READING RACE: POSTCOLONIAL NATIONALISM IN KOREA

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the significance of race to South Korean postcolonial nationalism. Despite critical scholarly attention paid to nationalist narratives in contemporary South Korea, the centrality of race remains peripheral. This poverty of investigation is paradoxical given the centrality of myths of racial origin, purity and uniqueness to nationalist historiography, political movements and discourses of the everyday. More intriguing still are the ways in which the modern myth of Korean racial homogeneity oppresses foreign ‘others’, particularly following the advent of Korea’s state-sponsored globalization movement. This project addresses the near absence of critical work concerned with the development of modern racial consciousness in Korea.

My dissertation investigates different sites of transnational and trans-cultural encounter between Koreans and non-Koreans that generate racial anxiety in the form of civil unrest, policy conundrums and new social phenomena. The emergence of multicultural politics to manage the political controversies concerning the presence of migrant workers and brides; the changing socio-legal status of biracial peoples; and the racial aesthetics of Korea’s popular culture industry as embodied in the Hallyu (“Korea Wave”) phenomenon, feature as sites of examination. The case studies of this project operate upon the premise that how South Korea currently confronts the processes and demands of neoliberal globalization reflects a great deal about the centrality of race to post-colonial, national identity, as well as how it is currently under duress and transformation. This dissertation contributes to Korean studies scholarship on postcolonial race relations, which is relatively small and emergent. It also contributes to research on Asian modernities, regionalisms and “New Asia” discourses, which examine practices of decolonization and imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region.
Introduction: Race and Postcoloniality in South Korea

In Korea, decades of rapid industrialization and globalization have not uprooted ethnic nationalism; instead Korea’s ethnic national identity has intensified in response to the penetration of these transnational forces.
- Shin Gi-wook

Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent neocolonial relations within the new world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enabled the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. Beyond this, however, postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities...if I may coin a phrase, ‘otherwise than modernity’. Such cultures of a postcolonial contra-modernity may be contingent to modernity, discontinuous or in contention with it...but they also deploy the cultural hybridity of their borderline conditions to ‘translate’ and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity.
- Homi Bhabha

Less understood or less examined in the interdisciplinary cultural studies of colonial and postcolonial discourses are the power relations between the different hybrid subject produced during centuries of imperialism and modernity. Thus, the center-periphery model, or West/non-West binary, is inadequate to understand contemporary world conditions under globalization: the relations among gendering practices, class formations, sexual identities, racialized subjects, transnational affiliations, and diasporic nationalisms.
- Grewal & Kaplan

This dissertation focuses on the significance of race to South Korean postcolonial nationalism. Despite critical scholarly attention paid to nationalist narratives in contemporary postcolonial South Korea, the centrality of race has remained peripheral throughout Korea’s post-war developmental, democratization and globalization eras. This poverty of investigation is paradoxical given the centrality of myths of racial origin, purity and uniqueness to nationalist historiography, political movements and discourses of the everyday. More intriguing still are the ways in which the modern myth of Korean racial homogeneity oppresses foreign ‘others’, particularly following Korea’s state-sponsored globalization movement. This project addresses the near absence of work concerned with the development of modern racial consciousness in Korea.
This dissertation contemplates the contemporary significance of race in Korea since the late 1980s through to present-day. Prior to Korea's economic and cultural globalization, dissatisfaction with foreign bodies was couched in anti-colonial rhetoric exhibiting a defensiveness and sense of victimization by threatening powers. However, race thinking enters the political culture differently now as Korea finds itself in the position to dictate the life-chances and ‘development’ of others outside its national borders. As members of an emerging capitalist center, many South Koreans currently confront a dilemma for which national history and memory has not prepared them – the possibility of a Korea as a regional, sub-imperial power.

Above all other national signifiers, the concept of *minjok* most comprehensively captures the significance of race to Korean self-understanding in contemporary society. Since Korea’s brush with colonial modernity, the concept of *minjok* has been retroactively applied through national historiography to denote a historically linear, linguistically and culturally homogenous people who for 5,000 years have been aggressed by foreign invasion, war and empire. *Minjok*, a term derived from Meiji Japan’s usage of *minzoku*, references and conflates Koreans as a race, nation and ethnic group. While the concept has clearly been informed by colonial encounters with Western universalist conceptions of historical development, *minjok* is most popularly treated by most contemporary Koreans as a particular identity anchored in pre-national origins.

Korea’s experiences under Japanese colonial rule, war with North Korea, labor and democratization movements have created the conditions through which the concept of ethno-racial homogeneity has become an important building block of Korean nationalism.\(^1\) As a

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result the scholarly constraints under anti-colonial/post-war mentalities have ensured the primacy of nationalist narratives produced by ideologues over more pluralistic narratives corresponding to the lived experiences of people in Korea. Shin Gi-wook notes that regardless of the competing visions for the political organization of the Korean nation following liberation from Japan (bourgeois nationalist, Marxist nationalist, agrarianist, etc.) “all used the modern language of nationalism and agreed on the ethnic base of the Korean national community”. Since, references to either the pre-historical fact of Korean ethno-racial cohesion, or the necessity for ethno-racial cohesion, have been heavily harnessed in Korea’s anti/post-colonial politics of emancipation and resistance - of “progressing” from colonization to decolonization, from oppression to liberation. Narratives “derived from a sense of victimization by and defensiveness toward threatening powers” tend to overwhelm the various trajectories of historical memory and over code acts of counter-hegemonic resistance against both foreign and domestic forms of oppression. An example excerpt from Hong Yi-Sup’s book Korea’s Self-Identity demonstrates the kind of historical analysis that uncritically treats the racial cohesion of a Korean people as a historical fact or constant:

Colonial nationalism is designed, first of all, to cast off the yoke of political domination imposed by an alien race and to remove a condition of economic, cultural, and mental enslavement. The struggle for liberty by a race naturally stimulates its dedication to racial unity.2

The tautological nature of this statement bears the self-referential logic of minjok. It is considered pre-discursive, yet also the source from which unity is derived. It is before and after, the agency behind its own inception. The general trend of postcolonial scholarship in South Korea has been to produce historical analysis that uncritically treats the racial cohesion

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of a Korean people as a-historical and pre-discursive, reducing chances for critical exploration into the system of facticities that enable the narratives of anti-colonial resistance.

The following questions animate the interests of this project: How do transformations of Korean ethno-national identity (minjok) respond to the provocations of neoliberal globalization? How do the sites of investigation in this project demonstrate a tension between anti-colonial nationalism, which constructs minjok identity against the memories of foreign/imperial presences, and the ideals of globalization that construct minjok identity in intimate relation to the authority of the ‘international’, and ultimately, to white authority. In other words, how does the foreign marriage trend, growing number of migrant workers and mixed-race births challenge the anti-colonial foundation of South Korean national identity? What kinds of identity trends are emerging in reaction to these changes? The evidences of racial anxiety seem important, because they indicate the disruption and instability of national norms, and thus, the new possibilities for thinking about racial identity. In the Korean context, anti-colonial positionality is generally equated with being anti-Japanese and/or anti-Western. However, Korean postcoloniality does not preclude, and in some senses is quite dependent upon, a racial superiority in relation to “lesser” others. This sensibility has been developed and scaffolded through various engagements with the U.S. and Japan in pre-colonial, colonial and imperial contexts. The export of Korean labor abroad during the 60s and 70s, Korea’s engagement in Vietnam, accelerated emigration of middle class families for primarily educational purposes since the 1980s, and the contemporary import of foreign labor into Korea represent major fields of transnational interaction, which have shaped Korean national, postcolonial psyches and informed national goals for first world status.
In answering the questions of this dissertation, this project investigates different sites of transnational and trans-cultural encounter between Koreans and non-Koreans that generate racial anxiety in the form of civil unrest, policy conundrums and new social phenomena. The emergence of multicultural politics to manage the political controversies concerning the presence of migrant workers and imported brides; the changing socio-legal status of biracial peoples; and the racial aesthetics of Korea’s popular culture industry as embodied in Hallyu or the “Korea Wave” phenomenon feature as sites for examination. Investigation of these sites helps me to demonstrate how race and racial identity remain central to Korean understandings of the self. This is a 'self’ that emerged in the period of Japanese colonialism and also retrojected into the past as a principle that organized Korean national history; this self is also projected into the future in terms of accomplishing a desired telos. The case studies of this project operate upon the premise that how South Korea currently confronts the processes and demands of neoliberal globalization reflects a great deal about the centrality of race to post-colonial, national identity, as well as how it is currently under duress and transformation.

As such, this dissertation makes use of what Ann Stoler refers to as “imperial formations”. She derives it from Althusser and Balibar’s concept of “social formation”, which signals the “concrete complex whole comprising economic practice, political practice, and ideological practice at a certain place and stage of development”. It also refers to how cultural practices are caught up in structures of dominance, such that social formations exhibit “effective movements and tendencies...[that have] variable and often oblique relations to formal institutions”. As opposed to formal institutions and fixed ideologies,

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3 Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan (eds.). Imperial Formations (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), p. 8. Stoler includes cultural practice in this definition to address more broadly concerns about practices structured in dominance.
however, imperial formations underscore the active and contingent process of hegemonic formations that signal the growth or decline of empire. They appear as “blurred genres of rule and partial sovereignties” and “depend on moving categories and populations…on material and discursive postponements… and thrive on deferred autonomy, meted out to particular populations incrementally…[They] create new subjects that must be relocated to be productive and exploitable…disciplined to be independent, converted to be human, stripped of old cultural bearings to be citizens…”.

As an example this dissertation will examine how contract brides are culturally, economically and reproductively disciplined through a traditional, Confucian family morality in the name of multicultural compromise. Child bearing and rearing practices, hygiene, culinary and home-making practices, home language preferencing and educational decisions for their children all become the realm of state interventions. These interventions are performed in the name of multiculturalism, and pursue a strict program of assimilation into the patriarchal Korean nation and family structure. Likewise, Christian churches, doubling as non-government organizations require migrant participation in “cultural” festivals or events, in which migrants demonstrate their customs and traditions for Korean audiences in the name of diplomacy and bridge building. Foreign bodies are continually produced as exceptional to the national polity through a civilizing framework that demands an impossible assimilation, while simultaneously requiring performances of their specificity.

These examples are instructive of how multiculturalism can be viewed as a “blurred genre” of racial rule specifically connected to the economic interests and function of the postcolonial state. It is part of an imperial formation, not just because of the cultural violence it wields against targeted populations, and for the purpose of producing (gendered, raced, 

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4 Ibid.
classist) epistemological claims about them. The application of multicultural policy in Korea also bares the familiar markers and accumulated legacies of liberal state building witnessed throughout much of the western world. The practices of state multiculturalism described above are specific to the context of Korea’s sociology to be sure. However, Korea is recruited as a participant in the broader currents of global imperialism through its participation in one of its governing legacies – multiculturalism. Such participation renders the contemporary treatment of foreign culture familiar, racial yet not, or as Stoler puts it “partially sovereign”. The processes and events of Korean multiculturalism tap into deployments and perpetuations of imperial structures and desires that this dissertation intends to examine.

It is critical to clarify what this dissertation is not. It is not a comprehensive history of racial politics in South Korea, nor is it an ethnographic study of racial rule. While the dissertation does draw on some first hand accounts and sources gathered during summer visits to Korea in 2007 and 2008, the scope of the dissertation, which spans multiple sites of inquiry in relation to the themes of race and postcoloniality, has meant a heavy reliance on theoretical, historical and discursive materials. Given the under examined topic of race in Korean Studies, the purpose of this dissertation is to first and foremost establish a field of critical inquiry from which additional studies can emerge in the future. In sum, the intent of this project is to contribute to the field of Korean studies and comparative politics by bringing postcolonial and critical race theory to an analysis of contemporary Korean nationalism, a nationalism that I see as having a deep, complicated and often neglected relationship with racial discourse and ideas. Assisted by contemporary Korean materials, this
project takes a different analytic cut at a topic hitherto under-investigated in the landscape of Korean studies.

Methods

This dissertation turns to critical race studies and postcolonial literature to provide the theoretical basis of intervention for this project. It is a general understanding in both the body of postcolonial theory and critical race studies that the political construct of race - as psychological referent, as imagery, as basis of judgment and action - is central to the organization of the modern world.

Racial imagery is central to the organization of the modern world. At what costs regions and countries export their goods, whose voices are listened to at international gatherings, who bombs and who is bombed, who gets what jobs, housing access to healthcare and education, what cultural activities are subsidized and sold, in what terms they are validated – these are all inextricable from racial imagery. The myriad minute decisions that constitute the practices of the world are at every point informed by judgments about people’s capacities and worth, judgments based on what they look like, where they come from, how they speak, even what they eat, that is, racial judgments. Race is not the only factor governing these things and people of goodwill everywhere struggle to overcome the prejudices and barriers of race, but it is never not a factor, never not in play. And since race in itself – insofar as it is anything in itself-refers to some intrinsically insignificant geographical/physical differences between people, it is the imagery of race that is in play.5

The shared assumption that racial imagery is always already “in play” in the modern world is what links the broad bodies of postcolonial and critical race theory literature, and what allows them to intersect and overlap in useful ways. Whether engaging “the postcolonial” or the analytic of “whiteness”, both terrains of scholarship acknowledge the historicity of race as emergent with the history of modern capitalism and the western bourgeois nation state. They also acknowledge that whiteness has been configured in the relationship between

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colony and metropole – in the interstices of the discursive, regulatory and technological means at its disposal to position itself through others.⁶

Critical race theory will allow for the treatment of race as a politically contingent concept, allowing for discussion on the transformative nature of racial expression across time, space, and institutional structures (material and discursive) and actors (state, civil society, the individual). David Theo-Goldberg’s approach to race perhaps captures the latest developments from the field. One of his main contentions is that race is ironically a hybrid concept, with the ability to conform to historical context, mobilize collective memories - to be form shifting. “Race…assumes significance in terms of prevailing social and epistemological traces of past significations.”⁷ According to critical race theories, race functions as a flexible vehicle for organizing economies of power depending upon context-specific investments. This argument proves quite useful to the project at hand, as it allows us to conceive of how Korea’s racial investments might be instantiated in multiple and even competing modalities of history, memory and institutionalized identities, and which can be recalled or suppressed in varying degrees as events demand.

This Foucauldian contention, however, falls short in at least one way for which postcolonial studies picks up the slack. Whereas those like Theo-Goldberg run the risk of arguing that race is an empty signifier, postcolonial theory allows for the recognition of race as a historically specific construct, which continues to find relevance, value and expression in instances of colonial/imperial encounter. Those like Chakrabarty engage the colonial encounter, producing rich historical accounts of how colonial subjects grapple with colonial

technologies of racial meaning and morality, be it through the regulative categories of gender, class or sex, or regulative ideals of development and decolonization. That is, he acknowledges the diversity of the post-colonial condition, whereby desires for the modern expressly manifest in ways not immediately recognizable as such. He problematizes the meaning of modernity for India’s postcolonial nation-building project, claiming that struggles, contestations, and desires around which it coheres reveals a historically specific relationship between the universalizing tenants of Western modernity and Indian culture and tradition. While we are all, in one way or another “products of world capitalism and the institutions, practices, and ideas that have accompanied it”, it is still worth exploring the ways in which their dimensions work out contextually, so that “the very nature of modernity” in post-colonial India, or in this case, Korea is at issue.

In a similar vein Irene Silverblatt infuses the historically contingent process of race thinking into her analyses of postcolonial subjecthood in Latin America. Race thinking is not synonymous with racism or the category of race. Race thinking, a process originally invoked by Hannah Arendt, helps us to understand the ways in which analytically separate social processes have interpenetrated and produced each other over time. Rather than treat race, ethnicity, caste, or nationalist as separate social formations, race thinking allows us to understand how supposed legal or social constructs, such as caste (viewed in one sense), morphs into a biologized determination of social hierarchy through the mechanism of “descent”.

Race thinking, then, broadly refers to any mode of construing and engaging social hierarchies through the lens of descent. It represents a potential way of sensing, understanding, and being in the world, a cultural possibility

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that can become part of social identities and social practices.\footnote{Irene Silverblatt. “Modern Inquisitions” in \textit{Imperial Formations} (Stoler, McGranahan & Perdue, eds.). (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), p. 282.}

The significance of “descent” and inheritance has functioned historically within Korea’s experiences of modernity and postcoloniality. One could even make the argument that the conditions of possibility for the ability to make local meaning of modern racial paradigms can be traced back to structures of Neo-Confucian governance, which made much of impenetrable social classes, natural hierarchy (i.e. slavery), clearly defined filial and gendered relations. That is, exploration of the extended past, while not the focus of this dissertation, can offer perspective on how the inter-articulation of “descent” paradigms occur to produce hybrid meanings of ontological value in the postcolonial present.

As a part of examining this inter-articulation, Korea’s colonial encounter with Japan and occupation by the United States will be considered highly relevant to the ways in which Koreans have come to interpret the worth of the national self and ‘other’ through a racial lens. It can be confidently argued that Korea’s engagements with racial paradigms occurred as a consequence of encounters with American elites during the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries (diplomatic envoys, missionaries) that naturalized Black slavery, the Enlightenment, and Darwinian philosophies of natural selection/hierarchy. Although evidence of racial interpretation or transfer from Japan to Korea is difficult to locate, Japan’s recorded history of engagement with the Dutch, the British and Americans since the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, publications that espoused the West as the apex of civilization, and 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century mobilizations of adapted racial paradigms for military/imperial purposes leave little doubt as to centrality of Japanese translation in the formation of Korean national consciousness and postcolonial psyche.
Korea became further “Americanized” following the proliferation of U.S. imperialism and Cold War politics in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing the racial tensions of Jim Crow, segregation and civil rights to bear upon Korean-U.S. relations, the effects of which are still palpable today. The proliferation of military capital, goods, discourses and media-flows (e.g. AFKN network) cannot be underestimated nor can the intimate and often paradoxical relationships forged between American military interests and Korean development. These relationships were forged throughout a series of forums, which created conditions for consolidating racial knowledge and practices across transnational lines. Korea’s military participation in the Vietnam war as a U.S. proxy; domestic prostitution; black market industries selling American goods and life styles; the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which protects U.S. forces from Korean prosecution; the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA) program in which Korean soldiers enroll on loan to the U.S. military constitute some of the terrains upon which these knowledge transactions took place. This dissertation does not suggest the Korean nationalism is complacent to U.S. violence, nor does it suggest that resistances have not been waged against occupation and racism. The countless protests and vigils against the U.S. military and ROK governments over the last several decades have, in some way or another, indicted the abuses perpetrated against the poor, workers, students, women, and land, which highlighted the uneven, bilateral relationship between the two countries. What this dissertation contends, however, is that critiques of racial oppression can occur without disturbing the assumptions and binaries that constitute global, racial imaginaries in circulation. This no doubt speaks to the conundrum that the very incarnation of Korean national cultures co-mingled with the assumptions of Western imperialism and racial worldviews.
Aihwa Ong instructs us on this very dynamic in her observation of an emerging multi-polar world in which the West’s economic relationship to the rest of the world is increasingly peripheral. She argues that the emergence of new centers for the regulation and accumulation of transnational capital serves as the condition of possibility through which non-Western countries are gaining cultural capital. This cultural capital challenges Western authority without de-linking white authority from the ethics of capitalist production and consumption.\textsuperscript{10} Evidence of race-thinking beyond properly ‘Western’ states such as that of South Korea elicits curiosity about the transferability and translatability of white authority. The psychoanalytic thread within postcolonial theory will help to tease out this particular dynamic, bridging the gap between the notion that race is a slippery, evasive concept and the contention that there is also something strongly fixed about the relations of race.\textsuperscript{11}

Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks argues that the structural consistency of race relations has much to do with the historical referent of whiteness. She informs us of the ways in which race functions at the interface of the social and the self. The policing of the self and others occurs in accordance with an understanding of a particular symbolic order, an order in which whiteness functions as the ultimate psychological referent for the measurement of ontological coherence and completeness. Whiteness remains outside the play of signification, however, even as it enables the asymmetrical and hierarchal system of oppositions. If Whiteness emerges as a category in racial discourse, it usually functions to diffuse a sense of hierarchy or binary opposition between “people of color” and “white”, such that whiteness appears as yet just another category on a neutral or apolitical spectrum of differentiated signifiers (black, brown, yellow). Thus, the illusion of race as a pre-discursive ‘fact’, whether bound in a

language of biological or cultural difference, gets maintained while Whiteness as an ideological product of power goes largely unacknowledged. Both post-colonial studies and critical race studies operate upon the premise that race is a concept that persists as a means to structuring and materializing white privilege through an array of material, discursive and symbolic economies. Their combined usage might explain why and how non-white actors desire, echo and materialize white privilege and will function critically to understanding forms of racial expression in Korea that are not only attributable to political investments in the particularity of minjok identity, but that incorporate a broader sensibility for the racial.

This dissertation sees the concept of race as invariably related to the condition of political modernity and its permeated presence in our lives. According to Chakrabarty it is impossible to think of anywhere in the world without recalling the categories, concepts and genealogies which go deep into the intellectual traditions of Europe.

Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history.\(^\text{12}\)

This dissertation operates upon the premise that race marks a confluence of these traditions. In particular, understanding the pervasive forms of modernity is key to how race operates in the situation of “double translation” like that of Korea, where the primary colonizing agent was not European or American. That is, in the double translation process we are required to understand the power of whiteness without its obvious or immediate presence, and even in cases when postcolonial movements articulate themselves against whiteness.

It is the view here that race is an analytic, a category and an embodiment that in one way or another says something about one the most enduring and powerful products of

political modernity - the universal vision of the human. It is the thing that the various permutations of modernity Chakrabarty lists above ultimately indexes. Race is often interpreted as a biopolitical construct, but it need not be. Racial meaning can be inferred ontopolitically, meaning that bodies are assigned meaning within certain contexts and marked within particular relationships. The relationship of North Korea to South Korea is a good example of this phenomenon.

Although considered and even romanticized as minjok, North Korea has played the role of ‘Other’ in the South Korean political imagination in interesting and ambiguous ways throughout the post-war years. That is, they have been othered, or racially coded, and discursively produced within binary systems of representation. They have been commonly juxtaposed to South Koreans as pre-modern and of the past, although interestingly ethno-racially ‘authentic’.

What has been most significant about the condition for both North Korean otherness and authenticity is their inaccessibility. North Korea’s status of ‘other’ has heavily depended upon the forbidden and near impossibility of physical contact between the two countries. As such, the othering of North Koreans has been inextricably linked to the politics of space and time. The museum exhibit dedicated to North Korean life at the DMZ prove as much, where contemporary artifacts of North Korean life are displayed as of the past. South Koreans living in the real-time of capitalist modernity gaze on and back at another dimension of time, at an historical trajectory they managed to avoid.

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14 Demilitarized Zone.
More recently, South Korea’s globalization doctrine has played a key role in bringing about increased communication and contact with the North Korean government and its people. It has enabled cross-border family meetings in both Seoul and Pyongyang, initiated peace talks (as exemplified by the Kim Dae Jung government’s “sunshine policy”), established a tourism link between the two countries, and brought about more business speculation on the potential value of North Korean land, labor, and future economy in general (for example the free-trade industrial zone in Kaesong). More North Koreans than ever before have escaped to South Korea owing to the establishment South Korean humanitarian relief organizations and evangelical Christian church networks. South Korea’s globalization program is forcibly absolving the taboo and accompanying fetishization of contact between the two countries, and as a result one notices new ways of othering that echo the flexibility of racial meaning. According to Hae-Yoon Choo, this has to do with the ways in which North Koreans are ethnically marked by language/dialect, by a lack of consumer-orientation and by gendered codes (e.g. North Korean patriarchy as backward in relation to South Korea’s gendered modernity). She states: “In the absence of concrete ethnic differences between North and South Korea, two postwar states of North and South produced state-based nationhood, a pseudo-ethnicity, in which North Korean settlers in contemporary South Korea are regarded as a distinct ethnic-like group that represents the North Korean nation-state, and thus “other” to South Koreanness”.¹⁶

What is key to the operation of race here is the function of whiteness and the possibility for non-whites to deploy white-like privilege. Recapping Seshadri-Crooks, whiteness is always within the play of signification in the valuation of bodies/identities. As

race is a modern construct emergent in the colonial encounter, so too is whiteness. Both always already stand in advance of conceived national, postcolonial projects and identities.

The issue is not whether Korea’s postcoloniality is racist or anti-racist, in favor of or contra whiteness, as it is the contention of this dissertation that there is no option of living outside modernity’s reach. Rather, how minjok, as the embodiment of Korean postcoloniality, works qua whiteness is of interest here. According to Toni Morrison the discourse of whiteness is never static, but rather defined in relation to ‘otherness’. Historical/political circumstances insist that both whiteness and otherness are flexible enough to accommodate different groups at different times.\(^{17}\) The flexibility of whiteness and otherness is apparent in the North-South example above, as South Koreans are able to mitigate a relational position of superiority to North Koreans by mobilizing the standards of white modernity. This mobilization is what allows for the superiority of South Korean minjok and the inferiority of North Korean minjok, demonstrating that the category itself is a changeable, political construct. The latter identity is rendered particular, “cultural” and ethnic in relation to the former, which is considered a national construct.

*Ethno-national Consolidation in Activism and Scholarship*

The derivation and significance of minjok must be considered within the context of East Asian modernities and regional history at the turn of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Minzoku arose to prominence as the discursive *modus operandi* for Japanese imperial discourse and, subsequently, East Asian nationalisms. The Japanese concept of minzoku was erected at the crossroads of national and regional imaginations. For one, the emergence of the Japanese state and its imperial pursuits required a new relationship to East Asia, and to China

especially. Secondly, Japan needed to procure a political environment within East Asia that made it ideologically ripe for colonization, by producing a need for Japan’s intervention in the name of staving off Western imperialism. Japanese intellectuals also surmised that, conceptually speaking, the idea of minzoku would be more readily acceptable or “translatable” across cultural lines into China and Korea than the biologically determined definition of race of the early twentieth century. This was because minzoku placed important emphasis on the historical specificity of ethnic groups that could speak to the diversity of China particularly, while simultaneously positioning China and Korea across a hierarchy of different ethnicities.

Korean activists and scholars mobilized the Japanese minzoku, and translated into an anti-colonial operative. Historically, the power of minjok has come to reside in its subversive critique of Japanese colonial rule, even as it was derived from the Japanese concept of minzoku. In fact, Lydia Lieu notes that in the context of the late 19th and early 20th century, translation practices often produced critiques of imperialism. In his 1922 work Kaebyok (reconstitution of the Korean nation), Yi-Kwangsu¹⁸ wrote against the dominant discourse on Korean ethnic nationality that came from the Japan in attempts to resist the cultural assimilation policies Japan had drafted toward Korea. Yi did this by reinterpreting the meaning of minjok (minzoku) as a reservoir of national sovereignty that was immovable, or rather, could not be assimilated. The inception of minjok fell in line with the increasing tendency to define the Korean nation in spiritual and metaphysical terms. In Korea Between Empires, Andre Schmid illustrates how Japan’s usurpation of Korean territory, takeover of state affairs, and eventual censorship of cultural practices and education prompted Korean ideologues to continually re-locate the imagined sovereignty of the Korean nation into a

¹⁸ Yi Kwangsu is considered a father of national history in South Korea.
domain where it could not be ideologically conquered. To essentialize Koreans as direct descendents of Tangun (mythic founding father of 5,000 years ago) created an uninterrupted, indigenous genealogy – a myth of national interiority that remained uncontaminated by foreign incursion and that preserved the essence of a nation/people dispossessed of their territorial country and political self-determinacy (Schmid 2002). Yi Kwangsu’s writings (among others) on the national significance of minjok identity became the basis for different branches of anti-colonial historiography and resistance. What sprang from the translation of minjok transpired meaning that was not only different from the Japanese vision of minzoku and the Western conceptions of nation. Its interpretation for anti-colonial purposes produced a critique of Japanese imperialism, which made it an attractive biopolitical expression of Korean postcolonial nationhood.

Following Korea’s independence from Japan, the proliferation of official historical narratives of liberation and partition within the Cold War paradigm of international contest did much to generate a popular sense of disenfranchisement and internal displacement among the working poor. Beginning in the 1960s and climaxing in the 1980s, the forging of what was later dubbed the minjung movement in its various forms and representational projects, populations and interests, laid claim to the recovery and embodiment of true Korean historical subjectivity. The rubric of “class” might have been disenfranchised by Cold-War geopolitics and the demonization of North Korean communism in the 50s and 60s. However, the minjung movement gained momentum as an oppositional force against authoritarian hyper-developmental state violence in the 70s and 80s, effectively heroizing South Korean workers as the essence of Korean historical subjectivity. Thus the significance of lineage and blood purity as it relates to national essence/sovereignty was further buttressed by a
parallel/off-shoot identity construct – *minjung* - which symbolically conjoins class struggle with the recovery of an historical subjectivity.

*Minjung* history functions as a site of counter-memory to the events that led to Korea’s loss of sovereignty to Japanese colonialism, providing its recovery not in the form of the nation-state per se, but in the ontological form of a historically sacrificial underclass – a cultural repository of political justice in the face of elites and elitism – not just Japan, but Korean *yangban* (elite class) and Western powers. In other words *minjung* history represents a particular engagement with postcolonial history. Beginning in the 1960s populist historians and folklorists narrated the peasantry as a source of authentic Koreanness and “intangible national treasures”, particularly in their ties to land and agricultural cultivation. They have been envisioned as “agents of social transformation and progress” following from the Tonghak Peasant Revolution of 1894, and maintain the tradition of anti-feudal, anti-imperial resistance into the present.\(^{19}\) According to Bourdieu, when those, from the point of view of the dominant discourse such as the state, stigmatize the underprivileged as vulgar or uneducated, those stigmatized have the tendency to turn the stigma into an idealization or symbol that represents their identity.\(^{20}\) The *minjung* movement did much to emblemize members of the underprivileged ranks as heroes of Korean history and the antidote to the alienation from rapid industrialization, labor exploitation and new partitioning of wealth and resources. While, in reality, *minjung* was and is not an analytic concept that is materially grounded (in that the people who represented *minjung* changed continually with political

\(^{19}\) See Sorenson in Shin and Robinson, p. 291. The Tonghak Peasant Revolution of 1894 marks a watershed moment in *minjung* history.

\(^{20}\) See Choi, p. 367.
developments and realignments), populations such as farmers and factory workers were invested with narratives of historical un-adulteration and purity.

In a way, the narratives of minjung heroism, similarly to official narratives of minjok, helped consolidate “class ethnocentrism”. By the late 1980s the collusion between state and chaebol (conglomerates) had been severely curtailed and the power of labor was significantly strengthened in national politics. When the necessity to globalize was first announced by Kim Young Sam administration in 1995, the initial vision for organized labor was to further integrate unions into political life, thereby increasing their clout and power over state affairs. With the democratic movement still fresh, the move to globalize Korea’s economy was conjoined with the vision for continued democratic reform and increased public, political participation. The once widely stigmatized persona of the Korean worker had been popularly transformed into a symbol of democratic progress and national treasure, adding to the history ethno-national consolidation in South Korea.

Additionally, Shin Gi-wook and Michael Robinson inform us on the conceptual limitations of Western (mainly U.S.) scholarship that have been informed by the Cold-War master narrative, which “compounds the competition between the national stories of North and South Korea” and “fits the problematic of the Korean peninsula into its own concept of the post-World War II era – a story that legitimates the American struggle against global communism.” In other words, Western scholarship takes for granted South Korean claims to the idea that all Koreans are minjok, and conveniently does so on the terms of South Korean Cold War historiography. U.S. scholarship supports the South’s dominant view on

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unification, whereby the North Korean state exits as an illegitimate entity preventing the unity of a common people. The dominant speculation is that the North will one day be absorbed back into the South thereby completing the inevitable destiny of the peninsula as one country and one people. Korean Studies scholarship, whether produced through the lens of Korean scholars or Western ones, tend to necessarily overlook the function and political contingency of minjok identity, working from assumption that Koreans are “historically one race”.

Although younger Korean historians began expressing uncertainty over earlier nationalist writers after the 1980s and 1990s in attempts to push for democratic reform, many of the symbols and concepts used to articulate these shifting national visions “can be traced to the early efforts of nationalist writers to reconceptualize the nation’s spatial and temporal bounds in a modern global ecumene. The differences between Pyongyang and Seoul – as well as among different groups in the south – are often expressed through these same symbols, now invested with novel meaning.” Those scholars who do treat minjok as a modern construct either do not connect it to the exclusionary processes of nation-building or national identity, or if they do, minjok gets limited to an ethnic identity which finds its continued basis for national exclusivity in the politics of anti-colonial resistance. In the instance of the former, minjok gets recognized as a modern construct with a view to advancing discussions on democratic cosmopolitanism in Korea, drawing a strong association between the politics of nationalism and a politics of pluralism (associated with democracy). In the instance of the latter, the politics of race is excluded from the account of the construction of minjok identity, ultimately circumventing meaningful discussion on the ways in which contemporary South Korea can no longer merely be considered a victim of

colonialism. In other words, the current discussions on Korean ethnic nationalism do not methodologically privilege race in its critical treatment of Korean nationalism, limiting the interpretation of Korean self-understanding to the emergency of preserving national lineage, language, tradition, and history against colonial infiltration and cultural contamination. It does not address the historicity of race to Korean nationalism, which invariably requires an investigation into how Korean self-understanding has been produced in relation to the globalized meanings and markers of modernity, and to the racial hierarchy that upholds them.

And then there is the standby presumptive logic that any anti-colonial nationalism, by definition, is anti-Western and therefore anti-racist. As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes, “Within India…racism is thought of as something that the white people do to us. What Indians do to one another…is variously described as communalism, regionalism, and casteism, but never as racism”.24 One could say this is a kind of blind spot of anti-colonial nationalisms to the foundational concepts upon which their national projects are built – to the common set of standards and inherited categories by which the state of development of a particular culture is measured. In sum, a general poverty of analysis persists regarding the inter-articulation between the universal and particular in producing the Korean subject and body politic, and as such the question, “against whom is the Korean national imagined?”, remains largely unengaged.

In addition to the limits of Korean scholarship, this project responds to the limited application of postcolonial scholarship to explain the evidences of race thinking in newly industrialized countries like South Korea. It argues that a postcolonial politics of race can operate within a context that does not automatically assume a conversation between the first and third world. The racialized conflict between the properly political Korean and non-

Korean, internal or external to national borders, elides the commonly reiterated tensions between officially white and non-white states and/or populations and blurs the normative distinction between colonizer and colonized. This does not mean that the field of postcolonial literature has not engaged the topic of comparative colonialisms and the transnational movement of race thinking. Mahmood Mamdani’s scholarship on the residual affects of Dutch racial rule in Rwanda, for example, does conceive of the ways in which colonial impulse is something socially elicited and inherited rather than something confined to the West. Likewise, Ashis Nandy’s work traces the power of colonialism to the pacts forged between elites in western and non-western societies. He essentially asserts that modernity is a conjoined project. His scholarship allows for the perspective that formerly colonized, non-Western societies have a complicated relationship to modernity and often one that further tightens racial hierarchies in service of elite privileges.

However, colonialism is still largely queried as a project of the West. It would seem that the newly industrialized countries (NICs) like South Korea have been embedded within developmental studies and inquiries of traditional political economy, but have yet to be substantially included in questions about how they engage the pressures of imperial sovereignty – of how practices of nationhood must confront the authority of de-territorialized/global capital, the dilution of state sovereignty, and the flows of migrant bodies

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26 Most recently Lee Jin-kyung (2009) extended the concept of “sub-imperialism” to Korea’s developmental legacy in the Asia-Pacific region, citing the country’s perpetuation of the same militarized and corporatized abuses upon migrants that were once visited upon Koreans by the U.S. The term sub-imperialism emerged in the 1970s within neo-marxist critiques of large, developmental countries like Brazil and India, who were seen as extensions of U.S. Cold War economic and military power. Despite this history of literature, very little exists on contemporary East Asian sub-imperialisms, with the exception of what might be considered endo-colonialisms in China and Japan.

27 For example, see the works of Alice Amsden, Chalmers Johnson, Zenya Onis, Meredith Woo-Cummings, Robert Wade, and Barry Gills.
into capitalist centers. As a result, countries like Korea experience pressure to engage in a politics of designation as to who constitutes the ‘undesirable’, and currently appear to struggle over how to narrate the presence of such bodies. Indeed, this project operates upon the premise that South Korean state and society seems to be negotiating their role as economic agents within the enduring structuring dimensions of racism of an expanded colonial order, whereby bodies of former colonies migrate into capitalist centers effectively reproducing the material poverty and symbolic stigmas of the third world. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein help further explain this phenomenon. They argue that the coloniality of race thinking has been embedded in the fabric and networks of the capitalist project, such that it becomes a logical ideological reservoir from which to draw securing the boundaries of nation-states and communities within. They pay some specific attention to the involvement and predicament of decolonizing actors in this environment. The heritage of colonialism, which Balibar terms the “imperialist superiority complex”, circulates through and informs decolonization projects, reinvigorated by the bodily and ideological confrontations and alignments global capitalism now enables. In other words, the economic determination of global capital appears at work here at the social level, whereby capital mobilizes whatever myths of race, barbarism, and unworthiness in the name of exploitation and division. The exterior helps to align the interior and vice versa through the expansive transnational networks and markets. It is within this structural arrangement that South Korean post-colonial nationalism currently confronts the forces of neo-liberalism and

pressures of imperial sovereignty. Korean nation building must mediate the authority of de-territorialized/global capital and the accompanying demand to adopt racial outlooks.

**Korea’s Globalization**

Globalization has been cited as central to contemporary transformations of Korean national identity. That is, globalization has been appropriated as a national goal, to include a variety of developmental, military, diplomatic and commercial policies/initiatives that promote Korea as a global leader, exporter, investor, philanthropist and brand. Shin Gi-Wook explains that these pursuits have prompted a reimagining of Korean national culture, identity and cohesion that, counter to the arguments of some scholars, is not antithetical to the transnational and global forces that supposedly fragment nationalist imaginaries.\(^{(31)}\)

Unlike the experiences of Western countries, globalization was initially a state-led initiative in Korea – a top-down program aimed at strengthening the state rather than weakening it. As such, the state and economy were publicly born into intimate, albeit, paradoxical relationship with each other at the outset, and nationalism the ideological glue that held them together. The Kim Young Sam administration, considered to be the first civilian government of the ROK, thematized the participation of globalization as a necessary step to national progress. By 1995, *segyehwa* (globalization) was in vogue in local discourse vis-à-vis the South Korean media, which resonated with older slogans such as “national modernization” and “creating of an advanced nation” under the previous Park and Chun military regimes.\(^{(32)}\) While the state-initiated globalization campaign recalled the experiences of industrialization under hard authoritarianism, it also narrated economic globalization as a

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step in the maturation of South Korean democracy, a campaign largely achieved on the backs of labor, student and women’s movements during the 1970s and 80s. In other words, the invitation to embrace economic globalization has also been an invitation to imagine a future of democratic cosmopolitanism in Korea, which rhetorically conjoins the otherwise contradictory goals of globalization for national preservation through international competition and globalization as a step toward achieving rule of law, human rights and international peace.

