peace Monument	Namhae, Korea	Namhae County
August 15, 2015	Peace Monument	Wonju, Korea	Civic organization (원주평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)
August 17, 2015	Peace Monument	Gwangmyeong cave, Gwangmyeong, Korea	Gwangmyeong city
August 25, 2015	Peace Monument	Ma Deul Park, Nowon, Seoul	Nowon-gu office
August 27, 2015	Peace Monument	Changwon, Korea	Civic organization
October 3, 2015	Peace Monument	Sejong, Korea	Civic organization (세종평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)
October 7, 2015	Peace Monument	Saraon Park, Gunwi, Korea	Civic organization (군위평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)

October 28, 2015	Korea-China joint Peace Monument	Street Park, Seoul, Korea	-
October 30, 2015	Peace Monument	Seosan, Korea	Civic organization (서산평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)
November 3, 2015	Peace Monument	Franciscan Center, Seoul, Korea	Ewha Girls' High School
November 3, 2015	Peace Monument	Youth Plaza, Cheongju, Korea	Civic organization (충북평화의소녀상기림비시민추진위원회)
November 7, 2015	Peace Monument	Uijeongbu, Korea	Uijeongbu city
November 18, 2015	Peace Monument	Pohang, Korea	Civic organization (포항평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)
November 18, 2015	Peace Monument	Korean Center, Toronto, Canada	Civic organization (화성시청, 화성시평화의소녀상추진위, 토론토한인회)
December 11, 2015	Peace Monument	Cheonan, Korea	Civic organization (천안평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)
December 12, 2015	Peace Monument	Haenam, Korea	Civic organization (해남평화비건립추진위원회)
December 19, 2015	Peace Monument	Jeju, Korea	Civic organization (2015제주, 대학생이세우는평화비건립추진위원회)
February 3, 2016	Peace Monument	Bucheon, Korea	Civic organization (부천시일본군위안부피해자기림비건립추진위원회)
March 1, 2016	Peace Monument	Busan, Korea	-
March 1, 2016	Peace Monument	Dangjin, Korea	Civic organization (당진평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)
March 8, 2016	Peace Monument	Asan, Korea	Civic organization (평화의소녀상아산건립추진위원회)
April 8, 2016	Peace Monument	Mokpo, Korea	Civic organization (목포평화의소녀상건립추진위원회)
May 12, 2016	Peace Monument	Namwon, Korea	Civic organization (남원평화의소녀상건립시민추진위원회)

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## **Essay III**

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"Transient Labor: Past and Present of Young Female White-Collar  
Work Force in South Korea"

Ye Won Hong, Yonsei University

# **Transient Labor:**

## **Past and Present of Young Female White-Collar Work Force in South Korea**

**Ye Won Hong**

**Yonsei University**

### **Abstract**

The paper aims to investigate transient patterns of young South Korean women by employing qualitative methods, namely participant observation, interwoven with the analysis of theoretical and historiographic texts. The transitory labor patterns among young women is analyzed through different historical figurations of ‘working’ women, from Chosun’s Confucian feminine ideal to contemporary Missy and young office girls. Young female workers were represented as exploitable daughters sacrificing for the nation-family during the industrialization under authoritarian government. Contemporary patriarchal corporate culture continued to marginalize women, forcing them to reenact the traditional feminine ideal, or to become ‘flowers’ in the offices. The alleged female empowerment under recent regime of neoliberal self-portfolioization and ‘spec’ accumulation is analyzed to show the reproduction of female subalternity. In the age that celebrates female power, the continuing precariousness of women’s position within Korean labor markets should be recognized.

**Keywords:** transient labor, female labor, patriarchy, neoliberalism, curated self, agency, (post-)feminism, South Korea, Japan

### **I. Introduction**

“My female boss openly said that I need to go to the army and learn how to behave in front of my superiors, including herself. She then compared my attitude to that of another male temporary worker who already served the military, suggesting how well he conducts himself. Even before I said something she was ridiculed by male workers who told her that no one would want to date a woman who served the military (Anonymous female interlocutor in discussion with the author, December 2015).”

Many young female college graduates in South Korea aspire to become full-functioning members of big companies, only to face the reality of corporate culture that excludes women to large degree. Numerous seminars about female power and leadership, carried out by already established, if rare, female executives, encourage ambitious young women to challenge their limits and ultimately become competitive ‘global leaders.’

