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Begetting the Nation:
The Androcentric Discourse of National
History and Tradition in South Korea

Rapid economic growth in East Asia in general and South Korea in particular has generated a body of literature attempting to formulate a “successful” model of economic development. Searching for factors contributing to this economic growth, scholars of economic development tend to emphasize such cultural factors as Confucianism and nationalism.¹ By nationalism, I refer to a set of ideas and practices designed to build an independent nation that is supposed to be a unified community, distinguished from others by its essential culture, tradition, and history. This definition suggests that there is more than one type of nationalism, depending upon who produces the ideas about a nation and how to build it. In this article I am concerned with official nationalism (or state nationalism)² and its implications for

gender hierarchy in contemporary Korea. Specifically, I will focus on the discursive form of nationalism produced by the state during the period of rapid industrialization under consecutive military regimes (1961–1987).

The Korean state as a major agent of industrialization since the early 1960s has tried to utilize nationalism as a way to legitimize repression and exploitation of the populace throughout the process. Industrialization as a national project gained priority in the postwar period of economic development. The reality of the Cold War has also shaped nationalist rhetoric, which touts “the building of a prosperous and strong Korean nation.” Specifically, the issue of national defense has become crucial to state nationalism in Korea, due to the unique experience of the Korean War and the continuing military confrontation between North and South. The effectiveness of state nationalism depends upon the collective memory of Japanese colonization and the Korean war, as well as on popular recognition of neo-colonial aspects of the American military and strategic dominance in Korea and Korea’s technological and economic dependence upon the United States and Japan.

However, the state’s attempt to conjure up the image of a timeless Korean nation through representations of its history and tradition is highly contradictory because this very discursive practice masks the marginalization of women and their exclusion from the putatively homogeneous and egalitarian community. This inconsistency is exemplified in the androcentric subtext of the official discourse of national history and tradition.

This essay is divided into three parts. First, I will situate the discursive form of official nationalism dealing with Korean history and tradition in the larger historical and social context of Korean nationalism and Third World nationalism. Second, I will analyze its androcentric subtext by focusing on books and articles produced by President Park Chung Hee (the main architect of official nationalism), the Ministry of Education, and state-sponsored research organizations—i.e., the Association of National Ethics Education Research (*Kungmin yulli kyoyuk yonguhoe*), which was inaugurated in 1972 and renamed Association of National Ethics Studies (*Kungmin yulli hakhoe*) in 1980, and the Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research (*Chongsin*

munhwa yonguwon), which was founded in 1978. In particular, I concentrate on texts dealing with Korean history, tradition, ethics, thoughts, and culture that comprise the discourse of national history and tradition. Then I will discuss the extent to which women resist androcentric official nationalism tinted with militarism and anti-democratic traditionalism. For this purpose, I will focus on women’s movements organized around the issues of family law reform and exploitation in factories, which challenge the ideas behind official nationalism. Finally, I will argue that it is important to examine the discursive form of official nationalism, because it reveals the androcentric view of a nation that military regimes have tried to build through the ideology of economic development. The nation envisioned in official nationalism is a patrilineal community of men, the order of which is rooted in essentialized differences between women and men. These differences are ultimately hierarchical, as images of men and women represented and implied in the nationalist discourse illustrate. Official nationalism, which constructs the Korean nation as a community of men in which women exist merely as its precondition, has serious implications for gender relations in contemporary Korea. Although some women have resisted the androcentric order of Korean society, economic development pursued with such a view of nation cannot bring about any substantial change in a persisting gender hierarchy.

Historical and Social Context of State Nationalism Under Authoritarian Military Rule

With the establishment of the Republic of Korea (1948), the postcolonial state adopted nationalism as an ideology of political legitimation. All postcolonial regimes in Korea have tried to exploit popular nationalist sentiments in order to legitimize their authoritarian rule. During the First Republic (1948–1960), Rhee Syngman’s regime tried to countervail its tenuous legitimacy with nationalist rhetoric based on anti-Communism and anti-Japanism. Park Chung Hee, who led the 1961 military coup d’état, which was followed by three decades of authoritarian military rule, attempted to justify the overthrow of the democrati-

cally elected Second Republic (1960–1961) in the name of “national reconstruction.”

Apart from varying degrees of criticism and praise, Park was unquestionably a central figure who laid the groundwork not only for the modern South Korean economy but also for the discursive form of official nationalism. During the junta period (1961–1963) Park, as the Chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction, launched the ideology of official nationalism with the themes of “self-reliant economy,” “self-reliant defense” based on fierce anti-Communism, and “national character.” Since then, the postcolonial state has adopted the triple goal of modernizing the nation through capitalist industrialization, defending it against the Communist North, and establishing a national identity in the midst of the rapid socio-economic change. This issue of national identity has been crucial to the state because that is what the nation-state is supposed to represent. The discursive form of official nationalism that I will analyze exemplifies the ways in which the state imagines the nation by invoking Korean history and tradition.

Park's nationalist themes as the mainstay of official nationalism share certain elements with earlier forms of nationalism of the colonial period as well as at the turn of the century. First of all, there is a common nationalist interest in “restoring” history and tradition as the essence of the nation. In the 1920s and 1930s, such folklorists as Ch'oe Nam-sŏn, Yi Nŭng-hwa, and Son Chin-t'ae attempted to reclaim Korean history and tradition from the Japanese interpretation of them.³ Second, Park seems to have borrowed rhetoric and ideas from earlier forms of nationalism. Thus he utilized the themes of “reconstruction” and “self-reliance,” first made current by the Protestant nationalist intellectuals such as Yun Ch'i-ho and An Ch'ang-ho.⁴ As I will show later, Park also employed the idea of *tongdo sogi* (morality of the East and technology of the West), which was the hallmark of the elite nationalism that emphasized social reforms toward the end of the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910).⁵

The themes of “self-reliant economy” and “national character” are not unique to Korean official nationalism. They have become nationalist concerns shared by Third World elites, which were often used to

appeal to populaces in the period of decolonization after the end of World War II. What is crucial to the nationalist link between the two themes is the emergence of the ideology of development, which views economic growth as a formulaic achievement based on capital, technology, and the market system of the West. In this hegemonic framework, economic development inevitably involves Westernization, which is at the same time perceived to be a threat to national identity. In this situation, Third World elites consider the issues of economic development and national identity as a dilemma. Consequently, the project of modernization (*choguk kŭndaehwa*) concomitant with the increasing adoption of Western institutions and practices, can engender fertile grounds for traditionalism.