For most, the impetus to “globalize” continues to strike a chord with a host of competing, yet simultaneously desirable national goals of both past and present – the desire for modernity, national decolonization, economic development, and democracy. To put it another way, according to Shin Gi-Wook, globalization has replaced the 1960s/70s modernization paradigm of socioeconomic change, and still before that, the civilizationalism project at the turn of the 20th century. Yet, little difference exists between “civilization”, “modernization” and “globalization” in terms of their respective relationships to nationalism, as all three can be characterized by an expansionary process “seeking to stretch the range of national influence to every corner of the globe. Capitalism has been the driving force behind this diffusion. In addition, all three are transnational forces with Western origins that have simultaneously been appropriated by Koreans for national goals.”

The narrative of national competition that aims to expand or ‘globalize’ Korean markets and values across the Asia-Pacific region has actually worked, to a great extent, to intensify Korean ethnic nationalism and not diminish it.

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Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One “Translating Modernity” examines the preconditioning of contemporary minjok identity to racial outlooks. It does so by discussing the emergence of minjok identity within the Korean discourses of nationalism, an emergence that was complex and multifaceted. Said another way, this chapter examines the gyrations Korean nationalism has gone through in trying to accommodate the fact of Japanese colonialism and great regional change at the turn of the 20th century. As the idea of nation began to flourish as a possible container of sovereignty for the Korean colony, political activists, scholars and religious leaders struggled through various meaning-making projects to establish a unadulterated yet modern Korean nation worthy of self-rule and recognizable to the global community. Those who attempted to define the specificities of a sovereign, national people drew upon other contemporary paradigms of world history and Japanese ethno-national uniqueness to arrive at a biologic notion of minjok. Minjok became an identity construct defined as a coherent ethnic specificity, but rooted in Western, biologic notions of blood and phenotype (e.g. Social Darwinism). This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding later variations of ethno-national identity practices in the name of postcolonial, national projects.

Chapter Two “The Significance of Hybridity to Minjok Identity” examines the discursive production of Korean citizenship during post-Korean War/Cold War industrialization era by analyzing the case of the othering of Amersians or “mixed race” peoples. It does so by discussing the function of hybridity in relation to the various patriarchal investments that secured the authoritarian political, military and economic order of the nation-state. The discourses that directly or indirectly establish Amerasian illegitimacy tend to implicate miscegenation, not only as an act of familial and patriarchal transgression
but also as a source of national degeneration. The emergency of maintaining blood purity has been a project to preserve Korean patriarchal integrity in the face of economic industrialization, and under the threat of national invasion, and postcolonial emasculation. By examining the treatment of racial hybridity in post-war Korea, this chapter strives to reveal the operational logics of Korean nation-building, and most importantly, how Amerasians or “mixed race” have functioned as the necessary ‘other’ that have enabled the properly political Korean.

Chapter Three “Multiculturalism and the Developmental Imperative” explores the emergence of a hegemonic Korean identity vis-à-vis the biopolitical management and representation of migrant workers under the banner of official, state-initiated multiculturalism. Unlike previous authoritarian expressions of national identity consolidation that often utilized practices of gendered violence, as mentioned above for example, practices of the Korean multiculturalism, in the borrowed liberal tradition, rely on discourses of tolerance, humanitarianism and assisted “integration” that position Koreanness as a dominant and sub-universal identity in relation to Asian “others”. What undercuts this regime of multicultural population management is the goal of development that harnesses migrant labor for the advantage of Korean postindustrial, national futures. Different needs (capital, reproductive) correspond to the different juridical and social treatment of migrant groups, further ensconcing the classificatory and utilitarian rubrics of racial rule.

Chapter Four “The Aesthetics of Hallyu (Korea Wave) and Shifting Postcolonial Subjectivities” examines how Hallyu (meaning ‘Korea Wave), a regime of commercialized cultural products and aesthetic value systems, represents and simultaneously re-scripts sensibilities about the meaning of Koreanness. That is, the chapter specifically interrogates
the aesthetic/life style regime of ‘Korean Wave’ (*Hallyu*) as an author of an emergent Korean national subject. Assisted by its regional appeal, nationalism and claims to a non-specific Pan-Asian aesthetic, *Hallyu* promises ascension to high modernity and cosmopolitan living that capitalizes upon the desire to revisit and transform colonial histories, mainly that of overcoming and possibly replacing the ‘West’ referent of modernity. The revision of the Korean nation’s historical arrival is simultaneously underwritten by a neoliberal project of privatized rights and in/securities that deterritorialize the elements of nation that *Hallyu* imaginatively reconstitutes. Thus, the ideal of Korean subjectivity is more easily disarticulated from the more traditional elements of postcolonial citizenship and is reconstituted at the level of aesthetic sensibility and judgment.
Chapter One: Translating Modernity

Rather than debating over how modern or traditional China is, one might do well to focus on the ways in which intellectual resources from the West and from China’s past are cited, translated, appropriated, or claimed in moments of perceived historical contingency so that something called change may be produced. This change is always already different from China’s own past and form the West, but have profound linkages with both.

- Lydia Lieu

Querying the relationship between race and Korean postcolonial nationalism requires that we begin by examining the historicity of the relationship between these two analytics. As minjok identity is memorialized within contemporary national historiography as the embodiment of anti-colonial resistance, a reflection on the conditions of colonial rule that in turn produced minjok as an expression of ethno-national sovereignty is in order. This chapter examines the historical complexity of race within Korean discourses of nationalism. It does so by tracing the gyrations Korean nationalism has gone through in trying to accommodate the fact of Japanese colonialism and regional political change at the turn of the 20th century. It asks the following questions: How has Korea come to particular understandings of self and otherness in context of the nation, region and the world? What kinds of historical interactions, doctrinal exposures and political conditions have primed South Korean nationalism to its current manifestation, such that it is popularly understood as an anti-colonial formation, but also one that has taken shape in response to the meaning of globalization in its various forms and practices? The purpose of this chapter is to impart a sense of how Korean ethno-national identity functions as a racial formation in the sense that it has been “constructed and transformed socio-historically through competing projects, through the necessary and ineluctable link between the structural and cultural dimensions” of what constitutes the
modern and, as such, a process that implies the production, living, changing and destroying of racial categories.\textsuperscript{34}

This dissertation treats “race” as an institution of the modern, as imbibed in formal and informal institutions, discourses, and categories to which Korean postcolonial nationalism has developed variable sensibilities, relations, “effective movements and tendencies”.\textsuperscript{35} In this chapter I try to draw some of these linkages through Korean experiences of Japanese colonialism, paying attention to the semiotic interplay between notions of the universal and particular that emerged through discourses of nationalism, and which have come to shape articulations of minjok identity through projects of colonial resistance, complicity and everyday living.

\textit{National Formations}

2005 marked a particularly dramatic year for Korea-Japan relations, which revisited matters of national trauma and reconciliation. The longstanding issue of Japanese state-issued history textbooks, which omit many of the colonial atrocities committed by Japan in Korea, reared its head again as did the contentious matter of territorial sovereignty over Dokdo (or Takashima in Japanese) island. The Institution for Research in Collaborationist Activities disclosed a list of more than 3,000 public and political figures, who allegedly consorted with the Japanese colonial government (1910-1945). Among those on the list were former president Park Jung-hee, the first president of Ehwa Women’s University, and the founders of major national newspapers who got their start during the Japanese colonial period. This unveiling corresponded with the 100\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the 1905 Ulsan protectorate treaty,

\textsuperscript{35} See Raymond Williams in Stoler, McGranahan and Purdue.
which sealed Korea’s fate as a colony, the 60th anniversary of Korea’s liberation from colonial rule as well as the 40th anniversary of Korea’s normalization of relations with Japan.\textsuperscript{36} The Minjok Munje Yonguso (Korea Issues Research Center) followed suit and compiled a collaborators list, and was also the sponsor of a major exhibition in Korea aimed at exposing Korean artists who allegedly collaborated with the colonial regime.\textsuperscript{37} The election of former President Roh in 2003 based on his “North-friendly” politics punctuated the renewed interest in examining South Korea’s colonial past outside of the security narratives of the Cold War and towards a politics of compensation and reconciliation in a renewal of the historical, ethnically unified nation. On the March 1\textsuperscript{st} Independence anniversary in 2006, he commented on Korea-Japan relations: “we need to bring to light the historical truth. It is necessary to apologize and reflect, pay compensation should there be things that need to be compensated, and reconcile”. Joining Roh in this public campaign was the National Assembly, which agreed to establish working committees comparable to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate Korean collaborators who profited from the colonial regime. The Constitutional National Assembly in 1945 had apparently “failed” over that exact matter of purging collaborators because many who allegedly collaborated remained in political power through post-liberation and post-war turbulence.\textsuperscript{38}

Such failure points to the ways in which defining the very terms of collaboration and determining who fell within and outside that definition presented a logistical and political mess. If collaboration is defined by having expressed consent to or benefited from Japanese

rule in its various structural and ideational forms, then very few would be beyond scrutiny. How does one decipher the events and actions that supported the evolution of what is currently considered minjok-based nationalism from those that supposedly worked counter to nationalist aims? For one, there was no unified, single nationalist movement to speak of during the period of colonial governance. Indeed, what is recognizable today as Korean ethnic nationalism evolved from political investments in shifting notions of community and criteria for belonging, which did not resemble the anti-colonial minjok identity much before the 1920s. Shin Gi-wook critiques the nationalist claims made by Korean historians during and after the Japanese colonial occupation that the ethnic nation was a stable and historically enduring category. He contends that such claims are revisionist in the face of evidence, which reveals that prior to and during annexation by Japan, many Korean intellectuals and politicians dedicated to Japanese resistance supported, for example, the ideological position of Western universalism. This means that, contrary to later nationalist claims, many Koreans were confronted with ideas associated with this worldview, such as social Darwinism, civilization and enlightenment thesis, humanism, liberalism and others that informed competing visions of the nation.39 And how does one separate the motivating logic of Japanese-enacted land confiscation, labor exploitation or assimilation reform campaigns in Korea from the activities of the Korean enlightenment movement40, which also interwove ideologies of capitalist modernity with the goal of national development? Driven by a scholarly elite interested in “new learning” around the time of Korea’s annexation, the movement’s main goal was to teach the population how to adopt certain behaviors that would raise the caliber of Korean national consciousness and promote competitive ambition that

39 Shin Gi-Wook. Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics and Legacy. p. 11
40 Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yonh-hyo, So Chae-pil, Yu Kil-chun, and Yun Chae-ho are examples of its most famous leaders, and some considered national heroes
would economically align the country with the capitalist world system. Many Korean editorials at the turn of the 20th century deployed a chain logic aligning the behavior of the individual to the fate of the nation, preaching the entrepreneurial spirit, the notion of self-help, respect for merchants, using one’s talents, learning market prices, valuing time, etc. as examples of how individuals could play a role in revamping the nation’s economic orientation.41

These motivations by no means clashed with the lessons of Japanese colonial governance, which not only preached development, modernity and the transformative power of labor, but fed into Japan’s assimilation goals for the colony. My own grandfather stowed away to Japan in the 1920s at the age of 15 to work in the logging industry under these pretenses, making money and sending it back to our family in Seoul. My grandfather’s earnings from the logging industry helped my family to start up a small yeogwan (motel) business, which subsequently became a safe house for political dissidents hiding from North Korean capture during the outbreak of the Korean war and in particular one of my great uncles who was a member of South Korea’s first national assembly. This story is a source of pride in my family and engenders all that is anti-imperial by the standards of capitalist modernity and anti-communism etched into the contemporary national psyche. What is not discussed within my family is that Japan’s logging industry was obviously lucrative because of the natural resources it extracted from Korea and other colonies, which critically helped build its imperial infrastructure and economy. What is also less repeated within my family is that my grandfather was able to accomplish what he did because he largely passed for Japanese in language and behavior; it is unclear as to whether or not he would have made the

money that he did otherwise. It is also never mentioned that his passing and intimacy with Japan was so convincing that he managed a domestic partnership with a Japanese woman upon his return to Korea – my grandmother.

The history of collaboration in post-colonial Korea is a complicated one. It is complicated in no small part because massive movements to purge collaborators and cleanse Korean national history after political liberation have bumped up against core contradictions of state policy, international diplomacy, and economic development pursued in the name of industrialization, militarization, democratization, unification, and globalization. Such a historical narrative also simplifies many of the lived experiences undeniable to Korean women and men who endured and benefited from the shifting alliances, interests and power of these processes.\textsuperscript{42} Collaboration politics in Korea also throws into relief the inherent anxieties and inconsistencies, which the anti-collaboration protests attempt to perpetually consolidate, around the narrative of national victimhood to which Korean postcolonial national identity is strongly tethered. Accusations of complicity, which was an almost unavoidable act if one was living in colonial Korea and an intentionally impossible act if one was merely related to alleged collaborators generations after, also extends beyond the mere implication and vilification of Japan in its undeniable imperial transgressions. It drives at other anxieties over grand narratives of complicity and resistance with the United States and its regional Cold War pursuits, with domestic authoritarian regimes, with North Korea, and atrocities committed by the Korean state past and present within or beyond its borders (i.e. involvement in Vietnam, the Kwangju massacre or present day migrant labor abuses, capital and land exploitation abroad). Thus, the periodic and impassioned uproar surrounding

Korean collaborators reads as a recurrent crisis of the national body. Bound in desires to restart the historical clock, the call for truth commissions seeks to enforce an impossible fidelity to a historically determined nation. This move necessitates the periodic naming and excluding of those who do not fit within the grand narratives of national history imperative to the time, to the pursuit of a democratic, self-determined nation free from imperial involvement, external intervention and internal compromise.

Reading the state of the postcolonial nation through this frame highlights the inconvenient fact that Korean national identity is a not a mere reaction to imperialism, and therefore an entity wholly separate of its logics, ideologies and impulses, but part of an *imperial formation* itself, continually reshaped by the impulse to work in the name of the modern. This is even when nationalist politics critique some formation of the modern. Stoler’s explanation of term “imperial formation” is rooted in the contention that empires, colonies and imperial ideologies are not fixed/permanent, but made up of active and contingent processes. “Empires may be ‘things’, but imperial formations are not. Imperial formations are polities of dislocation, processes of dispersion, appropriation and displacement. They are dependent both on moving categories and populations”. What is of particular interest in the behavior of imperial formations is the way they depend on discursive deferrals (ex. civilizing mission, manifest destiny) that promise autonomy. The conundrum of postponed autonomy, and the meager meting out of such autonomy in incremental gestures, creates the conditions of possibility whereby new subjects are created to be productive and exploitable. *Minjok* identity, contrary to national historiography, has been and continues to be reshaped by shifting political forces and allegiances. These contingencies do much to blur if

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44 Ibid.
not paradoxically produce supposed divisions between rulers and the ruled, aggressors and victims. My intent here is not to suggest that the issue of Japanese collaboration should be ignored or that more precise measurement be sought to determine who should be considered an imperial collaborator. In fact, this chapter is not about collaboration politics at all. Rather, as an example it highlights the impossibility of separations and containments attempted within postcolonial narrations of the nation. It is problematic to make a determination of the moralities, value systems or activities that constituted anti or pro imperialist positions during a time when there was no uniform nationalist movement to speak of. And the fact that Koreans mobilized the same ideological regimes Japan used against them for anti-colonial purposes represents the impasse the postcolonial nation encounters when constantly living within the contradictions of its own emergence.

*Racial Meaning in East Asian Histories*

What do national identities as imperial formations have to do with the significance of race to postcoloniality in South Korea? Approaching Korean ethno-national identity as an imperial formation, itself constitutive of the multiple modernization regimes that have shaped the political culture and lived experiences of those on the peninsula, pushes the conversation past evocations of the ethnic-specific as the only discursive modality through which to talk about and frame the emergence of national ontologies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ethnic-specific, as embodied in *minjok* or *minjung*, stands irrevocably tied to anti-colonial narratives which have pervasively functioned within South Korean society as the basis of collective nationalist consciousness. Even those arguments that mobilize *minjok* or *minjung* discourse to critique the nation do little to complicate the myth of ethno-national ontology itself and to gain a sense of its productive relations.
To highlight this, I choose a particular moment in Shin Gi-wook’s discussion of ethnic nationalism. He punctuates a transition from a nationalism based on desires for the international to a nationalism based on a desire to transform the body of the nation into an ethnic-specific construct. While Shin Gi-wook’s work on ethnic nationalism is invaluable to Korean Studies and certainly responds to silences in the field, I was struck by the linear and temporal distinctions he makes with regard to explaining the development of Korean nationalism during the first half of the century. It is during the Japanese colonial period that the racial or “cultural” elements of Korean identity were supposedly lost in favor of the ethnic, which was grounded in particularistic concepts of origins and decent relations for the purposes of more effectively resisting Japanese cultural rule (bunka seiji). The reasons why Shin draws these distinctions is worth quoting at length here:

Ethnic nationalism of the 1930s was obviously different from cultural nationalism of the 1920s. Both forms focused on nonpolitical issues and shared the same advocates…but they need to be treated differently as systems of thought or ideology. Their conception of nation, appreciation of Korea’s past, and philosophical outlook varied. Ethnic nationalists who understood the nation in racial and ethnic terms had a much better appreciation of Korea’s cultural and historical heritage and were much less cosmopolitan in their outlook.\(^{45}\)

The points that Shin crystallizes in this passage refer to a lengthier discussion on the ways in which cultural nationalists were critical of Korean “indigeneity” (or rather, it was the intellectual elite who conveniently identified commoners, farmers and peasants of Korea as objects of reform), arguing that major reform efforts were necessary to reconstruct Korean nationality or “new person” in the direction of modernity. Confucian traditions and ideological orientations inherited from China were considered backward obstacles to such an achievement, and as such areas of science, commerce, etiquette and bodily comportment

needed major overhauling in the direction of universal standards. Shin labels this cultural nationalist outlook as cosmopolitan, which indicates an affinity for Western, liberal standards of what is means to be “human” and “civilized”. Following from this, the palpable shift among Korean intellectuals in the direction of ethnic nationalism refers to a re/discovery or reverence for the very traditions and national “essence” that cultural nationalists rejected earlier.

The shift that Shin perceives and which in his view warrants recognition as different “systems of thought” elides the epistemological modalities that underscore and connect both. If we take Shin’s discussion out of the realm of national discourse, which keeps its eye on the national subject, and test it in a discussion of ontopolitics, one might discover that, while the vantage point or semantics of cultural and ethnic nationalism is perhaps distinguishable, they do not constitute separate “systems of thought”. Rather, an inversion of, or in this case, a reversal of the subject-object relationship occurs within the munmyung/enlightenment ideological confines. What Shin does not necessarily discuss, for example, is how Koreans interpreted munmyong kaehwa or Social Darwinian principles in ways that were not aligned with cultural nationalism, and in fact cohered with Korean ethno-racial nationalism. Or for that matter, how “others” were discussed in the context of these discourses. Tracking the locus of identity and difference across various versions of Korean nationalism, as embodied in the national subject, does not help to gain a broader picture of how the self-critical/self-revering dialectic Shin highlights plays out in the context of a fuller field of symbolic economies.

46 Ontopolitics refers to the politics of being, or rather, the interface between ontology and political agency. It gets at the matter of who one is (and how one can act) in relation to where one is in space and time. In this case, using the framework of ontopolitics to think through identity practices is emancipating because it allows us to think about identity beyond the political unit of the nation, and therefore, to see one’s relationship to the ideological structures and formations that contribute to its production.
There is also the tendency within East Asian studies to flatten racial meaning,⁴⁷ which has to do with the historiographical methods that undergird the recounting of the processes and events through which nationalisms have taken shape. What I mean by this is that such inquiries tether the formation of East Asian modernity to the chronology of modernity itself and historical development of political society. This has the impact of suggesting that the significance of race in postcolonial politics fades with time, lending the impression that race is a relic of 19th Social Darwinism when it was in vogue as the anti-colonial mode of resistance. In his article “Building National Identity through Ethnicity: Ethnology in Wartime Japan and After”, Kevin Doak asks an interesting question. “Why is it that minzoku expresses ‘racial superiority’ when espoused by any Japanese, but the same concept is rendered merely as ‘the people’ or is incorporated into a legitimate nationalism when espoused by some Chinese and Koreans?” The question is asked in response to the inconsistencies and fallacies he perceives in the argument among some Western scholars that race encapsulates the meaning of minzoku. For him, emphasizing the racial elements of imperialism is useful when it comes to explaining American and European empires, but for Japanese imperialism obfuscates the political and nationalist functions of minzoku discourse.⁴⁸ Doak concludes that race is too complicated a marker of social identity to track alongside imperialist ideology, and besides, it was the emphasis on a culturally defined ethnic concept of nationality that functioned as the essential element in constructing a social hierarchy suitable for Japan’s self-consciously conceived mono-racial empire.⁴⁹ His main argument seems to be that the centrality of minzoku to Japanese imperialist ideology, as an ethnic neologism, should not be

⁴⁹ Kevin Doak, “Building National Identity through Ethnicity”
collapsed into the concept of race. It is not difficult to agree with this cautionary statement, as riding roughshod over either ethnic or racial meaning would disservice any critical examination of Japanese imperialism. Moreover, if Japanese imperialism has been boiled down to sweeping accusations of racism, without paying proper attention to the semiotic nuances that inform the specifics of *minzoku*, then Doak’s concerns are certainly warranted.

However, rather than incorporating an analysis of race into the exploration of ethnicity, Doak brings up race to dismiss it on the basis of two main points: 1) that *minzoku* ideology contrasted with the earlier information empire that appealed to a common racial ‘Asian’ identity, and that 2) Japanese intellectuals found it an inadequate political concept for formal, wartime purposes. Japanese intellectuals surmised that, conceptually speaking, the idea of *minzoku* would be more readily acceptable or “translatable” across cultural lines into China and Korea than the biologically determined definition of race of the early twentieth century. This was because *minzoku* placed important emphasis on the historical specificity of ethnic groups that could speak to the diversity of China in particular. There is no doubting that Japan’s deployment of *minzoku* ideology in the Asia-Pacific produced a new and hybridized way of thinking about the criteria of national subjectivity. Indeed Doak discusses ethnicity as the modus operandi for the Japanese nation, as well as a Pan-Asia regionalism because of the ways in which it could collectively and socially mobilize people based on a reverence for lineage, tradition, cultural, and linguistic similarities.

Doak's discussion of ethnic nationalism begins with the assumption that *minzoku* is a neologism, but then makes the curious move of plucking race from the very hybrid model to which it contributes meaning. It is one thing to analyze the relationship of race to ethnicity as
embodying “distinct levels of identity” according to the ways that Japanese intellectuals and ideologues understood it. It is another to appropriate and reproduce that same contention in a critical evaluation of the effects of Japanese imperialism. It is not that race does not belong in an analysis of Japanese imperialism, and subsequent anti-imperial East Asian nationalisms. Rather, I would contend that there is a slippage when analyzing the complexities of race in its relationship to ethnicity and nation, which has been misidentified as the inadequacies of race as an explanatory concept itself. Additionally, arguments like that of Doak preclude the possibility that, given different political conditions, Korean and Chinese claims to homogeneity can also take on a racial gloss. Clearly, any claim to the legitimacy of Korean or Chinese nationalism is grounded in a politics of anti-imperialism, which can only be substantiated in so far as Korean and Chinese nationalism does not produce oppressive effects on others. This is, of course, an always already impossible thesis. If minzoku ideology in all its colonial, transnational adaptations had “moved on” from racial concepts, then what kind of language can be mobilized to explain contemporary nationalist tensions on the topic of foreign labor and immigration in Japan, for example? As much as Doak finds the language of race unsatisfactory, excluding race as an interarticulatory category and discourse likewise fails to capture the dynamics of ethno-national conflict in East Asia. In other words, while Doak acknowledges that the Japanese-derived concept of minzoku includes biologized elements of identity, he assimilates such attributes into the paradigm of ethnicity leaving out the disciplinary tendencies of race-thinking that condition ‘national ethnicities’ to enforce local and global ontological hierarchies.

50 Ibid.
51 Also see T. Fujitani’s (2011) analysis of how Japan’s “total war regime” managed racialized colonial subjects and national minorities through assimilation or inclusion policies, strategically rejecting the discourse of race.
To open both ethnicity and race to the possibility of being a conceptual modality of modern governance in Korea’s current political landscape, it is useful to think about their simultaneous relationship to the ideal of national subjectivity. Balibar’s analysis of the ethnic nation illustrates the ways in which ethnicity is just as much a socially elicited construction as race, which too relies on a unity against the backdrop of a universalistic representation, “…which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, in the name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process”. 52 No modern nation possesses an ethnic base at the onset. People come to imagine themselves as a fictive community, producing the conditions by which they may then continually measure the state against its “historic mission” in service of the nation.

Minzoku and Minjok: Racial Formations and Imperial Potentialities

The transformations that Korean national identity has undergone in accommodating Japanese colonialism, and the experiences of colonial modernity, requires an understanding of the process of ideational transfer and translation. Meaning is not simply transferred from guest to host or host to guest language/culture. Lydia Liu regards language as an event in itself – a political terrain upon which contending interests and ideological struggles happen, where the irreducibility of one language to another gets negotiated around the evocation of certain authorities, and where ambiguities are created and dissolved. As such, translation is about creating a new, third meaning that cuts across national languages and histories. The genealogy of the new meaning, or neologism, is rooted in the history of translation itself and while it is not a replication of the foreign or the local meaning, it still has profound linkages

She situates her project within a broader politics of colonial modernity in China, wherein she questions the processes of legitimation of the “modern” and the “West” in Chinese literary discourse as well as the ambivalence of Chinese agency in the mediated processes of that legitimation.

Rather than debating over how modern or traditional China is, one might do well to focus on the ways in which intellectual resources from the West and from China’s past are cited, translated, appropriated, or claimed in moments of perceived historical contingency so that something called change may be produced.

Liu stresses the importance of understanding the interaction between foreign and local systems of meaning, of how they wrestle, negotiate and change each other. Her project raises concerns about the political nature of translation, in terms of the myriad of actors and interests involved, as well as the historical nature of translation, in that it is mediated by environmental and circumstantial constraints.

Kai-wing Chow also narrates the processes of cross/inter-cultural translation, whereby Chinese political intellectuals attempted to selectively appropriate, amend and re-contextualize Western meanings of nation and race for the purposes of resisting, first Western and then Japanese imperialism. Chow’s method throws into relief the nature of translation between host and guest languages, whereby ‘semantic hybridity’ results from the intersection and interplay of ideological and political forces. “The political conditions under which ideas were translated significantly shaped the choice of terms and hence the meaning of the loan concepts that came to be embraced. The blending of different shades of meaning from both foreign ideas and domestic concepts is contingent upon the specific ways in which

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54 Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p. 39.
foreign ideas were appropriated”. China had to re-prioritize and then re-imagine organizing principles of political community, history and time in attempts to gain some control over how it could resist European and Japanese narrations of China as barbarous, without history and of the past. The processes by which this happened were incredibly complex, not only in terms of deciding how to politically position China as a historically linear, racially homogenous, sovereign nation vis-à-vis looming external powers, but in terms of how to imagine and correspond such narratives to internal competing communities. For example, Chinese reformers who sought to build a nation-state found Social Darwinism a useful organizing narrative, because it could be appropriated to narrate China’s struggle for survival against the European powers – a struggle between yellow and white races. This appropriation was also possible because they were able to graft the existing Chinese term zhong/zhongzu to mean race as lineage and race as type. However, the delineation of Chinese as a yellow race was too broad a category when it came to mediating internal power rivalry and regional differentiation. For example, the revolutionaries, who wanted to claim Han descent for the Chinese race, had to find a way to discursively exclude the Manchus and other surrounding groups (Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs) from the Chinese nation, and as such the myth of hanzu came to strongly feature in linear terminology, going on to become the justification for domination over “minority ethnic groups” later.

When it comes to the translation of modernity in colonial Korea, it is important to acknowledge that intellectual inquiries pertaining to the fate of the peninsula and engagement with ideational formations of modernity had much to do with the proliferating regional framework and lexicon driven by Japan and its imperial ambitions. That is, whether reform

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movements rejected or embraced Japan as leaders of the region, Korean intellectuals encountered Western enlightenment ideologies as interpreted mainly (although not exclusively) through Japan, or Chinese adaptations of Japanese texts. The framework in which Korean intellectuals engaged and interpreted literature on matters of world history, civilization, imperialism, nation-building, etc. had been largely shaped by Japanese intellectuals’ travels to and studies in the United States and Europe and their intended uses for such idea frames at home and in the region. While some Korean editorials adapted Japanese arguments or examples on the topic of reform to push for independence and nation building, others argued in the direction of pan-Asianism and regional alliance building with Japan at the helm. However, as Andre Schmid notes, it was inarguable that the conceptual vocabulary for the Korean nation was fashioned by a shared East Asian lexicon traceable to Japan. “With a shared vocabulary and working within the common framework of munmyong kaehwa (enlightening and reform), Korean and Japanese reform intellectuals spoke the same language”.56

Specifically, Korean nationalist intellectuals inherited and appropriated the discursive framework of minzoku in the production of minjok nationalism, which had already been practiced and sanctioned by Japan for making claims as a nation about ontological fitness, superiority-inferiority, inside-outside. In other words, Japan’s deployment of minzoku as a national identity category enabled a translatable, comparative model that critiqued the world from the standpoint of national specificity. It is the neologism of minzoku, and its anti-colonial antecedent minjok, which created the conditions of possibility for thinking universally about the national. That is to say, the model of minzoku identity, which came to inform the Korean conceptualization of minjok, contains within it the potentialities to think of

56 Schmid, p. 113.
oneself in relation to the nation and in relation to the standards of the global or “international”.

Minzoku bore the marks of European national ideologies, but was adjusted to address the imperial pursuits of Japanese statecraft and the political circumstances of East Asia at the turn of the 20th century. The concept minzoku was derived from several Western sources. Perhaps the most influential source was the German concept of Volk, the others being the English nation, and the French peuple. Taking cues from the emphasis that Germany, England and France put on the importance of a distinct national people, Nakamura fashioned a list of underlying, and apparently malleable criteria for the constitution of minzoku: 1) a common ancestral blood lineage, 2) historical and spiritual unity, 3) common culture, 4) common religion, 5) common language and custom, 6) a sense of community, 7) a common state structure that increases the sense of shared economic interests, and 8) a sense of economic or industrial community. This new structure of meaning contained the conditions of possibility for laying the basis of ethnic nationalism in East Asia, as well as for reserving the potential for Japanese rule.

In general, dividing Asia up according to separate, historically specific ethnic groups enabled Japan to selectively maneuver around the contradictions of its own imperial mission and claims to civilizational superiority. First, it allowed Japan to stake the claim of resistance against Western imperialism and the model of the political state. Japan’s own imperial ambitions would be advanced if other East Asian countries could retroactively invest in their own historical narratives of political strife and national emergence. Second, ethnic groupings allowed Japan to distance itself from its colonies, whereas claims to racial regionalism would

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57 Kevin Doak. “Narrating China, Ordering East Asia: The Discourse on Nation and Ethnicity in Imperial Japan” in Chow, Doak and Fu (eds.) Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia, p. 92.
inadvertently group Japan in with those it meant to rule. Third, it enabled a re-writing of China as composed of undisciplined groups, not a nation, knee-deep in ethnic strife and therefore in need of saving. Whereas Japan’s conveniently self-designated status of nation was grounded in a fictive ethnic coherence despite the existence of multitribal groups, the “Han ethnic nation was sub-divided until it was no longer recognizable as a single, independent (ethnic) nation”.

However, rather than settling upon the extent of such analysis, one could argue that in this political instance the embedded racial dichotomy of subject vs. non-subject appears. Japan’s ethnic coherence took on a racial dimension, because its claims to nationhood took on an ahistorical gloss when emphasized and juxtaposed against the historicity of China’s supposed ethnic incoherence. The governmentality of minzoku lay in its conceptual flexibility, on the one hand enabling Japan to relate its subject position vis-à-vis a hierarchy of other East Asian countries as rightful colonizer, and on the other hand encouraging East Asian nations to conceive of China as historically specific, regionally de-centered and in ethnic disarray to avoid capture under what was distinctly identified by Japan as Western racial biologisms and imperial reach. In other words, the conflation of race, ethnicity and nation into the neologism of minzoku allowed Japan to more flexibly narrate the nature of its subjectivity in relation to the subjectivity of others.

By the early 1920s, Japan’s self-fashioning to Korea brought about yet another trajectory of ethnic narration, which contrary to its treatment of China, was invested in the historical relationship that Japan and Korea supposedly shared. The shift from military rule that reinforced separatism between imperial Japan and Korea to assimilation programs had much to do with the rise of ethno-nationalist movements in Taiwan and Korea and the

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58 Ibid.
growing critique of Western imperialism, through which Japan's colonial ambitions were implicated. Japan had to find a way of distinguishing itself from European colonialism and simultaneously assert its natural superiority as the leader of Asia. Through precarious and contradictory moves, Japan launched a cultural assimilation program that required Koreans to act and behave as Japanese while being denied most political and economic privileges as subjects of the nation/empire.

The cultural assimilation of Koreans into the Japanese ethnic nation was suggested by Japanese intellectuals-cum-political administrators as a way to “end” the discrimination against Koreans. Cultural assimilation policies required Koreans to learn Japanese in school while speaking Korean was eventually banned altogether, to change their Korean names to Japanese names, to wear standardized dress, to adopt the Shinto religion, to demonstrate reverence for the emperor and in general practice behaviors in line with emerging amorphous meanings of "Japaneseness”.

Because of perceived cultural similarities between Korea and Japan, their close geographic proximity, and a long enduring colonial relationship (second only to Taiwan), Korea was included in Japanese national historiography. Yet, even as Japan connected its history to that of Korea, it did so in a way that temporally distanced itself from being the same as Koreans. Koreans were related to Japanese, but lagged in terms of historical advancement. To establish this lag, the Japanese governor-general established Sotofuku, an agency dedicated to the discovery of a scientific basis for Japan’s assimilation policies. First, by placing the Bureau of Academic Affairs under its purview, Sotofuku went on to establish the Department of Religion and Department of Research on National Treasures with the aim to 1) research and produce theories of cultural similarities and ancestral ties between Korea
and Japan (*nissen dosoron*) that could be more easily smooth the implementation of assimilation policies and 2) construct a teleology that justified Japan’s colonial rule by categorically separating Japanese (*Nihonjin*) as more civilized than Koreans (*Chosenjin*). Under the historical revisions created by this program, Japanese patronage would help Koreans advance and eventually become imperial citizens. Never granting Koreans the means by which to accomplish imperial citizenship, such as access to legal rights, higher education, government positions or employment that provided mobility, it soon became clear that Koreans could never “catch up” to Japanese standards of development and would remain at most imperial subjects.  

Hierarchy was maintained and done so in a manner that measured Koreans against Japanese superior civilizational progress.

The ambiguity of Japanese rule centered around deployments of historicism, culture and embodiments of national sovereignty. Unlike European or American colonial regimes that made very clear in ruling discourse the historical and cultural incompatibility of its subjects, Japan framed Korea’s backwardness as a matter of developmental lag, and went so far as to suggest that Koreans could accelerate the quality of their civilizational caliber and even be capable of locating a national essence among them.  

Of course these activities would be conveniently measured and monitored by Japan, and as such would not be allowed to materialize in imperial policy or lead to political independence. On the one hand, even though Japan’s approach to Korea was an inflection of its approach to China, they both achieved similar effects of producing ontological divisions and distinctions. On the other hand, Korea had been colonized by a power that made ambiguous claims about likeness and difference between colonizer and colonized, producing alternative narratives, origins and

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theories that interjected Japanese imperial authority into the model of historical and national
development. Chief among these was the inception and transmittal of the ontological
neologism, minzoku, whose philosophical structures reserved the potential for overcoming
the specificities that supposedly fated Korea as a colony of Japan.

National Essence and Lineage

This ambiguity was compounded by Japan’s attempts to re-script, counter to Western
prescribed criteria, the qualifiers for empire and civilization. Nowhere is this more evident
than in the example of kokutai. Japan's claims of "spiritual uniqueness" - kokutai\(^{61}\) - in
juxtaposition to Anglo authority demonstrated the possibility of an emergence of Japan as a
rival to the West. With the build-up to WWII, Japan's changing views on modernity and
civilization ushered in a new way of framing its political and moral power to its colonies.
During the 1930s and 40s, Japan applied the full force of moral law in the colonies, codifying
and therefore creating the potential to measure indicators of "Japaneseness" and "un-
Japaneseness". The Peace Preservation Law of 1925 (amended several times thereafter)
enshrined the concept of kokutai into a Diet act, signifying "the crystallization of racial
confidence". Before that time, kokutai had occasionally appeared in judicial opinions, but
with the codification of kokutai, acts of anti-Japaneseness became punishable, the
identification and enforcement of which was murky at best. The Peace Preservation Law was
ideological at the most general level, mandating the practice of such values as loyalty, filial
piety, harmony, and so on.\(^{62}\) These values were only meaningful in so far as they were could

\(^{61}\) Also see Eiji Oguma’s *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self Images*, which expounds on the internal debate in
Japan between imperialists and eugenicists over the expansion and endowment of Japanese identity in the
colonies.

*Colonial Modernity in Korea*, p. 46.
be used to identify un-Japanese behavior. In attempts to dispel confusion about the meaning of Japanese national essence, theoretical studies were conducted culminating in a publication titled the *Fundamentals of the Kokutai (Kokutai no hōgi)* in 1937. It claimed that the Japanese national spirit was destined to prevail over ahistorical liberalism of the West, and touted a superior Japanese political system that linked the individual and the emperor/state in comparison to Anglo-American self-congratulatory ideas of "social contract", "democracy", "constitutionalism" and "government by law".\(^{63}\) Thus, Koreans were not necessarily castigated for being "uncivilized" or "ignorant of the times", but were accused of adopting political views whose nationalist activities (anti-
kokutai) were perceived as offshoots of Western liberalism or communism.\(^{64}\) Japan became the referent of civilization within the ideological regime of *kokutai*, which insisted that Koreans act in accordance with Japanese laws, customs, and in general buttressed Japan’s assimilation project. It also constructed Europe and the United States (collectively the ‘West’) as a disavowed geopolitical locus. A statement made by the president of the Korean language newspaper Maeil Sinbo in 1938 resonates the effects of *kokutai*:

> National character has developed from a variety of centers, but in all the world, the only people to have been formed through the development of a true – an absolutely unchanging – center are the Yamato [Japanese] people. They are a people who have been formed with the eternal single family lineage of the Imperial Household as their center. Their national character is deeply rooted, strong, and has come down from high above. I do not think, however, that either the Korean people or the Chinese people have been formed from such a center.\(^{65}\)

The ‘West’ is de-centered by its absence of mention in the imagination of what constitutes the preferred meaning of national civilization in “all the world”. In a Korean recapitulation of Japan’s self-narration, one witnesses the adaptation of evolutionary logic to a theory of

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\(^{64}\) Ibid.

national lineage based on the Imperial Household of Japan. The linkage between biology and ontology gets refashioned through the language of national specificity and lineage. This leaves the impression that the essence of Japaneseness is not entirely specific (as the empire had made clear in its unique relationship to its colonies), nor universal (as the empire had also made clear through the development and dissemination of *minzoku* and *kokutai* ideologies), but an undulating mixture of both anchored to a discourse on the nation.\(^{66}\) The reverence for national lineage also falls in line with the way Japan organized its colonies around the goal of assimilation – to eventually become Japanese (since its colonies did not have national centers) – as opposed to the Western measurement of civilization which is the coherent formation of a political nation-state. This makes all the more sense given that fostering a Korean nation-state went against the imperial interests of the empire.