With the abolition of gender discriminatory policies in workplaces in 1988, it seemed that young women now have better chance than their predecessors of becoming something more than simple assistants who only worked until their marriage. In fact, female students outnumbered male students in college entrance

rate long since 2008, and almost three quarters of entire population of female highschool graduates had enrolled in college-level education in 2014.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, it is still quite common to see young women leaving their positions in companies. Women's participation in the labor force by age displays the shape of letter M, highest during late twenties and lowest during thirties, indicating the transitory labor pattern due to marriage and childbirth.<sup>48</sup>

Marriage, childbirth and familial or peer pressure related to the traditional obligations assigned to female gender in Korea are still major factors that hold back young women from continuing their career. Many leave their career in offices in hopes of finding 'stability' in their lives, often translated into their effort in finding husbands or, popularly in recent years, jobs that ensure reasonable employee benefits or certain social positions, such as governmental posts and licensed professionals. However, these exceptions seem to mainly serve to postpone the same pattern of transiency of female labor rather than to allow alternative conditions of labor for young women. In order to understand why today's ambitious young women with more education and encouragement follow the similar labor pattern of their predecessors, it is necessary to look into different representations of female labor in history of South Korea. Historical figuration of 'working women', from Chosun dynasty to modern day female office employees, may appear unrelated to each other; however, these figurations are similar in a sense that, despite notable progress, continue to reflect patriarchal and hierarchal social relations.

## II. History of conceptualization of Women's Labor

Korean women started to actively participate in the labor market as cheap factory labor from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century during colonial era, with number of such worker peaking in 1960s. With the gradual decline of manufacturing industry and the rise of service sectors, some women were able to enter different industries and job posts. During 1970s, under president Park Chung Hee's authoritarian regime, rapid and rather violent processes of modernization and industrialization were delivered and interpreted through traditional Confucian or Neo-Confucian family hierarchy.<sup>49</sup> Under such ideology everyone was closely related to each other by fulfilling parental or filial role pursuant to their social positions, placing additional emotional and possibly political meanings to otherwise neutral relationships. The rapid development of South Korea formed a symbiotic relation to the totalitarian regime where individuality was ignored and people were forced to form a homogenous body that entailed nationalist but also familial or family-like tropes and narratives.<sup>50</sup> Government and supervisors acted in *loco parentis*, equipped with authoritarian entitlement of

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<sup>47</sup> "2014 T'onggyerophonũnyõsõngũisam" 2014 통계로보는여성의삶 [2014 Women's Lives through Statistics], (Press release, National Statistical Office and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2015), 34.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>49</sup> Hyun Mee Kim, "Work, Nation and Hypermasculinity: the 'Woman' Question in the Economic Miracle and Crisis in South Korea," in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2001): 154, accessed April 18, 2016, doi: 10.1080/14649370120039452.

<sup>50</sup> HaeJeong Cho-Han, "'You are entrapped in an imaginary well': The Formation of Subjectivity within Compressed Development – a Feminist Critique of Modernity and Korean Culture," in *The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen, BengHuat Chua (New York: Routledge, 2007), 301.

protecting and commanding people, whereas citizens and workers became the 'children,' expected to be dependent and express considerable amount of filial piety. The rigid Neo-Confucian family propaganda inevitably jeopardized the position of those who are not considered as filial sons, such as, most visibly, young female workers. They were constantly pressured to sacrifice for the sake of collective benefits of the nation, analogous to the common practice of families with many children in the past that often educated the oldest son of the family at the expense of forcing others, especially female children, to work and support the filial son.

Factory girls not only were excluded from the benefits and gains of the developmental process but also frequently were described as victims, or ones to be protected by the patriarchal state and Korean men. Female workers were able to be symbolized as martyrs of labor movement mainly because they existed not as agents but rather as silent bodies and superficial representations. Under colonial regime, young factory girls were popular theme for proletarian literature movement (1925-1935), described as sexual victims harassed by capitalism and foreign influences, which only reiterates the 'aesthetic fixation' on feminine suffering and reveals the labor movement as paternalistic.<sup>51</sup> Later, during Park regime, when the entire labor force was feminized in contrast to authoritarian government serving as father figure, female workers were described to be the subject of protection, naturally placing educated Korean men in a position of the protector.<sup>52</sup> Female workers faced a demand of enduring, while waiting for the state's masculine protection. However, young girls who were the heroines in these fictional works rarely took part either in the literary movement or in labor rights movements, not until few decades later when autobiography of factory girls became popular. Factory girls were conceptualized as an object of the workplace, and also, in the end, of nationalistic discourse, thus serving as a main reproductive force for the paternalistic form of labor.