Park tried to resolve this dilemma by resorting to the turn-of-the-century nationalist principle of *tongdo sogi*.⁶ Although he subscribed to the idea of “modernization” to “build a prosperous and strong Korean nation,” he was suspicious of such Western values as liberal democracy and individualism.⁷ From his junta period (1961–1963) on, he articulated as his goal the building of Korean-style democracy—i.e., “administrative democracy.” Like many nationalist elites, he tended to believe that the unchecked influx of Western values and the indiscreet imitation of Western institutions during the First Republic (1948–1960) and the Second Republic (1960–1961) led to not only social disorder but also the weakening of Korean national consciousness. Therefore, from the beginning of his regime Park was conscious of counteracting Western liberalism in the midst of rapid modernization.⁸

However, the theme of “self-reliant defense” emerged as a result of the unique Korean experience of the Cold War. Koreans have lived through the national division, which resulted in the separation of ten million family members. The Korean War generated two million casualties. Military tensions between North and South have persisted for decades. Anti-Communist sentiments among the populace have been quite strong because of the bloody civil war triggered by the Communist North's invasion and because of the perceived threat of an impending war. Although not explicitly reflected in the official discourse of national history and tradition, anti-Communism plays a significant role in producing an official nationalism that contains a strong

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militaristic strand and therefore implications for gender hierarchy in Korean society.

Predictably, the military regimes saw education as a means to foster national consciousness, which they equated with "Korean tradition" and anti-Communism in the historical context of developmentalism and the Cold War. Park Chung Hee argued that Korean education should be able to produce not just an educated person but a "Korean." This view was well illustrated by the state's extensive control over the production and distribution of primary and secondary school textbooks. Under both Park's rule and later Chun Doo-hwan's, the state either published the textbooks or approved them before their distribution. These regimes also implemented a series of educational reforms in 1963, 1973, 1981, and 1987 in order to incorporate anti-Communism and authoritarian traditionalism into textbooks, particularly for such subjects as Anti-Communist Morality (*pankong todök*), Right Living (*parün saenghwal*), National Ethics (*kun'gmin yulli*), National History (*kuksa*), and National Language (*kugö*).⁹

The state's effort to build national consciousness through education was not limited to young students. In 1968 Park proclaimed the Charter of National Education, which began with the sentence, "we were born into this land with a historical mission for national restoration." The Charter was printed on the first page of every textbook and government publication. It was displayed with the picture of President Park and the Korean national flag in every public building. Similarly, in 1981 Chun's regime launched the "national mentality education" (*kun'gmin chöngsin kyoyuk*) campaign into which issues of "unification and national security," "national ethics," "national economy," and "social purification" were integrated.¹⁰

Yet it was not until the Fourth Republic (1972–1979) that the state elaborated its nationalist discourse with growing attention to Korean tradition, especially thought and ethics. This escalating traditionalism took place in the context of the political change marked by the end of popular election under the *Yusin* Constitution. This signified the hardening of authoritarian rule during the Third Republic, which stirred up popular protests. This situation necessitated the escalation of the state's ideological control of citizens, especially (male) university students, who

played a significant role in challenging authoritarian politics since the overthrow of the First Republic in 1960. In this milieu, the Association of National Ethics Education Research (*Kun'gmin yulli kyoyuk yön'guhoe*) was created in 1972 to conduct research on national ethics education at the university level. The inauguration of the Association of National Ethics Education Research was immediately followed, in 1973, by another educational reform that emphasized national security and Korean tradition. The subject of national ethics was initially created for high school curricula at the beginning of the Third Republic, through 1963 educational reform measures.¹¹ Since then, national ethics had become a central issue in the official nationalist discourse.¹² The Association was composed of pro-government professors, whom I call "state intellectuals." Although it did not have any official status, it functioned as a state research center, fully funded by the Ministry of Education. In 1980, during the political transition to the Fifth Republic, it was renamed Association of National Ethics Studies (*Kun'gmin yulli hakhoe*).¹³

The foundation of the Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research in 1978 also illustrates the state's growing interests in Korean tradition, especially ethics and thinking. Park was a key figure in the establishment of this institute. He articulated the need for a specialized center for studying Korean culture in a 1976 presidential decree. His rationale was that it was time to pay sufficient attention to Korean tradition and culture, which had been pushed aside by the exigencies of economic growth.¹⁴ A group of professors was recruited for this research institute. They soon formulated a plan to establish a graduate school of Korean Studies, which was approved by the state in 1979. Equipped with state-sponsored finances and sophisticated intellectuals, this institute made a major contribution to the production of official nationalist discourse in the 1980s, until the formal end of the military rule in 1987.

In the following section, I will analyze the androcentric subtext of the official nationalism authored by President Park, the Ministry of Education, and the state intellectuals working in or affiliated with the aforementioned state-sponsored research organizations. Authors of official nationalism consciously or unwittingly select various elements concerning Korean history, traditional thinking, and ethics, as well as

images of a “desirable” (*paramjikhhan*) Korean from the complex of Korea’s past. By combining those elements, they construct antiquity and the uniqueness of the Korean nation. Their representation of Korean history and tradition sometimes makes questionable links among those selected elements. I am not primarily concerned here with verifying narrative constructs, although I try to discuss them in endnotes.

Korean Nation of Men and by Men

Pivotal androcentric themes emerging from official nationalist Korean histories are the Tan’gun myth and various national crises caused by foreign invasion and patriotic struggle. The importance of the Tan’gun myth lies in its explanation of the origin of the Korean nation.¹⁵ During the colonial period, nationalist folklorists such as Ch’oe Nam-sŏn, Yi Nŭng-hwa, and Son Chin-t’ae also paid special attention to this myth of national foundation. Their investigation into the national origin had a special meaning under the colonial policy of acculturation that tried to Japanize the Koreans. Hence, it was an effort to resist the colonial policy of eliminating Korean identity. Contemporary authors of official nationalism picked up the Tan’gun myth that had gained hegemony due to its significance to colonial nationalism. As a result, it has become the basis of the national calendar and a national holiday. Despite its historical ambiguity, 2333 B.C., the reputed year of the foundation of the oldest Korean state by Tan’gun, is accepted as an historical fact. Since national independence from Japan, the Tan’gun’s year (*tangi*) which adds 2333 to the dominical year, has been used along with the latter. In addition, October 3rd has become a national holiday (*kaech’ŏnjŏl*) commemorating the foundation of Korea by Tan’gun.¹⁶