Japan’s attempts to create an alterity of cultural hegemony on the edges of Western imperialism (yet in seeming opposition to the West) required supplanting ahistorical self-proclaimed Anglo-European superiority with a stable, timeless national history/lineage that progressed not through the sands of secular, evolutionary time, but descended down from the heavens through the Yamato lineage. The history of the nation receives emphasis, inverting the Euro-American emphasis on world history and the evolutionary stages of development. What is more, national history is authorized by the uninterrupted stability of Japanese proto-national lineage. This model complicated the relationship (as if disbursed across two

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\(^{66}\) One can look to David Roediger’s discussion in *Working Towards Whiteness* on the historically specific bifurcation of racial meaning in the United States during the second wave of European migration. It demonstrates how racial identity, when connected to a nation-place, alters the potentiality of meaning and mobility of the racialized subject. African-Americans, Native-Americans and Mexicans were considered “color races” subject to hard racisms beyond the hope of assimilation and always the subject of “white man’s country”. The “new immigrants” such as Italians, Serbians or other southern European peoples were considered “nation-races” whose deficiencies were conditionally and contingently linked to their fitness for certain kinds of jobs or for American citizenship. The greater uncertainty and therefore potential for mobility of the latter groups within the American political and economic system rendered them “situationally white,” “semiracialized”, “not quite white” or “not white yet”, as discussed by American critical race theorists.
different dimensions/planes) between world history and national history, by making universal claims about national centers and specificities. The beginnings of eventual/would-be nations did not begin in pre-civilizational darkness according to the contentions of the ‘West’, but were always already nations in the perpetual light of civilization. Lineage enabled this claim.

This did not solve the precedent of national competition within the universality of world history, nor would its complete denouncement prove desirable given Japan’s need to reserve the civilization thesis for its lesser colonial counterparts. The minzoku and kokuttai thesis did trouble the “universality of differentiation”\textsuperscript{67} within the analytics of raciality, however, in which non-Euro, Anglo others are always already excluded outside the time and space of globality, deprived of the status as full subjects, as the transparent “I”. To encounter the post/colonial predicament means to be caught in the cycle of unbecoming (in the case of colonial narration) or becoming (as in the case of postcolonial, national narration) – to be charged with the always already corrupt task of overcoming the ‘lack’ of full historical subjectivity unlike their Western counterparts who simply and centrally “were” from the beginning of History. Japan demonstrated to Korea, however, that the formation of a nation centered on lineage reaching just as far back as secular time proved a challenge to imperial power, that there could be an other/“I”.

*Mobilizing Minjok*

The national lineage model was translated into a workable framework for Koreans to imagine their own national center in juxtaposition to Japanese rule. A significant outcome of Japanese assimilationist cultural rule was the popular consolidation of a Korean identity, not just through the construction of *Chosenjin* as a bureaucratic category and all the effects

\textsuperscript{67} Denise Ferreira Da Silva. *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 177-178.
enumeration and classification implies⁶⁸, but within the theoretical framework of Japanese *minzoku* identity, which provided a basis for thinking about the linear emergence and historical development of Koreans as a distinct national people.

Japan’s usurpation of Korean territory, takeover of state affairs, and eventual censorship of cultural practices and education prompted Korean ideologues to continually relocate the imagined sovereignty of the Korean nation into a domain where it could not be ideologically conquered.⁶⁹ In his 1922 work *Kaeb yok* (reconstitution of the Korean nation), for example, Yi-Kwangsu wrote against the dominant discourse on Chosenjin-as-colonial subjects that came from the Japanese government general in attempts to resist the cultural assimilation policies Japan had drafted toward Korea. Yi did this by reinterpreting the meaning of *minjok* (*minzoku*) as a reservoir of national sovereignty that was immovable, or rather, un-assimilatable. The inception of *minjok* fell in line with the increasing tendency to define the Korean nation in spiritual and metaphysical terms.

Yet, the question of how to lay claim to a distinct national identity that would not be subsumed under the hierarchic framework of *minzoku* still remained. Because Japan’s earlier claim as leader of racial independence (yellow race) from the ‘West’ was linked to that of its imperial mission within the Asia-Pacific, Korean intellectuals navigated a discursive split between “race” (*injong*) and nation, which revised the previous dichotomy of political strategies for Korean intellectuals and political movements: “national independence” or “civilizing the nation”.⁷⁰ Since civilizing the nation had been usurped as a task for Japanese imperialism by both Japan and cultural nationalists in Korea, a counter-nationalist movement

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⁶⁹ See Andre Schmid. *In Between Empires*.
that claimed biologized components of race in a specified body of the nation arose – that of
minjok-based nationalism. Sin Chae-ho, who is considered the founder of modern Korean historiography, illustrated this new political strategy:

…If Korea does propose nationalism during this competition among all nations and dream of pan-Asianism, then this is the same thing as being concerned about competing with other worlds of the universe…The nation is the head but pan-Asianism is only a guest. Nonetheless today’s pan-Asianism advocates pan-Asianism as the head and nation as the guest. They do not care about the rise and fall of their nation. Alas! How has stupidity reached this point? Even if Korea and Koreans eternally fail, if the country’s land falls under the label of the yellow race, is this satisfactory? Ah, this is not right…We notice there is no such Korean who rescues the nation by using pan-Asianism, and yet the foreigners usurp the national soul (gukhon) by using pan-Asianism. We should keep watch and be careful about this.71

This strategy narrates the inversion process, by which the troubled links between race and nation in the early 20th century needed to be revamped in the direction of clearly specifying Koreans as a race and nation. Korean intellectuals and political activists too mobilized the flexibility of racial categorization, which had already been demonstrated by the Japanese play on minzoku ideology and the internal contradiction that operated at the heart of its assimilation programs. Sin was the first to essentialize Koreans as direct descendents of Tangun (mythic founding father of 5,000 years ago) to create an uninterrupted, indigenous genealogy – a myth of national interiority that remained uncontaminated by foreign incursion and that preserved the essence of a nation/people dispossessed of country and political self-determinacy.

Japan most likely contributed to this approach by the ways in which they defined minzoku as sovereign embodiment and essence, rather than a political identity. The intensification of minjok nationalism in Korea accompanied a re-thinking on the part of some Japanese politicians who did not wholly agree with imperial assimilation policies of the time.

71 Chung’s translation of Sin, pg. 128.
As such, more subtle and strategic deployments of *minzoku* were suggested by some as a means to deter revolt and thereby more advantageously govern colonial Korea. It should be said that deploying *minzoku* ideology allowed Japan to position its colonial mission within the emerging internationalism of the 1920s, which enabled the Japanese leadership to discursively navigate around the direct claim of racial uniqueness as a defense of 19th century imperialism. One debate internal to the Japanese colonial administration centered around the question of how to manage the economic disparities between Japanese and Korean societies under capitalism amidst the emergence of anti-colonial nationalisms in the region, and in Korea specifically.  

Attuned to the problems of colonialism as a modality of governance, critics of assimilation policies such as Yanihara Tadao and Imperial Diet member Togo Minoru reinterpreted the boundaries of Japanese rule. This reinterpretation allowed Koreans a space for spiritual autonomy that could align with and continue to shape the emergence of Korean national identity. In his popular book, *Colonial Policy and Ethnic Consciousness* (1925), Togo detailed an anti-assimilation, pseudo-segregationist policy called "symbiosis", "through which Japan left its distinctive cultural impress on its colonies without dislocating and antagonizing local ethnic identities". Borrowing from the strategies of sociologist Yoneda Shotaro, Togo made the point of disassociating *minzoku* from race by defining it as an historical (as opposed to race, which was presumed ahistorical) group identity based on a "culturally rooted sense of...spiritual existence". This would allow Korean colonials some sense of sovereign association but deter nationalist activity from the domain of political independence.

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72 The independence movement kicked off with mass protests on March 1, 1919 is perhaps the most nationally recognized and celebrated anti-colonial campaign.
74 Ibid, p. 122.
It was perhaps the absence of a political nation-state, which accompanied Korean declarations of sovereignty that made the notion of national lineage-as-sovereignty all the more appealing, practical and workable. It was at this juncture that the call to protect and preserve Korean national lineage became bound in the “survival of the fittest” Darwinian paradigm, which supported “an organic, almost biological view of the minjok”. The preservation of bloodline in a time of world struggle became a major nationalist project. Sin made it very clear that his naming of the Korean national people as minjok had much to do with specifying the Korean “race” (injong) to where they would not be mistaken for Mongols, Japanese, or “others”, therefore ensuring the survival of the bloodline and family in its purest form, uncontaminated by foreign influence. Such an arrangement meant that the Korean race could coincide with the nation, and importantly, be made the subject of history.

One who writes history must first reveal one particular race that is the master of that country and take it as his subject. Afterward, he should record how its politics rose and fell, how its industry prospered and failed… how it accepted those races that came from the outside, and how it interacted with countries of other regions. Only then, can it be called history. Otherwise, it will be a history without spirit…which begets a nation without spirit…

The emergence of minjok as subjects of national history coincided with challenges to Japan’s assimilation programs and deployment of munmyong kaehwa. Japan’s attempts to conceal the contradictions at the core of its assimilation regime left room for ambiguity over the meaning of Japaneseness and, following from this, Koreans’ relation/proximity to Japaneseness in some settings/contexts. Yee Yong-suk makes the observation that:

The more the Japanese insist on the naturalistic concept of national polity (kokutai), the more the assimilation of different people becomes a theoretical impossibility.
To assimilate a different people means that the Japanese race must artificially transplant into others whatever essence constituted the Japanese race in the first

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76 See Hahm, p. 48.
place. If that is the case, the possibility of assimilating others means that the relationship between the nation and its people is not rooted in “nature” but can be artificially created.\(^77\)

If Koreans were promised the potential of becoming Japanese, then the claims of kokuttai seemed troubled, and at the very least provided openings for Koreans to either resist Japanese claims of national superiority by constructing a history of national origins of their own or to contemplate ways of manipulating Japanese claims to place themselves on par with Japan.

One can look to the impact of bourgeois-Japanese alliances (albeit uneven and ambivalent) on the shaping of Korean nationalism as an example, particularly during the wartime era 1937-1945 when Japan repeatedly looked for new ways to avert internal upheaval. Japan’s annexation of Manchuria presented an opportunity to further bind colonial mentalities of Korean industrialists and fortune seekers to the virtues of imperialism, encouraging an enthusiasm about pioneering and enterprise. Koreans were given preferential treatment and support by the Japanese imperial police in relation to the Chinese, permitting Koreans to settle on reclaimed lands. Koreans were also employed in the Manchurian police force and in matters of industry given opportunities and legal backing by the Government General to jointly exploit Chinese labor and capital.\(^78\) As a result, a quasi-imperialist attitude among Korean industrialists, as captured by the chairman of the Choson Malt Company, Kim Sayon, emerged. At a business and research sponsored symposium on the “Choson-Manchurian Economy and Industry” in 1937, he remarked:

Korea has seen remarkable industrial and economic development, and a spirit of rapid advance has quite taken hold. Certain areas of business are more developed than those in Japan, and there are also quite a number of facilities here which are superior to those found in the business world of Japan. Manchuria, on the other hand, seems to me to be in all respects – and especially when it comes to the quest of industry - still in a period of infancy. It is therefore my very firm view that while

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\(^78\) See Eckert, p. 171.
Korea and Japan are largely equal in terms of ethnic and economic development, Manchuria, on the other hand, is entirely different from Korea in these respects.\textsuperscript{79}

It is worth noting that a culture of self-critique and civilizational comparison had already been established in intellectual inquiry and public discourse since the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when nationalist pundits began to integrate munmying kaehwa and Social Darwinism into strategies of nation-building. The particular allure in munmyong kaehwa lay in its ability to link the individual, nation and world into an historical and spatial unity in a way that Korea could come to terms with its integration into the global capitalist system. That is, it lay the framework for intellectuals, publicists and politicians to argue in their various ways that becoming a nation was the way to expedite Korea's recognition and inclusion in the global capitalist order. As an editorial noted at the turn of the 20th century: "In this era the joint advancement of globalism and nationalism constitutes the path toward civilization". \textsuperscript{80} Social Darwinism compounded and complemented the civilization and enlightenment thesis. It too was considered spatially and temporally universal, and whereas historical progress compelled the development of civilizations, Social Darwinism made the rawer contention of biological organisms vying for survival through competition.

Social Darwinism rose to prominence between the late 1890s and 1920 as a common basis of thought among modernization-oriented urban intelligentsia on both the left and the right. Social Darwinism, which is obviously linked with racism of the West, was introduced to Korea via Japan and China through such well-known intellectuals as Kato Hiroyuki and Miyake Setsurei, Liang Qichao, as well as U.S. missionaries and diplomatic envoys. Social Darwinism posed a conceptual framework to explain inter/national inequalities of the time as well as guide East Asian responses to the “civilizing” West. In appropriating Darwinian logic

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{80} See Schmid, p. 33.
for defensive purposes, the German interpretation, which focused on the collective struggle for existence among nations and races gained wide influence. The idea of competition among states became compelling to Korean intellectuals because of the precarious position in which the peninsula found itself after the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. Potential regional allies or buffers (China and Russia) had been considerably weakened, and Japan had increased its interference in the peninsula's political affairs suggesting an intent to take-over and integrate Japanese and Korean governing systems/structures.

Particular Korean adaptations of Darwinian thinking contained a flexibility tied to an apprehension about the European civilization thesis that proclaimed racial inequality as biologically fixed.81 Korean scholars actively promoted the idea of flexibility among races to advance up the socio-political chain measured by the exercise and degree of civilization. Not wanting to release the potentiality of reform, an intellectual habit that compared racial fitness across groups emerged through various critiques of morality and religion. Take the earlier example of Methodist Church founder Yun Ch’iho (1895-1945) who adapted Darwinian logic from U.S. teachings to conflate the “survival of the fittest” with Christian theories of God’s moral judgment.82 In attempts to make sense of Korea’s impending colonial predicament, Yun offers a comparative excerpt in his English diary in which he finds logical explanation for the U.S. internal colonization of Native American populations:

Isn’t America better off in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon than she ever was under or rather above the control of the Redman? Indeed it would be hard to instance a single case of domination of one race over another but that we find the stronger has been almost always better or less corrupted in morals, religion and politics than the weaker. Thus we see that what seems to be a triumph of might over right is but a triumph of comparative

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82 Vladimir Tikhonov. “Social Darwinism in Korea and its Influence on Early Modern Korean Buddhism” (Oslo University).
I don’t say absolute – right over comparative wrong (November 20, 1892)

Yun was of the opinion that the abandonment of “degenerate” Confucianism and superstitious practices of both Buddhism and Shamanism on the one hand, and the embrace of Christianity on the other was the only “hope and salvation for Korea”. He remained cautiously optimistic that Korea’s “racial stock” stood the chances of “moral regeneration” and “physical survival” given the context of uncertain imperialistic rivalry around the peninsula. Thus, while accepting the tenets of social Darwinism as part of universal law forced Korean intellectuals to engage questions about their own crisis of development, its evolutionary premise also necessitated a buy-in to the premise of global and natural hierarchies based on, moral, and therefore racial fitness. Subordinated countries like Korea were not only fighting against imposed racialized categories fashioned by Euro-America and Japan, but were fighting for the establishment of a national status within the global order. Thus recognition of the global order/hierarchy of races should not be read as mere consent to White superiority, but against the notion of Korean/Asian inferiority. Establishing this resistance through claims of relative superiority to those occupying lower status on the civilization totem was not uncommon. Doing so also provided solutions that externalized the sources of Korea’s supposed political failures and initiated a culture of regional comparison. Korean reformers began to advocate for the removal of external influences, especially those imposed by China, and instead proposed the adoption of habits, institutions, ideas and technologies that would enhance national strength in the great struggle of societies. The ultimate goal and indicator of social evolution was the nation-state.

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83 Ibid.
Nationalist critiques of Japan on the issue of *munmyong kaehwa* also exemplify attempts to construct the civilizational potentialities of the Korean nation through comparative critique. In some instances, Korean intellectuals aimed to prove that everything accepted as superior about Japan could be traced to the origins of European culture and political life, so that Japan was rendered inauthentic.\(^{86}\) In another strategy, Japan was heralded as a reflection of Korea’s past superiority and as a cultural contributor to Japan. In other words, Korea in combination with the West, was the origin and enabler of Japan’s high national culture. As such Koreans should be reminded not to abandon their own national inheritance.\(^{87}\) In some ways this thesis challenged the notion of *munmyong kaehwa*. It challenged the notion that world history progressed through distinct stages of development by proposing that Korea’s former glory could be reinstated – that nothing was fixed or fated due to national culture. Disrupting the linear trajectory of progressive history, however, did not undercut the essential premise that progress equaled modernization/Westernization. By recalibrating Korea’s past accomplishments to align with the goals of modernization reformists threw their lot in with Japan to compete in claims of cultural superiority. Similar in the way Meiji historians turned to reconstruct Japanese and Asian pasts as a result of their waning enthusiasm for the philosophy of history with its implicit meaning of European progress, so too did Korean nationalists make attempts to re-theorize the relationship between Korea, Japan, the West and other regional players like Manchuria. The shift toward new narrations had much to do with Korea’s very acceptance of enlightenment history, as

\(^{86}\) Schmid, p. 109

\(^{87}\) The larger hypocrisy of Western imperialism intervenes in this argumentation, in which Europe, while criticized for its colonial aggression, functions as the universal repository of culture/civilization. Its legitimacy precedes the acts of colonial governance that produced the ‘West’ as superior. In this respect, Korean critics did not dispute the greater assumptions of the universalist paradigm, but rather the order in which they featured in it.
demonstrated earlier, and the ways in which they were not accommodated in Japanese colonial historiography.\textsuperscript{88} Indeed, editorials of the time refuted Japan's assimilationist policies on the grounds that Korean advancement in such areas like science, politics, morals and economics could only be achieved through their natural development as a people through time, and not forced, premature annexation. The impetus to modernize lay within Korean society and did not need to be imported from Japan.\textsuperscript{89} Using this argument, editorials like the Tonga ilbo went on to promote a sense of Korean national identity by publicizing, as Japan did for itself, Korean historical icons, language, cultural figures and artifacts, and in general created an historical archive which began to imagine and account for a tangible national genealogy and lineage.

\textit{Conclusion}

This chapter has discussed nationalist formations within the context of colonial modernity in Korea in ways that illuminate the ambivalent and multi-dimensional facets of \textit{minjok} identity – as both particular and contra-particular, anti-colonial and hegemonically-inclined. Japan’s colonial policies towards Korea demonstrated an ambivalent mixture of assimilation and exclusion – of what Balibar calls the interiority/exteriority dynamic which requires engagement with an intimate other in the production of difference, against which then an exterior “racial” representation of the nation can be coherently produced.\textsuperscript{90} On the one hand, to advocate for assimilation assumes difference and superiority on the part of the colonizer. On the other, rather than assume that the assimilation involves the meeting of two separate entities, it might be more useful to posit the power of Japanese cultural rule based on

\textsuperscript{88} Tanaka, Stefan. \textit{Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts Into History} (Berkeley: University of California Press), 45.
\textsuperscript{89} Mark Caprio. “Assimilation rejected: The Tong’a ilbo’s Challenge to Japan’s Colonial Policy in Korea” in Narangoa and Crib (eds.) \textit{Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945}, p. 136
\textsuperscript{90} Balibar in. \textit{Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities}. 
the ambivalent sameness it suggested (as opposed to radical difference).\textsuperscript{91} The ambivalence of sameness and difference intimated by Japanese cultural rule created spaces in which Korean colonial subjects could rearrange and invert the logic of assimilation. Doing so produced anti-imperial frameworks for thinking about the indigenous nation in the context of historicism and global competition. Such ambivalence even presented opportunities for pockets of Korean nationalist thinkers to conceive of their own imperial potentialities, as embodied in ethno-racial essence of \textit{minjok}. The purpose of this chapter has been to lay a foundational understanding for how racially mediated identity categories are a part of the postcolonial inheritance, and Korea’s inheritance specifically. Moreover, it establishes some of the ideational building blocks of contemporary postcolonial nationalism, which become visible in encounters with ‘others’ in an era of globalization.

\textsuperscript{91} See Leo Ching, p. 107
Chapter Two: Racial Hybridity in the Korean Postcolonial National Imaginary

For years, Lee Yu Jin kept her secret. Whenever anybody asked – and they did all the time as her celebrity as an actress and model spread – she simply denied the rumors. No, she was not a foreigner. She was Korean. Finally, last year, Lee called a news conference and tearfully acknowledged that her father was an American GI. As her fans had long suspected from her 5-foot-9 stature, she was of mixed race. “People ask why didn’t I come out earlier and why this is such a big deal,” the 27-year-old said. “It wouldn’t be anywhere else, but Korea is still a closed society where people like to talk about the purity of the race.” With her acknowledgment, Lee raised the curtain on what has become a phenomenon in the South Korean entertainment industry. Once considered a national embarrassment, a number of biracial entertainers have become famous in the last few years. Many of them, like Lee, have American fathers.
- Foreign Panorama, 2004

This dissertation now turns to discuss the making of minjok through particular trajectories of racial rule. It returns to the question posed earlier, “against whom is the properly political Korean imagined? As a precursor to understanding the treatment of migrant others in Korea today, this chapter looks at the controversial history of Amerasian or mixed-race peoples. Through this case study, this chapter throws into relief some of the racially inflected logics and practices that inform postcolonial nation building in South Korea – mainly how the power to other/racialize works through the politics of patriarchy and family, and how this othering specifically results in the affirmation of minjok as properly political (as citizen, as male, as national, as biopolitically pure). The production of Amerasian illegitimacy tells a tale about the racially-dependent investments of South Korean postcoloniality during a time of extreme and competing anti-colonial, anti-imperial campaigns, which played out on the micropolitical terrain of the family and around the issue of miscegenation. The legacy of Amerasian illegitimacy in Korea in many ways sheds light on how the modes of incorporating foreign migrants into South Korean life today also hang on the political axiom of family – family as a means to national reproduction, as means to reproducing patriarchal
privilege, and as a means to generating economic prosperity for the state in an age of global competition.

**Hines Ward Symptom and National Overcoming**

In 2006, Super Bowl MVP player Hines Ward was elevated to the status of a national superstar in Korea. The media seemed to be at the forefront of this publicity campaign, focusing on Ward’s success as a U.S. athlete despite the hardships he endured growing up in Korea as *honhyeol*[^92] (“mixed blood”) or Amerasian[^93] of African-American descent. One central focus of these news stories was Hines Ward’s filial devotion to his Korean mother, which was followed by comments about how he had tattooed his name in Korean on to his arm. The stories seemed to orchestrate a public narrative of national redemption through Hines Ward himself, suggesting that although Korea had mistakenly rejected Ward in the past, Ward could not reject Korea; it was a part of him just as he was a part of his mother.

The social buzz over Hines Ward can be read as an attempt to achieve some sort of expedited closure on the issue of long-standing discrimination against interracial peoples. The recent proliferation of Korean official multiculturalism invoked to deal with the challenges of global migration and capital seem to suggest that Korean society is in the midst of “overcoming” historical transgressions and race-related injustices that have targeted mixed race peoples. It is not happenstance that public debate on government-backed

[^92]: *Honhyeol*, meaning ‘mixed blood’, is a Korean term that specifically refers to peoples born between Korean women and American servicemen throughout the Cold War period. Although the term allows for some flexibility, it generally refers to this scenario and has a negative connotation.

[^93]: The term “Amerasian” was coined by the Pearl Buck Foundation to denote persons born between one American and one Asian parent following the intervention of the U.S. military in the Asian-Pacific region after WWII. The largest populations of Amerasians live in Korea, Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. It is generally assumed that Amerasians are fathered by U.S. servicemen, although this is not exclusively the case. For the purposes of this paper, however, the term Amerasian refers to the generations of people born between U.S. soldiers and Korean women (prostitute and non-prostitute) since the 1940s. The term does not refer to those born between non-American foreigners, such as migrants from elsewhere in Asia, and Koreans, which is a more recent phenomenon following the liberalization of Korea’s economy (late 1980s/early 1990s).
multiculturalism initiatives took on intensity during the Hines Ward craze. Legislation and social education to end discrimination toward peoples of ‘mixed blood’ became a topic to consider, including a proposal to revise the language in Korean school textbooks that teaches the myth of Korean racial purity and the relationship between ‘purity of blood’ and patriotism in civil ethics, history and other disciplines. For the first time perhaps, the Korean government is questioning the role of minjok identity beyond its anti-colonial paradigm and considering the ways in which it has been and continues to be implicated in the exclusion of minority groups.

Although the operational forces of every national project more or less secure an interiority that accommodates particular enunciations of state power, the narratives that orchestrate a dominant public sensibility toward the national subject varies depending upon the historicity and already constituted normalcy of such narratives. Judith Butler informs us on the extent to which the social vulnerability of certain bodies affects how national space, national time, and the national subject might be constituted. “The public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear and circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors”. ⁹⁴ In a similar vein, Deleuze and Guattari explicate the extent to which the production of stable subjects involve a “historically specific fixation of desire, brought about by the action of social codes”. ⁹⁵ The particular forces at work upon the body in turn constitute the body of a particular kind.

This chapter raises discussion on the production of ‘mixed-race’ subjectivity in South Korea to understand the specific constructs through which the properly political Korean has

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⁹⁵ Patton on Deleuze, p. 71.
been secured. I specifically argue that the ethno-national purity of Koreanness and the ‘otherness’ of ‘mixed-race’ persons in Korea is an outcome of the intentions, contradictions and insecurities of national governance, which cohere around discourses and legislation on the family. Throughout this chapter, testimony of various ‘mixed race’ peoples living in Korea reveal the racial, gendered and sexual discursive modalities through which they were rendered outside the scope and meaning of Koreanness. Their individual testimony also corresponds with the discursive limits established by government, particularly in the establishment of laws that govern desired familial relations within the climate of Cold War militarism and industrialization. The longstanding and still practiced abjection of mixed race peoples from South Korean society cannot be understood without exploring the intersection between a racial politics of ‘blood purity’ and a gendered politics of patriarchy that works in maintenance of an imagined Korean homogeneity.

Only just a few years ago Amerasian *honhyeol* were the only known interracial subjects in Korea and were considered shameful, regrettable bi-products of U.S.-Korea state relations. Today, however, a more recent generation of *honhyeol* controversially referred to as “Kosians”\(^6\) (meaning half Korea, half ‘Asian’) from brokered international marriages are regarded in state discourse as a potential national asset. In May 2005, the former Roh government announced the “Act on Aging and Low-Birth Rate”, which aims to “maintain the proper population composition and to improve its quality in view of maintaining the state’s growth” and to “implement appropriate population politics on the basis of reasoned

\(^6\) This term is controversial and carries a negative connotation. I was informed by the Daegu Women’s Association, which runs an aid program for migrant brides and their children that they refuse to use this term. The preferred terms such are “Onuri-a”, which means “children of the world”, or just children of multicultural families. However, these terms do not seem to have caught on in common social use, whereas ‘Kosian’ has to a greater extent.
prediction on population change”. Problems of low-birth rate relate to many aspects of life in the age of late capital and neoliberal principles. With the increased privatization of social services, the inflated cost of real estate and education, many families are simply not having children, or choosing to have only one. The mass female exodus from rural areas into urban centers means that women are not remaining in the countryside to have families with rural men. Farming communities have been hard hit by debt and low productivity now that much of Korea’s agricultural economy must openly compete with foreign markets.

In accordance with the newly realized interests of the state with respect to population problems, the limits to Korean subjectivity as dictated by ethno-racial conceptualizations of the nation has risen to the surface of public attention and debate. Specifically, the thousands of contract brides from Southeast Asia and China starting families with Koreans have raised deeper questions about the ethno-racial criteria that determine the legal criteria of citizenship, access to state welfare benefits, and social acceptance. The number of foreigners living in Korea totals over one million of country’s population of 48 million and continues to rise. Of this one million, 250,000 are migrant brides of brokered marriages. Thirteen percent of all marriages in Korea are international, and 30 percent of international marriages alone are unions between rural men and foreign brides. According to Pearl S. Buck International, approximately 15 percent of all newborns in Korea are products of “mixed” marriages and that figure will likely double by 2020. Additionally, one in five children is born into mixed families in rural areas. The legal and social criteria that govern national subjectivity and

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belonging are being reconsidered within the context of the challenges globalization poses for the future production of nationally viable families.

The number of government bureaus involved in the multiculturalism initiative is expansive, including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and the Korea League Association of International Families, among others. The pronounced goal of their coordination is to facilitate improved life conditions and eliminate widespread social discrimination. Changes to citizenship laws, the implementation of multiculturalism education in public schools, special immigration provisions for contract brides, family and childrearing support for multicultural families, language and cooking lessons for contract brides, and host of other family-focused issues have been proposed for policy action.

Many honhyeol remain doubtful of this sudden multiculturalism chorus, however, believing it to be a public fad. “People are paying more attention to us after Hines Ward came to Korea, but I think many Koreans still discriminate…most people don’t know what we have to go through. I’m afraid this kind of attention to our struggle will only be temporary”. Ward’s fame has also incited deep confusion and anger amongst many non-celebrity honhyeol. A series of anonymous interviews with them reveal the opinion that his fame is hypocritical given that “he is loved now for the same reason [they] have been hated all their lives.” Janet Mintzer of the Pearl Buck Foundation also instructs that, for honhyeol, “conditions have not changed much, despite the media focus on the success of some entertainers of mixed heritage”.

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100 Chris Ro. “Struggle Still Continues to Combat Bigotry”. Korea Herald 7/27/06.
101 Ibid.
Indeed, these suspicions direct attention to the ways in which commitments to the ethno-racial nation remain staunchly embedded in the juridical and social systems of post-colonial, national governance. It is hard to arrange various government bureaus, like the Ministry of Education, Family Affairs, Justice Ministry, and Human Rights Commission to work at cross-purposes because of the ways in which the illegitimacy of interracial peoples has been historically crafted at various juridical axes. In particular, the complexity of negotiating multiculturalism policies within an enduring legal framework that promotes the exclusivity of familial and national membership along ‘bloodlines’ seems a difficult task. Citizenship has been determined by patrilineal descent, and through this arrangement, one’s access to citizenship, healthcare, social welfare, and state education among other rights, hangs in the balance. Amerasians with Korean mothers (which is the case, almost without exception) have been excluded from obtaining these basic benefits until very recently. Military service, which is mandatory for Korean men but illegal for Amerasian men, is also an institutional right of passage, which enables access to citizenship. Reversing or amending these fundamental posts carry weighty implications for upsetting and redefining the hegemonic marker of Korean national identity and family – ‘blood purity’ endorsed by patriarchal authority. As an example, in December 2005 a lawmaker from the Grand National Party opposition proposed a revision of the current nationality law to enable anyone born in the territorial Republic of Korea access to citizenship. However, the proposed revision was rejected in the National Assembly due to strong opposition in public opinion. The legal roadblocks and processional hang-ups at the National Assembly reveal the complex and less attractive nature of racial law and morality, which multiculturalism rhetoric seems to too easily gloss over with discussions of diversity, human rights and globality.
Despite this more complicated picture the sudden and awkward public ‘embrace’ of Hines Ward, like a handful of other honhyeol entertainers, seems an event through which the ‘mixed race question’ has been invoked within the broader political framework of multiculturalism. And through the ritual of national self-problematization and self-accounting, Korea, with a new public record of democratic principles, can move forward into a national era of globalization anew.

There is another dimension to the inadequate problematization of honhyeol, which has to do with their current historicization in postcolonial memory. Similar to narrative treatments of Korean comfort women, which absents the story of Korean patriarchal complicity (in the form of political and intellectual power) from postcolonial, national narratives, the historical recounting of honhyeol presence and maltreatment tends to get framed within a narrative of international relations, in which they are an uncalculated, unruly and regrettable outcome of U.S.-Korea relations, and wherein the Korean patriarchal nation is ultimately victim. Elaine Kim discusses the educational tours kiji’chon women were co-opted to lead in the U.S., where they were prompted to recount their experiences within the perimeters Korean colonial victimhood. This explanation seems partial at best, as it supposes the common involvement and undifferentiated experience of Koreans with respect to national development and the forging of national consciousness. It also plays out mono-dimensionally within the framework of international relations discourse, without regard for the multidimensional and highly intimate ways in which U.S.-Korea relations were forged. In other words, Korean prostitution and honhyeol become an issue of U.S. imperialism, without reflection upon the role of Korean elite state, intellectual and corporate actors, for example, and the generally practiced standards of patriarchal nationalism – a nationalism that
facilitated the social and legal environment in which women were urged (and in many cases forced) to sexually service U.S. troops while simultaneously punished for their “fraternization” and boundary crossing.

Both genres of discussion concerning the problematization of honhyeol, legal and historical, converge around the assumption that their lived experiences are accidental and exceptional, either to the experiences of national citizenship during Cold War developmental times, or to the presumed norms of Korean democratic governance after 1987. This chapter queries the conditions and narrative interpretations that attempt to bypass, if not abject, the significance of honhyeol otherness from the construction of post-colonial, nationalism and the historical, Korean subject. Before there can be any discussion on the conceptual framework for interpreting the future of diversity and tolerance in Korea, it is necessary to analyze the historical legacy of honhyeol otherness to contextualize the current legal and social roadblocks. Clearly, honhyeol ‘otherness’ has been produced amidst a much more complex and nuanced network of inter and intra-national relations and needs to be understood, not as an aberration, nor a historical moment so easily dismissed, but as part of the racial logic of Korea’s post-colonial nation-building.

Background on Honhyeol

Recent research conducted by the Korean Migrant Workers Human Rights Center and the Korea Youth Counseling Institute reveal the deep seated systemic and social problems the majority of ‘mixed race’ still confront. The problem of being Amerasian honhyeol is apparent in the various material and psychological conditions they have endured over the last 60 years into the present. The number of Amerasians born in Korea since the Korean War is estimated
by the Korean government to be between 20,000 and 60,000, although the numbers are in all likelihood much higher. Accurate records were not kept and Amerasians were not officially monitored or classified by the state except in instances of regulating overseas adoption cases. In such instances, Amerasian “mixed” ancestry was represented as a type of physical disability, categorized among those with “harelip, deformity, prematurity, mental illness, and heart disease” according to a document titled “Adoptees by Types of Disability: Domestical and Abroad”. The question of multiracial subjectivity has been folded into pre-existing medical classifications that work to pathologize Amerasians and metaphorically liken racial hybridity to physical and mental degeneracy.

The troubled lives of many Amerasians can be gleaned by their brief brush with the Korean education system. According to a 2002 survey taken by Pearl S. Buck International, a nonprofit international adoption agency, 9.4 percent of Amerasians in South Korea failed to enter or graduate from primary school, while 17.5 percent failed to complete middle school. Many Amerasians claim they are unable or unwilling to finish school because of the abuse they endure by their peers and teachers.

I had lots of problems in school. I think there is no mixed blood kid without any problem in school years. ... I was ridiculed very often, so I did not want to go to school. ... When I was a junior high school student, I ran away with my friend. (Case 5, male, 45)

A questionnaire administered by Park Kyung-Tae, in which he surveyed 101 Amerasian respondents, reveals that many experienced physical and verbal abuse by peers and teachers.

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Table 2.1: Amerasians' Experiences during School Days (N=101, %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have experiences of being ridiculed by friends.</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experiences of being excluded from friends.</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experiences of being beaten by friends.</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experiences of unfair treatment by school teachers.</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was totally isolated in school.</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fought a lot against other students in school.</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had no friend in school who understood me.</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experiences of committing offenses for livelihood.</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These numbers reveal that a high percentage of Amerasians were regularly ridiculed, beaten by their peers and treated unfairly by their school teachers. These factors combined with frequent isolation meant that many came to rely on violence or escape as a way to deal with problems at school.

Even when Amerasians completed school and excelled, they were aware of the slim possibilities of being accepted to university or for gainful employment. Reverend Moen, who wrote the only study exclusively devoted to Amerasians in Korea, remarked that they had to struggle in all fields to achieve grades and records that were higher than other Korean students before they would even be considered for work. However, the almost always fated outcome of rejection made it impossible for Amerasians to succeed. The following is testimony from a Korean case worker on one particular example:

Miss Lee is a dark-skinned Amerasian who had done exceptionally well in school and graduated with honors from high school. Besides, she is an excellent typist and accountant. She has been looking for a job ever since she graduated from commercial high school. She passes the examinations brilliantly. Strangely enough the companies she has been in contact with put her on something they call a physical test, which really means they reject her because of her black appearance.  

Historically, the lack of educational and employment opportunities has resulted in dramatic differences with respect to quality of living when compared with the rest of Korean society.

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According to a Yonhap News survey, approximately 56 percent of Amerasians are currently unemployed, while only 24 percent of all Amerasians hold regular employment. The areas of employment are most typically construction, factory work, restaurant work or work in military camptowns. Such work is often unstable because jobs are acquired through unofficial channels, which pay off the books at generally lower salaries. The job turn-over rate is also high for Amerasians because of stressful working conditions. As Moen continues to note: “From the Amerasian’s point of view…The daily harassment over color, social background and lack of manners makes life in a pure Korean establishment intolerable. Therefore, finding adequate jobs for mixed race youth turns out to be a gloomy task”.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, the average monthly income of Amerasians is 1,460,000 won, which is less than half of the average monthly income of Korean nationals at 3,068,900 won. Interviews conducted by Park Kyung-Tae reveal the reasons largely responsible for such mass unemployment and underemployment.