The rampant literary beautification of suffering of young working women did not contribute to female labor rights movement in 1990s, directed by National Women's Union, which had no distinction between blue-collar and white-collar labor, as female's labor rights were considered to be secondary to that of men.<sup>53</sup> Governmental policies approach the problems of women's labor rights as a matter of welfare issue rather than infringement of innate human rights, which reinforces the idea of demanding endurance from female workers while providing fatherly care through a form of compensation.<sup>54</sup> Women's labor rights were realized on surface with the enforcement of the 1988 Equal Employment Law, in the same year of Seoul Olympics when Korea was trying to appear modernized, therefore it is no surprise that the law only provided superficial changes. Many young female college graduates who entered Korea's multinational companies in the late 1990s and early 2000s still faced obstacles within androcentric corporate culture. Best described as 'flowers in the office,' these young women remained as gendered beings in the office and were discriminated mainly with wage differences, an obvious and materialized evidence of gender inequality, and other forms of sexual discrimination, such as the lack of opportunity for promotions and insecure positions within

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<sup>51</sup> Ruth Barraclough, *Factory Girl Literature* (London: University of California Press), 2.

<sup>52</sup> Kim, "Work, Nation and Hypermasculinity," 56.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

companies.<sup>55</sup> ‘Flowers in the office,’ representing traditional gender role endowed to women to serve “decorative” and auxiliary functions, was incongruent to modernity of office environments.<sup>56</sup> Many female employees were sexualized, both as cheerful young girls who will serve male colleagues and superiors, and as nurturing mothers who will prepare food and take care of male employees during the office parties and events.<sup>57</sup> Epitomized by its infamous drinking parties in companies called *hoi-sick*(회식), often related to the vicinity or even direct engagement of sexual workers, Korea’s corporate culture is male-dominated, highly influenced by military culture. Korea’s conscription system is one universal traumatic experience for the entire male gender, therefore, leaves no room for female participation. Many young office women testified that they felt left out when men shared their experiences of military service in these parties.<sup>58</sup> Female office workers also suffered as they needed to be present in these parties as colleagues, but also, simultaneously, as sexualized objects, as many male employees had hard time separating their female colleagues from hostesses.<sup>59</sup> These situations where women are excluded from masculine bonding are not limited to the parties, as they are ever-present within the lives of corporate employees. Women in offices, in a way, are forced to reenact the idea of *gi-saeng*(기생) of Chosun dynasty, whose role was to entertain and serve men.

The imagination of ideal Korean women, tracing back to Chosun’s Confucianism, can be best represented as Confucian rule of triple obedience for women: obeying their fathers as daughters, their husbands as wives, and their sons as mothers. Feminized labor subjects had to obey the masculine authorities and make sacrifices for the ‘filial sons’ of the society during the industrialization, and then, consequently, had to cater to the need for feminine ‘touch’ in workplaces by entertaining and supporting the male employees. The conceptualization of female, mainly through sexualization of female labor, thus, only reproduces the male-centered, paternalistic working environments.

Transient pattern of female labor may appear not so unique to Korea, as there is similar example, or even precedent, in Japan, called Office Ladies (OL). Office Lady (OL), or Japanese young female office workers who served simple clerical tasks in many Japanese companies in 1980s and onward, showed similar transitory pattern of labor of young Korean women in 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. OLs were visually discriminated from male workers as they were required to wear uniforms, which made them look identical.<sup>60</sup> Female office workers in Japan were considered unnatural as they do not fit into Japan’s traditional pattern of ‘lifetime’ employment and promotions, because they only work until their marriage and childbirth.<sup>61</sup> The transiency of the OL’s labor was a justification for the sexual discrimination, ranging from wage

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<sup>55</sup> Nan-Yeong Park Matthews, “Development, Culture and Gender in Korea: A Sociological Study of Female Office Employees in Chaebol” (phD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2005), 102.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>57</sup> Sung-Eun Lee, “The Office Party: Corporate Sexual Culture and Sexual Harassment in the South Korean Workplace,” in *East Asian Sexualities: Modernity, Gender and New Sexual Cultures*, ed. Stevi Jackson et al. (London: Zed Books, 2008), 69-84.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>60</sup> Yuko Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender and Work in Companies* (London: University of California Press, 1998), 171.