According to Tan’gun myth, Korean history started with Tan’gun wang’gŏm, the legendary founder of the Korean nation, roughly five millennia ago.¹⁷ He was the son of Hwanung, an illegitimate son of Hwanin, the heavenly lord, and Wungnyŏ (which literally means a “bear-woman”). The story relates that illegitimate Hwanung (literally meaning “heavenly male”) was interested in ruling the human world, and his father allowed him to descend on earth with his entourage and

magical power. One day, a bear and a tiger anxious to become humans asked Hwanung to fulfill their wish. He ordered them to stay in a cave without sunlight and to eat garlic for one hundred days. While the tiger failed to observe this command, the bear patiently followed it and became a woman. Then Hwanung married the bear-woman and begot Tan’gun.¹⁸ The representation of gender is noteworthy in this narrative. In the myth, the woman is depicted merely as the bearer of the heir, thereby suggesting that woman’s only contribution to the creation of the Korean nation was the provision of a proto-nationalist womb. In other words, it implies that the Korean nation is ultimately the community of men, created by an extraordinary man, in which women exist only as its precondition.¹⁹

This nationalist view of women, more precisely of women’s bodies, is pervasive in state-sponsored family planning, which has been officially incorporated in the Five-Year Economic Development Plans. Male state bureaucrats who implement family planning policy tend to use the rationale that women are expected to accept birth control because unchecked population growth will jeopardize the economic growth of the nation.²⁰ In other words, women’s patriotism means submitting to the state anti-natal policy for controlling their nationalist wombs.

The heavenly man, Hwanung, and the bear-woman symbolize the essentialized difference between men and women and gender hierarchy as the very foundation of the Korean nationhood. While the man comes from heaven, his female counterpart is not only a mere earthling but is also of sub-human origins.²¹ Her animal roots place her close to nature, whereas his celestial roots distance him from it. She stands for women who produce sons for the nation as the community of men. In addition, the transformation of a bear into a woman carries the deep social meaning of womanhood epitomized by patience to endure suffering and ordeal.

Furthermore, the narrative depicts Hwanung as an illegitimate son.²² The issue of “illegitimacy” reflects a set of patriarchal social relations in which women are subordinated to men in the institutions of marriage and patrilineal kinship. It also indicates a hierarchy among women based on their marital status and sexual relations with men—e.g., married and legitimate wives, married but illegitimate concubines, and

unmarried and illegitimate mistresses. This kind of division among women reveals a patriarchal strategy to control women—i.e., divide and rule. An implicit but powerful message in the Tan'gun myth is that patriarchy existed from the beginning of Korean history and even before, and is a "natural" part of Korean culture. It is also implied that change would reduce Korean-ness or even dissolve the order of the Korean nation. In fact, as I will show later, this kind of fear was expressed by self-proclaimed Confucianists whenever reform of family laws was discussed.

The nationalist discourse on history tends to highlight numerous invasions of Korea and patriotic struggles. This approach to Korean history represents the nation created by Tan'gun being defended by men, especially by "righteous warriors." The discourse emphasizes the following events of foreign invasions and patriotic defenses that have become familiar to Koreans through formal schooling and mass media.²³ This line of history starts with Wu-ti, the Emperor of the Han Dynasty, who invaded Kochosön, the oldest Korean state, and established Chinese commanderies at the sites of his conquest. However, they were reclaimed by the kingdom of Kogüryö (?–A.D. 668). In the seventh century, Kogüryö also fought with the Sui and the T'ang dynasties of China. General Uljimdöök saved the nation by defeating Yangti, the Sui Emperor who invaded Kogüryö with 1,130,000 troops, near the Salsu river. Park and some state intellectuals praise Kogüryö for its courageous, strong and martial spirit and its role as a bulwark of the Korean nation in history. They represent it as the glorious and independent past of the Korean nation, which is to be revived.²⁴

The nationalist discourse cites the invasion by the T'ang dynasty around the time of the "national unification" of the Three Kingdoms by Silla (?–A.D. 668) in the mid-seventh century.²⁵ Collaborating with Silla for the conquest of the two other kingdoms, Kogüryö and Paekche (?–A.D. 660), T'ang attempted to annex the conquered territory to its own empire. Silla successfully drove out T'ang from the Korean Peninsula and unified Korea. According to the discourse, this unification by Silla, which developed later than the two kingdoms and was isolated by its geography, is attributable to the patriotic spirit of a *hwarang* (flower boy) and *hwarangdo* (the code of the elite youth corps).²⁶ I will

return to the idea of *hwarangdo* later in the discussion of the construction of Korean tradition.

The nationalist discourse points out the Mongol invasion of the Koryö Dynasty (A.D. 918–1392) in the early thirteenth century in order to provide evidence of the strong spirit of national defense. Despite the devastating war and forty years of Mongol rule (1231–1270), the Korean nation survived. A text published by the Research Center for Peace and Unification suggests that *sambyölc'h'o*, a special capital defense unit during the Koryö Dynasty, fought to the last man without surrendering to the Mongol invaders.²⁷

Another national crisis was the Japanese invasion of 1592–1599, during which the Korean nation was defended by Admiral Yi and *übyöng*, which literally means "righteous soldiers." They are called righteous because they volunteered for patriotic sacrifice. In the post-1961 period, Admiral Yi was elevated to the position of a "sacred hero" who saved the nation from total destruction and inspired many young men who inherited the spirit of *hwarang* to join *übyöng*. These warriors were not professional men of the sword who were duty-bound to fight for the nation, but Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, and peasants who were all, of course, male. They collaborated to save the nation, regardless of their religious and economic differences. A text published by the Research Center for Peace and Unification mentions the battle of Haengju Castle, in which General Kwön Yul, who was a civil official prior to the invasion, and Cho Yöng, a Buddhist monk, went into battle together.²⁸

According to the nationalist discourse, foreign invasions and the patriotic defenses by *übyöng* reached their peak in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, especially during the period between the annexation of Korea to Japan (1905) and its colonization (1910).²⁹ Moreover, the patriotic spirit of righteous fighters did not die out after the colonization of Korea. It underlay militant nationalist struggles in the Korean Peninsula and abroad until the end of colonial rule.

This specific representation of Korean history, which is quite familiar to the general public, reveals the androcentric and often militaristic nature of official nationalism. The continuous necessity to defend the Korean nation masculinizes it by linking citizenship to soldiering. This

also exposes the discrepancy between seemingly egalitarian membership in a nation and its gendered nature by pointing to the reality that some Koreans are more legitimate than others; men, especially able-bodied young ones who can be warriors, are more legitimate than women.