I tried so many things; shoemaker, garment factory, textile factory, doll factory. But they did not accept me. It must have something to do with my appearance. They say, "Sorry, but you are a foreigner." (male, 45)

I worked in several ironwork factories. Entering a factory was not quite difficult, but I encountered problems after that. Colleague workers were OK, but bosses were not. I decided to immigrate to the U.S., since I do not have much time to live now. (male, 52)

…my Amerasian friends working as entertainers pretended that they were original Americans from America. They were afraid of leaving the camptown, and in fact those were the only jobs available to us... (male, 52)

As a result of joblessness and underemployment, 66 percent of all Amerasians have accumulated personal debt averaging the amount of 41,187,000 won. Amerasians over 50

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105 Moen, p. 51.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
years of age have accumulated much higher debt averages, which range between 56,240,000 won for those who are single, and 62,210,000 won for those who are married. To compare, the average personal debt of Korean nationals hovers around 34,000,000 won. Accordingly, the Amerasian participants of Park’s study claim that their three issues of highest concern in life are 1) paying off one’s debt, 2) living expenses, and 3) finding employment.

In terms of the emotional and psychological wellbeing of Amerasians, stories of abandonment and suicide are unfortunately common, and so much so that the president of Pearl S. Buck International, Janet Mintzer, was compelled to state the following: “My impression is that there is more discrimination against Amerasians in South Korea than anywhere else in Asia and that it has not improved significantly”. Joblessness and poverty commonly feature as a part of their lived experiences, and teenagers continue to be ostracized by their peers to the point where emigration becomes their only hope for a better life. Lee Kwang-gyu, chairman of the Overseas Koreans Foundation, attributes phenomena such as this to the following: “Korea is so accustomed to a belief in pure-blood nationalism and a homogenous nation that its people don’t seem to be prepared to accept or understand a multi-ethnic and multicultural society”.

Patriarchal Power and Women’s Bodies

Having reviewed some background information regarding the experiences and status of honhyeol, this chapter now turns to analyze specific political trajectories throughout which they have been “othered” in Korea and how this othering has facilitated the consolidation of

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109 Ibid.
110 Decaan Herald. “In South Korea, A Silver Lining to Being Biracial”. Foreign Panorama 10/24/04.
the Korean national belonging. Historically speaking, the production of Amerasians in Korea as ontologically ‘other’ via the Korean nation cannot be articulated without the stories of the regulation of women’s sexuality and their gendered subordination to Korean patriarchal institutions and U.S. imperial power. Specifically, one must grasp the epistemic and institutional violence visited upon Korean women in the forging of U.S.-Korea military and economic relations.

It is first necessary to acknowledge the context of urgent militarism during this period, through which state goals of economic development and national wealth accumulation were channeled. Through the use of conscripts as workers, laboring and national defense were conjoined in a gender-coded meaning of ethno-national belonging. South Korea’s post-war administrations played a collective role in establishing the ideologies of official nationalism, whereby the normative national subject was continually instantiated through patriarchal state discourse. Perhaps most notably, former president Park Chung-Hee and his regime solidified official nationalism with themes of “self-reliant economy”, “self-reliant defense” and “national character” – themes that tried to stabilize a strong national identity in the face of rapid socio-economic change and the paradoxical goals of capitalist industrialization while avoiding Western cultural imperialism.\footnote{Moon, Seungsook. \textit{Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea}. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 36.} The following statements made by Park, the first soon after his coup and the second during the yushin (revitalization) reforms (1961-72) construct the meaning of the national subject by linking concepts of masculinity, labor and war in the overcoming of past colonial injustices:

\begin{quote}
The Korean tragedy is basically different from the tragedy of Western Europe. The Western European tragedy fights fate and dies gloriously… We do not have any of the manly tragic consciousness of the West…. The real national image of the great man [is] a patriotic fighter who would
\end{quote}
readily die on the battlefield in defense of his country.\textsuperscript{113}

Throughout this [March First] movement, our forefathers were able for the first time in our modern history to achieve a broad unity of the nation --- The fundamental purposes of the October Revitalizing Reforms include achievement of an impregnable unity of the entire people, regardless of faction or class, on the basis of a broad national will, --- and --- enhancement of our national glory throughout their work.\textsuperscript{114}

In both excerpts, Park’s vision of the public community is clearly male and masculine. By evoking images of battle and the need for national security, the laborer, through his physical endeavoring to literally build the national economy becomes the soldiering symbol of national defense. Themes of official nationalism continually reinforced a necessary defense of the Korean nation, an act that has been masculinized by linking national worth to soldiering and national defense.\textsuperscript{115}

The direct employment or evocation of the discourse of \textit{minjok}, which commands an uncontaminated national interiority to be maintained, operates as a nodal point through which regulatory regimes of power pass. In other words, the rhetoric of \textit{minjok} is the site or transfer point of power through which the metaphoric desire for racial purity passes into a desire to police ones sexuality in the name of indigenous, patriarchal values that accomplish state projects. Here, racial discourses manage sexuality to patriotic priorities.\textsuperscript{116}

Against this highly masculine and militarized political backdrop, the South Korean government sanctioned and promoted prostitution as a diplomatic gesture to the United States military beginning in the 1970s. The Nixon Doctrine called for a reduction of 20,000 troops


\textsuperscript{115} Moon in Kim and Choi, p. 43.

(approximately one third of the total service members) on the peninsula, a move which created anxiety for South Korea’s national security structure as well economic development. In a public effort to foster good relations between U.S. servicemen and the South Korean government, former president Park Chung-Hee instituted the “Camptown Clean-Up Campaign” which promoted a VD-free prostitution program. The Chunghwadae (“Blue House” presidential mansion) operated the program, which included medical screenings and prostitution etiquette classes for the women participants.

From the perspective of the Korean government, the camptown (kiji’chon) prostitutes had the opportunity to serve as personal ambassadors to the many GI’s with whom they came in contact. This view clearly established sex work as a form of patriotic labor, which physically as well as symbolically subordinated women’s bodies in service of state growth, and the simultaneous appeasement of American imperial presence. A former camptown worker recalls the indoctrination sessions sponsored monthly by local Korean officials:

During every “Etiquette and Good Conduct Lecture”, the local mayor or local public information officer or public peace officer would…give us the introductory remarks. They would say, “All of you, who cater to the U.S. soldiers, are patriots. All of you are nationalists working to increase the foreign exchange earnings of our country.” They said that we are servants of the nation and that we should live and work with pride. And then they told us not to show humiliating things (behavior) to the U.S. Soldiers, to maintain our dignity as Korean women.117

Termed a “necessary evil”, the Korean government actively promoted the commodification of women through sponsored prostitution programs in the 1970s, sanctioning the expendability of poor women for national prosperity.

Yet, reasons for women’s social scorn and exclusion have been subsumed under narratives of male humiliation, which is the privilege of the masculine nation form. The

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117 Ibid.
underlying aversion to Amerasian hybridity is informed by the stereotypical “pariah” status of their (often times) prostitute mothers and the sexual insecurities and “shame” of Korean men. In other words, the kijichon women feature as the objects of discourse in two simultaneous and overlapping narratives: one as violated national virgins and the other as agents of sexual and national betrayal. As Elaine Kim observes, this “pariah” status and social marginalization that so many kijich’on prostitutes endured in Korean society had a great deal to do with their situatedness at the “cusp” between Korean and Western culture. The prostitutes were considered imitators of Western dress and behavior, that in all likelihood, threw into relief: 1) the paradox produced between the doctrine that women should function as private, domestic beings and the hard evidence that Korean women, particularly poorer women, were underhandedly compelled by the state to work in the gendered spaces etched out for them in the new, post-war economy, and 2) the marks of Korean women’s “cuspness” also symbolized a betrayal of gendered and sexual loyalties to Korean men. One Amerasian interviewee in Park Kyung-Tae’s study identified the path of his own social alienation through his mother’s tainted sexuality.

Eventually all the blames go to mothers. If [an Amerasian girl is] pretty it’s because she is a daughter of a western-prostitute. (male, 51)

Another interviewee observed a similar connection:

Those elders in school always called me ‘Tui-Ki’\textsuperscript{118}, and verbal abuses like “your mother is a western-princess” were very common (male, 42)

From the improprieties of Western hair and make-up style, smoking and drinking to the more serious transgressions of sexual fraternization with Western men, the kijich’on women functioned as stark reminders of the compromised state of the masculine and homogeneous nation.

\textsuperscript{118} Tui-Ki means “half-breed” and in particular references half-breed animals such as the mule.
Sheila Miyoshi Jager discusses the transformation and translation of the symbolic value of women in the Cold War and democratization periods, in which they were mobilized as patriotic boundary keepers of the inner sanctum of the nation against state enemies, at first North Korea and later on the United States. After the brutal suppression of the May 1980 Kwangju Uprising, romantic narratives about the North-South division began to emerge through populist narratives. This shift in popular perception of the North was accompanied by the resurrection of the issue of *chuch’e* (self-reliance), which raised the question of whether or not South Korean historiography had become servile to the goals and demands of U.S. imperial power. The resurrection of *chuch’e* ‘challenged the long standing interpretive framework of the Korean War, *sadejuui*, which identified the North Korean Worker’s Party and not the U.S. as the real culprit. The romanticization of the relationship between the North and South mobilized the theme of divided, patriotic lovers in Korean literature, who struggled to overcome the evil powers that sought to keep them separated.\(^{119}\) Women were re-appropriated within this organized narrative, in which they came to symbolically resist, through sexual abstention, the outsiders that threatened the sovereignty of the peninsula. In the revival of Confucian-inspired tales such as that of *Ch’unhyang*, national reconciliation came to hinge on women’s adherence to certain codes of social conduct towards the husband in the modified reunification literary genre. They were consistently represented as the changeless and spiritual inner core of the nation, whose were destined to preserve the traditional values and mores against the West vis-a-vis their capacities as loyal wives.\(^{120}\)

Rape was also revived as a metaphor for national division, which had been used as a metaphor during Japanese colonial times to symbolize national humiliation and masculine


\(^{120}\) Sheila Miyoshi Jager. *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea*. p. 68.
shame at the loss of national sovereignty. Of course, rape was a literal experience for many
Korean women during Japanese colonialism during which time thousands were forcibility
removed or coerced into brutal sex camps. The theme of rape was extended to the women
who were sexually abused by U.S. armed forces, and was more contentiously wielded against
camptown prostitutes whose agency, as it was imagined in patriarchal terms, also narrated
them as complicit in the destruction of the Korean nation. Korean women’s bodies were
suppose to mark the boundaries of the inner nation, of the spiritual core and “home ground”
upon which reconciliation between the North and South was to happen against the intrusion
of the West. Korean women were not supposed to transgress those political boundaries in
favor of the corruptive, colonial agent. As Enloe observes, “For a man, to be conquered is to
have his own women turned into fodder for imperialist postcards. Becoming a nationalist
requires a man to resist the foreigner’s use and abuse of his women”.

Thus, it is through the kiji’chon women that the maintenance of family lineage has become politicized and racial
hybridity rendered problematic in relation to patriarchal interests.

An example of this political dynamic can be discerned in Kim Ki-Duk’s film Address
Unknown, wherein the Amerasian protagonist Chang-Guk attempts to remove from his
mother’s breast the tattoo given to her by his biological father, an African-American service
member who has since abandoned them. Throughout the film, Chang-Guk’s mother, who is
notorious in the village for her former relationship with the U.S military, acts out her
alienation from Korean society by stealing food from local farmers and speaking broken
English to those she knows cannot understand her. Chang-Guk reluctantly extracts her from
these confrontations several times before finally succumbing to his anger, at which point the

121 Cynthia Enloe. Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics. (Berkeley:
knife scene ensues. Even as Chang-Guk is scripted as a victim of U.S. occupation and racial excess, he perpetuates the violence of Korean patriarchal authority in his attempt to literally gouge out the evidence of militarized sexual relations from his mother’s body. It is in this cinematic moment that both mother and son get pitted at two different points on the narrative axis of U.S.-Korea relations, making it possible to see the ways in which their relationship has been rendered dissonant because of the complex nature of their victimization. In fact, the audience becomes aware of the ways in which they are violently implicated in each other’s victimhood by virtue of their estranged relationship to Korean patriarchal ideals – Chang-Guk’s mother from the ideal of patriotic sexual loyalty to the nation, and Chang-Guk from the ideal of blood purity upon which the patriarchal nation finds continued renewal.

The stigmatization of Korean *kiji’chon* prostitutes was further exacerbated by the circulation of American racial ideology and prejudice, which marked them according to the clientele they serviced within the camptown bars and nightclubs. *Kiji’chon* women and the businesses for which they worked were caught in the middle of U.S. race-relations of the Jim Crow segregation, Civil Rights and Vietnam War eras, and had to continually negotiate the demands and prejudices of the different G.I. groups. Bars and nightclubs particularly risked losing white clientele if they served blacks. Usually, a segregation system that categorized the prostitutes according to whom they serviced was instituted as a means to negotiating this politically charged ground. “Prostitutes who associated with whites were considered ‘higher class’ than those who slept with blacks, and it was common for the women to be socially and geographically segregated according to the race of men they slept with”.

They also risked beatings and loss of business if they crossed the color line from black to white or from white

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to black. *Kiji’chon* women’s ontological status was converted and downgraded based on with whom they slept and associated in the camptowns, so some were considered “black” while others “white”. Soldiers stationed in Korea admitted that “Korean locals have been subjected to the attitudes of the white majority for so long that they practice discrimination without even being aware of what they’re doing”.

Indeed the American racial imaginary is strongly embedded in Korean society, firstly inherited through Japanese encounters with “the West” and representations of “the other” - mostly notably the “black slave race”. One of Japan’s most recognizable and long-lasting racial images was of the “Kuronbo” minstrel. Kuronbo, originally designed by German artist Otto Dunkelsbuhe, was circulated throughout Japan and presumably its colonies between 1923 and 1989 as a commodity image for the Calpis beverage company. My father, who was a child during the Japanese occupation, recalled reading Japanese-published comics containing primitive, native characters. He related to me that the shock of encountering an African-American GI for the first time, because he was dressed in uniform like the White soldiers, and not, as the images in the comics had led him to believe, dressed in leopard skin, sporting a spear with a bone inserted through his nose. John Russell, whose longtime work on the intersection between Japanese culture, race and gender, brings to light a great deal of evidence that speaks to the naturalization of Western racial science and prejudices in Japan for many years. American racial ideologies were, of course, also inherited directly from missionary culture and U.S. diplomatic envoys, as was the case prior to the Korean war, and

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123 Moon, 72.
via military occupation after 1945 through experiences of the everyday in camptowns and U.S. TV and radio media (Armed Forces Korea Network). Given the compounded and layered nature of such inheritances, the perception of Blacks as slaves, as primitive, as infantile or animalistic caricatures has been firmly rooted within Korean society, as evidenced from my father’s recollection. The following excerpts from a Korean junior high school dictionary used to teach English in the 1990s speaks to this embeddedness. These racial images and caricaturing speak to the long and complicated history of Korean postcoloniality and the relationship between “White-managed racism”126 and Korean national knowledge production.

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Figures 1. 1990s Middle school English dictionary entries
White GIs went on to reinforce anti-Black prejudice in Japan and Korea, spreading horror stories among civilian populations about African Americans’ inclination for rape, pillage and murder, presumably as a way of detracting the suspicion of local communities from all American occupiers.\(^{127}\) It is not at all unlikely that the fear of sexual transgression and contamination, which White American GI’s fostered among local communities, contributed to the extended idea that Black corporeality could leave literal stains or darken that which it came into contact. The following recollections of Black-Amerasian childhood preoccupations reflect the ways in which some came to regard their dark bodies as dirty or polluted:

I tried to peel my skin with rocks because I was ridiculed by other children. I thought I could get the same skin color as the others.\(^{128}\)

I really like to drink milk, because I thought I could have white skin if I continued to do so.\(^{129}\)

This same psyche is reflected in a recent incident at a bathhouse in Busan, wherein the owner denied an Uzbek-Korean entrance because of her skin color. This story was featured in the Korean Times, and the owner was recorded as justifying his decision based on the following: “Koreans don’t like to bathe with colored people, because they might make the water dirty or have AIDS” as many foreigners appear to work the bars.\(^{130}\) Race as contaminant, as pollutant and as sexually transmitted function as the interpretive parameters for narrating Amerasian and “mixed race” peoples.


\(^{128}\) Park, 18.

\(^{129}\) Ibid.

"Legislating Family"

The family trope is important for nationalism… it offers a ‘natural’ figure for sanctioning national hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests – Anne McClintock

In addition to understanding the gendered trope through which ‘mixed race’ peoples have been deemed “other”, “foreign” and undesirable, it also important to examine the ways in which public policy crafts the conditions of their social illegitimacy vis-à-vis the concept and legal composition of the family. In a Human Rights report the U.S. Department of State described the plight of Amerasians in the following language: “Amerasians face no legal discrimination but informal discrimination is prevalent, making it more difficult for them to succeed in academia, business, or government”.

Such a statement suggests that discrimination toward Amerasians is a phenomenon confined to social attitudes that persist despite the absence of a proactive discrimination against them in policy texts. At the level of the everyday, ‘mixed-race’ peoples were and are to a great extent still are considered a national aberration. Amerasians were treated as an unplanned and regrettable outcome of post-war politics, while “Kosians”, although not unplanned, are generally regarded as “foreign”.

The general inability to accept or comprehend “mixed race” peoples as a part of the Korean nation and as entitled to political personhood has much to do with the ways in which public sentiment has been historically and reflexively crafted at the level of state planning and national policy. Korea does not have an official system of racial categorization, and like most civic-ordered states only legally delineates between national and non-national

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membership. Although the ROK constitution mandates that all citizens are politically equal regardless of gender or class, the family is legislated as an exception to the rule due to the blurry distinction between kinship and citizenship. Kinship relations tend to get perceived and treated as ‘natural’, as something born into and not alterable by culture. The domain of family is a governmental space that straddles the public-private divide, and is vulnerable to legislative measures that otherwise contradict constitutional claims. The family is “the foundation of all civil and political life”…and offers “a model of connectedness that connects the maintenance of life to the creation of free citizens.” Simultaneously, it is regarded as a self-constructed space governed by mutual relations. While family is considered a private institution in the liberal imagination, its members are simultaneously and indirectly subjects of state authority. Thus, the family unit occupies an ambiguous terrain that is both public and private, and is therefore an interesting site where private relationships and identities get harnessed in constructing the meaning of the national subject.

In response to the irreconcilability between constitutional law and the political mandate of minjok, as well as the tension between national purity claims and the realities of U.S. occupation, family law has been deployed as a mechanism of governance that promotes public investment in the myth of blood purity vis-à-vis the significance of patriarchal lineage. As a consequence, mixed race peoples have been exempt from basic protections and privileges because of the impossibility from birth of conforming to the rigid sexual and gendered criteria that constitute the vision of the normative, national family. As I will argue,

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132 Immigration is well documented, however, to regulate temporary work visas.
'mixed race' peoples have been rendered exceptional legally and therefore socially as the non-national ‘other’ and produced as a threat to the order of Korean families, and by extension, the patriarchal nation.\footnote{Giorgio Agamben. \textit{Homer Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life}. (Stanford University Press, 1995)}

While in Korea, the ethno-racial category \textit{minjok} has become the discursive referent around which the postcolonial subject has been cohered, the conditions of possibility that produce the racially appropriate subject and racially inappropriate non-subject rely upon a particular regime of sexuality that correlate the subject’s sense of national belonging to his/her function in a set of productive relations that advance the family order, and by extension the national order. The private operation of sex, like the discursive function of race, “not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls. Thus sex is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place through certain highly regulated practices”.\footnote{Judith Butler. \textit{Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”}. (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 1.}

The deployment of family law counter to the ROK constitution has meant that Amerasians have been politically delimited by their mother’s subordinated position within the family unit. The construction of their non/subjectivity is locatable within the context of family relations and that raises questions about the significance of gender and sex to the function of the state. Citizenship in South Korea has been and continues to be determined by lineage. Until 1998, citizenship was only transmittable through the father thus placing Amerasians born of Korean women and estranged American (in many cases G.I.) fathers in
legally and culturally ambiguous positions. In some cases Amerasian children managed to obtain citizenship by claiming to be offspring of either the mother’s father or brother. In other cases, citizenship issues were plainly over looked as there was no blueprint for processing Amerasian offspring into South Korean society. Moen who performed outreach work in Korea with Amerasian communities throughout the 1960s and 70s described the ambiguous circumstances into which they entered the world: “Suddenly, with no special prearrangements or formal bindings, children started to be born and a new situation came into existence…no one knew how to cope with the situation, neither the mother, nor the family, neither the father, nor the government”.138 Most have survived in the shadows without citizenship having been abandoned to orphanages or the streets, or raised privately by their mothers in poverty. Paternal authority over the determination of national citizenship has symbolically buttressed the significance of homogeneity – of the value of ‘pure lineage’ and of racial belonging in relation to national belonging. The household registration law (hojuje), which refers to Part Four and Five of the Civil Code of the Republic of Korea and has been revised numerous times since its enactment in 1948, bestows full, national citizenship upon males to compensate for their capacity to labor and play a role in national defense. In rigid contrast to the state constitution, the household registration law between 1948 and 1990 secured male dominance over women in patrilocal marriage, patriarchal family, and patrilineage in kinship and in the inheritance of property.139 This Neo-Confucian institution continues to govern familial relations and operations, which until 1991 did not allow women to become heads of households, to enter their children on family registers, to exercise custody over their children in cases of divorce, or decide place of residence.

138 Moen, p. 21.
Given that the continuation of the family along patriarchal and patrilineal kinship is the primary and most expected relationship among all family relations, single mothers and their children fall outside this culturally anticipated norm.140 The household registration law speaks volumes about the woman’s inability to sustain her economic and social survival outside of patriarchal, hetero-normative familial unit. Until 1998, for the many women who were left to singly raise their Amerasian children, this meant that they were unable to establish their own government-recognized families and were ineligible to receive state benefits, such as healthcare. If the mother continued to live with her natal family and receive benefits through her father’s household registration, state benefits would be inaccessible to the Amerasian on the grounds that his/her father was not Korean. Having a racially mixed child also made it near impossible for women to marry or remarry in Korean society, let alone add their children to the new husband’s household registry. Domestic adoption of ‘full’ Koreans has been incredibly taboo in itself, signifying the contamination of family lineages.141 The possibility of integrating ‘mixed race peoples’ into Korean families and society on an informal level has been nearly impossible precisely because of the legal restrictions that have helped to manufacture an aversion to ethno-racial hybridity by restricting women’s political status.

The power of law goes beyond a state’s ability to respond to, endorse, or prohibit specific social, cultural, and economic dynamics. Rather, law has the power to outright shape the public reality, manufacturing via its texts certain agents, relations, understandings, and aversions where they did not exist before or were not made prominent in society. In other words, there is interconnection between the legal imagination and social one, whereby how

‘mixed race’ peoples are talked about and treated within the family, within schools, on the streets, etc. is a measure of some intention of governance through policy initiatives or a lack thereof. Ethno-racial hybridity has been regulated similarly to sexuality in the legal imagination – by an absence of mention in juridical discourse. Here we see the ways in which law

…never establishes any connection between power and sex that is not negative: rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage, concealment, or mask. Where sex and pleasure are concerned, power can “do” nothing but say no to them; what it produces, if anything, is absences and gaps; it overlooks elements, introduces discontinuities, separates what is joined, and marks off boundaries. Its effects take the general form of limit and lack.\textsuperscript{142}

Amerasians become a-categorical and transient strangers hidden and roaming between the lines of juridical text, bouncing off the discursive limits that define national families, and de facto assuming the capacity of “outsider” or “other” against which legitimate, national belonging is positioned. The illegitimacy of Amerasians is always already inferred/inscribed by the mark of their absence from politics and affirmed by the restriction of women’s sexuality.

Additionally, by neither outlawing nor recognizing Amerasian personhood, the ambiguous object/subject position of ‘mixed race’ peoples has become a flexible vehicle for securing the bounds of national subjectivity. In “Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers” Ann Laura Stoler describes the ways in which the rejection of metis as a specific legal category in both Indochina and the Netherlands Indies intensified how the politics of cultural difference played out in other domains.\textsuperscript{143} By not sorting or fixing a juridic subject-position for metis peoples within the colony or metropolitan center, the qualities that rendered them inferior or

\textsuperscript{143} Stoler in Back and Solomos, 2000.
ambiguous vis-à-vis European superiority or indigenous national movements were always in flux. Stoler writes, “Class, gender, and cultural markers deny and designate exclusionary practices at the same time. We cannot determine which of these categories are privileged at any given moment by sorting out the fixed primacy of race over gender or gender over class”.\textsuperscript{144} She highlights the regulatory power of the uncategorized, which makes available a multiplicity of criteria by which the non-subject can be invoked, excluded or serve as an object of juxtaposition in various political, meaning-making projects.

Due to the solid juridical and discursive framework in which familial organization has been represented and enforced, Amerasians have had no designated roles, and therefore, have been displaced as strangers amidst a tightly sewn set of productive private and public relations. One effect of such triangulated governance has been that Amerasians have formed a sense of frustration and confusion over their bodies, because of the ways in which narratives of sexual immorality have been symbolically tethered to the concept of racial hybridity. Butler contends that it is necessary to “rethink the ways in which scenes of reproduction, and hence, of sexing practices not only as ones through which a heterosexual imperative is inculcated, but as ones through which boundaries of racial distinction are secured as well as contested”.\textsuperscript{145} The act and symbolic meaning of reproduction becomes integral to an othering process that of uses the rejection of hybridity as its basis. In other words, “hybridity” takes on a racialized meaning when the sexual act of miscegenation is implicated in its production, suggesting tainted or polluted offspring.

My grandfather hit me and called me names. He was embarrassed. He used to say, “What kind of ugly seed did you come from?”\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, p. 326.
Amerasian honhyeol also think about the ways in which they embody the act of miscegenation itself.

I have memories that I have very deep deep deep down. Because I was ashamed of them. And I realized as soon as I let them pop up, my whole self-image would crumble and I thought I would lose my faith. See I was born in Korea, and I was born right after the Korean War and I was born out of sin. I was born out of lust. And the two people that came together to form me might have thought twice if they had known what I would have to endure, but they didn't. I was different. Not only was I an orphan but I was also a half-breed. They had a word that they called me and the word is 'Tui-Ki'. The translation of that word means alien devil. So from the time that I can remember it was registered into my mind that I was worthless, that I had no value, that I had the devil in me. (Story of an Amerasian woman, KBS147)

In the case of this testimony the regulatory regime of sex, which produces her parent’s relations as illicit, also produces her ontological dysfunction, immorality and valuelessness.

The politics of sexuality that govern mixed race corporeality also extend into the area of national defense. According to the conscription law, Amerasians, as “illegitimates”, are de facto ineligible for military service. All of the formal categories for exemption are as follows: “the less educated, the indigent, criminals, the disabled, the mentally retarded or ill, the physically unfit, the illegitimate, and women.”148 Just as conforming to the correct patriarchal behaviors in a family unit becomes an access point to full, national membership, so too does participation in fraternal defense of the nation. The military is an exclusive male club, and is at the forefront of the nation-building project by literally defending nation and family from foreign invasion as well as preserving certain codes of masculine behavior. To exclude mixed race from military service on account of their hybridity reveals the symbiotic relationship between masculinity and national belonging, and facilitates the inappropriate sexuality of ‘mixed race’ men.

147 Park, p. 21.
148 Kwon In-sook. “Militarism in My Heart: Militarization of Women’s Consciousness and Culture in South Korea.” Ph.D. diss., (Clark University, 2000).
When you join the army, the sergeant will say ‘You come to the army because you are healthy and normal men of the Republic of Korea’ or ‘If you are men of the Republic of Korea, you should come to the army.’

Given that the conscription law is for all intents and purposes a contractual arrangement between Korean male citizens and the state, the law presumes that Korean men, properly gendered and sexualized, are willing to sacrifice their labor and bodies in the name of nation. As such, honhyeol men are pre-empted outside the boundaries of ‘normal’ masculinity.

In many ways, law is the condition of possibility for identities, and the direct affirmation of one can mean the indirect effacement of another. People’s fates are inextricably linked through categorization and standardization practices. Through what Michel Foucault regards as the ‘tactics of governmentality’, Amerasian honhyeol have been materialized in negative relation to discourses that categorically affirm the normative, properly gendered and sexed national subject. It is a matter of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics – to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved.

Amerasians have and continue to exist as peripheral beings in a state of indistinction between the power of patriarchy that determines familial membership and gendered norms on the one hand, and the working class mother’s substandard legal, social, and economic status on the other. As the racialized ‘other’, the hybrid body is that which the national regime of family displaces. Thus sex materializes racial otherness through a negative relation of perceived lack (although not real), through prohibition, and the diagnosis of metaphoric sexual dysfunction. Such method of juridical triangulation has been significant for overlooking that which is

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149 Ibid.
necessary and integral to Korean national development, while simultaneously arranging ‘mixed race otherness’ as aberration to the otherwise historically determined homogeneity of the Korean nation.

Repositioning Patriarchy: Multicultural Families as Neo-national Families

New criteria are needed to determine rationality and remain in line with the changing global environment. The Constitution prohibits discrimination without rational grounds.
- Ministry of Justice, Republic of Korea

Neoliberalism…can be conceptualized as a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and non-ideological problems that need technical solutions.
- Aihwa Ong

With the advent of the ‘multicultural family’ the relationship between race and patriarchy is being remapped by the positive citation of mixed-race people in policy. As articulated earlier, prior to the demands of economic liberalization, citizenship and family laws worked to break hybrid families apart, or at the very least discourage them from forming, even if there was no direct policy banning miscegenation. Indeed, to have produced such legislation would have worked counter to the military and economic interests of the ROK state. However, today juridical categories and a language for talking about mixed races are surfacing within the philosophical and legal imagination of multiculturalism. While this change may be compelled at some level by a general concern for the rights of foreign women and their mixed-race children, this shift in dynamic is also consistently underscored by the same demands that frowned upon miscegenation: the desire to preserve patriarchal privilege and lineage. The demands for policy action have largely come from a much more conservative rural base, who would not be able to produce legitimate/recognized families under the previous legal conditions. The multicultural family does not render Korean patriarchal power obsolete, but rather repositions it over definitions of family, kinship and notion of legitimacy.
The Presidential Committee on Social Inclusions generated reports on the targets and guidelines of official multiculturalism policies. One such report generated in April 2006, titled “Social Support Measures for Mixed race and Immigrants” declares that multiculturalism measures “will facilitate Korea’s transition towards open multicultural society where mixed races and immigrants are not discriminated but their presence is valued”. If one draws a picture of the overall political goals suggested by the measures of support for foreigners, some interesting patterns emerge. First, foreign wives and their ‘multiracial children’ appear to be the groups on which most of the policies comprehensively focus. The number of support agencies for multicultural families has more than tripled in the last few years, from 86 in the year 2005 to 364 in 2007. While guest workers and Chinese migrants, the other two categories listed in the report, have been the concern of immigration and national security policy, they receive little to no attention within the imaginative space of the multiculturalism initiatives. Second, the policy goals targeting foreign wives and ‘mixed race’ children appear legislated within the concerns of Korean population shortages, reproducing the patriarchal family structure and promoting cultural assimilation known as sahwe donghwa or sahwe tonghap. The following outline some of the rights and benefits extended to foreign wives and their “mixed race” children:

For Foreign Wives

1. Eased naturalization process
2. Free Korean culture/language class
3. “Maternity protection” support through Foreign Wives Support Centers Ministry of

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152 Chosun Ilbo, 5/12/08.
153 In my interview experiences with multiculturalism researchers and aid workers in Korea, the term sahwe donghwa (meaning social assimilation) is deployed when the user of the term means to be critical of the concept of assimilation. However, sahwe tonghap, which means social consolidation, seems to be feature in discourse that promotes official multiculturalism and is less critical of the idea of assimilation.
Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF): Korean language courses, support during pregnancy and childbirth, childcare courses, all of which incorporate” Korean family customs and culture in the content” so that they may be “utilized in family life and childbirth counseling”. (MOGEF website)

4. Social welfare support
5. Minimum Living support if with children
6. Supports of pregnancy/birth/raising
7. Provision of children-raising tips printed in their mother tongue
8. Door-to-door nursing assistance

For Kosian and the Mixed Race

1. Development of multicultural curriculum (public schooling)
2. Kosian counseling/mentoring system
3. Multiculturalism education for teachers
4. After-school classes
5. Introduction of Anti-discrimination law
6. Amendment of Conscription rules
7. Replacement of the word mixed race via public subscription

As of 2007, approximately 100 ‘multicultural family support centers’ had been established along with five nodal or ‘base centers’ that connected regional support centers and the central government administration (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs). These support centers included community centers, schools/local education offices, volunteer centers, migrant women shelters, employment support centers, health clinics and Korean cultural centers.155

The value of foreign women is clearly interpreted within the framework of Korean ethno-racial nationhood, and the policies that target them solicit their subordination to patriarchal family structure and to raising their children to become as Korean as possible in terms of language and cultural identities. As Hui-Jung Kim points out, former president Roh Moo Hyun’s remarks quoted in the Maeil Economic Daily (May, 2006) engenders the politics of Korean official multiculturalism: “I used to have some doubts but I was assured

that foreign wives can live harmoniously with us Koreans when I heard about Emile, who won a prize for filial conduct toward her Korean in-laws”. My discussions with several migrant wives revealed the existence of this patriarchal positionality within their homes, families in which belonging can only occur through domestic, filial service to husbands and children. One young woman from the Philippines told me that her husband is adamant she not speak to her son in Tagalog. She is taking Korean lessons, but is having trouble speaking to her son in the meantime. She says that when she tries her broken Korean out on her son, he often pretends not to understand and not to recognize her parental authority. Another woman from the Philippines told me that she would not be allowed to visit her homeland until she bore a son.

Migrant wives are granted little social personhood, and are largely assumed to be dependents of Korean men. Their rights and welfare are tied to the production of children with their Korean husbands and the women do not seem to be given much consideration outside the domestic sphere. This does not negate the fact there are just as many migrant wives who are content in their new family arrangements as there are women who are unhappy. However, it was the opinion of the director of the Korea Women’s Association for International Solidarity, An Ie Jung-Sun, that multiculturalism efforts have mostly focused on the assimilation of migrant wives to Korean society and the ridding of their native cultural logics, languages, and desires. She noted in particular that the Korean government makes no attempt to educate ‘multicultural families’ about the places and practices from which these women come, which is one reason why the Korean husbands, in-laws and other extended family generally regard them as without pasts or subjectivity. Instead, many

156 Also see Kim Hyuk-Rae and Oh Ingyu. “Migration and Multicultural Contention in East Asia”. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 37, no. 10 (2011), pp. 1581. They discuss multicultural policies across Korea, Japan and Taiwan to be culturally assimilationist or “passive” in pursuing multiculturalist policy.
function as kept-labor, which An likened to sex trafficking. Many are confined to the home, not allowed to venture out except with their husbands.\textsuperscript{157} This kind of geopolitical erasure is evident in the public discourse surrounding the children of multicultural families. Controversial in society, the term “Kosian” has gained popular usage in Korea to refer to children with a Korean parent and a parent from elsewhere in Asia. The term “Kosian” refers to children of marriages between Koreans and other Asians, usually between Korean men and Southeast Asian women or in some cases between South Asian male laborers and Korean women. Similar to its predecessor “Amerasian” coined by the Pearl Buck foundation to mean children of American soldiers and Asian women, the Korean, patriarchal derivative “Kosian” demonstrates a racialized psychology. This racial psychology that compels the ethno-national specific naming of Korean identity in relation to the essentialized regional abstraction of poorer Vietnamese, Filipino, or Bangladeshi bodies, for example, positions Koreans as an ontological identity and Korea as a spatial-temporal center apart from the peripheral rest. The privileging of Koreanness as, at the very least regionally superior if not quasi-universal (in relation to other Asian identities), indexes the local/global axis around which Korean postcolonial, national identity emerges.

\textsuperscript{157} Discussion with An Ie Jung-Sun at Daegu Women’s Association. June 20, 2008.
Apparently, few legal or enforceable protections exist for migrant wives in cases of divorce or instances of abuse. After concluding its inspection of the status of foreign migrants in Korea, the United Nation’s “Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” concluded that the foreign women who marry Korean men do not receive the adequate protection of any intermediary/mediation agency in order to prevent instances of latent abuse. Often, Korean husbands will use their foreign wives as an opportunity to collect financial assistance from the intermediary agencies that do exist, and in order to continue doing so will confiscate the legal documents of their wives to hold them hostage.\(^{158}\)

In one conversation I asked a staff member from Daegu City Hall about the multiple policy proposals circulating to support women in cases of abuse or divorce, she told me that few had materialized and even fewer were actually enforced in meaningful ways. “It seems that government officials and politicians are aware of these problems, but they often turn the

other cheek.” The woman with whom I spoke frequently interacts with the families of international marriages, and from week to week deals with cases of spousal and familial abuse, attempted suicides (sometimes successful ones), and in some cases murder. One case involved a woman from Philippines, ‘M’160, who had been selected through an international marriage agency by a bachelor from the rural outskirts of Daegu. He is twice her age. When the woman joined her new family, she discovered that her husband was mentally handicapped from an illness, which caused occasional onsets of rage and physical abuse. I was informed that this situation was unfortunately not atypical, as the international marriage industry in Korea, particularly during its founding, frequently falsified bachelor age, family background and health status much to the surprise the women who end up marrying them. M was also sexually molested by the husband’s brother and her mother-in-law was likewise abusive, confining her to the home and demanding that she wait on her according to traditional customs that many Korean women are no longer expected to perform. ‘M’ then became pregnant at which point the mother-in-law confiscated ‘M’s passport and other documentation verifying her legal presence in Korea. This was so she would not run away with the child. The city caseworker received a frantic call from ‘M’ one day saying that her mother-in-law had threatened her with a knife. She was forced to run away without her papers. Although Daegu City Hall relayed the message to the police in the area, the family was not investigated and the situation remains unresolved. ‘M’ has now relocated herself to a town in Gyongiddo province and is working illegally in a shoe factory with other migrants laborers. She lost the baby due to miscarriage. While these stories by no means represent the majority of multicultural family experiences, they punctuate the less dramatic but stressful

160 Story recalled from notes taken during a phone interview with ‘M’ and from notes taken during the interview with Daegu City Hall worker, who staffed M’s case. ‘M’ is a pseudonym.
trend of troubled family unions, which primarily “burden [migrant wives] for the purposes of pregnancy, childrearing, in-law care, and domestic duties”. The consistent theme that arose across my interviews was the “problem of kabujangje”, or patriarchy. Although kabujangje was mostly discussed as a problem at the family level which hinders official multiculturalism efforts, it is evident that kabujangje is also integral to the logic of official multiculturalism as can be gleaned by the themes of policy proposals and politicians’ statements. Multiculturalism initiatives that concentrate on family composition remain in keeping with this gendered division of labor and production of patrilineal families, and which involve a network of state and non-state actors, primary and extended family members.