<sup>61</sup> Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men*, 36.

differences to exclusion from various bureaucratic formalities, for instance, a formal evaluation process necessary to determine the amount of the bonus.<sup>62</sup> Korean female workers went through similar experiences in the corporate environments before 1997 Asian financial crisis, however, what makes Korean office girls distinctive is that the system of oppression is being perpetuated through self-portfolioization brought by neoliberalism of post financial crisis era.

### III. Making of Transient Labor in South Korea

As mentioned earlier, South Korean government's enforcement of family role-play had huge influence over the idea. During and after the crisis, mass media propagated the idea of encouraging the fathers of families who were thought to suffer the most, as their role of being the patriarch and bread-winner were challenged due to the financial crisis.<sup>63</sup> A commercial song "Daddy cheer up" in 2004, which went viral with catchy melody of children's song and simple lyrics, may display the effort to cheer up the patriarchs, reinforcing the collectivity of Koreans under the idea of them being the united family. During the financial crisis in late 1990s, many companies 'offered' retirement for the employees to reduce staff, and female employees, especially younger ones who were at their marriageable age, were the first ones to fall prey to such measure.<sup>64</sup> Female employees were, in a way, more threatened by the crisis than the 'fathers' of Korea because they were, yet again, required to endure and sacrifice for the collective good of the nation-family.

While the patriarchs were popularly supported, women were chastised for endangering the conventional harmonious family ideal through their ignorance and over-consumption.<sup>65</sup> Its legacy may have influenced how people think of young female office employees in South Korea, often blaming them for their exorbitant lifestyle, most popularly characterized by *dwenjang-nyo* (된장녀). Roughly translated as 'bean paste girl', the term generally describes young women purchasing foreign luxuries with money of their fathers and boyfriends.<sup>66</sup> The consumption of bean paste girls is considered to be useless and frivolous, acting as counter-example of labor and production of patriarchs who are working diligently for the family and, furthermore, for the nation. Interestingly, the possibility of women having financial power and autonomy to purchase those items remains almost always unexplained in these narratives.

Along with the repetitive enforcement of gender roles in public spaces through media and popular narratives, neoliberalism also took a role in perpetuating the patriarchy, and strictly hierarchical system that now does not tolerate differences. Office experience of contemporary young female employees are not so different from that of their predecessors, including factory girls and early female white-collar employees, as South Korean corporate culture stays patriarchal and hierarchy-driven. Young female workers experience and witness the moments of friction between them and corporate hierarchy while trying to either resist or to adapt

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>63</sup> Cho-Han, "'You are entrapped in an imaginary well'," 303.

<sup>64</sup> Park Matthews, "Development, Culture and Gender in Korea," 218.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>66</sup> Jeong Min Hyun, "New Women and Modern Girls: Consuming Foreign Goods in Colonial Seoul," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 5, no.4 (2009): 495, accessed May 19, 2016, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-01-2013-0004>

to the office environment. There are many issues that visibly limit women to be perfectly incorporated into office scene, such as drinking culture and military culture, which sexualize and exclude women. However, it is more important to understand how people, especially young women, internalized neoliberal beliefs which introduced the entirely different form of subjectivity. For a start, it is necessary to see who is responsible for the problem of neoliberal, unsustainable and, consequently, only transitory female labor, from governmental and corporate ideological self-production to the work of educational institutions, but also of parental and familial desires and influences formed by such societal regulation.