The militaristic tint in constructing a male warrior as the legitimate subject of Korean history appears to have been stronger during the 1970s when military authoritarian rule became more rigid. For example, the first book published for the National Ethics Series by a state-sponsored research association in 1979 was *Korean Soldiers' Spirit*. A drift toward militaristic expansionism in official nationalism sometimes appears quite explicitly. For example, *Investigation of the Image of a Korean* (1974), published by Korean Education Development Institute, mentions that the "national spirit" runs through the Kingdom of Koguryō, which conquered Manchuria; the Kingdom of Paekche, which attempted to conquer the Shan Tung peninsula in China; and the Unified Silla, which attempted to be the tributary center in East Asia.

Despite its anachronistic nature, this ethos of militaristic expansionism is well institutionalized in the Korean Military Academy established by President Rhee (1948–1960) in the midst of the Korean War. Modeled after West Point, this four-year military academy started as a key instrument to realize Rhee's official policy of "marching-to-the-north" unification. Since its opening in 1951 "*pukchin t'ongil, ko'ŏ hoe-bok*" (unification by marching to the north, recovery of old territories) has become a central slogan embedded in the daily routine of salute practices as well as elementary military training for new cadets. This motto was also inscribed on the academy's buildings until 1988 when Korea held the Summer Olympics in Seoul. Its elimination was probably motivated by an official concern with Korea's image during that international event. Yet, the practice of shouting the motto at the time of salute and during elementary training continues.³⁰

Androcentrism tinted with militarism is best articulated by President Park himself. As one of his initial speeches after the coup illustrates, he conceives of the Korean nation as a community of men. His junta spoke to its "beloved brethren" of the "inevitability" of military "revolution" and the necessity of supporting it.³¹ His initial calls for patriotism contain a strong desire to build a fully masculine Korea. Park was ambitious

to reconstruct the Korean nation by "recovering" ancient histories, "especially those concerning the knighthood of Koguryō and *hwarang*."³² He argued that the long history of vassalage to succeeding Chinese empires since the Koryō Dynasty undermined the spirit of Korean independence and ultimately Korean masculinity. He wrote:

The Korean tragedy is basically different from the tragedy of Western Europe. The West European tragedy fights fate and dies gloriously . . . We do not have any of the manly tragic consciousness of the West. We want sentimental sympathy. This weak and frail desire for maudlin sympathy cannot foster true human courage among the populace nor engender a genuine pioneering spirit in life . . . [Confucian formalism] was so obsessed with ceremonies, rites, and manners that it did not achieve any beneficial social result . . . [Consequently] "honor" (in the sense of Western European chivalry) did not develop . . . The real national image of the great man was not that of a weak pedant but rather of a patriotic fighter who would readily die on the battlefield in defense of his country.³³

As I pointed out earlier, this strand of militarism in official nationalism reflects the reality of national division, the bloody civil war, and military confrontation between North and South that has lasted for decades. The Korean Peninsula has become one of the most militarized regions in the world. In this unique milieu, militarism, which values male soldiery, has underlain such ruling ideologies as national security and anti-Communism. These ideologies in turn enabled the military regimes to manage to stay in power until the late 1980s. To be sure, they have been challenged by participants in the dissident movement, especially radical students, religious leaders, intellectuals, and politicians opposed to the military dictatorship. Yet the general public has accepted the dominant ideologies.

Constructing Korean Tradition

The nationalist history of Korea, represented in terms of foreign invasions and defense by patriotic warriors, conjures up the antiquity of the Korean nation. Yet this is not sufficient to establish its unique identity

in a period of rapid modernization. The increasing influx of “Western” values and attitudes in the process of aggressive industrialization, accompanied by rapid integration into the global market, has led to a popular concern for Korean identity.³⁴ The military regimes have recognized this issue and exploited it in order to secure their rule.

A text published by the Research Center for Peace and Unification defines Korean tradition as “what Korean people thought and think” and “what contributes to the development of Korean thoughts.”³⁵ Reflecting the earlier nationalist strategy of *tongdo sögi*, an underlying rationale here is that the modernization or transformation of Korea into a strong and wealthy nation does not mean becoming like Westerners. Although Koreans change their appearance, their real identity lies deep in their thinking or spirit, which is not to be affected by the Westernization of material life.³⁶

The nationalist discourse produced by Park, the Ministry of Education, and the state intellectuals portrays the spirit of Tan’gun, the spirit of *hwarang*, “state-protecting Buddhism,” and Confucianism as the principal elements of Korean tradition. As we will see, all these components of Korean tradition are interpreted in such a way as to articulate the interests of male ruling elites.³⁷ A critical content analysis of textbooks on national history (*kuksa*) and national language (*kukö*) taught in primary and secondary schools since the late 1950s also reveals a similar bias in the construction of Korean tradition.³⁸

In line with his privileged position as the founder of the Korean nation, Tan’gun’s spirit occupies a special place in the officially represented Korean tradition. According to the nationalist discourse, Tan’gun’s spirit constitutes indigenous Korean religion, thoughts, and ethics as opposed to Buddhism and Confucianism, which were imported and Koreanized. The ideas of *kyöngch’ön aein* (worshipping Heaven, loving human beings) and *hongik ingan* (widely benefiting human beings) epitomize Tan’gun’s spirit. The idea of *hongik ingan* is said to be Tan’gun’s spirit of national foundation (*könkuk inyöm*). Officially, it has been adopted as a philosophical tenet of formal education since the establishment of the Republic of Korea (1948). Han Süng-jo, a leading state intellectual, argues that these ideas of *kyöngch’ön aein* and *hongik ingan* later developed into the Korean brand of humanism. This tradi-

tion that values human life and promotes collective welfare runs through Korean history.³⁹

Han also argues that in association with Tan’gun’s humanism, the Confucian notion of *minbon juüi* provides the traditional basis for Korean democracy. *Minbon juüi* refers to the belief that the basis of ruling or polity is the people, that is, the ruled. The notion of Heaven is central to this belief, as is Tan’gun’s humanism. Both the spirit of Tan’gun and Confucianism draw the basis of political authority from Heaven. Confucianism as a philosophy of rulers relies upon the moral concept of the Heaven’s Mandate (*ch’ön myöng*) in order to legitimize otherwise naked power. Given the unity of Heaven, earth, and human beings, Heaven as the source of legitimacy means that ruling is based on those who are ruled. Ruling in harmony with the Heaven’s Mandate means, in principle, ruling for the people. In other words, politics is about taking care of the ruled and this politics for the people is represented as the Korean tradition of democracy.⁴⁰