It is particularly interesting then that despite the concentrated efforts of multiculturalism policy to manage the production of children and family welfare resulting from international marriages, many families are struggling to fulfill the vision of the state. The inadequacy of state sponsorship is particularly evident when it comes to childcare subsidies for migrant women and their ‘Kosian’ children. Multicultural families financially struggle to raise their children. Many of the livelihoods of Korean men who marry women from abroad are tied to a struggling agriculture economy in the rural countryside or work for small businesses, which are floundering in the face of large corporate competition and buyouts. The foreign women also have a low earning potential, mostly finding work in factories. A 2006 survey conducted among Vietnamese migrant brides by the Women’s Family Bureau revealed that 70% of the respondent’s children under school age were left at home alone during the day. This figure compares with an average of 30% for the children of

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161 Lee Tae-Gyung. “Mothers Who Cannot Help With Homework, Communicate or Play With Their Children”. Chosun Ilbo 5/10/08.
162 Kabujangje is particularly pronounced in the Gyeongsan region, in which Daegu is located, and which is the known for its conservatism and adherence to the neo-Confucian principles of gender segregation.
migrant mothers managing difficult lives in other countries. A representative from the Family Welfare Preservation Department of the Family Research Center pinpointed the lack of meaningful government childcare support for migrant brides as a major reason for why multicultural families and their children suffer. This is particularly the case for those families in the rural areas. Korea has actually seen an 80% cancellation of government-appointed childcare facilities. As a result, a growing trend for these families is to send their children to the mothers’ home country to live with relatives, which defeats the supposed market-based logic that compelled the formation of multicultural families in the first place. Others who remain in Korea frequently do so under conditions of poverty and inadequate policy protection. Mere reduction of services for ‘multiculturalism families’ is not the entire story, however. Kim Soon-yang and Shin Yeong-gyun at Yeungnam University point to the habit of hasty policy and program development without careful consideration and securing relevant budgets and personnel. The “over-issuance” of policy may be politically motivated, targeting the votes of Korean families who house foreign brides.

In general, the patriarchal-based visions for multicultural families are currently interrupted by more widespread and pressing concerns for familial economic prosperity in an era of rising costs of living. The fear among many government and non-profit agency experts in Korea today is that inconsistent and under-funded policies that do more to maintain romantic and superficial visions of global multiculturalism than deal with the material and social conditions that underwrite the formation of brokered families.

163 Kim Jin-Myung, Chosun Ilbo 5/9/08.
Considering that the majority of international marriages are institutionally brokered between Korean men and women from various developing countries throughout the Asia-Pacific, the patriarchal dynamic of Korea’s emerging racial world view needs to be contemplated particularly within transnational arrangements whereby poorer women are being imported as reproductive labor. Tellingly, today divorce rates among “international marriages” are on the rise. To compare, between 2003 and 2007 the national divorce rate among Korean couples declined from 171,855 to 124,225 while divorce rates among international couples (meaning one Korean spouse and one foreign spouse) increased from 2,784 to 8,348.¹⁶⁶ Reasons for divorce are varied, among which deception and racism are ranked fairly high. According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, about 30 percent of the 1,061 foreign wives interviewed in the survey said their Korean families discriminated against them because of their ethnic background.¹⁶⁷

It could be said that international marriage agencies, a booming trade in Korea, contribute to the crafting of social attitudes toward foreign women from poorer countries. The increasingly lucrative international marriage brokers enable a wider web of business to flourish, and combine interests with local collaborators such as recruiters, tourist and hotel businesses in countries all over Asia including China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, Central Asia, and even countries as far as Eastern Europe including Russia. At present, Vietnam appears the largest exporter of women and is apparent in Korean commercial advertisements on signs, billboards, and in newspapers reading: “Marry a Vietnamese Angel”. Ethnic Korean-Chinese (Chosonjok) women, once the foreign bride of choice because of similar ‘blood ties’, have been cast as runaway brides and publicly

¹⁶⁷ Kim, Tong-hyung. “Divorce Rate Rises Among International Marriages” Korea Times. 4/15/07.
characterized as “heartless opportunists who actively exploit the South Korean men they marry”. Vietnamese and Filipina women, on the other hand, are “too immature, naïve and docile to run away”. Young Vietnamese women in their 20s are portrayed as the embodiment of exoticism, innocence and whose virginity is there for the exploration and ownership of Korean men. Transnational love economies are not only a means to re-establishing metaphorically gendered relationships between countries, but re-commit women to Orientalized myths of docile femininity, sensuality, domestic subservience, and in the case of international marriages in Korea, envision foreign women as extended wombs of the nation.

The directional flows of women from the South and Western peripheries into Korea are consistent with Korea’s emerging economic and cultural power in Asia. The operational logic of the racial state becomes identifiable through its involvement in the globalized labor market, rather than by the former delimitation of Korean women’s bodies and identities alone. This shift indicates that the latter methods have become less viable given the history of the women’s rights movement throughout the processes of democratization. Rather, their vulnerability has been transferred to migrants, who now factor into the relational ‘othering’ of foreign and mixed race peoples and the crafting of social attitudes towards them. In some scenarios, migrant women take the place of Korean women in industries that service the U.S. imperial presence. That is, they are doubly subordinated by both quasi-imperial and imperial patriarchies in service of Korean national and transnational economies. Take for example

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169 This is not to suggest that Korean women have been exempt from scrutiny when they decide to marry foreign men, particularly migrant workers from South Asia. Such transgressions can be interpreted within the re-emergent conservative narratives of family ‘corruption’ and the re-privatization of women following the IMF crisis. See authors Song Jesook, Kim Seung-kyung and John Finch for examples on the issue of Korean women’s re-privatization following the IMF crisis.
JA, a 39-year-old Filipino woman, who was told by her promoter back home that she would be working as a singer in South Korea. She found a very different job awaiting her:

All I did was talk to customers - American soldiers – and get them to buy me drinks. I was forced to fill a drinks quota. That was my job. Upstairs there were rooms with beds where customers could have sex with the bar girls. The club owner tried to force me to have sex with the customers by threatening to send me back to the Philippines but I refused and told him that I would rather go back home.

A psychic restructuring of the national order alongside the neoliberal restructuring of the economy can be observed. The theme of “development” emerges in the idea that migrants should fulfill/enact/live the developmental discomforts of Korean postcolonial pastness, particularly regarding manual and sexual labor. JA’s experience demonstrates that migrant women are “replacing” Korean women as sex entertainers and prostitutes. Likewise contract brides, who also perform sexual labor, are replacing or serving as proxies for Korean wives and producers of nuclear, national families.

The systematized importation and “assimilation” of migrant women into Korea’s national economic structure is also a reminder of former engagements with the developmental fantasy, in which Vietnamese women facilitated the sexual and “racial transvestism” of Korean soldiers. Similar to the camptowns that materialized around the U.S. military bases in South Korea, Korean and Vietnamese women were pulled in to sexually service South Korean soldiers around various battle fronts in Vietnam. In other words, this history connects Korean postcolonial pasts to globalized presents through developmental fantasies. It ruptures the patriarchal text of colonial victimhood and pulls to the surface other minor histories of imperial desire that have remained fairly peripheral or muted in Korea’s national landscape.
Conclusion

This chapter has mapped some of the discursive “paths” by which mixed-race people have been produced as ‘other’ for the sanctification of national, patriarchal identities. Beyond an accounting of mixed-race people’s lived experiences, it has explained their historical (non)subjectivity as an outcome of the interconnection between the patriarchal Korean family system and national political projects, such as the goals of industrialization and militarism during the Cold war and the more recent challenges posed to Korean national life by a neoliberal ethos – free market competition, privatization of public services, rising costs of living, population and labor shortages, among others.

The concept of ethno-racial homogeneity remains important to Korea’s nation building in an era of globalization, even as multiculturalism discourse and policy initiatives on the family attempt to nullify its effects. The formerly ‘unmanaged’ problem of racial hybridity has been recommitted to official multiculturalism initiatives, which cite mixed-race people in official discourse and political society. How they are marked and circulate within that discourse, however, continues to signal local and global constructs of racial meaning upon which Korean national patriarchy finds continued renewal.
Chapter Three: Multiculturalism and the Developmental Imperative

With the presence of foreign workers, from South and Southeast Asian, Koreans are for the first time being charged with a xenophobic nationalism that is offensive and oppressive to others, especially towards those who are weaker and poorer. That is, South Koreans as a people and a government, are being identified as racists, exploiters, and arrogant human rights abusers intent on using foreigners only for economic gain.
- Katherine Moon

Multiculturalism is a racism, which empties its own position of all positive content, but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate properly other particular cultures – the multiculturalist respect for the Other’s specificity is the very form of asserting one’s own superiority
- Slavoj Zizek,

Over the last several years, multiculturalism or damunhwa has become a familiar discursive framework used by state, NGO and civil society actors for defining and managing the presence of transnational migrants in Korea. Similar to the state-led globalization campaigns that began in the 1990s, multiculturalism was born out of official reasoning to deal with the postindustrial problems of stagnating birthrates and aging populations, subsequently creating a demand for transnational, foreign labor – skilled, unskilled and domestic.

Broadly speaking, this chapter interrogates multiculturalism as a postcolonial project, one that pushes visions for national development in new directions, and which reconfigures a national interior in ways that allow for the presence of non-national bodies in neoliberal, “global” times. More specifically, I examine some of the political potentials of Korean multiculturalism to re-structure and re-privilege Koreanness vis-à-vis the management of other Asian ethnic identities in Korea. The authority of the ethno-national specific minjok has the potential to take on new life when re-contextualized within the policy discourses, geopolitical sensibilities and imaginative spaces afforded by the historicity and technologies of multicultural governance. The core of my argument here is that technologies of multicultural governance invigorate a new relationship between Korean state/state-
approximate practices and liberal imaginaries that yield biopolitical consequences for (1) the racial subjugation of migrants and (2) the positioning of Koreanness as a sub-imperial identity construct.

Framing the “Korean Dream”: Multiculturalism as Postcolonial Development

A language of multiculturalism consistently portrays acts of force required for neoliberal restructuring to be humanitarian: a benevolent multicultural invader (the United states, multinational troops, a multinational corporation) intervenes to save life, “give” basic goods or jobs, and promote limited political freedoms
- Jodi Melamed

In the summer of 2007, a visit to the Daegu area to research NGOs that act as social support mechanisms took me to a church-run group. My arrival coincided with the annual weekend get-away subsidized by government monies to run programs for migrants. That year, the trip was to Pohang, a popular beach town bustling with local tourists in the summer months. The organization took about 300 workers who had opted for the vacation experience, and I was permitted to accompany. The hectic morning of departure, we all met at the church and piled into multiple buses that would take us to Pohang. I immediately noticed a pattern emerging in the planning of the trip. Every migrant worker was put on to a bus that corresponded to his (and in a few cases her) country of origin. When the ethnic/national groups were too small to occupy one bus, groups shared, but were seated in distinct sections. There was the bus for the Chinese, the Filipinos, the Cambodians, the Nepalese, Bangladeshis, and so on. I was directed to ride on a shared bus with the Filipinos and Nepalese. The two teenage daughters of the church minister (and head of the organization) were also placed on my bus.

Through this experience, I began to think about multiculturalism as a political regime of representation - not in the normative, liberal sense of providing minority access to democratic representation, but rather, as an ocular regime. The NGO performance of
multicultural values seemed to have much to do with the counting, classifying and assigning democratic meaning to the dissected presences of migrants who participated in this trip. I also began to think about how to frame this multicultural exercise within a broader context of the South Korean postcolonial state, and began to see the ways in which a will to state ethnography was somehow being exercised in the micro-political spaces of the NGO buses.

I took the opportunity of the two-hour ride to speak to some of the workers on the bus, and being placed with the few women and men from the Philippines was particularly helpful considering their higher proficiency in English. As I learned about their lives in Korea, I was intermittently distracted by the behavior of the two Korean sisters sitting a couple of rows down – their boisterous remarking of the smells on the bus, the “noisy” languages people were speaking and their insistence on using nearly all of my sunscreen lotion in preparation for our disembarkation onto the beachfront.

Upon our arrival to Pohang, we were led to an old fishing home complex with multiple rooms fixed around a central courtyard. This is where we would stay for the weekend. The house was obviously too small for the numbers of people, and I was instructed to stay with the Filipino group in a single room. There were too many of us to sleep lying down, so the male members of the group told me that most of them would end up sleeping on the beach to compensate. There was one outhouse toilet for the entire group, and an outdoor faucet with running cold water to serve as the bathing facilities. The few women I was with worried how to handle their periods and/or feminine hygiene with appropriate discretion. The minister and the group of NGO employees stayed in a large second floor space of an adjacent house. The beachfront was stiflingly hot and humid, with very little breeze.
The program for the weekend was mapped out, with a ceremonial dinner the first evening, and closing with a karaoke competition. Almost as soon as we arrived the first day, the workers were instructed to break off into their respective national groups and begin preparing for the dinner. They had brought food materials with them, and they went to work. It was custom for several years running that each group prepares a national dish to share. That evening the groups presented their dishes in a quasi-ceremonial event. The minister and NGO workers got to sample the dishes of each group, after which everyone else was invited to eat. A particular enjoyment of migrant ethnic specificities seemed to take place.

These series of exercises is reflective of a pattern of discursive focus among academics, NGOs and various offices of government emerging around exceptions of blood and ethnic category to the norm of the Korean mainstream/majority. Observations abound about ethnic communities in Korea, in which non-Koreans are counted, classified, sorted and geopolitically tagged. The accounting of numbers and types of ethnie correlates to the measurement of Korea as a globalized society – one that is tolerant of variety and able to consume other cultures. This is not only discernable in the scenes described here, but is part of a larger ongoing effort to establish records of migrant presence, movement, life activities and attitudes to better respond to the challenges they face as Korea transitions to a multicultural society. Data collection ventures, executed through extensive surveying (door-to-door) and census research, through the establishment of registration procedures for programs and benefits (governmental and non), index the integration of classification practices into the everyday management of migrants. A preoccupation about Korea’s rank among nations is discernable in newspapers, branding campaigns and journal articles that discuss Korea as a multicultural society, as if the ability of a country to manage diversity as a
measure of its modernity or globalized nature. That is, Korea’s ability to demonstrate its internationalism is inter-articulated with national bureaucratic systems that quantify and enumerate representations of diversity. These bureaucratic systems also presumably spawn bureaucratic imaginations about the meaning of migrant presences. Korea’s rank among exporting countries, its number of multinational corporations, how many times it has hosted an international sporting competition (world cup, Olympics, FIFA), and numbers of dignitaries serving in international organizations (e.g. the U.N.)\(^{170}\) corresponds in some way to the number of foreigners living in Korea, how many inter-racial children are born per year, percentage ratios of Koreans to foreigners per year, population benchmarks to achieve official multicultural country status, and so on.

After dinner, a professor from Kyungbuk University delivered a speech. The speech was somewhat peculiar, given the relative inaccessibility of its contents to the audience. Most of the migrant workers I encountered did not have a very firm grasp of Korean, and certainly not an academic grasp. Yet the speech/lecture was delivered using advanced technical discourse on the subject of political ideologies and the conversion of Korea to a multicultural society.

When I asked several migrants in the audience if they had understood the speech, I was answered with shrugs and awkward smiles. Although I cannot be certain of what was understood or not, the intelligibility of the speech to its audience did not seem the point. What appeared to matter more was the performance of ethical concern for migrant lives, the claiming of knowledge about migrant life in Korea, and the instructional medium through which the interaction took place. The speech seemed to arrange the conditions of possibility

for a simulation of migrant desires for Korea – to create the conditions of possibility for the “Korean Dream”. The “Korean Dream”, a phrase used in the Korean media to describe migrant desires to come to Korea, approximates Korea with the U.S. (the American Dream) as a global destination and semiperipheral metropole. The phrase inflects a kind of Korean triumphalism and the corresponding desire to participate in the “free world” developmental fantasy, in which it becomes the haven for groups from countries that are less developed and less free.171 The fantasy of Korea is constructed in images, commodities and narratives published by government agencies, NGOs, the travel and tourism industry, among others, which contextualizes the simulation I observed in Pohang. Just about every promotional material I picked up, purchased or found on the internet constructs Korea as a place of immigrant desire, facilitated by Korean benevolence and paternalism. These narratives of domestic migrant love for Korea connects to transnational media stories and promotional materials that feature Korea as a benevolent international agent, donating aid and volunteers across the world to countries in political and economic strife.

After the academic lecture, one of the NGO workers offered information about the country’s current migrant policing efforts, especially those in force to capture and deport illegal migrants. They were advised where in the country they could and should not travel, how to travel to avoid detection, and the best methods for escaping the immigration police if they were pursued. Much of the advice seemed rather trivial, impractical, or after the fact - requiring migrants to have access to transportation, money, the ability to relocate, or the ability to merely “outrun” trained police and avoid detection by surveillance technology. The climbing rate of police violence against migrants, detainments and deportations (especially

since the 2004 national crackdown campaign) speaks volumes about the incongruity of such advice, and references other instances of NGO efforts that are not aligned with migrant needs. Take for example labor brokerage firms handing out Korean phrase books to Vietnamese workers to use in the face of employer abuse, which include such phrases as “We are also human beings”; “Please don’t hit me”; “Can we have such things in writing?”; and “If you hit me again, I will move to another company”. When interviewed about these phrase books, Vietnamese workers stated that although many Korean books published for foreigners contain nice phrases, they are not suited to their needs.172

After all the speeches, the karaoke machine was set up and the migrant groups performed into the night, each group competing against the other. As I made the rounds speaking to individual migrants about their experiences of coming to, living and working in Korea, and also about the specific trip at hand, it became more and more apparent that, like the NGO church group that had brought them there, they too were “going through the motions” of an already anticipated experience. One man from Nepal said he doesn’t like multiculturalism gatherings – that they are superficial and “simple”. He went on to say that he does not like living in Korea because of the hierarchy (he demonstrated with his hands where Koreans were on a vertical line, and then where he was below them). He said Korea represents itself as advanced, “but that is all…in Nepal, we treat people as equals”.173 Kim (2009) cited by Michael Olneck also encountered similar reactions in her visits to Korea, stating that migrants “are silent, indifferent, or even critical of, this multicultural explosion” and that migrant activists believe that multiculturalism “actually perpetuates negative

172 Ibid.
173 Interview with migrant worker, Pohang, August 2007.
classification of migrants as less than full members of the Korean nation-state”. The sense my interviewee and other migrants had that the motives behind this series of multicultural events were generic, superficial or even disingenuous raised the issue of performativity at work in the regiment of Korean multicultural conduct. Others I spoke with said that they had very little interaction with Koreans, suggesting that their worlds rarely converged and that ceremonies or events such as the one we were experiencing were programmatic, but not indicative of broader social dynamics or processes. The scripted, predictable nature of “tolerance” as a performed pathos in these events signals the genealogy of multicultural tolerance as an already available artifact of liberal multiculturalism that Korea has come to re-iterate and transform for postcolonial, national purposes.

Tolerance rests as the ideological crux of multicultural discourse. It is the regime of affect upon which policy actions are rationalized and the presumed limit of human potentiality in plural democracies. Tolerance is taken as a transcendental, universal concept in liberal interpretations of multiculturalism. That is, tolerance constitutes an apolitical demonstration always already bound, foreclosed, and “anti-racist”. This is an impoverished way of conceiving tolerance, and one that forecloses the possibility of probing the political nature of multiculturalism and ways in which it is underwritten by racializing practices. Wendy Brown’s application of Foucauldian governmentality to the analysis of multicultural tolerance is particularly helpful in this endeavor. By approaching tolerance as a practice of governance rather than a principle doctrine or virtue, she illuminates its productive force that “fashions, regulates and positions subjects, citizens and states we all as one that legitimates


175 Much in the way that “color-blindness” misidentifies the possibility of objectivity in the face of racial distinctions.
certain kinds of actions”. While her work applies to the U.S. context, it is still valuable for the genealogical mapping it provides of the racial undercurrents that inform state and state-related violence in the name of multicultural projects.

First, she marks a transformation in the intelligibility of discourse of tolerance that is useful for understanding how it might travel, translate and function within imperial, and therefore postcolonial, circuits of power. Mainly, she notes the grammatical move made over the last decade in the U.S. to incorporate civilizational discourse into the previous classically liberal discourse that focused on the settler-colonial dynamic and prevention of racial violence. This incorporation has elevated tolerance discourse to a general language of anti-prejudice and signifier of a good society. It is indicative of the co-mingling of domestic and imperial/civilizational circuits of narrative, further hegemonizing the secularism of liberal democracies and the moral autonomy of the individual at the heart of racial or religious conflicts (as opposed to colonialism, for example). Such a transformation also means that tolerance has become institutionalized as a part of the response profile for non-profit/aid agencies that manage ethnic conflict, transnational conflict, and so on. The multiplication of tolerance discourse as a means of reducing domestic and global violence raises the valid concern about the ways in which it has been hermeneutically rigged to circulate and redistribute ethnic/racial vulnerability.

Brown also makes the point that the liberal logic of tolerance operates through a variety of historical frames in which the universal West, in all its representational permutations, is designated in advance as the standard of civilization while others are likewise always already marked as intolerable based on “culture”, religion and other

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specificities of space, place and time. In other words, domestic as well as international uses of multiculturalism discourse invoke ontological divisions that have already been established in advance as to who constitutes the tolerable and intolerable. So, racially charged assumptions and hierarchic constructs subsist at the heart of multicultural politics and reflect the enduring link between colonial ideology and liberal governance. Multiculturalism cannot be discussed without the citation of colonial history and Eurocentric discourse in order to be relevant in some kind of political critique.  

Finally, Brown’s corrective of Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality draws attention back to the state as a fulcrum of political legitimacy in late modern nations. Although the state may at times be a minor apparatus of governmentality, the discourse of tolerance has the effect of shoring up state legitimacy and even state violence. Brown claims that both state and non-state deployments of tolerance strategically support and strengthen state legitimacy in an era where state sovereignty appears weakened or diminished by globalization. My particular concern is for the role of state and other state-associated bureaucratic apparatuses to postcolonial nation building in the age of late, global capital where the developmental agenda can be secured through officially-mediated claims to an ethics of multiculturalism, or its discursive proxy *segvehwa* in the case of Korea.

A central theme at work throughout this chapter is the claim that multicultural politics in Korea reinvigorates “languages of stateness” which conspire with the project of

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179 See Brown (2006), p. 82. Also, see Soguk, (1999); Shapiro (1993); Weber (1995); and Walker (1991) who point out that state sovereignty, contrary to essentialist bi-nary notions that it is either a force ever present or in a process of erosion, is an effect of a complex set of practices that work to create the appearance of permanence or dissolution. Therefore, it might be said that discourses of tolerance reiterate state power through its appeal as a universal principle of modern nations, as it circulates through and informs the political practices of a variety of spheres, be it religious, legal, cultural and so on in the governing of subjects.
postcolonial development. By language of “stateness” I first refer to Hansen and Stepputat’s definition of the ever-evolving “bundle of widespread and globalized registers of governance and authority” that constitute modern forms of state across a variety of local settings.\textsuperscript{181} Hansen and Stepputat levy that, regardless of whether the state is philosophized as an entity that interjects itself into the society it means to govern (Weber, Bordieu), or considered a summative product of delocalized configurations of self-regulating power (Foucault), the state is as a mythic power that persists in our imagination of what constitutes society. The proliferating demand of state accountability and good governance on the one hand, and the simultaneous criticism from the “international community” on state inadequacies for not extending its governance far enough can be read as a paradox deeply persistent in the imagination of the state as an embodiment of sovereignty – the state as source of social order and stability. That is, even when we cannot conclude what society is, the state is central to all that is not state: civil society, NGO’s, the national economy, the market, the “international community”.

For Korea, the imagination of the state in political life is very strong, and unlike much of the literature that discusses the diminishing state in post-industrial, globalized economies, it has not taken such a backseat in contemporary political or economic life. Even after the decline of the so-called “developmental state”, democratic transition, national globalization agendas and even neoliberal projects have been intimately linked to state authority.\textsuperscript{182} This strong predisposition toward the culture of stateness appears central to multicultural governance. Even as advocates of multiculturalism evoke the spirit of segyhwa, international human rights, and cosmopolitan values - discursive cultures that seem antithetical to the

\textsuperscript{181} Blom and Stepputat (2001).

realm of state authority – multicultural politics is also a state-convened project that requires the biopolitical management of populations, albeit through new ways and “languages of stateness”. For example, the NGO has become pivotal in rearticulating state visions for migrants in Korea, serving as extensions of aid, immigration enforcement and cultural assimilation policies/programs. NGOs are often the fulcrum of post-colonial state legitimacy, and major transmitters of new administrative technologies for developmental projects. The number of nonprofits to help migrants in Korea has risen dramatically – in 2008, 564 were registered as migrant support organizations. In 2009, the number rose to 743, up 59% from the previous year. NGOs are sometimes humorously referred to as “new government organizations”, because of their tendency to closely align with government politics in Korea. Choi Jang Jip explains that, although democratic politics replaced the authoritarian regime in the 1980s, the strong “over-extended” state still pervades much of political life, and wields extensive influence over civil society. Others characterize the collusion of state and NGOs as more recent, stating that the once prominent status of NGOs that signified the emergence of civil society in Korean during the era of 1980s democracy are now in decline due to their “structural weakness, over-politicization, and the risk of being potentially co-opted by the government”.

Whereas prior to the influx of migrants, the Korean ethno-nation might have been considered a fairly stable container of sovereignty, the new demographic shifts, which government agencies and NGOs base so much of their activity around, prompts a kind of

183 Ibid.
state politics that has not been centrally employed in Korea prior to the 1990s – ethnographic politics of the territorial nation-state with internal minority populations. Prior to these symptoms of late industrialization and neoliberal transformation, population, citizenship, belonging and ethno-national identity were tightly sutured and assumed. Chapter Two’s discussion on the hegemony of patriarchal and patrilineal power over familial and national belonging highlights some of the dynamics of this association.

This is not to suggest that the state and NGOs are in complete control of multicultural discourse and programs that serve migrants. Many civil society organizations representing the views of migrant workers, including academics and migrant groups themselves, have critiqued state policies that biopolitically manage foreigners for nationalist gain. Yun Injin points out that ironically the seeds of multiculturalism in Korea were sewn by migrant worker advocacy groups in the 1990s in reaction to state practices that violated human rights and facilitated migrant labor maltreatment. Timothy Lim also refers to the predominately effective alliances forged in the 1990s between Korean activists, civic groups, trade unions and migrant worker groups in curtailing the proliferation of public anti-immigrant discourses.\textsuperscript{187} Organizations, such as the Citizen’s Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEI) began working with migrant workers to secure resources and establish credibility for the plights of foreign labor.

By the mid-1990s, a core group of foreign-worker labor advocacy offices had formed a nation-wide network called the Association for Foreign Workers’ Human Rights. This coalition was initially led by activists, who provided a variety of labor-related counseling services to domestic workers. Eventually 40 or so different organization joined the coalition.

including women’s organizations, churches, Buddhist temples and a variety of progressive citizen groups, eventually becoming the Joint Committee for Foreign Workers in Korea.\textsuperscript{188} The coalition continued to protest politicians and business groups for their unwillingness to pass a comprehensive Foreign Worker Protection Bill. In the 2000s, this coalition saw a growth in its church-group base (Protestant-dominant). Church groups began to frame migrant worker issues in the context of biblical messages, galvanizing migrants as populations in need of God’s message and support. The Christian Council on Korea was eventually founded, consisting of 38 churches and the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches.

Today, religious civic organizations, social movement organizations, medical service groups and legal service groups coordinate campaigns with migrant workers for the improvement of rights, pay and working conditions.\textsuperscript{189} In addition migrant worker and civic organizations, academics and journalists have worked to intellectually debunk the assumptions of Korean ethno-national homogeneity\textsuperscript{190} – an assumption upon which official multiculturalism discourse is actually built. Yun calls this aspect of multiculturalism “citizen-led” or “grassroots”, which can work in concert with but often opposes government-initiated policies that seek national unity under the banner of multiculturalism. It could be said that “citizen-led” multiculturalism is more likely to oppose policies and programs that propose assimilation or otherwise move to suppress the distinctiveness of ethnic minority cultures and identities.\textsuperscript{191}


\textsuperscript{190} Lee Yoonkyung, p. 375.

Through the work of grassroots-organized protests and press releases, which eventually caught the attention of the mainstream media in the mid 2000s, the theme of multiculturalism gained momentum within public discourse and was picked up by government to spearhead new policy initiatives addressing marriage migrants. The Roh Moo Hyun administration of that time (Roh himself was a former human rights activist and lawyer) was quick to instruct the Ministry of Justice to compose policies addressing foreign residents in Korea, including the Multicultural Family Support Act that this dissertation mentioned in the previous chapter. These policies were limited in their applicability to legal foreign residents, however, while the illegal migrant workers and the NGOs and other civic organizations that supported them, were left to continue their advocacy efforts without the support of public policy. Given these historical trajectories, Yun argues that Korea’s current multiculturalism programs are “not entirely led by the state or civil society, but…rather, led jointly by the two actors”.192

However, the hegemony that I speak of pertains to the imagination of state-authority, in the sense that those who wish to critically or otherwise engage the topic of multiculturalism must come into the state apparatus to be heard.193 And more centrally, the existing conflict over what definition of multiculturalism to privilege (e.g. assimilation vs. “mixing bowl” approach) and to whom to apply it (foreign resident vs. non-resident) still exercises the conceptual building blocks of the liberal democratic imagination and the issue

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193 Ibid.
194 Based on a conversation with Dr. Jungmin Seo during the oral defense of this dissertation. March 16, 2012.
of populations of belonging and unbelonging.\textsuperscript{194} Joon Kim describes this impoverished aspect of multiculturalism in Korea as “cultural paternalism”, which can deployed through a variety of interpretive frames (i.e. multiculturalism as a politics of pluralism or as a politics of assimilation for social harmony).

May of the multicultural programmes are one-way, top-down efforts to impose liberal paternalistic agenda about how to deal with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, cultural paternalism is premised on the idea that the dominant society knows what is best for the minority group, thereby categorizing the latter group as passive objects to be studied and acted upon rather than as active agents of social change.\textsuperscript{195}

The foregrounding of political communities as objects of multicultural governance inflects the authority, or rather, “languages of stateness”, pulling the developmental goals of the postcolonial state (the “strategic” use of migrants for national economic gain) and state articulations of power (demography, ethnography) closer together under the banner of multicultural governance. This foregrounding is significant for at least a couple of interrelated reasons. First, the gradual recognition of Korea as a “plural” society potentially challenges national sensibilities about where national sovereignty lies, or where it should be vested if the wholesale declaration of \textit{minjok} as sovereign cannot work politically in the ways in did before – as the public basis for policy and subject of the national imaginary. Also, by rationalizing what has been an arena devoid of juridical management, government or state-like bureaucracies are not only reinvigorated as a legitimate source of governance, but even more importantly, demographic change as impetus for a politics of multiculturalism taps into imaginative circuits of multicultural democracies and majority-minority relations that animate the imperial desires of postcolonial nationhood. This chapter has already discussed

\textsuperscript{194} See Ji-Hyun Ahn. “Transforming Korea into a Multicultural Society: Reception of Multiculturalism Discourse and its Discursive Disposition in Korea”, Asian Ethnicity, vol. 13, no. 1 (January 2012) who asserts that multiculturalism discourse operates through “minority discourse and minority movements”.

the emerging domestic vision for racial hierarchies amidst a political atmosphere of tolerance, patriarchal benevolence and desires for postcolonial development in the direction of first worldness. Thus, how the sovereignty of Koreanness gets expressed through representations and practices of multicultural governance has been the issue under examination.

Partha Chatterjee’s comparative narration of technologies of governmentality under colonial rule and the modern nation-state also help locate the enumerative and classificatory practices of migrants as something of a hybrid phenomenon of the postcolonial developmental state. He asserts that technologies of governance often predate the nation-state, especially where experiences of colonialism existed prior to its inception. In South Asia for example, “the classification, description and enumeration of population groups as objects of policy relating to land settlement, revenue […] crime prevention, public health…public morality, education, and a host of other governmental functions has a history of at least a century and a half before the independent nation-states of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon were born”. He references Nicholas Dirk’s naming of this dynamic as the “ethnographic state”, because clearly populations under colonial rule were managed as subjects and not citizens.

In the aftermath of revolution and political independence, Chatterjee explains that the impulse to republic citizenship is quickly overtaken by the developmental state, which through its policies of economic growth and social reform, promise to end the poverty and backwardness that pervades the postcolony. In this promise, developmental state leadership adopts the technical strategies of modernization and development often prompted by international and nongovernmental organizations. In the wake of adopting these practices, however, older ethnographic concepts convenient for describing and classifying groups of

people tend to enter the field of knowledge about populations. The categories become the “targets for administrative, legal, economic, or electoral policy”. Chatterjee details the politics of this history impressively, discussing the implications of colonial classification systems on the bureaucracy of the modern Indian nation-state.

The rationalized nature of discussion surrounding migrant presence, which at its heart features the counting, classifying, and prediction of demographic trends, helps to shape the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a geopolitical imagination, which interestingly, shapes Korea as a post-industrial country, which too is finally seeing the demographic effects of globalization and transnational migration. In other words, Korea is experiencing the privilege of the burden of foreign settlements and must now too grapple with the question of moral, humanitarian and multicultural conduct.

Multiculturalism as Neoliberal Policy

It was around the same time as my trip that the Korean National Assembly passed the first official attempt to establish a comprehensive, overarching framework for migrant incorporation titled the Basic First Plan for Immigration Policy (2008-2012). The act was compiled by the Ministry of Justice, and outlines a comprehensive plan to execute the following four goals: “(1) enhancing national competitiveness with a proactive openness policy; (2) pursing quality social integration; (3) enforcing immigration laws; and (4) protecting human rights of foreigners”. The plan requires that national, municipal and local governments along with a designated Foreigner Policy Committee coordinate all policies

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197 See Chatterjee, p. 37.
regarding foreign residents. 612.7 billion won (approx. 600 million U.S. dollars) has been
dedicated to this plan for program funding and assigning various ministries.

This attempt to legislate the combination of open-market competitiveness,
immigration enforcement and the human rights protection gets more specifically at the
developmental priorities upon which Korean multicultural politics hangs. The policy
framework declares Korea’s transformation into a multicultural society, which must
accommodate the fact of a diversified foreign resident population, low Korean birth rates and
rapid population aging, a rapid increase in immigration, and the climbing number of
“multicultural families” with children. The new “domestic scene” thus demands that Korea
move from a “control-oriented” national security focus to a focus that recognizes the
“strategic value of foreign workers…[and] tap[s] into the talent and capital of the rest of the
world”. 199

The strategic aspect of the plan refers to a more purposeful and comprehensive
folding together of measures that are regulative and extractive in scope, as well as benevolent
and culturally informed. More precisely, the strategy of the plan requires “securing growth
potential by attracting highly skilled foreigners”; “attracting manpower from overseas for the
balanced development of the national economy [and] to reflect corporate demand and social
costs”; and “creating a foreigner-friendly living environment” by pursuing “high-quality
social integration” for migrants, “multicultural children” and Korean diaspora. Finally, the
plan calls for the strict enforcement of immigration laws, including the reduction of
overstayers, improved capacity to “investigate illegal status and crack down on violators”,

“reinforcing the system of managing the foreign population in the ghetto”, border control and “securing solid citizens” (among other points).200

In the summer of 2007, I traveled to visit the “Village Without Borders” (gukgyung ubnun ma-ul) in Wongukdong, a district area within Ansan201. The “Village Without Borders” is comprised of a sizeable number of neighborhood square blocks, which is dotted with a handful of government and non-government offices including an industrial assistance office, a health clinic, several churches, a human rights consultation center, a women’s center, a trade union office, and shelters that run “multicultural” programs for migrant laborers living in that area. There is also a palpable police presence. Wongokdong is located near a free trade zone and has attracted migrants from all over Asia and beyond to work menial, unskilled factory jobs. Wongokdong is considered to be one of the most foreign populated areas in Korea, visible by the number of Chinese, Bangladeshi, Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian (among others) restaurants, mom and pop stores and even mosques tucked between Korean-owned businesses. The foreign population actually exceeds Wongokdong’s Korean residents, this transformation having taken place over the last 20 years or so.

Wongokdong is a cultural and economic microcosm within Ansan, which illustrates how multicultural politics play out within the context of Korea’s neoliberal globalization. I was confronted by several competing visions of multiculturalism in Wongokdong, which mirror the rather paradoxical list of goals that constitute the First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy. For instance, at the time of my visit, the Industrial Assistance Office was working to “redevelop” Ansan by building a district for migrant workers outside of Wongokdong. While the Industrial Assistance Office provided certain institutional supports for migrants – mainly

200 Ibid.
201 Ansan is a city that grew out of Seoul’s urban sprawl and industrial expansion.
handling worker-industry relations in the name of multiculturalism - it also made broader
claims to work for the safety of Wongokdong’s community, implying a correlation between
the removal of migrants and the safety of all parties concerned in Wongokdong. This
situation resonates with the structure of the Basic Plan for Immigration Policy, which
crystallizes the relationship between the ethic of multiculturalism and spirit of neoliberal
development - that is, the tendency of multicultural discourse to frame the biopolitical
management wielded as a course of neoliberal restructuring to be humanitarian, or at the very
least considerate of migrant life.202 This paradoxical tension speaks to the theme of
“instrumentality” that informs the axiom of human rights discourse - the liberal assumption
that human beings are rational, free, and bearers of inviolable rights. With this assumption of
the human in tact, abuse can be co-opted by more tempered claims to reasoned
instrumentality, so long as human rights protections are in place to regulate the natural, self-
interested and pragmatic nature of human relations.203

Hanyang University in Ansan opposed this campaign because such a move worked to
effectively isolate and ghettoize foreigners. The removal of migrants to outside the borders of
Wongokdong went against their vision of a more socially inclusive multiculturalism, which
at minimum required the geographical co-existence of foreigners and migrants to curtail
Korean ethnic nationalism and generate tolerance for the foreign. The Village Without
Borders shared in this perspective, as can be gleaned from the programs they run in the name
of building cross-cultural understanding. Sports games, language classes, cooking
workshops, integrated church services, and cultural festivals, for example, are sponsored by

203 Pheng Cheah, Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitan and Human Rights (Harvard University Press, 2006),
p. 4.
the Village Without Borders to bring Korean and migrant residents into contact and communication.