The “Spec Generation”, born in the late 1980s, pioneered such obsession for superficial or externalized self-enhancement. Young people of Spec generation largely invest to train oneself, or in idiomatic sense, to accumulate ‘spec’, meaning specifications or resume-building activities, in hopes of attaining secure and high-paying jobs in companies. They often see their lives as continuation of competition, however, not to become the best but to become average, possibly because of their own and their parents’ trauma of 1997 Asian financial crisis.<sup>67</sup> The relationship between the children and parents of Spec generation resembles that of player and coach, where parents instrumentalize their children and children also regard their parents as providers of material necessary for self-training.<sup>68</sup> In a way, parents and families are investing on their children, rather than raising them, similar to how youth invest on their resume-building activities in order to secure their future. Through the familial support, younger generation inevitably learns to become neoliberal labor, reproducing their family’s class status within the neoliberal society. Parents coach their children to enter top-tier university expecting that the ‘brands’ of these schools will ensure their children to succeed in landing on secure jobs.<sup>69</sup> These branded schools further train younger generation into neoliberal workers.

Educational institutions, most visibly universities, had turned into training centers for neoliberal workers. A female student, one of the students who left school to support the anti-diploma movement, publicly denounced that schools are becoming ‘diploma brokers’.<sup>70</sup> She felt betrayed by her school because it was encouraging students to accumulate ‘specs’, rather than putting an end to the competition. Under neoliberal reform South Korea experienced during and after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, higher education system was transformed in context of deregulation, privatization and globalization, which in turn produced students who are the managers of their own qualities, motivated to continuously commodify themselves.<sup>71</sup> Schools became one of numerous ‘specs’ for young generation, qualifying those who successfully entered prestigious schools, but at the same time reproaching those who could not for failing to manage themselves. Many schools also use ‘globalization’ to promote themselves to the parents. For instance, in 2002, one of the top-tier universities in Korea claimed to the parents, that its education will turn their children into global leaders, competitive and

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<sup>67</sup>Hae-joang Cho Han, “The Spec Generation Who Can’t Say “No”: Overeducated and Underemployed Youth in Contemporary South Korea,” *Positions* 23, no. 3 (2015): 447, accessed April 20, 2016, doi: 10.1215/10679847-3125823.

<sup>68</sup> Cho-Han, ““You are entrapped in an imaginary well’,” 304.

<sup>69</sup> Cho-Han, “The Spec Generation Who Can’t Say “No”,” 445.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>71</sup>Nancy Abelmann, So Jin Park, and Hyunhee Kim, “College Rank and Neo-liberal Subjectivity in South Korea: The Burden of Self-Development,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 10, no.2 (2009): 233, accessed April 20, 2016, doi: 10.1080/14649370902823371.

self-managing individuals who will work in Wall Street, or any other multinational financial institutions.<sup>72</sup> It became popular rhetoric of South Korea's education, which held hands with parental and familial pressure in mass-producing the identical model-house future for the younger generation, which leaves out huge number of people who do not fit into the ideal. The privileged students believe that South Korea cannot be distracted by the issues of socio-economic inequalities because it has to focus on winning the global race, thus providing the perfect excuse for the general disregard towards the underprivileged or those who refuse to be part of the 'global race.'<sup>73</sup> This, to the dreadful extent, resembles South Korea's rapid industrialization through the idea of nation-family that inevitably required sacrifices from the members of the community. What is interesting is that people who are left out of the unilateral mode of life also help the abusive hierarchy to be sustained by desiring to be part of it through endless self-developments, mainly propagated through neo-liberal ideology. Resume-building and self-portfolioization does not end in universities, but rather aggravate in the corporate environment. One of the interlocutors said during the interview that "the most annoying part of corporate culture is the endless effort to make everything looks so important and grand." Countless seminars and sessions provided by employees, along with motivational pep talks from colleagues to make them more productive, proactive, and global is an only extension of what is being exalted in families, schools and society as a whole.

This brings us back to the anecdote in the beginning of the paper. Like the female superior who told a new female recruit to enter the military service, which is now becoming one of 'specs' rather than civil obligations, she, who once had been the victim of the rhetoric, is repeating the same situation only to be ridiculed by the masculine labor environment. Thus, women are the victims and, at the same time, the offenders of their own subalternity, reproducing the Korea's traditional masculine form of labor.