Aside from the paternalistic and moralistic characteristics of this definition of democracy, there are conceptual limits to the notion of *minbon juüi*. First of all, it does not address who decides what kind of needs are to be taken care of and how. This silence is conducive to administrative dictatorship in the Tocquevillean sense. When there is little room for grassroots participation in political processes, people will at best be depoliticized by the mere satisfaction of immediate material needs. In addition, the Confucian idea does not discuss what people can do when politics fails to respond to their needs. This absence is not conducive to democratic politics based on equality among individuals.⁴¹

Some state intellectuals try to vindicate the absence of the notion of individual equality in Korean “humanism” (*inbon juüi*) with the emphasized presence of Korean “community consciousness” (*kongdongch’e üsik*). This refers to a priority of the collective over individuals. Lee Tong-jun and Han Süng-jo argue that the Korean people have maintained their oneness since the foundation of the nation by Tan’gun. *Paedal minjok*, the self-referential term for the Koreans, constructs their oneness.⁴² Moreover, millennia-old agrarian life has generated a strong sense of belonging to one’s community. One sees oneself not as an individual but as a member of one’s community. They affirm this “commu-

nity consciousness” as an essence of Korean identity in contradistinction to the “Western identity” based on individualism. Furthermore, the nationalist discourse represents “Western individualism” in relation to pursuits of selfish interests and praises the Korean collective orientation grounded primarily in Confucian social relations as well as Buddhist transcendence and selflessness.⁴³

As core values of the “community consciousness” (as opposed to Western individualism), the nationalist discourse emphasizes loyalty to the state (*ch’ung*), which is equated with the nation, and filial piety to the parents (*hyo*). It represents these “Korean values” as being derived from Confucianism. This conservative tendency to revive the ideas of *ch’ung* and *hyo* was especially strong during the 1970s, when the state launched the *ch’ung hyo* education campaign in schools at all levels. The following excerpt illustrates the focus on individual duty to presumably natural units of collective life—i.e., the family and the state—without safeguarding the rights of the individual.

According to Nature’s laws, the earth sprouts seeds, produces flowers and fruits. And old leaves fall, are decomposed, and become fertilizer for new lives. Ancestors infer the ethics of human relations from this and live accordingly. Parents love their children, and the children feel grateful to their parents and perform filial piety. A husband loves his wife, and she respects him. All of them consider one another constituting one body which cannot survive without the roles that they play. Therefore, antagonism makes survival impossible. It is not an issue at home whether parents come first, children come first, the husband comes first, or the wife comes first. All of them are masters by playing their roles.⁴⁴

What is noticeable in this emphasis on Korean collective orientation is that it tries to legitimize the lack of civic freedom under military rules in terms of Korean tradition. In other words, anti-democratic tradition becomes useful to the ruling elite when they perceive political participation of grassroots and decentralization as counter-productive and destabilizing. The state has to mobilize the populace to achieve economic growth but at the same time keep the grassroots politically obedient and loyal to it. One way to cope with this challenge of democracy is to invent Korean tradition. This makes not only the Korean nation distinct from other nations, but it also can be used to legitimize problems of

democracy in terms of a “Korean style” of modernization rooted in Korean tradition.

In addition, the idea of collective orientation feminizes the grassroots in relation to the masculine nation-state by demanding their selfless sacrifice. The masculinity of national identity represented in official nationalism can be seen quite explicitly in the discussion of *hwarang* (flower boy, or the “flower of male youth”). Interestingly, this appears to be the single most frequently discussed subject in the nationalist discourse on history and tradition. A *hwarang* was originally a youth from an aristocratic family in the ancient Kingdom of Silla, who became a member of an occult religious group. Following the priestly class of Sŏn’gyo (mountain-spirit religion), a Korean version of Siberian shamanism that was characterized by worshipping a mountain spirit as the supreme manifestation of the heavenly spirit on earth, the elite youth cultivated themselves by practicing ancestor worship, nature worship, poetry writing, and martial arts. They purified themselves by bathing, wearing white clothes, facing the east where the sun rises, and carrying out pilgrimages to high mountains.⁴⁵

Later, during the reign of King Chinhŭng (A.D. 540–576), the *hwarang* were transformed into a band of elite warriors. Each of them, like a military officer, led a group of subordinates called *nangdo*. This change reflects the Silla state’s need to supply well-trained soldiers at the time of its expansion during the period between the sixth and seventh centuries. A text published by the Center for Peace and Unification states ironically, “these young people [*hwarang*] were organized into warrior groups and this organization became a source of supply of warriors in the year of King Chinhung, the Elite Youth Corps was under state control, and the state trained them.”⁴⁶

According to the nationalist discourse on tradition, *hwarang*’s religious practices originate in Tan’gun’s religion. *The Identity of the Korean People* represents the institution of *hwarang* as a splendid synthesis of Korean thought—Sŏn’gyo, Buddhism, Confucianism, and even Taoism.⁴⁷ It uses the *hwarang sesok ogye* (five secular injunctions of *hwarang*) as evidence of the synthesis. The five injunctions were made by Wŏnkwang, a highly regarded sixth-century Silla Buddhist. The rules are: 1) loyalty to one’s king, 2) filial piety to one’s parents, 3) no retreat

in battle, 4) fraternity with fellow *hwarang*, and 5) mercy in taking lives. The first and second injunctions reflect Confucian concepts of *ch'ung* and *hyo*, which emphasize the obligation of subordinates to pertinent authorities. Since this version of Confucianism as a philosophy of rulers presents hierarchical differences as the order of things, the ruled are at the mercy of a ruler's good will, which is paternalistic at best. The fifth injunction mirrors a modified Buddhist precept against killing. Yet, this version of Buddhism as a state ideology, like Confucianism, serves rulers' interests in safeguarding their state. It is not clear how Sön'gyo plays a part in these injunctions except that *hwarang* were originally followers of Sön'gyo priests. What is noteworthy here is that the nationalist discourse equates Korean tradition with that of male ruling elites by conflating their interest with the nationalist spirit of protecting the nation.

