



EVERYDAY POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION IN ROK

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FOREIGNERS IN KOREA

- Labor migrants
 - Koreans no longer want to do the 3 Ds (dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs)
 - Concept from Japan (3-K kitanai, kiken, kitsui 汚い、危険、きつい) Korean doesn't alliterate—töröun, wihöghan, öryöun
- Korea, which had been a labor-exporting country, became a labor-importing country in 1992
 - Migrants from poorer (mostly Asian) countries provide temporary 3-D labor
 - Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh
 - Migrants from developed countries tend to be in comparatively well-paid service industries
 - US, Japan, Europe language teaching, expat businessmen
 - Marriage migrants—females to meet the demographic shortage of rural women—China, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, etc.

SOUTH KOREAN NATIONALITY LAW

- 1997—Nationality Law amended to allow citizenship based on mother or father
 - Under old law, citizenship followed the father unless a woman was unmarried
- 1999—Overseas Koreans Act 재외교포 (在外僑胞)
 - Allows dual citizenships for emigrants who left after 1948
 - Excludes ethnic Koreans in China and Soviet Union (because most left Korea before 1948)
 - Ethnic Koreans born in China after 1949 are considered Chinese citizens with no special rights in South Korea (following Chinese citizenship law)
- 2010 Law Revision
 - Continues to exclude overseas Chinese ethnic Koreans, but includes foreign-born spouses

VISA PRACTICES STRUCTURE OPPORTUNITY

- Overseas Koreans from wealthy countries (Japan, USA) can get work visas that are easily renewable
- Overseas Koreans from China can only get 5-year non-renewable visas (like guest workers from countries like the Philippines or Nepal)
- As a result, much labor migration among Chosŏnjok involves “making and faking kinship” and overstaying visas (as among other nationalities, too)
- Seoul has Chosŏnjok residential areas (Tarimdong, Kurodong, Karibongdong), Filipino neighborhoods (Hyehwadong)

UNDOCUMENTED AS “SPACE OF NONEXISTENCE”

- State does not allow migrant workers to establish residence and form families
- Workers who come anyway lack legal status
 - Possibility of immigration raids and deportation looms over them
 - Subject to heightened policing as “illegals”
 - Vulnerable to exploitation by employers
- Why does this group exist in so many countries?
 - Restrictive migration laws create a flexible and contingent work force that certain employers like
 - Argument goes: employers want cheap labor, so the state doesn’t exclude migrants entirely, but structures things so that only their labor is allowed, not citizenship (i.e. as trainees, but trainees feel exploited and jump ship)

IMMIGRANT RAIDS AS A DISCIPLINARY PRACTICE

- Choo:“... Immigration raids contained migrants within geographic and social boundaries in the shadows of citizenship, actively producing and reinforcing systems of exclusion through physical and social boundaries in migrant communities ..“ p74
- ”vibrant contestation and negotiation among the state, migrant advocacy NGOs, and migrant communities”, however, make raids a site where inclusion and exclusion is negotiated
- Important to note:
 - When and where immigration officers patrolled
 - Whom immigration officers targeted
 - When and how migrants navigated these patrols

IMMIGRATION RAIDS AS “BORDER SPECTACLE”

- November 2008 raid in Factory town
 - Officers detained as many people as possible without checking their papers (later releasing those with papers one-by-one)
 - Migrants were arrested based on their racial (phenotypical) appearance
 - Thus Chosŏnjok, Mongolians, and Chinese were excluded, while those from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines were rounded up
 - Raid was followed by gatherings of activists, journalists, and others to tell heartrending stories (such as of Seonwuu Eummi and her common-law Bangladeshi husband)
 - People hid more and factories reopened to operate more discretely
- Coalition of activists and small factory owners block immigration vans, and beg for their release

MIGRANTS' ADAPTATION

- The raids don't actually eliminate undocumented workers, because others come to replace them since there is demand for their labor, and they can improve their lives through work in South Korea
 - There are more than 200,000 undocumented migrant workers in South Korea living in ethnic enclaves
- To avoid deportation migrants stay in “their zone” so as to remain “invisible” to the larger society
 - Home, factory, church
 - While this isn't a guarantee of tolerance, migrant arrests were far more common outside of the home-factory-church neighborhood
 - This, in effect, worked to segregate migrants by targeting those who enter public spaces beyond the borders of immigrant neighborhoods
 - Filipina domestic workers, while not able to migrate legally (unlike Singapore or Hong Kong only Chosŏnjok can do this in Korea) felt safe because raids never targeted affluent neighborhoods
- While the stated purpose of immigration raids is to deport undocumented workers, the effect of them is to contain migrants in segregated spaces out of sight, since deportation is an ever-present danger outside of ethnic zones
 - Because of racial targeting both legal and illegal are affected

SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

- In addition to the factory-home-church boundaries there are social boundaries migrants may not transgress
 - Do only low-wage work
 - Do not engage in political activity or anything high profile
 - E.g. deportation of Shakil Ahmed, a Bangladeshi
 - Migrants' Trade Union activist
- Employers and can use threat of report to immigration office to labor organizers
- People within the community can use deportation to police their own community
 - Those married to Koreans have citizenship and thus more power

TWO DIFFERENT DEMONSTRATIONS

- 2008—Demonstration of men and women from migrant advocacy NGOs and trade unions in front of National Human Rights Commission of Korea
 - Protesting raid on migrant workers 이주 노동자
 - This protest was done by Koreans *on behalf of migrant workers* (workers not in a position to speak for themselves because they lack civil rights)
- 2010—Demonstration of marriage migrants 결혼 이민자 in front of National Human Rights Commission of Korea
 - Marriage migrants themselves called for benevolence and protection within Korean society
 - In this case marriage migrants can speak for themselves
- Choo—this dichotomy is not “natural” by brought about by the intersection of multiple groups of South Korean actors p95



NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF KOREA

국가 인권 위원회—나라키움

Established in 2001 as a national advocacy institute for human rights protection.

중구 삼일대로

MOLDING THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY IN KOREA

- Coalition of three institutions
 - South Korean state that does not grant permanent residency to migrants unless they are married to Koreans
 - Philippine state that works to claim migrants as “new national heroes” who are still part of the Filipino polity while living abroad (“diasporic nationals”)
 - Catholic church with priests working to cultivate and maintain Filipino ethnic identity
 - Hyehwa Catholic Church Tagalog Mass
 - Filipino ambassador occupies front pew and is recognized by priest
 - Community events are announced during services
 - Father Thomas of Factory town
 - Does Tagalog mass in five cities, organized bowling leagues, provided labor counseling

HYEHWADONG CHURCH AND FILIPINO STREET MARKET



MINGLING OF MARRIAGE AND WORK MIGRANTS

- In Factory town, marriage migrants and work migrants mingle
 - Some Filipinas who married Koreans came first to Korea as undocumented workers and only later married a Korean they met at a factory
 - Many of those in the factory work force don't learn Korean well and are immersed in the immigrant community
- South Korean NGOs tended to encourage solidarity of workers of all ethnicities on a class basis
- From the Government of Korean perspective, however, marriage migrants are a special category
 - Special education programs group all foreign women married to Koreans in the same category and enroll them in educational programs designed to encourage assimilation
 - Given Koreanized names
 - Study Korean language produced by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family—and are taught they are *multicultural families* (tamunhwa kajok)
 - These classes create a collective identity among marriage migrants

CONTESTING VISIONS

- Peace Center—led by Protestant pastor Kim Wonsik
 - Held services for Filipinos
 - Did outreach activities for a variety of ethnicities
 - Paternalistic, hierarchical organization
 - Used panmal (language unmarked for politeness) with workers—note that this disturbed Choo when younger Koreans used panmal with older workers when they should have used chondaemal p103-4
 - This was less a problem for Filipinos whose community was church based
- Migrants' Trade Union (MTU) from 2005
 - Began as Equality Trade union in 2001
 - Run by secular, younger, more political staff (often of student activist background)
 - Work from the view of all marginalized labor in global capitalism rather than migrants per se
 - Nepali and Bangladeshi workers gravitated toward this organization, and objected more strenuously to the use of panmal

MIGRANTS' TRADE UNION

- Emphasize collective empowerment of migrant workers through migrants' direct voices and equal comradeship between migrants and Koreans
 - Activists called each other “comrade” (tongji) and used chondaemal or English
 - Tried to have translators present
- Activities of MTU were otherwise not markedly different from those of the faith-based institutions
 - Not an actual trade union that could bargain with management, but did in principle ask that the workers own voices be heard
- Risks of activism were greater for migrants than for Korean activists
- 2007-2017 conservative governments (Myungbak Lee, Geunhye Park)
 - Immigrant crackdown against undocumented workers

MIGRANT WORKERS VERSUS MIGRANT MOTHERS

- This distinction was created by the Korean government due to its creation of the category of “multicultural families” as those in which foreigners are mothers of Korean citizens
 - This new category put together women of varying classes and ethnic grounds
- Peace Center as woman’s “birth family” (ch’injǒng ömma, ch’in’gatchip)
 - Mediate between uncomprehending –in-laws and foreign wives and place to go for comfort and advice
- Maternal guardians—volunteer teachers in multicultural programs
 - Middle-class women “ideal national subjects” as wives of “salarymen”, but lose sense of purpose once children are grown (or become bored and isolated by domesticity)
 - Maternal guardians feel able to empathize with migrants as women, and teach them how to become Korean mothers
 - Control “people below” (ignorant husbands and mothers-in-law) by showing them middle-class ways
 - Protect migrants from officials who are upper-class meddlers
 - 사랑하면 알게 되고, 알면 보이니, 그때 보이는 것은 전과 같지 않으리라
- Maternal guardians challenge their own gender-based subordination while upholding racial and class hierarchies and heteronormative family