Office girls are created by families, educational institutions, and, most importantly, by themselves. Their subjectivity is expressed through consumerism and resume-building, or self-enhancing activities. In order to penetrate the problem of transient pattern of female labor, it is important to see how the commodified selfhood empowers young women, but at the same time serves to cover for the lack of real changes in the reality of job market and traditional gender roles in general.

#### **IV. Agency and Subjectivity**

In her paper Cho Han Hae-joang uses Feher's idea of distinguishing liberal capitalism and neoliberalism to explore the differences in respective forms of labor subjectivity. Under liberal capitalism, individuals' subjectivity and labor power are not to be equated, meaning one is not a commodity, whereas one's labor is. On the other hand, neoliberal laborers equate themselves to their marketable assets that can be consumed, disposed of, and most importantly, developed through investment, which is being expressed as resume-building of Spec generation in South Korea. It becomes almost impossible for the individuals to distinguish private and personal self from commodified and curated self, forcing them to become more

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<sup>72</sup> Cho-Han, "The Spec Generation Who Can't Say "No"," 455.

<sup>73</sup> Nancy Abelmann et al, "College Rank and Neo-liberal Subjectivity in South Korea," 235.

intelligent in enhancing their own usability, however, ultimately turning themselves into disposable labor commodities.<sup>74</sup> Neoliberal subjectivity often praises but also chastises individuals for their success and failure, therefore equivocating the structural inequalities between classes, age, and gender groups that still exert influences over people's daily lives.<sup>75</sup> Curated and commodified selfhood can assure the autonomy in the process of self-enhancement, however, simultaneously, it reinforces the systematic powers that are often sexist and patriarchal. Young women may have become more empowered as they can exercise autonomy in the process of self-enhancement; however, the reach of such autonomy is limited since it largely does not challenge the conventional patriarchal form of labor.

The new subjectivity appeared to allow better career choices and increased autonomy to young women through consumerism and self-curation. The fruit of this process is young women called 'Missy' in the later part of 1990s, who whole-heartedly embraced their new subjectivity and femininity. Missy is a product of what Cho Han Haejeong calls as the 'housewifization' that started in 1960s where women were gradually becoming to be more associated as a man's wife rather than a man's mother.<sup>76</sup> Unlike the previous generation of *ajummas* who devoted themselves to take care of their families and raising their children, Missy invests in herself to look attractive and sexy, just like unmarried young women.<sup>77</sup> The new generation of self-investing young (married) women accepted their pseudo-career within domestic realm, claiming that they are "professional at housekeeping."<sup>78</sup> Young women whose career were severed because of marriages, and also due to companies cutting down staff during the financial crisis in the late 1990s, were brought back to domestic realm, just like in their previous generations. However, they were empowered in a sense that they transformed home and family into their scene, offering moments of self-realization, which was mainly carried out through consumption.<sup>79</sup> This consumption by middleclass wives seen as form of self-enhancement were also to reproduce and to secure the current social status, for instance through purchasing the 'right' furniture or electronic devices that matches the family's status. Many young women, instead of confronting the problem presented by the patriarchal society, had resolved the situation by superficially climbing up the social ladder mainly through their husbands' success, which, in the end, further solidifies the existing system rather than challenging it.<sup>80</sup> Missy's continuing devotion to self-management led those who cannot afford to participate in it to be left out and marginalized.<sup>81</sup> The neoliberal subjectivity is realized through consumerism and self-portfolioization, however, this inevitably jeopardizes the position of young women within family, school, and, most importantly, career spaces that still remain patriarchal.

Even when young women and Missy-to-be enter job markets, the patriarchal work environments

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<sup>74</sup> Cho-Han, "The Spec Generation Who Can't Say "No"," 451-452.

<sup>75</sup> Nancy Abelman et al, "College Rank and Neo-liberal Subjectivity in South Korea," 229.