President Park (1961–1979), who came from the military, idealized the *hwarang* as the paragon of a Korean—i.e., a young, patriotic, male warrior. According to him, a *hwarang* is, first of all, a warrior who will not retreat in battle. He is a public man who will sacrifice himself for the sake of honor and national welfare, a humanist who can restrain himself from killing in battle, and a man of nature who can enjoy leisure time being in and appreciating nature.⁴⁸ Although tinted with Buddhist and romantic values, these virtues still reflect militarism and Confucian hierarchy. The idealized representation of *hwarang* can be understood as the expression of a militaristic undercurrent of androcentrism constitutive of official nationalism. Consequently, Park sees the nation as a community of fellow men, who are ideally young, courageous, and patriotic warriors.⁴⁹

This militaristic selfhood of the “desirable Korean” Park constructs in his emphasis on *hwarang* may have been resisted by state intellectuals, who seem to pay more attention to *sönbi*, a generic term for Confucian scholars of the Yi Dynasty, as another desired type of a Korean.⁵⁰ Yet, this image of a Korean is not necessarily incongruent with that of the righteous warrior, because a *sönbi* would turn himself into a patriotic fighter in times of national crisis, as the narratives on national history maintain. State intellectuals sometimes display militaristic tendencies by echoing the idea that national independence is ultimately guaranteed by military superiority because national history

is characterized by foreign invasion and patriotic defense. For example, Min Tong-kün deplors the loss of Korean sovereignty at the end of Chosön Dynasty (1392–1910), and attributes that loss to the lack of military might.⁵¹

In discussing “Korean values” rooted in tradition, official nationalism constructs another version of the selfhood of a Korean—the male head of the family. For example, an educational text, *For Ordinary People of Our Time* (1986/1988), which was published presumably for all adult Koreans, is filled with gender stereotypes. It represents women as passive, meek, gullible, and talkative housewives. Similarly, *Investigation of the Image of a Korean* (1974) is replete with both Confucian and contemporary values and attitudes that a “desirable” Korean should internalize. Yet, the text explicitly states that although social service is important, it is absurd for a woman who cannot raise her child and respect her husband and the elderly (at home) to participate in social activities. Women's exemption from social service due to domestic duties illustrates the extent to which women are marginalized in the community of male citizens.

Mapping Women's Resistance to Androcentric Nationalism

The discussion of official nationalism containing androcentrism, militarism, and anti-democratic traditionalism so far raises a crucial question about the existence of women's resistance to it. It is not easy to identify a direct counterdiscourse to it for the following reasons. First, the repressive politics based on surveillance and vengeful punishment did not allow the explicit articulation of counterdiscourses. Second, the nationalist discourse of history and tradition was produced largely in isolation from the public. Under the military authoritarian rule from 1961 to 1987, state activities were marked by their technocratic and anti-democratic orientation. Citizens were reduced to objects of manipulation and followers of ready-made decisions, although this has never been completely successful, as is shown by the continuous presence of grassroots movements.⁵² In this milieu, the production of knowledge about national history and tradition was the exclusive

domain of professional experts who were pro-government scholars in this case. Third, despite the exclusive nature of the production of the nationalist discourse proper, its salient elements were internalized by many Koreans through mass media as well as textbooks for such subjects as Morality, National History, and National Ethics. Consequently, the Tan'gun myth, the history of foreign invasion and patriotic defense, the Tan'gun spirit, Confucianism, and Buddhism became widely accepted by the populace as basic ingredients of Korean culture. The hegemonic nature of the nationalist discourse reduces the possibility of an explicit counterdiscourse.

However, it is valid to focus on the women's movement in contemporary Korea as indirect resistance to official nationalism, which constructs the nation as the community of men and defended by men, in which women exist merely as a precondition. Androcentric discourse tinted with militarism delegitimizes women as citizens who are excluded from soldiering, constructing them instead as carriers of nationalist wombs to deliver heirs and potential warriors who can defend the nation. This implicit message goes hand in hand with official nationalism's emphasis on collective orientation as opposed to Western individualism. In other words, Koreans are to sacrifice themselves for the nation, and women do so by performing their domestic duties. Women's movements organized around issues of family law reform and exploitation in export-oriented factories illustrates the extent to which women have been challenging androcentric official nationalism.

The women's movement to revise family law has aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in marriage, family, and kinship, as shaped by the Neo-Confucian principle of patrilineage.⁵³ Family law, which refers to Part Four and Part Five of the Civil Code of the Republic of Korea regulating kinship and the inheritance of property, respectively, has been a target of public debate since its enactment in 1948. Sharply contradicting formal gender equality guaranteed by the constitution, the family law enforced between 1948 and 1990 protected men's dominance over women in patrilocal marriage, patriarchal family, and patrilineage in kinship and the inheritance of property.

A core element of family law that supports the modern patriarchal family based on the Neo-Confucian principle of patrilineage is the insti-

tution of the household head (*hoju jedo*). Reflecting the principle of primogeniture, the legal order of succession of household headship moves down from the first son, to the first son's first son, to the second son. When there is no male heir, the first daughter can assume the domestic authority of the household head, but only on a temporary basis, until she marries. When there is no daughter at all, the wife, the mother, the daughter-in-law, and the granddaughter-in-law can inherit the domestic authority in descending order. The pre-1991 version of family law granted the husband as the provider of his family a series of rights over family members—i.e., the right to accept or refuse one's entry into the family register, the right to expel a family member from it, the right to decide a place of residence, and the right to exercise primary custody over children in case of divorce. With this state-delegated domestic authority, the husband was even entitled to admit an "illegitimate" child he begot with another woman into his family register without his wife's consent! The mandatory succession of the household head's authority primarily revolves around men, which has been an essential means to marginalize women. Thus, women's subordinate position as breeders in the patrilineal order concretely reflects official nationalism in family law.⁵⁴

Patrilineal family law was enforced for more than four decades without any major change until the 1989 revision was put into effect in January 1991. Yet the revised family law still prohibits marriage between persons with the same family name and ancestral seat (*tongsöng tongbon pulhon*) and the formal succession of household headship (*hoju sünggye*). The marriage prohibition is an extreme manifestation of exogamy based on patrilineage. An assumption behind this legalized taboo is that one's identity is determined by her/his father's blood, which is presumably identifiable by his surname and ancestral seat, or the putative place of his clan's origin. The formality of the succession of the household head persists even after most mandatory rights and obligations between the *hoju* and his family members are eliminated. Both of these elements strongly reflect the Neo-Confucian principle of patrilineage that reduced women to mere breeders to continue the agnatic family lines.⁵⁵

Coalitions of women's organizations have pursued the revision of family law since the early 1970s. There were three organized efforts to reform family law in 1974, 1984, and 1987 before the women's move-

ment achieved substantial changes in family law in 1989. Each time, a number of women's organizations formed a coalition group and forwarded the reform proposal to the National Assembly. The coalition's reform attempts were always met by hostile reactions from self-proclaimed Confucianists and lukewarm responses from the legislature. Both Park's and Chun's regime responded reluctantly, with a piecemeal reform in 1977 and by brushing aside proposals in 1984 and 1987.⁵⁶