The response of the Village Without Borders and Hanynag University speak to the ways in which multiculturalism is articulated as a moral imperative also. This viewpoint is generally accompanied by the argument that multiculturalism must be a solution to accommodate the current era of international cooperation and the diminishing integrity of ethnic nationalism as a means of nation building. In this case, multiculturalism is an ethical-political movement that gathers momentum from the much-made-of democracy movement that historically preceded it and the advent of state-led globalization. Several NGO officers I spoke with in Wongokdong’s Village Without Borders and the Daegu Women’s Association said their interest in foreign labor rights grew out of Korea’s labor movement and their very own participation in the democratic movement. They also situated the development of churches as NGOs in the context of their involvement in social work, particularly in the “new education” movement, which targeted minjung farmers and laborers in the rural areas for developmental reform in the 1970s and 80s. The history of multicultural activism can be traced to national and sub-national reform efforts that attempted to make developmental progress by reconditioning national psyches. Many of the same actors, church groups and NGOs, serve as mouthpieces for the promotion of multiculturalism, either as an instrument of social reform to generate a national ethos of tolerance and respect for human rights, or as an instrument that stretches the reach of state and non-state institutions to incorporate foreigners into the permanence of everyday living. Citizenship, representation in labor unions, welfare services and a host of political privileges are frequently debated as globally responsible

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204 Interview with Village Without Borders in July 2007 and Daegu Women’s Association staff members in June 2008.
solutions to eventually bring about a socio-cultural change in a country struggling to overcome its ethno-centrism.\textsuperscript{205}

One must question the logic and therefore effectiveness of the argument that protests racial discrimination against foreigners and the resurgence of Korean nationalism in the normative language of globalization. An example from a Joint Committee on Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK) report proclaims that Koreans must recognize the fact that migrant workers have “become our neighbors” and “must find ways to live together harmoniously and overcome the existing system that unfairly persecutes and oppresses migrant workers…such steps will ensure better ties with foreign nations and contribute to a smooth globalization process already in the making”.\textsuperscript{206} Interestingly, Yoon et al.’s (2008) interpretation of the 2007 Korean General Social Survey data suggests that South Koreans think civic factors are more important than ethnic factors as qualifications of Korean national identity, but the data in actuality demonstrate that ethnic factors are equally important as civic ones, and between 2003 and 2007, ethnic factors became more important to respondents.\textsuperscript{207} This time period witnessed significant increases in migration and the related proliferation of official multiculturalism in Korea.

In fact, according to Korea Times editorials, nationalist backlash is growing. Objections to migrant presence resemble familiar arguments about job stealing, rising crime, and environmental abuse (littering, defiling land). A Masters thesis produced through the

\textsuperscript{205} Also, see Kim Choong Soon. \textit{The Voices of Migrant Brides: The Roots and Development of Multiculturalism in Korea.} (Plymuth: Alta Mira Press, 2011), xxi. Kim’s ethnographic work finds that Koreans deploy the concept of multiculturalism as a “counterconcept” to the idea of a single ethnic nationalism.


\textsuperscript{207} See In-Jin Yoon, Young-Ho Song, and Young-Joon Bae. “South Koreans’ Attitudes toward Foreigners, Minorities and Multiculturalism”. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Boston, MA, August 1-4, 2008. Also see Michael Olneck. “Facing Multiculturalism’s challenges in Korean education and society”.

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Seoul University’s anthropology department chronicled Korean perceptions regarding migrant workers in the district of Wongokdong, Ansan city. The authors cited “urban fear” as prevalent among Korean residents, fostered by media stories that disproportionately criminalize migrants and the palpable presence of immigration police on the streets.\(^\text{208}\) When I walked the streets of Wongokdong, I tried to engage small business owners/workers on the topic of foreigners in Wongokdong (markets, drug stores, etc.). Similar tales were conveyed about the transformation of Wongokdong from a once predominately Korean town to one infiltrated by foreigners, effectively becoming ghettoized. Complaints about rising crime (theft), alcohol-induced violence and trash-littered streets featured in their stories. I was told by both a drugstore owner and an NGO worker from Village Without Borders that migrants in the town were exhibiting behaviors that Koreans “used to” – throwing trash on the streets and being ignorant of environmental hygiene.\(^\text{209}\) This explanation further highlights the centrality of development theory in Korean specific race thinking.

Anti-immigrant websites and online organizations are also responsible for a growing percentage of opposition campaigns. Some of them include the Pan-National Alliance against Foreign Workers, the Alliance Against Multiculturalism, the International Marriage Damage and Prevention Center, and the Citizens’ Alliance Against Foreign Workers.\(^\text{210}\)


A recurring theme throughout the posts on one of the websites, which I was able to access without an account, was the fraud foreigners perpetuate against Korean society with claims to higher education and proficiency in English - the result of this fraud being that foreigners are stealing jobs and women from Korean men. These comments were particularly aimed at South Asians whose colonial pasts with Great Britain gave them cover to make such claims about their credentialing.

University in Pakistan or Bangladesh is the equivalent to Korean high school, but foreigners say they are college graduates to get Korean women [author’s translation].

It is said that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are justified as immigrants [in Korea] because of their college degrees and proficiencies in English. But, if you listen to them closely, their grammar is incorrect, level of vocabulary is low and they don’t use correct terminology [author’s translation].

One can glean a gendered insecurity about the debunking of Korea’s developmental authority, which is indexed by education level and English proficiency levels. This insecurity is contextualized within the choking of employment opportunities for educated, skilled Koreans, and I have been told that this resentment is particularly high amongst men who feel they gave their lives as college students to the democratic movement, which strongly

211 Accessed from Citizen’s Alliance Against Foreign Workers website www.njustice.org
212 Accessed from Citizen’s Alliance Against Foreign Workers website www.njustice.org
advocated for the protection of domestic labor. These types of complaints are growing
despite the fact that the majority of migrants in Korea are classified as unskilled, and
therefore do not compete with the Korean lower or middle-income classes for employment.
This does not mean, however, that hostile attitudes towards migrants are not exacerbated by
growing wealth disparities and socio-economic polarization that has particularly resulted
from Korea’s engagement with neoliberalization. Standing in solidarity with the protestors on
Wall Street, crowds occupied Yeoui-do (island) where the Korean stock exchange is located.
Testimony taken from one protestor sums up the strife of low and middle-income Koreans
who have been victimized by acts of privatization, unstable job markets, inflation and
unregulated financial predation.

In Korea, there are plenty of students who are killing themselves for the bank
debt, from skyrocketing tuition fee, plenty of seniors whose life-time savings
are gone to the air for the criminal activities of banks, plenty of workers who
get laid-off for private equity funds that toy with factories for squeezing fabulous
sum of profit. But the politicians and government are doing nothing
[Translation: Korea Times]²¹³

Private and state-funded researchers have documented the trend of declining happiness in
Korean life, which is linked to the country’s widening income gap since the Asian financial
crisis and subsequent neoliberal restructuring at the hands of the International Monetary
Fund. The more recent collapse of Lehman Brothers and the global recession that has
followed has exacerbated the financial inequality and social immobility in Korean society.²¹⁴

The civil society/activist culture that hangs its politics on the discursive axiom of
human rights runs up against competing desires – the condoning of Korea’s current capitalist
expansion and economic competitiveness on the one hand, and the desire for human rights

²¹³ Kim Tong-hyung. “Inequality Stretches Social Rift: Yeouido Protesters Frustrated By Economic Divide”.
²¹⁴ Lee Hyo-Sik, March 13, 2011.
protections despite the uneven integration of diasporic and foreign communities into Korea’s expanding economic block. Multiculturalism as a state response to neoliberal rationality and as political-ethical imperative often occupy two sides of the same proverbial coin. As such, reasons for incorporating foreigners into Korean economic and political life gets shorn up as the moral calling of the nation. Park Hyun Ok highlights this tendency particularly well in what she calls “neoliberal democracy.” She ties immigration legislation to a politics of overcoming in her discussion of the Overseas Korean Act (OKA) and its impact on the state of democratic politics in South Korea. By treating ethnically Korean Chinese as diaspora, the Overseas Korean Act attempts the completion of the ethnic Korean nation and unresolved colonial history. Park claims this move is reductionist in nature as it accomplishes more than anything their incorporation into the building block of Korean economic development. The outcome of the state’s project is that of neoliberal democracy. Political and legal initiatives (by the state or as extensions of the state) that manage populations to the forces of economic globalization get instantiated within a politics of overcoming past wrongs (colonialism, authoritarian regime abuses), such that market initiatives thrive on the desire to democratically resolve historical injustices. OKA simultaneously fosters national unity by granting overseas Koreans legal privileges in Korea as well as help them settle in their communities abroad.

The objectives that reconfigure ethnic relations are inextricably linked to market principles, which is revealed as much by an official government newsletter released in 1999, which Park sites: OKA, “aims to expand and globalization the living boundary of overseas Koreans, in the era of global economic system, by facilitating their home visits and economic
participation in reviving the Korean economy”. What Park notices in her analysis of the Overseas Korean Act notes the injection of this particular strain of democratic politics into other legal realms and ideological constructs that manage the effects of Korea’s globalization initiatives, including those dealing with non-ethnic Koreans and migrant labor.

Park’s observations about the role of democracy in the symbolic nullification of capitalist violence can be stretched to make sense of the form and function of multicultural politics in Korea. Her politics of transcendence is further elucidated when we insert Zizek’s reflections on the operations of philosophy in moments of supposed historical change. Drawing on Lacan, Zizek might point out that what matters to the Korean participants here is “experiencing the situation as open”, to participate in the seeming passage from one stage of politics to another – from a national to a multicultural one. And the network of NGOs, churches, and state agencies acts on behalf of Korean society to produce what Lacan calls the discourse of the analyst, the aim of multicultural discourse being to produce the master-signifier and to render proof of its produced nature. The declaration of a multicultural Korea opens up the possibility of witnessing and participating in a new era of politics.

The power of the declaration that multiculturalism signifies a new era of politics – or the assertion of historical transcendence from a less diverse, less just national society to a more diverse, more just one, recalibrates the language of national historicity without relinquishing the goal of national development. The misinterpretation of the role of global capital is at work here. The declaration of multicultural diversity leaves the impression that global capital is a diversifying agent, when one might argue for its homogenizing effects. The

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216 Zizek, Tarrying with the Negative, pp. 1-2.
problematic of multiculturalism is that it imposes itself in the form of its opposite, “of the massive presence of capitalism as universal world system”. 217 This is evident in multiculturalists’ continuous invocation of segyehwa (globalization) as the enabling agent of Korea’s diversity, tolerance for difference and the moral impetus for new social, ethical projects.

And even as citizenship and economic participation are being linked (decoupling ethnicity and citizenship) for marriage migrants, their contributions are thanked with the benevolence of Korea’s state-sponsored assimilation agenda, which aims to integrate foreigners into a Korean way of national/patriarchal life. Stories of assimilation abound in state and NGO publications, in which members of multicultural families (read foreign woman who married a Korean man) that commonly advance through a three-stage developmental process: “arrival to Korea”, “struggle to assimilate”, and “happy acclimation”. In one publication titled The Stories of Multicultural Families produced by the NGO Village Without Borders, stories with titles such as: “As I live the Korean dream”; “As I think of happy times”; “Learning Korean”; “Starting Over Again”; “My love, My Marriage, and my Children”; “Introducing my family” and “The people that bloom like flowers to me” and so on, abound. 218 What is more, the state’s assimilation solution preempts ways that migrants can come to understand the meaning of their labor for Korea’s economy. Rather than seeing the ways in which their transnational, “flexible” labor disrupts Korean ethno-nationality, they are most times compelled to commit themselves as inflexible citizens to the South Korean

nation-state.\textsuperscript{219} This inflexibly is compounded by the inconvenience that assimilation is always already impossible event, as the very logic multicultural governance depends upon the separation of ethnic specificities to a national majority. Judith Butler writes about the politics of recognition and potential for processes of liberation to \textit{undo} or restrict in unforeseen ways the personhood that is promised by those very doctrines and political processes.\textsuperscript{220} This restriction occurs when recognition of human life becomes confined to certain forms of intelligibility, thereby limiting the ways subjects can represent themselves, traverse and live within political spaces. Ranciere echoes this precaution, characterizing democratic emancipation as an unpredictable process that, while redistributing a system of sensible coordinates, does not ensure the elimination of social inequalities of the previous, hegemonic order.\textsuperscript{221}

Assimilation programs have been the state solution for migrant wives, as the coherence of the family patriarchal unit is at stake. However, non-reproductive migrant labor is committed to a different trajectory of economic practice, leaning towards a politics of segregation. Strict labor laws that ban social entitlements and residency for foreign workers, coupled with a continued state insistence that South Korea is an ethnically homogenous nation, has served to racially segregate Korea’s current labor force. In fact social, economic and geographical isolation of migrants in ethnic enclaves, or what is often referred to as the “ghettos” is becoming more widely recognized as a symptom of segregationist policies and attitudes. The example of ethnic grouping on the NGO bus is in many ways a meta-level reflection of state approaches to naming, managing and engaging migrant groups. Such

\textsuperscript{219} See Aihwa Ong, \textit{Flexible Citizenship} (Durham, 1999) and Lee Jin-Kyung, \textit{Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea} (Minneapolis, 2010).


evidence gives insight to the simultaneous efforts to assimilate certain groups of migrants in the name of state interests, such as contract brides who marry into and reproduce Korean families, or ethnic-Koreans who have returned to the homeland from living in the U.S., China and the former Manchuria. The vision for assimilation is very limited in gendered, class-based and racialized ways that also work in the name of producing ontological hierarchies with Koreanness as an identity in relation to “lesser” multi-ethnicities.

The ethnic proximity of extra-territorial bodies to Koreanness based on their historical relationships to the nation as well as the economic utility of foreign bodies to national development are prime factors in the production and revision of nationality and immigration laws, such as the Overseas Korean Act. That is to say, Koreans who have since emigrated to and acquired citizenship in developed countries like the United State or Canada are privileged above other categories of immigrants, including Koreans who emigrated out of necessity to China during the period of Japanese colonialism. As such, the application of legal conditions that privilege ethnicity over nationality (in the case of the former) or nationality over ethnicity (in the case of the latter) has much to do with a vision for a “Global Korea”, that valuates the national belonging of bodies based on economic potentiality, a logic informed by the geopolitical biases and preferences.

Termed “overseas compatriots” by the 1999 Overseas Korean Act, Koreans emigrants with foreign nationalities were granted special visa status as “overseas compatriots”, including freedom of employment and economic activity, with access to property, national health insurance and pensions. These privileges have much to do with encouraging the return of educated, skilled foreign-Korean nationals to contribute to the development of the Korean economy. The ability of the Korean-Chinese, or joseonjok, to claim Korean nationality and
enjoy similar privileges has been in legal contention for many years because they had not had their Korean nationality ascertained before acquiring Chinese nationality.\textsuperscript{222} Their exclusion from the privileges that other “ethnic-Koreans”, who had Korean nationality and renounced it or who never had it (e.g. second generation Korean-Americans), is based on a legal technicality that was not in force during the time of Korean emigration to China.

This geopolitical logic is also evident in the hierarchy of other migrant classes, who can make no prior claims to Korean nationality or ethnicity. Strictly tied to the purpose of the labor market and to temporary sojourn, “foreigners” have experienced varying treatments on account of ethnic origin under both the industrial trainee system prior to 2004, and under the current Employee Permit System. While the physical presence of migrants in Korea is invoked as an indication of multicultural transformation, government policy by-in-large rationalizes migrant labor as an ends for meeting national economic needs, invoking the “racial state” thesis.\textsuperscript{223} This “label” makes more sense in the context of the fact that most of Korea’s current laws regarding migrant presence have been inherited from Japanese colonialism or borrowed from contemporary Japan.\textsuperscript{224} Chapter One outlined much of what constituted Japanese colonial rule in Korea, paying emphasis to the antagonistic co-emergence of both Korean national and Japanese imperial identities, which developed in tension with particular and universal constructs of manifest history, biologic notions of blood purity, and lineage as proof of nation. Chapter two also highlighted many of the policy campaigns in post-colonial, post-civil war (Korean war) re/construction that worked to fuse a very specific construct of a Korean, patriarchal national subjectivity to the privileges of

\textsuperscript{223} See David Theo-Goldberg, Omi and Winant and Lee Jin-Kyung.
\textsuperscript{224} Lee Jin-Kyung (2010), p. 188.
citizenship, family rights, education, military participation and the spoils of economic
development.\textsuperscript{225}

The themes that can be extracted from my field research experience when considered
in tandem with national policy agendas are multiple and conveys a sense of the adaptable
nature of multicultural politics in Korea: as 1) a policy instrument fundamental to
postcolonial development and reinvigoration of the state and state-like authorities; 2) a
regime of “non-ideology”\textsuperscript{226} that resides over the biopolitical management of “the foreign”,
and 3) that which sutures the dissonance emerging from the paradoxical pursuit of open
market policies, strict immigration enforcement and human rights protection. Indeed, the
deployment of multiculturalism discourse in Korean national politics over the last half-
decade lends a sense of its broad and encompassing political power through which all sorts of
national agendas are shored up – from immigration and international trade to cultural
diplomacy. This is reflected in the quasi-humorous statement made by a prominent NGO
leader and activist for migrant laborer rights, whom I interviewed: “[In Korea] everything is
cause for multicultural celebration. Even when foreigners must leave the country, their
departure is celebrated as a multicultural event.”\textsuperscript{227} This statement alludes to the “catch-all”
function of multiculturalism as an over-coded political discourse rooted in nationalist
functionality.

In my discussions with NGO workers in Ansan\textsuperscript{228}, multiculturalism was described as
both a “necessary” and “natural” solution to the “problems” facing Korea, and the only

\textsuperscript{225} Indeed comparative studies indicate that the privileging of diaspora who return from first world countries is
hardly exceptional.

\textsuperscript{226} See Zizek on “non-ideology” in \textit{Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology}. The
struggle for ideological and political hegemony is always the struggle for the appropriation of the terms, which
are ‘spontaneously’ experienced as ‘apolitical’, as transcending political boundaries (p. 30).

\textsuperscript{227} Interview with Oh Kyung-Suk, NGO Activist and Sociology Ph.D., Ansan, July 2007.

\textsuperscript{228} Interviews with two program staff at the Village Without Borders, Ansan, July 2007.
question was a matter of how to go about deploying it as a movement or set of practices. This explanation is offered as the basis for the shift towards multiculturalism by state representatives, scholars – proponents and critics alike. Multiculturalism in this case has been thrust upon a reticent Korea as the most viable option for dealing with the material and structural changes of its economy, while sticking on the path of democratic rule and modern governance. Multiculturalism is developmental imperative to be sure, as it is what other post-industrialized countries “do” eventually and inevitably. The following opening line of a paper abstract on Korean multiculturalism clinches the common historically-determined framing of this phenomenon:

As a result of international migration and the growth of racial/ethnic minorities, South Korean society has entered the first phase of multicultural society. Because multicultural values that acknowledge and respect cultural diversity and minority groups’ rights are an important pre-condition of a multicultural society, we examined the current situation of South Koreans’ attitudes toward foreigners, minorities, and multiculturalism and their willingness to support the government’s policies to support racial/ethnic and cultural minorities…

From this viewpoint, multiculturalism is approached as an already rendered “fact” of society, rather than a political project. Through a calculative problematization of migration, multicultural societies are rendered inevitable as a symptom of the age of late capital. And then borrowing from scholars like Will Klymincka, scholars and activists problematize Korea’s ability to cope with the fact of a disrupted ethno-national populace as a matter of striking a delicate balance between the politics of identity and the politics of civic rights and citizenship – keeping putative categories of the liberal imagination and ethnic nationalism simultaneously alive and well.

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230 See Stam and Shohat, p. 295.
Narrations of the historical inevitability of multiculturalism have co-evolved with other narrative dimensions, which calculate the rational utility of migrants to national futures. Put another way, multiculturalism is explained and rationalized in a variety of ways in Korea that shore up the developmental imperative. It is first and foremost conceptualized as a state response to the inevitabilities of economic liberalization - a response that demands policy initiatives to respond to the problem of an aging population, labor gaps (low-skilled and reproductive) in Korea and the influx of migrants to fill them.\textsuperscript{231} The Ministry of Justice refers to the process of conferring of Korean citizenship on migrants who marry Korean citizens as “securing human resources”.\textsuperscript{232} A series of “attitude” and “conflicting consciousness” surveys on the topic of foreigners (comparing 2003 and 2007 responses) revealed that in general Koreans are becoming more open to the idea of immigrants living in South Korea. Interestingly, whereas it hadn’t featured in the 2003 response pool, the condition of immigrant contribution to Korean development featured in the 2007 response pool. Other conditions under which migrants are tolerated are in cases where 1) they do not become a sizeable portion of the population (that they remain “a small and powerless minority group”); 2) they respect and practice Korean custom and tradition (implying cultural assimilation, which the authors noted as differing from ethnic assimilation); and 3) they do not own property in Korea.\textsuperscript{233} This trend in responses suggest that, as long as migrants do not interfere with national development and culture, their presence is less problematic. In an interview addressing the adaptation of Korean small business owners to the foreign client

\textsuperscript{231} According to Johnson-Hanks (2008), the representation of demographic transition is usually represented as a consequence of modernity under some guise, be it the changing modes of production, rising aspirations for consumption, increased secularization and individualism, or changing conception of sex, gender and family.
\textsuperscript{232} See www.immigration.co.kr
\textsuperscript{233} See Yoon, Song and Bae. “South Koreans’ Attitudes Toward Foreigners, Minorities and Multiculturalism” (2008).
population in Ansan\textsuperscript{234}, a sociology professor at Korea University was quoted as saying, “if Korea fails to brace for multiracial families, mixed-blood children and foreigners, it will suffer a huge social cost in the future…as multicultural families are set to increase in number amid the era of globalization, the country must proactively develop a system to make the most of them.”\textsuperscript{235} Familiar alarmist sentiment aside, this quote discloses the nationalist trajectory through which migrants have been made intelligible as economic potentiality. It also indexes decades of economic violence committed for the “miracle” of South Korean development, and the meaning of labor to national economic development and ascendancy as regional icon.

\textit{Labor, Ethnicized Pasts and Presents}

The reading of migrants as economic potentiality indexes the hermeneutics of labor within South Korea’s developmental trajectory. The collusion between state/government agencies, civil society groups and capital recognizable in contemporary Korea can be read as a continuation of the era of rapid industrialization. Korea’s emergence as a “subempire” since the late 1980s has transformed the country from being a provider of transnational labor during a period of industrialization, to a country that imports labor from other Asian countries in service of multinational capital.\textsuperscript{236} Whereas in the past, conglomerates abstracted labor from domestic populations, today they work with small and medium industries to import and govern foreign migrant labor.\textsuperscript{237} Both eras of labor suppression are intimately tied to the narrative of economic development and the need for cheap labor supply. Throughout

\textsuperscript{234} Ansan is a city that grew out of Seoul’s urban sprawl and industrial expansion.\textsuperscript{235} “Wave of Multiculturalism Spreading Korea”. \textit{English News for Migrants}. 2/3/2009. Retrieved from \url{www.migrant.kr}\textsuperscript{236} Lee Jin-Kyung, 2010, p. 185.\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
the 60s, 70s and even 80s, state authoritarian rule derived executive laws that severely curtailed labor rights, including the right to strike, organize, and engage in collective bargaining.  

The history of migrant labor in Korea has been particularly fraught with conflict; critical voices from within and outside have widely accused government policy, corporations and other employers as arrogant human rights abusers. In 1987, shortly after the inception of Roh Tae-woo’s eight point plan of democratic reforms, over 45,000 migrant workers had settled in Korea to fill low-skilled labor shortages; over 90 percent of these workers had entered illegally. The government devised and enacted deportation policies shortly thereafter, which led to the burgeoning of labor advocacy organizations mentioned earlier, who assisted migrant workers with protests and advocacy services. In the mid-1990s, the Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea (JCKM) was founded, which functioned like an umbrella organization for migrant advocacy groups, lobbying the National Assembly for labor rights. Significantly, they drafted a bill in 1997 to legalize the status of migrant workers, which after being initially opposed by vested parties and organizations, was redrafted and passed as a proposal for the formation of a two-year trainee program. The trainee system was then replaced by the Employment Permit System (EPS), which is a guest worker program proposed in 2004.

The EPS presented several problems for migrant workers. EPS granted foreign workers three-year visas that could be renewed for an additional two years. The challenges of EPS is that it constructed foreign labor as even more temporary, and therefore potentially illegal, than in the past. While the EPS granted legal stays to foreign workers for temporary

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238 Ibid, p. 25.
239 This year (and the Roh Tae-woo presidency) is nationally recognized as the official beginning of democracy in Korea.
periods, it only applied to those who have lived in Korea for less than four years as of March 2003 (Seoul and Han, 2004). Back in 2004, this meant that over half of the then 420,000 foreigners who had entered Korea through the previous trainee program had become illegal.\textsuperscript{240} A brief amnesty period was called in which these foreign workers were allowed to surface from hiding and volunteer for their own deportation. Since then, the Immigration Bureau and Justice Ministry have intensely cracked-down on illegal workers and their employers, conducting raids and using brute police force. “…illegal workers and their employers who had been in Korea for over four years were immediately deported, while thousands more have gone into hiding. Reports that many were summarily beaten by immigration officials were rejected by the Ministry of Justice as misinformed, and calls for a formal investigation were ignored”.\textsuperscript{241}

Today, many low skilled migrant workers are tied to their employer and face restrictions in changing jobs. Migrant workers on the most common three-year working visa must have their contract signed each year, and need their employer’s permission to leave and find another job. In many cases employees keeps their workers’ passport and documentation, making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.\textsuperscript{242}

The racialized subordination of current migrant labor reinvigorates and inflects a particular global imaginary that resonates with past logics that militarized and subordinated various domestic labor markets for state purposes. Over the last 50 years, domestic labor markets – military labor, economic labor, sexual labor – have been subordinated to patriarchal developmental agendas, as well as made conditional to U.S. Cold War/capitalist ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region throughout Korea’s rapid industrialization. Not only has

\textsuperscript{240} Employee Trade Union publication, 2005.
\textsuperscript{242} Amnesty International, December 8, 2009.
Korean economic development and militarization heavily subsidized by the U.S. (protectionist trade policies, Status of Forces Agreement, Korea’s involvement in the Vietnam War, etc.), but the U.S. has largely been considered an ally in Korea’s developmental pursuits. The activities required to maintain this trajectory of capitalist development have required patriarchal aggression – war-making, labor suppression, sexual/ized labor, – all of which appealed U.S. interests and primed conditions for Korea’s emergence as a sub-imperial power. The logic of developmental history is doubly manifest in the national narrative of Korea’s “ascendancy”, in which imperial authority was directly tied to Korea’s official record of national achievements and patriarchal validation. As such, meaning making around the arrival of migrants is largely restricted to an understanding of and long-time national obsession with Korea’s rise through the ranks of developmental world history, from a once-colonized, splintered, latent nation to an industrialized capitalist democracy plugged into the global economy as a center of transnational labor and capital.

What can be characterized as the worlding of Korean labor – of military labor, economic labor, sexual labor – is being recast to incorporate migrant labor. What subsists at the heart of this vision is expectation of ethnicized pasts to play out in the subimperial present; that is, Korea is currently re-witnessing its own developmental history from the vantage point of host. Migrant presences in Korea serve to affirm the developmental telos, and the racial sensibilities required for it to “play out” as a natural, determined and inevitable symptom of world history. As such, the value of Koreanness becomes recontextualized within the developmental telos as well. The national terrain is reconfigured geopolitically, relating

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243 This is a general statement, as the narrative of the U.S. as friend and ally became more controversial as domestic labor gained momentum, springing off-shoots of other pro-nationalist, anti-authoritarian movements that preached self-reliance, socialism and other anti-imperial political ideas in the 1970s and 80s.
Korean identity to other *ethnies* vis-à-vis their underdeveloped origins. This is the basis upon which Korean multiculturalism is continually renewed. The practice (humanitarian, economic, moral) of civilizing and/or otherwise assimilating ‘others’ to Korean national life is also the assured means to securing their difference and specificity in relation to Koreanness.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has charted some of the ways in which Korean multiculturalism responds to and is provoked by neoliberal globalization. It asserts that many of the state and/or state-backed multicultural policies and programs that attend to the lives of foreigners hang on the developmental imperative of the postcolonial nation. To recapitulate, while migrant brides are considered a category of foreigners to be culturally assimilated for building national families, migrant laborers are generally treated as temporary sojourners. Meanwhile returning Korean diaspora are valued as permanent contributors to the economy, being granted citizenship and other incentivizing provisions to remain in the country.

Even as Korea responds to the demands of labor shortages and other ‘market needs’, the presence of foreigners/migrants in Korea has not necessarily challenged the meaning or power of Korean ethnic homogeneity to postcolonial nation building. Rather, Korean ethnic homogeneity is being remade to work in the name of state and capital, through biopolitical practices that “tolerate”, classify, enumerate and relation “other” Asian ethnicities to Koreanness as a dominant identity construct. Such biopolitical management practices index an engagement with the developmental psyche, which geopolitically tags and devalues certain bodies as lesser within a particular imagination of international relations – an imagination built on racial knowledge and hierarchies. Korea’s own developmental history -
as exporter of cheap labor to the world, as commodifier of women and sexual labor for imperial powers, as proxy for and economic benefactor of U.S. military pursuits in the Asia-Pacifc – bares upon the ways in which Korean multicultural politics are deployed. Some of the interviews conducted with NGO workers and those directly involved in multicultural programs suggest an expected recapitulation of the developmental telos. That is, an expectation exists for ethnicized pasts to unfold in the present, and that Korea is witnessing the history of its development from the temporal position of host/metropole. Koreanness can be viewed as an emerging identity construct that is discursively manufactured through the technologies of state multiculturalism, which is an enduring project of postcolonial development.
Chapter Four: Aesthetics of Hallyu and Shifting Postcolonial Subjectivities

Now it will no longer be possible to discuss a global issue without including Korea...[the ROK] is no longer on the periphery of Asia...[but the] center of the world.
- Lee Myung Bak, President of the Republic of Korea

[Global Korea will combine] the strengths of an advanced welfare economy and self-reliant defense capability with significant educational, cultural and artistic potential and is accordingly needed and respected by the international community. The pursuit of short term and piecemeal interests is not in keeping with the vision of Global Korea. Rather our national interests should be advanced under the framework of long-term comprehensive international relations.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, the Korean Wave (Hallyu) can be defined as Asia’s wave of nostalgia for an essentialized tradition, as Asia plunges headlong into the ocean of modernity, also known as Westernization. Global technology allows a modernizing Asia to view its neighbor South Korea’s period and contemporary films and television serials, which formulaically feather romance amidst the conservative social milieu of a Confucian, patriarchal legacy. Far more than a mere escapist fantasy, the Korean Wave’s melodramatic, repetitious plot captures the quotidian life and longings of its viewers.
- Sheng-mei Ma

In December 2007, the Seoul Economic Daily published a story titled, “The Second Korea Wave Hits India”. The story reported that a village in the Indian state of Nagaland, had invited the crew of Korean “Arirang” TV to attend their Hornbill Festival. This invitation, however, was not so that Arirang TV could report on the Festival. Rather it was proposed that the meeting could facilitate an opportunity for the people of Nagaland to know more about Korea. The basis for this invitation was attributed to the popularity and influence of Hallyu, or “Korean Wave” a phrase initially coined in China which refers to the impact of exported Korean popular culture, including TV dramas, films, other commercialized products, aesthetic trends and value systems all over Asia. Hallyu, spurred by TV dramas, films, and other popular culture products, has generated a great deal of industry and desire around various cosmetic procedures, clothing lines, dietary and dating regimes and, in broader terms, transitions Korean identity into grander narratives of middle-upper class
“cosmopolitan” living, individual happiness, and the virtues of modern consumption. The story reports:

On the day our team from Arirang TV was scheduled to visit, a state elementary school closed for the day so the children could take part. The children showered us with questions: "How can we visit Korea?" "How long does it take to get to Korea?" "Can you invite Rain and Boa to come here for us?" Because of the simple fact that we were Koreans, they asked for our autographs, hugged us, and held on to our arms. The popularity of "Tell Me" by the Wonder Girls had reached them also. And saying they had learned the song from the miniseries "Full House," some launched into a rendition of the "Three Bears" song performed by the heroine of the drama, doing all the actions as well. Most of the children there dream of studying in Korea one day, and some have gone to Calcutta, where many Koreans live, to take lessons in the Korean language. At the Hornbill Festival, we were greatly moved to see the residents of Nagaland waving the Korean flag and singing the traditional folk song "Arirang." The adults seemed particularly interested in Korea's economic development, lifestyle and the stylishness of Korean women. A group of Nagaland volunteers operated the Korean pavilion during the festival, and when they gave out Korean posters or CDs as lucky draw prizes, many of those who didn't win asked if there was any way they could buy the same things. They also waited in long queues to have their photo taken with a model wearing the traditional Korean dress, hanbok.

The popularity of Korean cultural icons and lifestyle translates into a broader interest in “Korea’s brilliant economic and cultural growth”, according to the story. Nagaland has been designated a special economic zone by India’s central government and is a site for a series of urban planning projects and has been included in the development of trade routes that connect the northeastern parts of India. Apparently, Korea was chosen as the “benchmark” for developmental standards in Nagaland.

This story is one of many that features Korea at the center of admiration and emulation and generally promotes the idea of a loosely braided, and perhaps shaky, regionalism that corresponds Korea’s rise to economic power with the emergence of regional ethos of transnational cooperation. These kinds of quasi news/reality shows are very common, and usually follow a pattern in which Korean celebrities, as representatives of the nation, travel to less developed countries to report back on the impact Korea is having in the world. Special features on Korean foreign aid, humanitarian relief, NGO volunteerism, financial
investments and educational initiatives abound for domestic consumption, tying cultural marketing with diplomatic initiatives.

*Hallyu* also promotes domestic tourism, which merges “culture” into the narrative of Korean modernity and global competition. Take the *Hallyu* Dream Festival national branding initiative, for example. It consists of a yearlong (2011-2012) schedule of popular culture events aimed at promoting Korea as an international tourist destination. The overview page of the festival’s website states the following as its purpose: “Korea wave dream festival advertises Gyeongbuk as well as Gyeongju worldwide, prepares new turning point of competitiveness reinforcement in Korean tourism, reconsiders awareness and promotes vitalization of Korean tourism”.

The *Hallyu* Dream Festival is supported by public and private institutions, such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Korea Tourism Organization, KoreaEntertainment Producers Association, Korea Visiting Year Committee, the Gyeongsanbuk-do Tourism Association, the city government of Gyeongju and the regional government of Gyeongsanbuk-do.

The *Hallyu* Dream Festival is being held in the city of Gyeongju, the capital of the former Silla Dynasty. Gyeongju is considered the cultural center of Korea and has been designated a UNESCO world heritage site for its palaces, Buddhist temples, royal gravesites, ancient celestial navigation/astronomy towers and for preserving the cultural arts (e.g. traditional pottery cooperatives that support the local tourism industry). The popular culture events feature a mixture of film screenings, celebrity meet-and-greets, dancing, singing and dramatic acts that also incorporate ‘traditional’ displays of the Silla dynasty’s retrojected national prestige. The “Silla Culture Experience”, for example, is an event in which attendees visit cultural displays, stone rubbings, witness kite making, soap making and watch the

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244 See [www.hallyudreamfestival.or.kr](http://www.hallyudreamfestival.or.kr)
making of various earthenware artifacts. Traditional musical performances, parades (e.g. the “lamp walk”) and food events also lace the festival. Finally, an element of the “international” is incorporated into the festival, in which tour packages offer visits to the Gyeongju World Expo, wherein tourists (local and foreign) witness “World Street Performances” featuring “the exotic art performances of European streets”.\textsuperscript{245} Traditional culture, and the performance of it, is commodified for tourist consumption on the basis of its newfound legitimacy within the broader context Hallyu success. The Hallyu Dream Festival manufactures a desired gaze of the ‘global’ upon a re-imagined, reconfigured Korea.

Spivak once asked: “In what interest, to regulate what sort of relationships, is the globe evoked?” She posed this question as part of an inquiry into the imaginative role played by the “global” in narratives advanced by the proponents of financialization. As a scientific abstraction the “globe” is not something that can ever be experienced and therefore the only relationship that is accessible to the globe is through the gaze.\textsuperscript{246} This chapter reflects on the attendant function of the “global” in Hallyu (Korean Wave) aesthetic regimes. Hallyu, represented by TV dramas, films, and other popular culture products, has generated a great deal of industry and desire around various cosmetic procedures, clothing lines, dietary and dating regimes and, in broader terms, transitions Korean identity into grander narratives of middle-upper class “cosmopolitan” living, individual happiness, and the virtues of modern consumption, drawing on discursive scripts that sometimes mimic the ‘West’ but that also reinvent Korean tradition and ‘authenticity’. It is argued that the production of desire by Korea’s recent culture industry to consume products (narratives, images, cosmetic

\textsuperscript{245} See www.cultureexpo.or.kr
procedures, etc.) that promise ascension to high modernity capitalize upon the desire to revisit and transform colonial histories, mainly that of overcoming and challenging the ‘West’ as the central referent of modernity. More precisely, this chapter interrogates the production and rearrangement of postcolonial desire by attending to the ways in which the aesthetic regimes constituted by the (Hallyu) contributes to the scripting of a changing Korean historical subject vis-à-vis the mobilizing, tapping into and re-working of racial/geopolitical imaginaries and identity practices. The reworking of these racial imaginaries is rendered possible by the link forged between the mission of cultural diplomacy and national development within Korea’s current globalization mission.

This chapter begins by discussing the postcolonial contexts through which Hallyu emerged as an embodiment of industry subsidized by state government to advance “global” development agendas for the future of the nation. It then goes on to discuss the commercial forces that produce Hallyu as a series of hybrid, regional representational constructs and consumer products that simultaneously challenge notions of Western modernity and arrange for Korean positional superiority. Finally, the chapter renders an understanding of how Korean positional superiority is exercised through aesthetic engagements (social and spectacular) with the “foreign”.

**Hallyu and Cultural Diplomacy**

Culture has become one of Korea’s leading exports owing much to the lead taken by government to fund and foster a newly competitive industry that would take a lead role in developing Korea’s globalization program. In his 1998 inaugural address, former president Kim Dae Jung stated that:

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247 Postcolonial superiority is a concept invoked by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism.*
Diplomacy in the age of globalization will require a change in ways of thinking. The new ways of thinking must be different from those prevailing during the Cold War. Diplomacy in the 21st century will center around the **economy** and **culture**. We must keep expanding trade investment, tourism and cultural exchanges in order to make our way in the age of boundless competition, which will take place against a backdrop of cooperation.  

In light of the 1997 Asian financial crisis former president Kim Dae Jung wanted to re-secure the confidence of foreign direct investment by embracing the free market system. The International Monetary Fund had identified Korea’s “weaknesses” as related to its commercial banking sector, its deeply indebted conglomerates (*chaebol*), and the inadequate crisis management capabilities of its government. As a part of this administrative line, Kim changed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which symbolically conjoined diplomatic and economic initiatives.  