<sup>76</sup> Hae-joang Cho, "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities: Mother, Motherly Wife, and Sexy Woman in the Transition from Colonial-Modern to Postmodern Korea," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall. (USA: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 167.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

pressure them to leave. Such transiency in current labor market manifests itself in two distinct forms. There are female white-collar workers who stay to be oppressed by becoming normalized to the existing power inequality. They accept their destiny and continuously serve to become the exploitable daughters and sisters in corporate environments, often permanently or temporarily quitting their career for marriage and childbirth. At the first glance, there is an increasing number of young women who are trying to take upon the alternative ways, such as taking governmental exams (*go-shi*, 고시) or going to graduate schools, escaping the office scene. Yet such movement usually acts as postponement of the similar fate, since their effort to pass *go-shi* or to earn degrees in graduate school usually work as crucial ‘investment’ to their life and career. At the first glance, it seems that young women are enacting their agency, consciously and voluntarily choosing among various options. However, their agency, even the transgressive one, often takes a form of neoliberal self-development, which ultimately serves young women only to better-present themselves in South Korea’s labor market transitory and precarious, or, more often than not, in marriage market.

The transient female labor pattern caused by neoliberal self-investment is problematic since it is a by-product of current patriarchal form of labor and is reserved only for the young women of certain socio-economic class. Possible female empowerment can be observed in seeking alternative lifestyle outside of corporate careers, which, ironically, is only possible through the patriarchal system that constrains men to remain as bread-winner while allowing relative freedom to women. Also, since many of these investments on one’s career development costs considerable amount of time and money, they are only available to those who can afford the expanses, and, as a result, many are excluded. More balanced and thoughtful investigation, including sociological research along with ethnographic approach, is needed in order to see if the generation of *go-shi* takers is displaying possible female empowerment, or echoing Missy phenomenon.

## V. Conclusion

The thought on women’s transiency in labor market inevitably bring us to a number of questions and dilemmas, but maybe most painfully to the role of women’s education (and the financial investment it entails), which have been unsuccessful in empowering young girls. South Korea’s education for women started in 19<sup>th</sup> century was conceived to educate girls to become good wives and mothers, rather than to let them challenge the pre-existing patriarchal social hierarchy. *EwhaHakdang*, established by foreign missionary, actively engaged in arranging marriages, called *hakgyogyelhon*(학교결혼), roughly translated as school marriages, between its graduates and the “modern” young men during the initial period of establishment.<sup>82</sup> Its first commencement exercise in 1908, in fact, was marriage ceremony for its graduates.<sup>83</sup> Like how the last queen of Chosun, SunjongHyo Hwang-hu, who established first public girl’s school, Hansong Girl’s High School in 1908, had wished, young women were educated to fulfill the roles of “newly educated women” of becoming

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<sup>82</sup> Jennifer Jung-Kim, “The New Woman and New-Style Weddings in Colonial Korea,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 11, no.4 (2008): 19, accessed May 30, 2016.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

wise mothers and wives for the nation.<sup>84</sup> The pattern, in a way, is being reproduced through contemporary young women who still face traditional and familial pressure of marriage and childbirth along with neoliberal pressure of self-enhancement, reenacting the conventional gender roles while education and other social institutions, such as marriage and family, remain spectators.

The same student who decided to drop out of her top-tier school said that many of her colleagues are “now contemplating applying for graduate schools, study-abroad programs, and becoming licensed professionals,” because they fear “being used up and disposed of after ten years struggling” even after receiving educations in prestigious schools.<sup>85</sup> However, it is contestable how real their effort is in escaping the transient pattern of female labor, since the alternatives mentioned in her declaration can be so easily turn into another instrument of self-enhancement, which will ultimately consolidate the unending competition of South Korea’s neoliberalist society. Also, the sense of betrayal towards the education has not yet triggered reform, but rather translated into more extreme form of self-enhancement, where even children in elementary schools and kindergartens becoming part of.

Educational institutions are encouraging young girls to become like few successful female CEOs and congresswomen, however, turning a blind eye to the need for real changes within South Korea’s labor that may be hindering young women to break out of the cycle of transitory labor. The rhetoric almost always leaves out the women of lower-middle and lower class, creating the social anxiety to catch up, and thus requiring sacrifices of various forms. However, the emphasis on and enforcement of the few ideal example is, in fact, the very proof that the gender equality had not been realized despite the law passed almost three decades ago. Until the systematic inequalities are recognized young women will continuously display transitory labor pattern, repeating the lives of their mothers and grandmothers.

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<sup>84</sup>Yung-Chung Kim, ed., *Women of Korea: A History from Ancient Times to 1945* (Ewha University Press, 1976), 225.

<sup>85</sup> Cho-Han, “The Spec Generation Who Can’t Say “No”,” 450.

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