The presence of the self-proclaimed Confucianists as a significant force in the politics of family law reform is very interesting because, although an obscure and anachronistic group, they seem to represent the widespread conservatism facing the reform attempts among the general public. As early as 1972, "Confucian representatives" protested against the idea of revising family law in the name of "five million Confucianists." By 1975, the conservative forces assembled a national federation to impede the revision and collected signatures from one million people.⁵⁷ In 1984, the Confucianists criticized women's attempts at family law reform for allegedly "[shaking] the roots of the nation itself."⁵⁸ Again in 1987, 5,000 Confucianists protested against the reform proposal, which suggested modification of the marriage prohibition, and was forwarded to the National Assembly by the coalition of eighty women's organizations. The state, which has responded militantly to student protests and dissident movements in general, largely condoned Confucianists' vociferous demonstrations.⁵⁹

The women's movement to revise family law challenges official nationalism by undermining the patrilineal family as the basic unit of the nation.⁶⁰ As I showed earlier, official nationalism constructs the nation as a community of men in which women are marginalized as domestic reproducers of heirs and potential warriors. This patrilineal gender hierarchy is institutionalized in family law, which the women's movements have attempted to change. Moreover, the nationalist discourse uses this particular form of the family as an ultimate metaphor for paternalistic "harmony," which underlies such elements of Korean tradition as community consciousness and collective orientation. In other words, the Korean nation is essentially a familial community in which members have collective orientation as opposed to "Western individualism." Hence, the egalitarian family that women's movements

advocate disrupts the established order, not only in the family but also in the nation. Interestingly, the Confucianists express this fear by arguing that family law reform would shake the roots of the nation itself.

State intellectuals producing the androcentric discourse about Korean history and tradition seem to be aware of the emergence of women's voices demanding family law reform. The following excerpts from texts published by the state illustrate this point.

These days there are prolific debates about equality between men and women. But as far as the relationship between husband and wife is concerned, the discussion of equality itself results from a misunderstanding. The conjugal relationship is based not on the conflict of interests but on harmony and love.⁶¹

A wife takes care of her husband and children without sleeping at night not because she is a coward or a fool but because she feels responsible for performing the traditional duty, and she does it with pride . . . [P]atru yubyöl (differences between husband and wife) does not intend to discriminate against women but it means that [men and women] have different roles to play.⁶²

The first part reflects a strategy to obscure inequality in the name of "harmony." This strategy underlies the nationalist discourse on Korean tradition. It is ultimately a conservative response with a modern twist to the rise of women's voices demanding equality. It argues that women's domesticity is not about equality and discrimination but about functional differences between the sexes that *pubu yubyöl*, one of the five Neo-Confucian principles guiding human relationships, teaches.

Another strand of the women's movement that challenged official nationalism was labor union activities of young women workers in export-oriented industries during the 1970s and the 1980s. To be sure, not just female workers but also male workers have suffered from sub-minimum wages, long working hours, and hazardous working conditions. However, women workers were made even more vulnerable to exploitation due to stereotypes of female docility and of the male as provider. Presumably, women would not engage in militant protests against exploitation and their income would be mere supplements to men's (and therefore women would accept lower pay). Moreover, young

women workers were subject to varying degrees of sexual violence by male supervisors. Indeed, women workers were paid barely half of men's wages throughout the 1970s and the 1980s even though they worked longer hours than their male counterparts.⁶³

However, even under the extremely repressive labor control by the state as well as management, female factory workers refused to remain "cheap" and "docile."⁶⁴ The women workers' movement began spontaneously in response to extreme exploitation that threatened the women's day-to-day survival. Although confronting violent assaults and threats from the police and company-hired thugs, women workers organized democratic unions outside the company-sponsored ones.⁶⁵ Initially, their demands were directed toward wage raises and the return of unpaid wages, but they expanded toward the end of the 1970s to encompass women's right to work after marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth. For example, women workers in Pfizer and Control Data requested the abolition of the not-so-subtle practice of forced retirement at the time of marriage or pregnancy. Women workers in Samsung Pharmaceutical Company obtained paid time for feeding their babies.⁶⁶

By the early 1980s, the female workers' movement shrank because of at least two factors. First, the state, again taken over by the military junta led by Chun Doo Hwan in 1980, launched an undeclared offensive against grassroots movements, including democratic labor unions, which had been activated by the political vacuum created by the sudden assassination of Park Chung Hee in 1979. Second, the economy moved its focus from light industry to heavy and chemical ones by the end of the 1970s. As textile and garment industries that hired young female workers on a massive scale declined, the majority of women workers left factories and returned to their homes in the countryside or got married. Then the women's labor movement was eclipsed by a rapidly growing number of male workers in steel, shipbuilding, and automobile industries in the 1980s.

The women workers' movement to organize democratic unions and their struggle to gain the right to work after marriage sharply contrast with the image of domestic and reproductive women constructed by official nationalism. As I discussed earlier, the military regimes promoted economic development in the name of national modernization. Under

the official export promotion strategy, young women were massively incorporated into export-processing zones. They were treated as raw materials to be used to build the national economy. The women workers' movement challenges official nationalism, subverting the masculine nation by refusing a marginal place for women as the nation's mere precondition. Their movement also undermines anti-democratic traditionalism, which emphasizes loyalty and sacrifice in the name of "community consciousness" (*kongdonche' ūisik*) or collective orientation.

The Implications of Official Nationalism for Gender Relations

The analysis of the nationalist discourse on Korean history and tradition strongly suggests that industrialization as a way to build a "prosperous and strong" Korea is a highly gendered process of societal transformation in and by which women are assigned subordinate positions in the nation. Official nationalism also implies that the order of the nation is firmly rooted in essential and hierarchical differences between woman and man. While men are the founders of the nation with heavenly origins, righteous warriors or patriotic soldiers, and heads of households, women have sub-human origins and are the bearers of sons who will inherit the nation and defend it. In other words, men are creative actors and legitimate citizens, whereas women are reproductive and domestic beings who cannot be full members of the nation since as a part of nature they can only contribute their bodies as a precondition for building or developing the masculine nation.