The seeds of the culture industry and *Hallyu* were sown in this period of uncertainty over how to manage the challenges of liberalizing markets and ensuing foreign competition. The Korean government began gradually lifting the long-time political ban on Japanese cultural imports, partly in concern about the potential onslaught of Japanese music, videos and dramas that already circulated the black market. The Korean government armed the Ministry of Culture with a significant budget increase to execute a five-year plan to build up Korea’s domestic industry. The ministry provided scholarships and equipment budgets to universities that would open culture industry departments. Consequently the number of such departments rose from zero to 300 in less than a decade. The Korean government and

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249 Additionally, Shim Doo-boo contends that the cultural industry was ripe for growth by 1997, as Korea had been exploring possibilities for media market liberalization and contribution of cultural industries to the national economy in the years leading up to the financial crisis. For example, the Korean government established the Cultural Industry Bureau within the Ministry of Culture and Sports in 1994, and instituted a Motion Picture Promotion Law in 1995 to lure corporate and investment capital into the local film industry. See Shim Doo-boo. “Waxing the Korean Wave”. Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 158. (Sungshin Women’s University, Korea, 2011), p. 9.
domestic corporations began promoting a developmental strategy to grow and sustain the culture industry. The Basic Law for Cultural Industry and Promotion in 1999 reflects these initial efforts.\textsuperscript{250}

In 2002, the Ministry of Culture opened the Korea Culture and Content Agency to promote Korean cultural exports. By the time the ban on nearly all Japanese cultural imports was lifted in 2004, the Korea Wave had swept across Asia, including Japan. Copies of South Korean dramas and music albums have even been smuggled into North Korea and are gaining popularity. South Korea’s entertainment industry jumped from generating profits of $8.5 billion in 1999 to $43.5 billion in 2003. In 2003, South Korea exported over $650 million in cultural products alone.\textsuperscript{251} The rising popularity of Korean music, dramas, movies, and so on has also opened doors for non-culture industries and paved the way for all kinds of regional initiatives, including diplomatic and business efforts. Sales of Korean consumer goods, such as cars and electronics, and outsourcing of Korean technological expertise and development contracts have risen in the last ten years. All kinds of tourism to Korea from countries like Taiwan, China and Japan are also on the rise. Many travelers purchase television theme tours, visiting locations where popular dramas are filmed.\textsuperscript{252} Others come for cosmetic surgery procedures and “well-being” (health) tours, food and shopping tours, and countless other kinds developed and commercialized by the tour and travel industry. The sharp boom over the last decade of Korea’s culture industry is telling of the ways in which state and corporate actors have worked to produce Korea’s own meaning of globalization that bolsters national interests while narrating the ROK as a regional icon, responsible for the

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
transnational flow of cultural commodities, diplomatic outreach and regional cooperation bolstered by business-cum-political initiatives.253

The Office of Developmental Assistance (ODA) and Korea Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) have worked in tandem to tie together the promotion of “global” outreach efforts and Korea’s “soft power” industries (to include cultural programs and products/“culture technology”). The Presidential Council on National Branding, formed in 2009, is indicative of this merger, which aims to garner public, tax-payer support for overseas aid ventures through representational regiments that position Korean culture as a developmental asset to the world. The President Council on National Branding, Lee Bae-yong, was quoted saying the following: “Through adopting democracy and achieving notable economic growth, Korea has now become a ‘well-off’ country…now is the time for the country to work on raising its national brand index and become a country that is loved and credited by the world”.254 The Committee was initiated with a ten-point strategy to promote Korean martial arts, sending the South Korean equivalent of the Peace Corps abroad, exporting Korean arts and digital technology, developing university scholarships and promoting South Korean multiculturalism.

Today, Korea engages in diplomatic outreach on a world scale, a majority of the country’s efforts spent reinventing the country’s role regionally, as problem-solver and pacifier of conflict, and as a hub for economic development and investment.

253 The use of cultural diplomacy as a major IR strategy reflects the general academic atmosphere of the Korean IR community in the post-cold war era, which has been under the “self-imposed motto of creating [and “marketing”] distinctly Korean IR theories” reflecting the country’s unique historical experiences, including the issue of national division and reconciliation, its geopolitical location, and reinventing South Korea’s role in East Asian as a regional pacifier. See Jong Kun Choi. “Theorizing East Asian International Relations in Korea”. Asian Perspective, vol. 32, no. 1 (2008), p. 204.
The Korean IR community’s general contention of Korea’s historical uniqueness in the world, and the unique regional relations of Northeast Asia is the driving justification for much of the country’s trans-regional activities. The late president Roh Moo Hyun (2003-2008) even remarked that Korean soft power, and specifically Hallyu, would someday unify the country.

**Hallyu and the Geopolitical Imaginary of the Regional**

A popular claim among scholars and industry specialists is that Hallyu culture corresponds to and embodies a regional desire to transcend the record of Western and Japanese imperialism. Eun-Young Jung surmises the popularity of Hallyu is its hybrid qualities that approximate tastes and cultural preferences across the region and beyond, without the colonial legacy and at times alienating content (e.g. high sexual content). Its points of attraction include the

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captivation of “Asian sentiments” such as family values and respect for elders, and sexual temperance in dramas and films. Many fans of Korean popular culture also talk about the physical attractiveness of the Korean actors and actresses and their modern and glamorous fashion, make-up, and hairstyles. They point to lavish the production qualities of visual media, including their skillful editing, beautiful cinematography, good acting, captivating storylines and accessibility.259 “The Korean fad is part of a region-wide reassertion of Asian identity. It's kind of a pan-Asianism ... You can look for alternative cultures, not necessarily European or American”.260 Contemporary pan-Asianism can also be viewed as an emerging formation of imperialist desire, in which various sites compete for the leading position in a newly constituted geopolitical order. The historical circumstances of pan-Asianism have obviously changed, most notably the early twentieth century ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Project’ heralded by Japan in its attempt to consolidate an empire comprised of multiple and competing ethno-national projects. What is similar, and particularly articulated through the politics of East Asian globalizations, is the “unity within difference” theme.261 The specific historical conditions evoke globalization as an agent of regional mediation, ordering, cooperation and competition.

National constructs of memory cannot be disentangled from the effects of global media that shoot through it, fragment it, disperse it and contribute to the re-appropriation and localization of it elsewhere. It is not that the narratives of Hallyu resonate with some essential or distinct set of ‘Asian values’ but rather are based more upon a sense of consciousness of shared political geography and modern temporality facilitated by the global capitalism and its

technologies. This speaks to the nature of translation in an era of accelerated, intensified, and diversified ‘global flows’, facilitated by new technologies and modes of travel. For Appadurai, globalization is not only about a world of things in motion, but about a world of disjunctive flows. Object, persons, images and discourses have different speeds, axes, points of origin and termination, and varied relationships to institutional structures in different societies, nations and regions. As such, globalization as a world of disjunctive flows not only carries implications for the acceleration and multiplication of affect, but also the layers of paradox and discord that connect otherwise disparate places and spaces.

These patterns and directional flows affect the nature of how Hallyu gets translated and glocalized across various sites in Asia, perhaps enabling a more complexly woven and therefore effective regionalist thinking that articulates the relationship of global capitalism to a kind of symbolic production. The wide reach of Korean popular culture/Korean aesthetic across Asia, for example, seems to elicit or engender meanings of regional solidarity.

After a century or more of mimicking the West, the contemporary Korea Wave offers a ritual of play, i.e. outside of the Western sphere of influence in work, to transport Asian and Asian diasporic audiences back to an unsullied Asian essence. The Korea Wave offers an alternative to the domination of Hollywood and Western entertainment. For a transnational migrant like myself, the Korea Wave drives a wedge into American assimilation and veers towards nostalgic Asian identity, even Pan-Asian solidarity.

On the one hand, the shared experiences of exploitation and colonization, which define Asia within the specific “geopolitical condition that marks the global extension of Western imperialism”, remain a “powerful trope for regional solidarity”. The idea of pan-Asia or the regional functions as an imaginative space upon which locally derived insecurities and

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The problems of identity “manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have contexts that are anything but local”. 265

The nature of trans-national production has effected a spatial displacement of capitalist epicenters, diluting agency and depoliticizing the directionality of commodity and idea flows. That is, the contemporary era of capitalist globalization has produced the conditions of possibility whereby the realities of identity difference and political inequity are more easily “lost in translation” to a regionalist thinking. Furthermore, the development of communication technologies now means that past images are no longer restricted to one’s own society, but can include mediated images of other cultures. This is what Iwabuchi calls a “borrowed nostalgia” which informs the stylistic aspects of East Asian popular culture products.266 Leo Ching discusses the irony of Japanese cultural dominance (mostly through popular culture products) amidst this atmosphere of perceived regional unity. “As soon as the commodity-image sound of mass culture becomes the fundamental form in which the putative unity of Asia is imagined and regulated, the internal contradictions of Asianism are suppressed for the sake of commensurability and compatibility within the global distribution of cultural power”.267 Regionalist thinking, then, is an outcome of the function of the global economy as well as an embodiment of a semi-fixed meta-narrative of a shared anti-imperial solidarity rooted in localized postcolonial contexts.

Hallyu as a regime of political resistance is certainly not without consideration. Appadurai identifies one of the central problems of today’s globalization as the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization. The homogenization argument usually refers to the Americanization of the world by way of mass production,
monopolistic distribution of and acculturation by U.S. commodities. However, Appadurai argues for a more complex understanding of the ways in which various local cultures re-appropriate these so-called homogenizing forces, suggesting that commodified goods, images and ideas can become “indigenized” in one way or another. The work and power of the imagination is key to this process. “If globalization is characterized by disjunctive flows that generate acute problems of social well-being, one positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics of globalization is the role of the imagination in social life”.

The Korean aesthetic thus becomes something ‘otherwise than modernity’ an amalgam of scattered cultural images brought under a single paradigm to constitute a uniquely “Han Style”. Homi Bhabha’s argument on mimicry can also be employed to discuss the potentially counter-hegemonic politics of Korea’s newly established cultural authority in Asia. For Bhabha, colonial discourse is ambivalent in that is aims to reproduce the image of the “reformed, recognizable Other”, that is, the Other that is “almost the same but not quite”. Those who engage in mimicry are obliged to inhabit a zone of ambivalence that grants them neither identity nor difference; in other words they must mimic an image they can never fully assume. As such, the slippage between identity and difference exposes the normalizing authority of colonial discourse and its domination of media images and consumer trends.

However, there is also the sense of something contentious if not hegemonic about Hallyu culture and corresponding conditions of its exportation across the Asia-Pacific region. Oppositional responses to the high volume commercialization of Korean popular culture in

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270 Ibid, p. 3.
the Asia-Pacific region are mounting. Voices from within the Chinese and Vietnamese governments, for example, have raised economic concerns about their domestic markets. Opposition to Hallyu often occurs in tandem with charges of other diplomatic violations, such as the over-the-acceptable-limit abuse of migrant brides in Korea. Because of the high rates of deception on the part of Korean marriage brokerage firms, for example, Cambodia has now banned marriage exports to Korea. It is at these points that the semblance of regional coherence breaks down.

**Hallyu and Korean Postcoloniality**

It is clear that Hallyu’s popularity abroad has much to do with local identifications with the postcolonial predicament, and a desire to overcome the record of Western dominated value systems and tastes vis-a-vis the enjoyment of imagined ‘Asian’ spaces, values and solidarity. Media consumers in Cambodia, Vietnam, and China for instance identify with the values and representations of Hallyu culture because it functions as an approximation to something ‘Asian’, even though its productive origins are specifically Korean. For all the discussion of regional and transnational impact, however, what is the role of Hallyu culture in Korean postcoloniality? And furthermore, how does ‘foreign’ consumption of Hallyu culture affect Korean national self-imaginings? While Hallyu culture is intended as a means of cultural promotion and profiting abroad, it also assumes a very important pedagogic function for the postcolonial nation.

The impetus for Korean cultural diplomacy, as represented by Hallyu, tugs at the strings of a kind of historical reconciliation of the postcolonial nation, the underside of which is the opportunity for a kind of cultural imperialism. The call to match the tempo of the “international” takes place against the desire to rectify the miscalculations of the past - where
the opportunity to develop in the direction of a nation-state was not taken, and where Japanese colonialism followed by a security driven authoritarian politics ensued as a kind of historical punishment. Former president Kim Young Sam can be seen as one of the originating champions of the “new diplomacy” (sin oegyo) campaign that specifically fit within the emergence of the globalization segye hwa paradigm of the mid-1990s. This new diplomacy called for Korea to engage with the world beyond its “one dimensional preoccupation” with national security issues. The conservative, Cold War bureaucracy served as a major obstacle on this front.

This shift in representation of Korean national destiny also demonstrates in some ways a departure from past strategies of developmental politics in Korea, whereby East and West were represented as separate and opposing vestiges of morality. Korea’s post/anti-colonial landscape has been overwhelmed by the developmental imperative within the spatial and temporal Cold war ecumene. Thus, it has publicly made much of national programs and goals regarding Korea’s economic competitiveness in the world, even as Korea’s development was financially and militarily subsidized by the United States. The government had to find some of delineating its developmental pursuits from other anti-colonial narratives disapproving of any kind of dependence on or occupation by imperial powers. During the 1960 and 70s, president Park Chung-hee coined the phrase “Western technology, Eastern spirit” (dongdo soggi), as a way of accomplishing this, the former providing the traditional moral guidance for national development and the latter symbolizing the technological advances of modernity. In painting its vision for Korean national society, the Park government attempted to affect a false split in the political imaginary between economic and cultural life. The former belongs to the universal and civilizing winds of the modern, while
the latter remains dedicated to a particularized ethnic identity, often grounded in representations of the authentic peasant and narratives of honest agricultural life.\textsuperscript{272} That is to say the embodiment of the modern is now ontological in the sense that corporeality and the life worlds they inhabit are the subjects of Korean postcolonial renegotiation and transformation, as can be gleaned in \textit{Hallyu} culture.

Kim painted a vision in which Korea functioned as an intermediary on issues of democracy, freedom, human rights, world peace, arms control, poverty and environmental protection regionally, as well as beyond.\textsuperscript{273} He specifically framed Korea’s internationalization as a second historical chance, as an opportunity to correct national history and to shed the post-colonial psyche. In a speech he gave in February, 1994, he observed the following:

I am chagrined to find that the importance of internationalization is yet to be generally well understood and a solid public consensus has yet to be formed on this task. A century ago, we failed to internationalize on our own initiative and were thus forced by others to open up our country. This was why Korea remained backward, soon to be reduced to a colony of a foreign power. If we are not to repeat the mistakes we made 100 years ago at the time of Korea’s first opening, we must actively endeavor to accomplish Korea’s second opening on our own initiative. We must learn the lessons of history. Instead of deploring the fact that our doors are unlocking, we should ourselves thrown open our doors and march out into the wide world. We no longer have any reason to feel inferior to or be afraid of others.\textsuperscript{274}

Given the historical context of globalization in Korea, the emergence of \textit{Hallyu} punctuates a multiplication of Korea’s postcolonial sovereignty, in which the potential for regional hegemony opens up Korea’s previous Cold War ethnic-nationalism to a slew of possible transformations and expressive modalities through the rubric of globalization. The emergency of sovereignty is no longer centrally secured through the trope of national defense

\textsuperscript{272} Which finds its historical roots in the agrarian \textit{Minjung} movement during the Japanese colonial period.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.
and state-protectionism, but is now increasingly locatable in the mission of global expansionism as a means of exercising national authority.

**Shifting Postcolonial Subjectivities**

*Hallyu’s* political raison d’etre coheres with this the globalization-cum-nationalism that advances Koreans as a “people” into modernity, normalizing an entertainment culture that boasts Korea’s ascendancy to loftier living and individual happiness through the medium of romantic melodramas, family soap operas and fantasy action films. For protagonists in Korean melodramas, consumer freedom appears as the gateway to cosmopolitan living or global citizenship - a lifestyle defined by one’s ability to purchase commercial goods that are symbolic of Western luxury, freely travel and get educated in the West, speak Western languages, learn about other cultures, enter into and out of relationships and families (represented as new gender and youth freedoms), and in general exercise individual free will. This cosmopolitan narrative gets inserted into, and in part re-arranges the look of Korean postcoloniality, functioning as a major condition of possibility through which Koreans become resynchronized as homogenous, historical objects of the nation.275 The effect is that the Korean nation remains intact in anticipation of the deterritorialization of national capital, population, information and media flows that dictate many dimensions of modern Korean lifestyle. In other words, Korea’s postcolonial nationalism does not resist capital, but rather attempts to shift the terms and historical memory upon which it functions.276 This is what Bhabha, in essence, describes as the ultimate goal of postcolonial project – to not only reconstitute the discourse of cultural difference, but to radically “revise the social temporality

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in which emergent histories may be written, the rearticulation of the ‘sign’ in which cultural identities may be inscribed”.277

The MBC series, My Lovely Samsoon exemplifies what might be typical of Korean melodramas and the popular narrative of cosmopolitan life that dictates the popularity of Hallyu. The story revolves around a young woman named Kim Sam-Soon (played by Kim Seon-A), a strong-willed high school graduate who goes to Paris to study as a pastry chef. Upon her return to Korea, she dates a rich man whose family owns a successful, upscale Italian restaurant - Hyeon Jin-Heon (played by Hyeon Bin). The rest of the drama follows the development of romance between Sam-Soon and Jin-Heon.

The cast is full of many characters that throw twists and turns at this burgeoning relationship, including a former girlfriend who returns from a several year stint in California, an Amerasian oncologist named Henry (played by model Daniel Henney), a widowed mother and a divorced and glamorous older sister. What is more, Sam-soon has reached the age of 30, which in Korean “traditional”, patriarchal terms is considered a shameful age for women to be unmarried. Her mother is particularly concerned for her matrimonial welfare. Although Samsoon’s attraction to Jin-Heon is real, she holds him in suspicion as a typical man who wants a replacement for his mother. Sam-soon is most like her deceased father, who always encouraged her to be independent minded. Sam-soon’s affections become temporarily diverted to Henry, the Amerasian oncologist who barely speaks Korean. The following describes the dramatic moment when Sam-Soon and Henry become romantically involved:

Sam-soon sizes him up and then, while he beams at her uncomprehendingly, she tells him (in French, Korean, and bits of English), about the role of pastry and memory in Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, a book she learned about during her training in France.278

277 See Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 246.
278 See http://www.koreanfilm.org/tvdramas/index.htm
Several things happen in this scene (aside from the obvious Audrey Hepburn, American Girl Paris reference). First, Lovely Samsoon remakes the face of Korean patriarchy into an accommodating mode of governance that does not need to be scrapped, because it is capable of flexibility. It claims to no longer restrict or scorn women who choose to love or marry outside the confines of ethno-national “bloodlines”. Henry, the Amerasian oncologist (although his father is white and he has a successful career) represents the capacity for the adaptability of Korean tradition to the realities and opportunities that globalization produces. After establishing this disclaimer, Samsoon’s consumption of the foreign and her desire to transcend some of the ‘traditional’ barriers of Korean society becomes permissible.

However, this flexibility is limited on the grounds that the consumption of the foreign happens through the power, desires and decision-making of Samsoon. My Lovely Samsoon demonstrates not only a desire to consume the West, but makes the point that it can be consumed. Samsoon ends up happily opening her own patisserie, in effect achieving financial success while recreating her Paris lifestyle in Seoul. In the conclusion of the drama series, Samsoon ends up falling back in love with Jin-Heon, who turns out to be more grounded and faithful than she had first realized. He is also descended from a wealthy family that owns a very successful and prestigious Italian restaurant – a marker of the same kind of boundary crossing and Euro-desire demonstrated by Samsoon through food. Their relationship is featured as the natural settling of the dramatic narrative.

Soap dramas like My Lovely Samsoon narrate a postcolonial, national fantasy that attempts to supplant Korea as the center of modern living, in which material and romantic comforts of the West can also be achieved and rightfully adjusted within the Korean context. In other words, the West does not impose itself on Korea, but rather Korea chooses to
consume what it wants from the West, and in other instances can leave what it does not find relevant within Korean living. This drama series demonstrates an attempt to relocate the historical origins of modernity. Samsoon’s mobility and, indeed, the capacity of the audience to witness her mobility vis-à-vis the transportive capabilities of melodramatic plot, camera shots and the like, contribute to the imagining of a kind of scripted cosmopolitan corporeality based in a national desire to historically transcend the record of Anglo, Euro-American authority on whose terms the referent of globality has been dictated.

Korean historical dramas are also popular in this regard, as they produce popular nostalgia for re-imagined pasts. On the one hand these dramas affirm the dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, but on the other establish a coherence between a Korean past and a Korean present, not a Korean past and a Western/imitation present. Evolutionary time is not as much the subject of change as is the subject of/in time, thereby suggesting the possibility that the origins of modernity can belong elsewhere, or at the very least, that Korea can claim a parallel and equally impacting modern transformation as that of an imagined Euro-America. The immense national and regional popularity of the television drama series, *Daejangum*, punctuates this politics of nostalgia in the ways it re-spins histories of royal court life during the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), a time period well known for the revival of Confucian patriarchy. Loosely based on a 16th century story, a young woman, Jang Geum, rises through the ranks of court life from humble beginnings as an orphaned kitchen maid to eventually becoming the King’s personal physician and the first to perform a caesarean in Korean history. The drama series infuses modern sensibilities, in this case interpreted as an impulse for feminism, in an imagined past so as to draw continuity with the present. Dramas that re-imagine pre-colonial histories are mirrored in other media genre products, like the
documentary. The Korea History Channel produced an episode challenging the assumption of national historiography that Korean civilization dates back a mere 5,000 years to the time of the mythic Tangun. The special argued that new evidence within historical documentation dates the beginnings of Korean civilization back 10,000 years and makes the claim that ancestors of the “Korean race” constituted what is otherwise known as the Mesopotamian civilization. The program then moves forward linearly from 10,000 years ago to the present and geographically from West to East, tracking a record of Korean imperial conquest, cultural influence, even claiming to have established Chinese civilization. Narrative plots like these attempt to establish a credible past and journey into the present, citing the Korean nation as a genuine subject of history and source of civilization.

*Enjoying the National Self: Hallyu as Embodiment and Spectacle*

For the subject to take up a position as a subject, he must be able to situate himself as a being located in the space occupied by his body. This anchoring of subjectivity in its body is the condition of coherent identity, and, moreover, the condition under which the subject has a perspective on the world, becomes the point from which vision emanates.

- Elizabeth Grosz

The role of indigenous culture and tradition has been key in the constitution of the *Hallyu* cultural regime, its various genres and artifacts reconstituted throughout the popular culture industry as a means of both surviving the homogenizing effects of globalization at home and establishing a cultural identity that will compete internationally as a commodity. The scope of cultural policy for constructing cultural identity began with folk/heritage and traditional arts in the 1970s, and then expanded to encompass the field of contemporary arts and “cultural life of people” in the 1980s, and the popular culture industry in the 1990s.279 Today, cooking shows and contests, celebrity visits to the countryside to interview villagers about re-

discovered farming, pottery or culinary techniques, the rebranding of cosmetic products using indigenous roots and herbs which celebrities promote, converting former “intangible assets” (e.g. folk villages) into tourist theme parks, or the unearthing of unknown histories about the nation are examples of this theme.

Moon Okpyo makes the argument that since the mid-1990s, cultural tradition has become a commodity for package and sale; it is “not longer considered an ideological source to educate and enlighten people” as it did throughout the national reconstruction era of the 60s and 70s, or as it did during the 

Minjung national counter-movement of the 80s. He writes specifically about the case of Hahoe village in Andong city, and the impact of the globalization imperative on state action to turn its Confucian literati heritage and folk art traditions into an arrangement and object of spectacle for tourist consumption.280 It is true that the historical transformation of this village, and others like it, points to a commercialization of tradition on a mass scale. However, it is not that the imperative of cultural self-preservation has disappeared from Korea’s postcolonial politics, leaving behind only economic incentive as Moon suggests. Rather, cultural self-preservation has been re-calculated through an alternative valuation of national progress – of the valuation of “global competition”, which can be considered a postcolonial exercise of the pedagogical sort.

The commercialization of “tradition” also speaks to multiple or layered gazes, in which the national subject position is reconstituted. Moon’s observation about the commodification of tradition indexes what Zizek refers to as the exercise of national enjoyment. Building on Lacanian thought, Zizek explains that in order for a national community to achieve some kind of “ontological consistency”, enjoyment must come from

the very national practices that work to consolidate the nation. “A nation exists only as along as its specific enjoyment continues to be materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices.” The object of enjoyment is elusive and often embodied in the entity called “our way of life”. Thus, it is tautological in character; the thing of national enjoyment exists only in so long as members of the community continue to believe in it. Following from this, the presence of “the other” threatens to disrupt such national enjoyment, even though the enjoyment in specific national, social practices are defined in opposition to the “other”. Thus, racial conflict is about possession of the national Thing and about the theft of enjoyment of the Thing. That is, immigrant communities are often disdained for their “excessive enjoyment” – an enjoyment that is either stolen from the host community (by ruining our way of life), or an enjoyment that comes from the excess and perversity of their “ethnic” cultures.

In short, what really bothers us about the ‘other’ is the peculiar way he organizes his enjoyment, precisely the surplus, the ‘excess’ that pertains to this way: the smell of ‘their’ food, ‘their’ noisy songs and dances, ‘their’ strange manners, ‘their’ attitude to work. To the racist, the ‘other is either a workaholic stealing our jobs or an idler living on our labor…the basic paradox is that our Thing is conceived as something inaccessible to the other and at the same time threatened by him.

The process of national self-preservation can be observed through the workings of Hallyu cultural representations, particularly in the way it reinvents Korean tradition through the foreigner’s gaze and Korean gaze on the foreign. The presence of “others” creates opportunities for the vicarious enjoyment of the nation while maintaining their exclusion from the nation (or perhaps denying the other within the self).

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281 See discussion of Lacan by Leo Ching in “Asianism in the Age of Late Capital” in Appadurai (2001), p. 82.
The notion of “embodiment” anchors the popular Korean conception of cultural authority, on the one hand making it possible for Koreans to demonstrate their authenticity and on the other hand rendering the attempts of non-national others to do so inadequate and even satiric. The postcolonial desire for culture/national self-preservation and the colonial desire to represent the non-national “other” in opposition to Koreanness converge in a way that can make use of material markers of national culture, such as dance forms, traditional clothing, or the act of making traditional food, reinforcing the knowledge of who constitutes the authentic bearer of culture. Performances of Koreanness are often required of the foreigners. One MBC (munhwa bangsong/cultural broadcasting corporation) television show titled “Finding the Best Foreign Daughter-In-Law” requires migrant brides to master and then appear on the show to demonstrate trot singing, traditional Korean cooking skills, prove their ability to operate farming tools and speak Korean in the local dialect. This show aired under the banner of a “healthy multicultural society” in response to national news produced by the Ministry of Justice that the number of foreigners in Korea had surpassed 1 million. Similar shows were also aired around the same time (2007) about the proper way for foreign wives to observe Chuseok (major harvest holiday).283

The media images above advertise celebrations of national tradition through the spectacle of foreignness. By dressing them in pre-20th century Korean garb (peasant above and royal below), these kinds of displays particularize and mark foreigners and/or migrants in interesting ways and also enforce structures of feeling about Koreanness. In one view, the ethno-national narrative of minjok genealogy is seemingly tightened by this representation; it is a reminder of the significant relationship between embodiment and minjok and the fact of its “hard cultural form”. As a part of his discussion on how cricket began indigenized in
colonial India, Appadurai discussed the conditions of possibility for how cultural forms become susceptible to reinterpretation and in turn reorganize social boundaries. To make his point, he draws a distinction between “hard cultural forms” and “soft cultural forms”.

Hard cultural forms are those that come with a set of links between value, meaning and embodied practice that are difficult to break and hard to transform. Soft cultural forms, by contract, are those that permit relatively easy separation of embodied performance from meaning and value, and relatively successful transformation at each level.284

Interestingly it may be the hard form of Koreanness indexed by the traditional/dated clothing on foreign bodies that allows a certain epistemic flexibility about what it means to be Korean contemporarily. This representation preserves an essence of timeless Korea/Korean tradition in juxtaposition to the foreign, the point being that the foreigner is rendered out of time and place. What is key to the operation of this representation is that the three women simultaneously function as imposters of and proxies for Korean tradition. Korea essentially gazes at itself, enjoying itself through the impossibility of others’ in/abilities to embody Koreanness. Korea’s modernity, or post-colonial time becomes sensible through the abjection of the traditional from Korean corporeality on the one hand, but also the re-sanctification of the traditional in instructional contexts.

Historically speaking, cultural conservationist streams of the 60s and 70s have much to do with the methods of self-representation described here. Their goals were to overcome the experience of being objects of Japan’s colonial gaze, to preserve Korean cultural traditions in the aftermath of the Korean War, and to re-authorize what constituted embodiments of Korean culture from a national perspective.285 The Cultural Properties

Protection Act, originally issued in 1962 and amended many times thereafter deemed that intangible cultural properties, such as drama, music, dance and crafts carried profound historic and academic value. Folklore materials, manners, customs and materials related to everyday living were also considered authentic expressions of culture not to be altered. Therefore, certain people, not just objects, were deemed by the government as intangible cultural properties, meaning that they physically embodied an original form of Korean culture to be passed on to others through traditional tutelage, university education, and other pedagogical means.  

*Gender and Postcolonial Masculinities*

Often, the pedagogical act is enforced through the gendered subordination of foreign women, scripting the relationship between Korean masculinity and feminized racial hierarchies. The KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) talk show *Minyeodului Suda* (“Chit Chat of Beautiful Ladies”) is a good example of this. *Minyeodului Suda* features women from around the world. Set up to promote diversity and cross-cultural understanding in Korea, the talk show consists of a five-person panel of Korean male Hallyu celebrities sitting on one side of the studio. Facing them is a tiered stage upon which rows of foreign, female exchange students and young professionals in their 20s sit (16 in total). All are able to speak Korean to a proficient degree, many of them fluent. The women are effeminately and some cases provocatively dressed, each labeled by their country of origin. My immediate response was to think of two highly gendered spaces in which the male gaze is central – the beauty pageant and the prostitution house.


286 These strategies for managing cultural properties and traditional values largely emulate Japanese cultural policy.
Activities of the show consist of a quiz/dialogue portion and a talent performance portion. Regarding the former, Korean male celebrities ask the foreign women questions about their knowledge of, experiences in and perspectives on Korea. In the latter, the young women take turns singing, dancing and acting on stage as the Korean male celebrities look on. Gender relations within the broader context of assimilation to Korean living is the prime topic of discussion in the show, as can be gleaned by the titles of the episodes: “When I feel sorry for Korean men” (Episode 18), “When I feel envious of Korean women” (Episode 103), or “When I feel I’ve become a Korean (Episode 112). Some questions from the show’s website feature as follows: (1) What was the most embarrassing thing to happen to you in Korea?; (2) What kinds of things do Koreans do that you can understand least?; (3) When have you felt “Ah, I’ve become a real Korean now”; (4) What are five good things about Korean men?; and (5) What Korean entertainer would you like to have as a boyfriend. Aside from the highly presumptive nature of the questions, they invite (directly or indirectly) comments of enjoyment about life in Korea, Korean people and more specifically Korean men through an interpretive lens of popular culture.
While Minyeodului Suda claims to encourage Korean people to understand its “current location in world...through the eyes of its foreign residents”287, and therefore tied to the broader theme of Korea’s ranking among nations of the world, it is also more specifically a production that generates an enjoyment of the nation by arranging Korean men as objects of and authorities on foreign women’s sexual desire. The show is a lesson in if not a reinforcement of the normalcy and viability of Korean masculinity for its Korean audiences. It does more than this, however, as the relationship of Korean masculinity to the foreign is mono-dimensional, but varied. In reverse, the show also scripts the incompatibility of certain women with Korean male sexual preferences. According to behind-the-scenes discussion blogs, the panelists often complain about their physical placement on the tiered rows, sensing the racial and gendered preferences the show promotes. That is, the younger, thinner, longer-legged and/or Caucasian women are featured towards the front, while the other panelists called “the row of fallen leaves” sit towards the back. The frequent discussion about the physical appearance of the panelists reinforces the purpose of the show as spectacle for the Korean male gaze and Korean audience at large.288

The relationship between Korean masculinity and foreign women is further drawn by the differentiated conversations that occur between the show’s members. For instance, the Canadian woman (Caucasian) has been caricatured as too talkative and opinionated. She is too aggressive for the Hallyu male celebrities, which can be surmised by the jokes the male host makes at her expense. This woman has also been featured in media advertisements as always “gabbing”. Dialogue between the African-American woman and the Korean men frequently end up on the topic of compatibility and family approval. She is asked questions

about how she would behave if introduced to the family of a Korean boyfriend, or conversely, how she would introduce a Korean man to her family. The discussions are also spotted with racial stereotyping, as the Korean celebrities shower the African-American woman with compliments about how Blacks are good at singing and sports. In one episode this woman performed a song on stage, during which one of the Korean male guests jumped up to dance with her, wearing a “rasta wig” mocking her with the phrase “sikameo” (which means “I’m a blacky”), a reference to the “black-face” routine made famous by the Korean comedian Lee Bong-won in the 1980s and 90s. While still an object of sexual spectacle, the Black woman is rendered incompatible with Korean male preferences, as her identity is forcibly recommitted to notions of third world primitivism or token stereotype.

The Russian model is usually the target for comments about her body, reinforcing the association between East European women and sexual promiscuity. In the photograph above, one will notice that the Russian woman (sitting second from the left) has been dressed in the most revealing (low-cut) outfit of all the other women. According to the South Korean Ministry of Gender, Eastern European women are considered most desirable in the Korean prostitution business. Joon Kim notes that the choice of Russian, and therefore more Caucasian looking women, as prostitutes taps into the latent psychological need to overcome the Korean “racial complex”.

The arrival of Russian women on the South Korea’s nightlife scene has generated “sense of spurious pride” among men who are able to dominate Western dominance.

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289 Based on author’s viewing experience.
290 Ibid.
291 See Joon Kim. “International Migration of Women: A New Commodity Frontier in South Korea’s Sex Industry”. According to a survey of 114 men who paid to have sex with foreign women in 2002, 66% responded that satisfying curiosity was the main reason. These men identified Russian women as their preference of prostitute at 67.5%, followed by Korean-Chinese at 21.7% and Filipinas at 17.4%.
Through their objectification of Russian women within the global sex trade, Korean men can “easily sample experiences, bodies and identities” as a way of overcoming their masculine, inferiority complexes. As one commentator for *Newsweek Korea* heard his school friend exclaim: “Look! It’s like planting a Korean flag on the belly of a Western woman. That is the cure!”

Figure 8. Foreign women pose in Hawaiian garb.

The media image above of a Eastern European “foreign dance troop” hired to perform hula outside a department store promotional event in Busan performs a similar function to subordinate whiteness by augmenting Korean male authority and sexual validity. The group of women are hyperfeminized and orientalized by the sexually suggestive bikini costumes that caricature “native” Hawaiian women. They stand with their backs turned to onlookers, subjected to the Korean male gaze. The Korean men also wear “Hawaiiana” shirts as they preside over the display. More significantly, this photograph can be interpreted within the historical context of U.S.-Korea relations, wherein Korean women were fodder for

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292 Ibid.
imperialist sexual appetites (see Chapter Three). This arrangement not only responds to White or nearly-White women as objects of fetish, it also symptomatic of postcolonial anxiety about “Western” men and the desire to imaginatively degrade them via their women. Thus, the once objects of xenophobia have been instead turned into prime fetishes, governed by Korea’s postcolonial history of resistance to imperialism and by the symbolic exchange of global commodity cultures.293

The crisis of masculinity is treated within other Hallyu genres, such as that of contemporary film. The patriarchal pedagogical imperative is best contextualized within the years leading up to and following the crash of the Asian financial markets and the application of the International Monetary Fund’s structural adjustment criteria on banks, businesses and national economic policy. As Kyung Hyun Kim notes, Korean cinema of the last two decades has incessantly pursued themes, characterizations and narratives that focus on male subjectivity – a crisis of male subjectivity triggered by pressures of globalization - institutional repression, family responsibilities and personal anxiety. The crisis of masculinity is embedded in the issue of vanishing national culture and rendering the “native” obsolete.294

Once the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis hit, the economy went into stagnation; employment levels dropped, economic spending hit a low, and many Koreans had to adjust ways of living to accommodate the element of financial vulnerability. As businesses and banks failed and unemployment skyrocketed, women were targeted by a series of media and rhetoric campaigns that reinforced traditional gender roles. Television shows, dramas and movies increasingly featured male-centered messages and newspaper articles covered special interest stories about women’s contributions to the their families. The political atmosphere

generated by these campaigns not only added to the stress of women who statistically already
endured more instances of family quarreling, physical abuse and spouse depression, but also
created a stronger precept that husbands should not be challenged.\(^{295}\) It would seem that the
power of neo-liberal globalization resides in its capacity to reverse gains for women or at the
very least stagnate them, particularly for those who belong to the working and middle class.
It also re-exposes the majoritarian patriarchal power that in many ways has not shrunk as the
base structure of political life.

The tradition of Korean film throughout the period of industrialization (60s, 70s)
featured strong elements of aurterism and realism as a means to overcoming premodernity and
framing anxieties about the political future of the patriarchal nation. Plots generally involved
the ideational and romantic struggles of tormented characters, who in the end, fail to
overcome obstacles or arrive at any definitive solution. In the 1980s and early 1990s,
filmmakers probed themes of nationalist struggle and revision in the context of the country’s
class struggle and democratic movement and more broadly reinvigorated postcolonial
sensibilities through the redefinition of traditional national values decoupled from repressive
government.\(^{296}\) Films such as the *Tae Baek Mountains*, *Berlin Report* and *North Korean
Partisan in South Korea* demonstrate the use of nationalist rhetoric in the restoration of a
patriarchal, homogenous Korea through the lens of national modernity, historical
consciousness and social responsibility.\(^{297}\)

The treatment of nationalist historical consciousness in films today is much different.
The mobilization of genre, mixing of fantasy and reality, Hollywood-like spectacle and

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\(^{297}\) Ibid.
postmodern themes of disjuncture and atemporality do much to re-arrange and re-stitch the structure of postcolonial feeling for viewers in ways that reconcile postcolonial traumas through “postmodern hubris” – “namely the faith that the cinema can redeem the past, resolve the real, and even resolve that which was never real”.²⁹⁸ Francis Gateward contends that a review of film literature, interviews with industry professionals, historical surveys and in-depth textual analysis reveal that fragmentation is the defining characteristic of contemporary Korean cinema. That is, most films rely on narrative strategies that deviate from the previous marker of linear progression, and instead employ repetition of event from multiple perspectives, parallel-time structures, regressive causal momentum, space/time continuum violations, time travel, flashbacks to explicate the present, and the trope of amnesia.²⁹⁹ These fragmentation practices allow directors to fill in gaps of the past and draw connections between national histories of the past and contemporary life worlds.

Many of contemporary Hallyu films are hyper-masculine, in that they reconcile patriarchal national anxieties of the neoliberal, globalized present through destructive Korean female characters that threaten the family/home and the nation. Post-1997 films experienced an increase in crazy, jealous, adultering and murderous women characters who wreak havoc on unsuspecting, emasculated husbands and boyfriends as in the case of films like Happy End (1999), My Sassy Girl (2002), The Butcher’s Wife (1999), or My Wife is Gangster (2001). When not portrayed as home wreckers, the female antagonists often turn out to be traitorous spies and conspirators who play Korean men against national enemies as in the

²⁹⁹ Gateward, p. 193.
Interestingly, Gateward notes that the role of distressed damsel or docile female are increasingly outsourced to non-Korean women, as in the case of Hong Kong’s Cecilia Cheung who plays the heroine in *Musa: The Warrior* (2001). These industry choices not only index the mission of “Hallyu as cultural diplomacy” – to appeal to regional audiences – but also the restructuring of contemporary national masculine culture that incorporates racialized women into its maintenance and preservation. While Korean masculinity is recouped through the monodimensional scripting of Korean and foreign women, it is also recouped through big blockbusters that mobilize epic, action and sports genres in which Korean men live by absolutes. Korean hero characters in films like *Joint Security Area* (2000), *Taeguki* (2004) and *The Good, the Bad, the Weird* (2008) live by moral codes of the nation, whether in the form of fraternity, codes of honor and defeating the opposition. These types of spectacular blockbusters also engage rivalries of race and region that correspond to contemporary issues of national economic security and competition. In *Musa: The Warrior*, a tale of national emergence is told through the journey of a Korean emissary in 1375 sent to China to seek national recognition. He is rejected by China, but ends up saving the Ming Dynasty princess from bandits of her own country. The story weaves a connection between China’s disrespect for Korean sovereignty in the distant past and the eventual intervention of the Chinese in the Korean War. Since the war, China has not only played a contentious role in the security of the peninsula (read China-North Korea relations), but continues to leverage economic power through trade partnerships and deals with the ROK.

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301 Ibid, p. 199.
The film *The Good, the Bad, the Weird*, a play on *The Good, the Bad, the Ugly* is a darkly comedic, western genre-inspired, cult action film that can be seen as a commentary on Korea’s colonial pasts, contemporary regional relationships, and the crisis of the masculine nation. What is most interesting about the film is it plays with Korean postcolonial history outside the bounds of national space and time. Set in former Manchuria against the backdrop of Japanese colonial expansion, three Korean outlaws (and popular *Hallyu* stars) compete to find hidden Qing dynasty treasures somewhere in the nomadic plains. These riches are simultaneously sought by the Japanese imperial army and Manchus and traitorous Korean expatriots. The film unfolds in a Scorsese-like style, in which gangs of treasure hunters violently and creatively kill each other off in apocalyptic, desert shantytowns. Mostly relying on the self-destructive or barbaric tendencies of the Japanese and Manchurians, the Korean outlaws/would-be cowboys manage to outpace everyone in pursuit of the Qing riches. References to the crisis of the Korean nation and historical resentment of Japan are intermittently woven in to the highly sensational plot, dizzying camera work and overtones of stylistic genre. The film ends in a three-way Mexican style shootout, in which the Korean outlaws simultaneously foil each other’s chances of recovering the treasure.

Although encountering foreign lands/spaces, the three Korean outlaws seem particularly adept at controlling their interactions with the foreign. That is, they are able to con/manipulate, capture, kill or otherwise manage the Japanese, Manchurians, including their women, and even fellow Korean exiles (who turn out to be traitors of the nation). They are also able to negotiate the desert landscape, horses, trains, trucks, weapons and architectural structures with masculine authority and understated ease as they rip through each scene with determined speed in pursuit of the treasure. They are masters of whatever environment and
its contents they encounter. The only people the three protagonists cannot outmatch are each other, as reflected in the stalemate at the conclusion of the film. In effect, the film offers an alternative narrative of the colonial Korean nation retrojected from the perspective of Korea as a regional, masculine authority. Constructed through postmodern film techniques and patriarchal narratives that integrate imagined pasts to explicate the present, *Hallyu* cinematic culture literally rebuilds postcolonial national memory and sensibility.

This trend is not only powerful because it reinstatiates patriarchal authority while subordinating Korea’s regional ‘others’. *Hallyu* film culture largely targets Korean youth, who have no first-hand connection to the national traumas featured in contemporary film and who are being educated within the neoliberal ethos of individuality and competition – subject positions predicated upon chauvinistic and racially-charged assumptions. The flourishing of genre, aesthetic experimentation and highly sensational works, and disenchantment with the history of ideology embodies a commercialized postmodernism that chimes with the ways in which neoliberal values have been shaped within the Korean globalization experience, particularly among the younger generations, whom *Hallyu* most effectively targets. Global youth culture is particularly adaptive to the narratives of individual competition over social solidarity, pragmatism over ideology, and entrepreneurialism over state-secured employment because they confront the changing valuation of what constitutes cultural capital with little lived experience of the pre-globalization era and the political struggles that defined the democratization movement. The 368 generation\textsuperscript{302} student protestors that hung the rights of labor around demands for government reform are fading from the institutional memory and

\textsuperscript{302} The 368 generation is a term in Korea that refers to the segment of the population that are in their 30s, were born in the 60, and attended university in the 80s. It is a term mainly used to reference the portion of the population that would have been student activists during the 1980s popular democratization-cum-labor movement.
activities of campuses. Professor Seol Dong-Hoon, Sociology professor at Chong-buk National University confirms this trend, stating that: “Korean society is influenced in general by the neo-liberal policies that everyone is subject to competition and accomplishments. College students are jumping on that social bandwagon.” Statistics show that political concern and activism, from voting to study groups, is waning considerably on college campuses. Instead, student decision-making patterns show an increasing preference for what a Yonsei professor calls “materialistic values”, explaining that in Korea today, “college students are seeking more realistic and materialistic values; the prolonged economic stagnation and the high unemployment rates are preventing them from thinking about other values.” In 2004, Seoul Women’s University opened a “how to” course on wealth accumulation and investment, quickly attracting a 350 person student audience. Hanguk University of Foreign Studies and Kyung Hee University also began offering similar courses, in which they invite authors of “get rich” guidebooks and investment experts. Entrepreneurial CEOs are becoming class speaker favorites and new clubs called “riches societies” are forming in place of the dwindling political clubs, in which students gather to discuss business start-ups and investment strategies.  

The nationalist history of the democratic movement has framed the meaning of civic responsibility among educated youth since the late 1980s. It is one of the most powerful political tropes through which the historical destiny of the Korean nation has been interpreted. And yet, from the perspective of global capital, it has little bearing on the psychic make-up of the younger generation. A Dean from Yonsei University spoke on the imperative for Korean universities to initiate self-sustaining globalization programs, insisting that the key for Korean students’ development as proper global citizens is for them to let go of

ideological struggle which clung to a “distorted sense of equality demanding equal treatment from government and society” and instead foster students’ “individual efforts” which will properly prepare them for overseas jobs and corporate life.\textsuperscript{304}

‘Odorless’ Korean Bodies

On one of my summer visits to Daegu in 2007 I accompanied my sister, who is Korean, to several plastic surgery clinics. She was considering yet another procedure and allowed me to sit in on several of her consultation appointments. Like countless others, my sister was participating in a national trend of cosmetic body alteration popularized by the Korean Hallyu stars and the broader culture/entertainment industry. The aesthetics of Hallyu are in part defined by the physical appearances of dramatic actors, movie starts, singers and models – the human ambassadors of Korean culture – most of whom have undergone some form of body alteration, setting a trend known as Korean Beauty abroad as well as at home.

![Cosmetic surgery. Before (above) and after (below) images of actress Park Han Bea](image)

South Korea has the highest ratio of cosmetic surgeons to citizens worldwide.\textsuperscript{305} A professional group titled The Korean Society of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgery reported an 85% rise in its membership to 960 in the year 2000. Another group, the Korean Society of

\textsuperscript{304} See “Korea’s Universities Need Globalized Education”. August 17, 2006. [www.koreafocus.or.kr](http://www.koreafocus.or.kr)

\textsuperscript{305} See [www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com)
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, reports 1,300 members. In 2009, South Korea’s population had consumed more plastic survey procedures than other top competitive countries, including Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, China, Brazil and the United States. Procedures that were first sported by Hallyu TV, film and music pop stars rapidly spilled over into expectations and activities of the everyday. Eye-fold surgery, chin, cheek, forehead and breast implants, nose jobs, bone-lengthening procedures (usually the legs), bone-shaving procedures, liposuction, calf reduction surgery, and of course, skin whitening procedures are emblematic of what is commonly available at clinics today. Clinics abound in most cities, and there are those that are particularly famous for the high-end clientele they service in Seoul’s Apgujeong district, including Hallyu pop stars and Korea’s bourgeois.

While my sister and I were in one of the waiting rooms I asked several people around me why they were seeking surgery. Most said that the treatments just made them “better” or “prettier”. When I sat in on my sister’s consultations, the doctors had similar answers. It wasn’t that their clients wanted to look more “white”, but just improved. My sister wanted to get her nose fixed, and one doctor in particular we met described the ideal parts or parts systems of the face as context for her desired facial aesthetic: (a) chins that jut out further than the profile of the lips; (b) thin (vs. wide) jaw shapes; (c) nose-bridges that are high enough to obscure the view of the eye on the opposite side of the face when viewed at a profile; (d) thin and pointed nose bases vs. wide and flat nose bases; and (e) eyes that are closer together vs. wider-set. My sister was told that if she wanted to get her nose base raised and sharpened, she would have to also get her nose-bridge raised. Doing this, however, would make her eyes seem wider-set. The nose alteration would also require that she receive a chin implant. At one point he held a ruler up to the profile of her face, telling her the ways

306 www.asianplasticsurgeryguide.com
in which the contours of her forehead, nose and chin did not align in accordance with ideal standards of beauty. By the end of the appointment, he had recommended several inter-related surgeries. Below is an example of a beauty rating based on measurements of disaggregated facial elements, the likes of which I witnessed in the plastic survey clinics. The image is of Amerasian model/actor Daniel Henney, who was given a facial beauty score of 8.67/10.

![Image of Daniel Henney. Courtesy of community.livejournal.com](image)

What struck me about the experience in the clinic, among other things, was the common referral to an assumed, universal or implicit standard of beauty that was indescribable as a total aesthetic, but that was speakable in biologically isolated parts or part systems. When I distributed a survey to groups of young people sitting in cafes on the topic of what makes someone beautiful, highly technical descriptions of the body abounded. Yet, when asked to
summarize what they thought a beautiful person was, all those technical criteria amounted to being “kind”, “driven”, “bright” or “interested”. 307

This discourse of neutrality has been subsumed under the aesthetic label of mugukjeok, meaning non-nationality. The transnational, regional appeal of Hallyu culture has been attributed to its mugukjeok (non-nationality) qualities, or as Iwabuchi puts it, the “odorless” aesthetics of Korean cultural products and images – lending the sense of blurred meaning, non-specification and almost fantasy-like representational regimes of Asian or neo-Oriental values, lifestyles and commodity images.

Figure 11. Image of the boy band FTIISLAND, which stands for “Five Treasure Island”

Mugukjeok “implies the transcultural hybridity of popular culture, which is not only influenced by odorless global elements, but also by traditional (national) elements”. 308 Sun

307 This reminded me other times that I could not get much engagement on subjects that triggered discussions on mimicry such as desiring whiteness, minjok identity, race and other discourses that required the “naming” of political geographies/imaginaries. Most people to whom I spoke, such as the doctors in the clinic, NGO workers, city workers, and even friends and family, often closed down discussions that I tried to open on race with pre-scripted rhetoric. Comments that prevailed were along the lines of: “everyone is a human being”, “discrimination is unfortunate but common everywhere” and varying “neutral” responses that the genealogies of liberalism enable. Although not specific to Korea, the evasion of the topic of race or using discourses that connote race has been palpable and consistent in my recent experiences.
Jung uses it in the context of gender appearances and the *mugukjeok* aspects of Korean masculinity. He describes Korean masculinity as a flexible series of representations that respond to the criteria of heterosexuality in different ways. In fact, he names “genres” of Korean masculinity based on popular *Hallyu* films and mini dramas – the Bae Yon-Joon *Winter Sonata* “metrosexual” genre, the Rain *Full House* “cute” genre, and the Dae-Soo *Old Boy* “cool guy” genre. These genres are constituted, in part, by the transnational audiences to whom the *Hallyu* characters most appeal. For example, the Bae Yon-Joon “metrosexual” character largely appeals to middle-aged Japanese women.

The idea of odorlessness, as a non-specification of ethnic or national origins is an interesting concept to consider in terms of how it functions as a racial aesthetic within the broader context of Korea’s regional and international relations. If *mugukjeok* is comprised of “global elements” and tradition to produce a non-specific odorlessness, then how that odorlessness or hybridity, in its cultural and corporal manifestations, acts as a political operative is necessary to analyze.

The construct of ‘odorless’ bodies directly speaks to how race relations are structured and, specifically, to the ‘exnomination’ of whiteness in the production of biopolitical representation. Similar to Seshadri-Crook’s description of whiteness as a silent referent, Bhattacharya, Gabriel and Small discuss whiteness as unnamed or unmarked. That is, discourses of whiteness actually rely on the concealment of white privilege under the guise of supposedly ethnically neutral discourses. “That is to say, the tactics of concealment include ‘ex-nomination’, where the power of whiteness exists precisely in its capacity not to be

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They describe a process of naturalization through which whiteness establishes itself as self-evident. Korean Beauty capitalizes on this exnomination working through hybrid imaginaries labeled as neutral, pan-Asian or “global” identities. In other words, Korean Beauty can be read as an attempt to expel racial excess from the body rendering it “odorless” through its association with white standards and ideals.

As a commodity culture, Korean Beauty is marketed through elements of difference and hybridity. As such, Korean Beauty as a disruption of ‘Asian’ aesthetic norms is not necessarily subversive. Indeed, “privileged groups can, on occasion, display their privilege precisely by the extravagant display of their right to ambiguity”. Korea’s upward mobility and related economic capacity to fund and promote a popular culture industry can then be linked with the presumed right to establish cultural precedents in the region. In this view, Korea is not only becoming a cultural hegemon in Asia, but is also acting as a “filter for Western values”.

![Figure 12. Image of Fx all-girl group member](http://asiaenglish.visitkorea.or.kr)

“Creamy white skin, big bright eyes, and a cool expression have become Krystal’s trademarks and part of her personal appeal” [Narration from the official “Visit Korea” website]

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Interestingly, the popularization of Korean Beauty appears disarticulated from the very local and rooted conditions that propel its consumption. When I asked people waiting in the plastic surgery clinics why they wanted plastic surgery, narratives about self-enhancement and the association between appearance, social reception and life chances arose. I was struck by the language of political economy used to describe motivations for plastic surgery. Some, including my sister, made concrete claims that they were more hirable if they were better looking. One woman was accompanying her daughter to a plastic surgery consultation, and said her chances of getting a job out of college would be better if she had work done. These examples speak to the ways in which an aesthetic of beauty powered by plastic surgery has emerged as a growing “social ethos of economic morality”[^314] that is gaining explanatory power through the problems and workings of daily life amidst an unevenly governed terrain of employment and life chances. Many of the reasons women and men give for altering their looks has to do with economic/practical considerations for their lives. According to them, enhanced faces and bodies make them more competitive within the job market. According to conservative estimates, over 50% of Korean women in the 20s have had some form of cosmetic surgery, with the numbers tapering off among older women. Some 20 percent of men in their 20s and 30s now undergo cosmetic surgery, with 70 percent of men in a recent poll agreeing they would consider surgical “improvements”.[^315]

In addition to employment reasons, women in their 20s and 30s hope that cosmetic surgery will increase their chances of marrying financially well-off partners. Coined the “Cinderella syndrome” a woman’s magazine advised its readers to spend up to 30% of their income on looking good, the reasoning being that the money would produce returns on a

[^314]: See Song Jaesook “Family Breakdown and Invisible Homeless Women”.
better and richer husband. Their looks are considered a viable financial asset.\textsuperscript{316} In response, Korean men supposedly seek out cosmetic surgery procedures as a way of meeting women’s fairy tale expectations. While the post-1997 financial crisis socio-economic breakdown of the Korean population reveals an increasing wealth gap between rich and poor, with many middle-class families joining the ranks of the working class, the social advancement-seeking behavior and expectations of many seem removed from what is possible given the current statistical reality. It is even common now that high school students receive plastic surgery as graduation gifts from their parents. Just like other graduation gifts that are meant to give students a running start in life, “good looks” is considered a prime factor that brings opportunity and financial success.

The need to manage and manicure one’s body in accordance with the demands of commercialism and industry throws into relief the way Korean Beauty regime functions as symbolic capital in the most literal sense. Even though Korean Beauty is commercialized as a cultural phenomenon, as an unquantifiable and immaterial essence of Korean subjectivity and nationality, it nevertheless operates in accordance with market logic and it is a kind of commodity that is leveraged against financial risk and for situational advantage.\textsuperscript{317} Korean Beauty is part of an emerging socio-economic ethos that tells the story of a newly competitive society of Koreans, whose competence and survival depends upon their access to aesthetic capital.

\textit{Whiteness and Intertextuality}

The power of Korean cultural industries and of \textit{Hallyu} is vested in the capacity to shape national sensibilities vis-à-vis the production of aesthetic texts that work through and against

\textsuperscript{316} Visser, 2002.
\textsuperscript{317} Aihwa Ong. \textit{Flexible Citizenship} (Duke University Press, 1999), p. 89.
geopolitical imaginaries of East and West. Thus, the effects of Korean Beauty on national sensibilities depend on the ways in which it is operationalized both contextually and intertextually. What is of particular interest in this section is how Korean Beauty functions within ethnographic spaces of *Hallyu* mediascapes - that is, how Korean Beauty inter-articulates with spectacles of the foreign to produce the Korean nation as an approximate “white space”.

A popular, live game show titled “Star Golden Bell” which aired on KBS between 2004 and 2010 is an interesting forum in which to understand this dynamic. The show is hosted by and features *Hallyu* celebrities including singers, actors, models and comedians, most of whom have been whitened, chiseled, tucked and groomed by various cosmetic surgery procedures. In all approximately 20 celebrities participate, and they are grouped into teams to compete in various challenges/games. Money is added to a team’s pot for every win. Many of the games are based on word play, including interpretation of the Korean and English phrases, fill-in-the-blank guessing tasks, riddle solving and popular culture trivia (matching stars to their songs, etc.). In other words, the show emphasizes the importance of language, communication, translation and interpretation. A very popular segment of the show involves foreign guests who participate in or facilitate the word play games. A Kenyan man has appeared multiple times in a segment of the show that features foreigners in the spirit of multicultural communication. His task is to either read a Korean script obscured by a Swahili accent or to speak Swahili. It is the job of the Korean celebrity audience to discern if he is saying anything intelligible. The celebrities strain to listen and attempt to decode the Kenyan’s speech. Whether or not they come up with the correct answer is not the point. The ‘African’ comes off seeming unknowable, distant and infantilized. This pattern of interaction racializes the foreigner in juxtaposition to Koreanness, as it reconstructs the would-be white
gaze from the reference point of the Korean audience, in turn objectifying the foreigner within modernity’s ethnographic rules of engagement. His language is reduced to gibberish and his attempts to speak Korean rendered inadequate.

All the while his ‘otherness’ gets established within a mock-scene of international diplomacy in which Korea attempts to normalize relations with the African. The Kenyan man is literally featured as if he were a representative of the United Nations, sitting behind a panel adorned with a placard sporting his national flag and wearing his ‘national’/‘traditional’ garb. The dynamics of the game thus tap into the imaginary currents of the raciosity of international relations, and specifically the Western construct of Africans as passive, without subjectivity and without speech. Ling discusses the ways in which “the meaning in global relations...rebounds to the social values assigned to race, gender, class and culture”, leading to the replication of the Self by the Other in local cultural trends and representational regimes. This is because, for one, developmental paraphernalia is bound to the borrowed ideological components of international relations, such as commercially tied aid, foreign advisors, consultants or experts, First World rules, practices and institutions. Escobar informed us some time ago of the coloniality of developmentalism, whose representational impact he likened to Said’s concept of Orientalism. Development is more than a process, problematization or technical policy initiative. It is an organized discourse, a corporate institution and a discipline that is critical to the “binding or a range of differences and

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discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization”.

Figure 13: Image of street performance. “Boys take part in a performance to raise awareness of poverty and hunger organized by World Vision at Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul”

The authority of whiteness is highlighted and inflected throughout the scene in Star Golden Bell in which philosophical expectations about cross-cultural interaction are arranged in advance of and in synchronicity with ocular and other accompanying expectations. Assisted by fated miscommunication, the Korean language becomes the referent of global intelligibility through which Korean corporeality achieves a closer relationship to white/modern subjectivity. These shows, assisted by the popularity of Hallyu aesthetics, work to produce difference between Koreans and others – to distinguish from the position of the ‘white gaze’ a new kind of Korean that would otherwise not be visibly obvious or historically intelligible. These types of events might be read as the act of crafting an historical ontology, of a kind of archiving or record production that attempts to change the

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rubrics and rules of imperialism. Ignatiev acknowledges the complex relationship between being white and acting white, the possibility that arises between the two being at least approximation. Whiteness operates as a discourse and works through other discourses (through gender for example), and thus can transcend embodied whiteness. Whilst white skin has brought disproportionate access to that power base, it is also true that whiteness is echoed and materialized by groups not necessarily defined as white.

While whiteness might seem a particularly stubborn and inflexible discourse to inhabit on the part of those who do not “embody it” from the start, being white also comes with its own limits and constraints. Not just in the way that Dubois meant it – that whites were forced to live out racist subjectivities because of their positioning vis-à-vis blackness, but in the sense that whiteness lives within a particular space and time of the global imaginary (contrary to accompanying claims to universal transcendence). Whiteness is wedded to the history of colonialism, capitalism, the European bourgeois and liberal intelligensia and to the general habits of Occidentalism, which are also unlikely to be unmoored with any more ease than what Said analyzes as Orientalism. After all, Europe functions as a discursive figure, an ideological fiction and not as a real set of places, practices and people. Ironically then, postcolonial practices have the tendency to invert the Orientalist production of the ‘Other’. Just as the Orient is a fictive product of European thought, now Europe has also become a symbolic, object, which serves as the condition of possibility for Korean postcolonial transformations.

321 See Ann Stoler, Imperial Formations.
Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which various facets of Hallyu culture represent and possibly compel transformations in Korean postcolonial identity. More specifically, it throws into relief the ways in which the “global” is inflected in various Hallyu aesthetic regimes, such as TV dramas, films, beauty trends, traditional culture and other popular culture products and trends that suggest the transition of Korea to cosmopolitan, globalized living. The central task has been to analyze how Hallyu aesthetics rearrange postcolonial desire to shift the historical foundations of Korean subjectivity. That is, this chapter has described instances in which Hallyu aesthetic regimes re-arrange national histories, sensibilities and memories to reconstitute the meaning of Koreanness. As a part of this reconstitution, Korean bodies and identities are constituted as “global”, as “Pan-Asian”, as mujeongguk through Hallyu aesthetic regiments, which tap into racial imaginaries and the workings of white privilege embedded in international relations discourses. The ways in which Korean identity is constructed as ‘global’ are compelled by the Hallyu industry connections to state and corporate campaigns that aim to brand the country for global economic competition. Speaking more broadly, Hallyu can be viewed as a continuation of Korea’s state-sponsored globalization movement. It is an institution responsible for helping shift the historical grounds upon which minjok identity becomes meaningful as a national identity construct.
**Dissertation Conclusion**

The goal of this dissertation has been to analyze the role of racial identity in Korean nationalism, and especially to assess how changing notions of *minjok* and Koreanness have responded to the provocations of neoliberal globalization in recent decades. That is, it has illuminated race-thinking and racializing practices inherent in Korea’s ongoing national identity formation and which are emergent within the often paradoxical analytics of capitalist modernity, and specifically within Korea’s globalization projects. This project arose from the need to understand, in more productive and critical ways, Korea’s contemporary treatment of ‘the foreign’ beyond the readily available explanation of anti-colonial defensiveness – a discursive genealogy that continues to animate the national myth of *minjok* homogeneity.

As already conveyed, the significance of *minjok* identity to Korean postcolonial nationalism is highly significant. Retrojected to pre-national origins, *minjok* has come to reference an ethno-racially homogenous people who for 5,000 years have endured foreign invasion and war (Mongolia, Japan, China, North Korea, and in some historical renditions the U.S.). Most significantly, *minjok* functions as the embodiment and signification of anti-colonial politics in Korea – an identity type that emerged within, against and in intimate relation with discourses of colonial modernity. These were discourses largely shaped by, filtered through and adapted from Japanese colonial projects on the peninsula. Most notably, Japan’s own imperial identity construct – *minzoku*, itself a neologic blend of local and European ideas about national identity – served as a blueprint for the inception *minjok* and the scaffolding its meanings thereafter.

This dissertation has investigated several sites of recurring and increasingly systemized encounters between Koreans and those considered non-Korean, which generate
racial anxiety in the form of policy conundrums, civil unrest and new social phenomena. The changing socio-legal status of ‘mixed race’ peoples to accommodate contemporary transformations in patriarchal, family governing structures has been one sphere of interest. Related to this, the emergence of multicultural politics to manage the influx of migrant workers, migrant brides and the resulting increase of ‘mixed’ families has constituted another chain of inquiry. Finally, this dissertation has queried the role of popular culture regimes, and specifically the phenomenon of Hallyu, in the making of contemporary, national meanings of Koreanness. The examinations of these sites of encounter have been animated by the following questions: How do transformations of Korean ethno-national identity (minjok) respond to the provocations of neoliberal globalization? How do the sites of investigation in this project demonstrate a tension between anti-colonial nationalism, which constructs minjok identity against the memories of foreign/imperial presences, and the ideals of globalization that construct minjok identity in intimate relation to the authority of the ‘international’, and ultimately, to white authority?

To be clear, this dissertation has not argued that minjok identity is racist, or unique in its racial outlooks. All modern, national identity constructs are ultimately rooted in the memory of colonial encounter and the experiences of colonial modernity that followed. What this project has argued, however, is that the power of minjok invariably depends upon race thinking, or investments in racial difference, to function as an agent of postcolonial, nation building. Going further, this dissertation suggests that contemporary identity making practices index a certain pliability of Occidentalism, wherein projects, such as those embodied in Hallyu discourses, incorporate the ‘West’ into an alternative telos of living. That is, while race-thinking is a colonial inheritance of sorts, it is also subject to translation and
localization to produce alternative variations on value systems, aesthetic preferences and so on. Korean racializing practices commit to the broader oeuvre or repertoire of globalized biopolitical imaginaries – the rather inflexible part of race relations. However, how bodies and identity practices are valued and devalued within local contexts also vary with specificity.

Take for instance the section in which this dissertation discussed the ways Koreanness is enjoyed through the arrangement of spectacles that place non-Koreans in specifically Korean ‘traditional’ cultural contexts. Chapter four raised examples of representations that celebrate Korea’s diverse foreign population vis-à-vis Korean traditional practices and artifacts. In those representational instances, foreigners are displaced as ‘other’. Significantly, the ‘othering’ of foreigners occurs against the “specificities” of supposed ethnically marked traditions. That is, Koreans use markers of traditional culture – what in other contexts might signal the pitfall into particularism – as symbolic capital in the production of Korean dominance and paternalism.

This phenomenon is possible not only because of the double move postcolonial societies must take generally in valuing and evaluating themselves. It is also an outcome of the position of “in-betweeness” Korea finds itself in as mediator or translator of both ‘West’ and ‘East’. Speaking more broadly, the flexibility and fixed nature of racial politics are rendered through the case of Korea’s positionality vis-à-vis the political economies of the Western first world and world of developing ‘others’. The complex and nationally mediated experiences of globalization have enabled this position of “cuspeness”, wherein celebrations of Korean cosmopolitanism become simultaneous celebrations of Korean national uniqueness.
The celebration of Korean uniqueness is a celebration of homogeneity to be sure, which continues the tradition of ethnic nationalism. However, it is also a celebration of newfound upward mobility and of globalized, national futures. Korea’s globalization is about the reification of national pasts and about the production of national futures. More to the point, the celebration of Korea’s globalization is frequently tethered to claims to history – to actively producing it and remaking it, being a part of it’s unfolding, and being locatable within it.

Chapter one discussed nationalist formations in Korea’s brush with colonial modernity. It traced some of the gyrations Korean nationalism went through to accommodate the fact of Japanese colonialism. Formations of national ontologies throughout the colonial period suggest that Korean racial consciousness was molded through a biologized concept of ethnicity – one that engaged Darwinian principles, but that also privileged the specificity of a retrojected, unadulterated national lineage. Korea’s particular engagement with concepts of race and ethnicity came out of negotiating Japanese colonial rule, desires for national self-determination and for modernization. Japan’s own imperial identity construct minzoku – itself a neologic blend of Euro-colonial and indigenous ontologic formations – influenced Korean options for engaging the analytics of nation, space, time, history, and modernity. In other words, Korea’s layered colonial experience created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of national sensibilities that indexed “global” (Euro-American/racial worldviews), regional (Japanese/ethno-biologic lineage) and local loci of enunciation for what constituted ontologic validity. These at times competing and at other times complimentary identity paradigms have become a part of the fabric of Korean minjok identity. It is this amalgam of
colonial experience that has made possible later expressions of Korean positional subject-positions, which this dissertation has discussed.

Chapter two examined the discursive production of the properly political Korean during the era of post-Korean war industrialization by analyzing practices of nation building that othered ‘mixed race’ peoples in South Korea society. The chapter argued that ethno-national purity of minjok and the otherness of ‘mixed race’ peoples were mutually constitutive, and that the latter was necessary in the production of the former. Specifically, ‘mixed race’ otherness was an outcome of various strategies of national governance, which cohered around discourses and legislation on the family and around the taboo of miscegenation in a time of heightened militarism. Through a reading of national policy texts, such as family law, I mapped the production of the properly political Korean subject to the taboo of miscegenation and maintenance of patriarchal, patrilineal privilege within the family. As an extended micro-political space of the masculine nation, the family has serves as the ground upon which postcolonial insecurities of U.S. occupation, Cold-war militarism and authoritarian-led industrialization have been projected. The myth of Korean ethno-racial homogeneity has been maintained vis-à-vis the exclusion of Korean women and their “hybrid” children from family-mediated political rights and, by extension, national belonging. I also traced the extension of these patriarchal practices into the present and in relation to the multicultural family. The patriarchal basis of multicultural governance, especially when it comes to policies that subordinate migrant brides to their husbands families, reinforces not only the prerogatives of Korean men, but the structures of Orientalized femininity. The case of mixed race peoples brings to light the foundations and capacities for race thinking inherent in Korean postcolonial nationalism, and also the ways in
which the power to racialize works through analytics that are contextual and specifically meaningful to Korean nation building, such the Neo-Confucian patriarchy and the sexuality of Korean women.

Chapter three argued that Korean multiculturalism is a postcolonial project of the developmental kind. It views multiculturalism as an extension of Korean developmental pasts and which reconfigures the national interior in ways that allow for the economic inclusion of non-national bodies in neoliberal times. Korean multiculturalism responds to a variety of issues related to migration, including an urgency to secure cheap human capital/labor for national development and the simultaneous pressure from the international community to protect the human rights of migrant workers. The developmental imperative at the heart of Korean multicultural programs, policies and practices recalibrates Korean ethno-national identity as tolerant of difference, benevolent and also hegemonic in relation to other migrant ethnies. That is, practices of multiculturalism have produced new spaces for rewiring the meaning of Koreanness in relation to “other” primarily Asian ethnicities. For example, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and churches (often one-in-the same) develop support programs for migrant workers, migrant brides and “multi-ethnic” children that arrange for the familiar trappings of multicultural rule, including the explicit expectation of cultural assimilation. Adult language programs, child-rearing programs, school-based education programs, employee-training programs in large work to generate a political ethos of conditional tolerance. As assimilation is an always already impossible task it has the effect of securing the specificities of other Asian ethnicities in relation to Koreanness.

Chapter four mapped several trajectories of racialized and racializing power that work through the exhibitory practices of contemporary Korean Hallyu cultural
representations/performances. I argued that *Hallyu* culture acts an extension of Korean government and industry, responsible for the production of postcolonial desire – that is that *Hallyu* cultural representations can be considered aesthetic, hybrid manifestations of the confluence of political economies that work toward the national goal of globalization. *Hallyu* products (narratives, images, cosmetic procedures, etc.) promise ascension to high modernity and capitalize upon national desires to revisit and transform colonial histories, mainly that of overcoming and challenging the ‘West’ as the central referent of modernity. That is to say, while its effects are at once local, regional and transnational, *Hallyu* finds its logic in postcolonial reason, which is locatable in the impetus for national economic and cultural expansion. Aesthetic expressions of contemporary postcoloniality, however, loosen the meaning of Korean subjectivity and history from state territoriality through the transnational images, language and “odorless” aesthetics of the ‘global’. The co-production of Korea’s foreign affairs programs and domestic media/culture industry to manage global relationships and market competition is connected to the changing contours of Koreanness – an iconic subjectivity of sorts able to capitalize on the aesthetics of hybridity, transnationality and intertextual racializing practices.

By examining applications of postcolonial nation building where racial investments come to fore, I have examined the ways in which Korean national identity contains hegemonic potential and, indeed, produces hegemonic effects. Koreanness can be viewed as an emerging identity construct that is discursively constituted through policy, media and social programming technologies conceived in the name of charting a path to globalization. I do not suggest that Korea is a full-blown imperial power, nor would I say that the country is in the throws of internally colonizing its ‘others’. The U.S. military’s continued occupation
of South Korea and the lived violences of war, rape, poverty and family estrangement of people on the peninsula would trouble these claims. However, I do assert that alongside the very powerful national imagination of historical victimhood, one can make out the contours of imperial formations – institutionalized movements and tendencies that are oppressive towards others, and which suggest that Korea’s anti-coloniality is not always or necessarily troubled by racial rule. Minjok emerged largely around an anti-colonialism predicated upon anti-Japanese sentiment, and to a certain extent, in opposition to the West. However, the index of development, of modernity, and of civilization then and now is wired to a politics of race – to a white managed racism that has marked and geopolitically devalued certain bodies in advance of any national project. Korea’s strivings for first world, globalized status, which can only be conferred through the gaze of “global” authority, has meant engaging in some of the prescriptive steps to becoming such.

Korea’s adoption of multicultural rule, for example, is viewed as a path towards becoming a “global Korea”. The particular, historical circumstances of Korea’s globalization experience have meant that working in the name of democracy, diversity and “global citizenship” – the ideological constructs that globalization implies in the case of Korea – also work to re-secure allegiances to the memories of postcolonial struggle, national identity, “development” and, importantly, a national future that is distinctly Korean. The policies and discursive contours of migrant intelligibility have been shaped by the notion of the “multicultural family”, which in many ways can be considered a developmental project of the state. Laborers have been excluded from this vision, with a great deal of attention given to migrant brides and their integration into Korean society via Korean men and their families. In other words, a patriarchal vision of the national family has been reconstituted through the
notion of the multicultural family, which exists in service of a national reproduction project. Therefore, the policies and programming ventured in the name of achieving a diverse, multicultural Korea is also a project of national economic development, which requires the differentiated and exploitive treatment of migrants as much as it does benevolent, humanitarian treatment.

Additionally, programmatic results such as these should not be considered surprising, sudden or entirely new. Minor histories that have remained peripheral or muted in Korea’s national landscape rupture through the cracks of such projects. Current contention over the differentiated treatment of foreigners reminds us that imperial ambitions not unknown to the landscape of South Korean international relations or national narratives. Operating as a proxy or “neocolonial surrogate” for U.S. politico-economic expansion in Asia, for example, South Korea supplied the largest number of troops among other international forces (300,000) to Vietnam throughout the war. Staunch anti-communist regimes justified Korean military involvement in Vietnam to the public as an exaltation of “national prestige overseas”, an exercise that heroically protected freedom from communists. Lee Jin Kyung frames this military historical moment for Korea as an exercise in the recovery ethnonational masculinity, which fed the culture, ambition and masculine pride of a “sub-empire”.324 According to Ann Stoler, ‘minor’ histories should not be mistaken for trivial ones. Nor are they iconic, mere microcosms of events played out elsewhere on a larger central stage. “Minor history…makes a differential political temper and a critical space. It attends to structures of feeling and force that ‘major’ history might be otherwise displaced” 325 As such, Korean nationalism is not impeded by racially based practices that govern its changing

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324 Lee Jin-kyung, p. 665.
population landscape. In some ways, the very presence of ‘others’ in Korea is a sign of its globalized status, which may further embolden Korean nation building at the expense of non-Korean bodies.

*Future Trajectories*

The dissertation has worked within two trajectories of intent. The first has been to expand postcolonial scholarship on comparative colonialisms in East Asia – to demonstrate how a postcolonial politics of race operates outside the Western/Non-Western encounter. The second is to consider how neoliberal/market-based logics of governance currently impact and rework the meaning of Korean postcolonial, ethno-national identity. It has been compelled by the search for emerging configurations of power in the Asia-Pacific region that potentially displace, interpret and/or remake practices of governance, sovereignty, and identity. This dissertation has engaged questions that throw into relief frameworks for thinking about alternative modes of racialized authority, be they expressed through institutional, cultural or gendered modalities.

Neoliberalism is too often essentialized as a single mode of economic governance that deregulates global capital and dilutes the agency of the nation-state. This common and polarizing assessment of neoliberalism is often reproduced by scholarship that focuses on post-industrial Western economies. By redirecting attention to a non-Western example, this dissertation opens up opportunity to explore the variegated, often surprising and even counter-intuitive effects of neo-liberal governance. The communist, developmental and authoritarian political backgrounds of industrialized East Asian countries provide a different

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set of historical circumstances that align methods of state governance to economic activity differently.

This work finds agreement with the disclaimer/descriptor Ong attaches to the meaning of ‘alternative’ (i.e. alternative modernities) as not being outside the ideational or material logic of capitalist modernity, but indicates attempts to harness the narrative and structural possibilities of capitalist modernity to make distinctly Korean claims about Korean identity. In Korea, globalization, multicultural governance and neoliberal economic policy have worked in tandem to replicate elements of racial rule for the goal of national development. This project signals the emergence of alternative modernities in Korea that, crucially, do not suggest a critique of or opposition to capital, but that suggest different kinds of relations to the idea of “the West”, to global capital, to state developmental strategies in a post-cold war order of flexible capitalism.

This dissertation works in the direction of expanding research on Asian modernities, regionalisms and “New Asia” discourses. It expresses interest in new kinds of transnational, trans-local or trans-regional relationships currently under consolidation that defy the normative assumptions of international relations, rational state behavior and cross-cultural exchange. Most significantly, this project signals ongoing discussions of how “Asia” is being re-imagined not necessarily as a site of counter-Western hegemony, but as an alternative locus of enunciation for what can constitute the “modern”. Research in this area can contribute to ongoing discussions on the practices and challenges of decolonization in the Asia-Pacific region.


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