The deep-rooted view of women as a part of nature producing for the community of men implies that economic growth in Korea relies upon women's identity as primarily reproductive and domestic beings, which prevents them from being full citizens who participate in all aspects of a democratic society. As a result, the incorporation of women workers into the process of industrialization as "cheap" labor cannot transform their primary identity. Rather, this would be used as an excuse to marginalize women workers in the expanding national economy.

Women's subordinate positions as represented in official nationalism are not simply a discursive construction isolated from the process of eco-

conomic growth and the reality of military confrontation with the Communist North. In contrast, the military regimes as producers of the nationalist discourse on Korean history and tradition have exploited women's dubious citizenship. As I discussed earlier, patrilineal family law has persisted throughout the process of industrialization. Women have been forced to carry a reproductive and domestic identity that pre-empts their full membership in the national community. In fact, the state's insistence upon patrilineal family law as the nuclear family grows indicates that it has viewed the neo-patriarchal family based on the gendered division of labor between the husband-provider and the reproductive housewife as a basic unit of the Korean nation.

This feminine identity as a breeder in the patrilineal order goes hand in hand with the exclusion of women from soldiering, as implied in the discursive construction of the masculine selfhood of a Korean citizen. Delegitimized as citizens, women are bodies carrying wombs and labor power. The integration of women in the economy as "cheap" factory workers illustrates the actual manifestation of the androcentric view of woman as the bodily precondition for building and developing the nation.

Although some women have challenged the androcentric ideas behind official nationalism, their organized power is still weak *vis-à-vis* the state and hegemonic androcentrism pervasive in the society. The central implication of official nationalism for gender relations in contemporary Korea is that industrialization cannot bring about substantial change in hierarchical gender relations. Indeed, gender hierarchy has been recomposed in modern forms.⁶⁷ As a result, more and more women face the contradiction that they carry the *socially ascribed* status of female gender in industrializing Korea which espouses, in principle, individual equality and achievement. To be sure this does not automatically lead to the explosion of women's movement, but it prepares a fertile ground for it.

NOTES

I would like to thank Chungmoo Choi and Farzin Vahdat for their helpful comments and information.

1. Throughout the 1980s, studies vindicating Confucianism as the cultural ethos behind East Asian economic development were produced. A conference on "Confucianism and Economic Development in East Asia" was held at the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research in Taipei, Taiwan from May 29 to 31, 1989. See also Ronald P. Dore, "Confucianism, Economic Growth, and Social Development," in *In Search of an East Asian Development Model*, eds. Peter L. Berger and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988); Ronald P. Dore, *Taking Japan Seriously: A Confucian Perspective on Leading Economic Issues* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Michio Morishima, *Why Has Japan 'Succeeded?': Western Technology and the Japanese Ethos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). In addition, studies on economic development in South Korea tend to discuss nationalism as a crucial factor. See Roger L. Janelli with Dawnhee Yim, *Making Capitalism: The Social and Cultural Construction of a South Korean Conglomerate* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Carter J. Eckert, "The South Korean Bourgeoisie: A Class in Search of Hegemony," in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, ed. Hagen Koo (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

2. "Official nationalism" was coined by Seton-Watson in his historiography of nationalism. See Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder: Westview, 1977).

3. See Roger L. Janelli, "The Origins of Korean Folklore Scholarship," *Journal of American Folklore* 99 (1986): 24-49.

4. See Kenneth M. Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestant and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

5. See Jae-Hyeon Choe, "Strategic Groups of Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 16 (1986): 223-36.

6. A similar nationalist strategy was used by Bengali elite in colonial India during the nineteenth century. See Partha Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Women," in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

7. There are many anecdotes illustrating how deeply Park was "Korean" in terms of his life style, taste, and attitudes. Coming from a poor peasant family, he despised urbanites with refined Western manners and tastes—e.g., who drank cocktails and ate Western foods.

8. Park Chung Hee, *Minjok chunghüngüi gil* (A Way to National Prosperity), Seoul: Kwangmyöng, 1978 (there is an English translation of this book, *Korea Reborn: A Model for Development*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979); *Our Nation's Path: Ideology of Social Reconstruction*, Seoul: Dong-A Publishing Co., 1962; Cabinet Planning

and Regulating Room, ed. *Minjokui tungbul* (Beacon of the Nation), Seoul, 1971.

9. Kim Ch'in-gyun and Hong S'ung-hui, "Hanguk sahoeüi kyoyukkwa jibae ideologi" (Education and Ruling Ideology in Korean Society), in *Hanguk sahoeüwa jibae ideologi* (Korean Society and Ruling Ideologies) (Seoul: Noktu, 1991).

10. See note 9.

11. Hong 'ng-s'ön, "Kungmin yulli kyoyuküi naeyong" (The Content of National Ethics Education), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* (Aug. 1976): 303–15.

12. For explicit emphases on national ethics see Ch'oe 'i-r'ae, "Hy'öndaekungmin yulli kyoyuküi ponjilgwa g'ü kin'ung" (The Nature and Function of Contemporary National Ethics Education), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 13 (April 1982): 199–209; Han S'ung-jo, "Kungmin j'öngsin kyoyuküi iny'ömgwa y'önsu kyoyuküi gwaje" (The Ideology of National Mentality Education and Issues for the In-Service Training Education), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 13 (April 1982): 227–252; Ku H'ön-hoe, "Kungmin j'öngsin kyoyuk kangjwaüi bömwüwa naeyong" (The Range and Content of National Mental Education Class), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 13 (April 1983): 263–270; Yi Ch'ang-wu, "Kungmin yulli kyoyuk mokch'öküi j'öngnip" (Establishing the Goals of National Ethics Education), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 10 (November 1980): 159–167; Yu Dal-y'öng, "Kungmin j'öngsinüi gibbon banghyang' seminae j'üümhayö" (On the Seminar "A Basic Direction of National Mentality"), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 5 (August 1976): 245–255.

13. This brief history of the Research Association of National Ethics Education is based on my review of its journal, *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* (National Ethics Studies), from 1973 to 1982, and especially on the prefaces to various issues.

14. See Yi S'ung-ny'öng, "Hanguk j'öngsinmunhwa y'önguw'ön sosa" (A Brief History of the Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research), *Ch'öngsin munhwa* 4 (1981): 21–28. Singapore, which has also undergone a rapid socio-economic change, shows a parallel case. The Singaporean state has tried to reconstitute the national identity based on Chinese Confucian culture in that multi-ethnic society. See the special section on Singapore in *Far Eastern Economic Review* (9 Feb. 1989): 30–41.

15. The Tan'gun myth was recorded in *Samguk yusa* by Ily'ön, a Buddhist monk, in the eleventh century. He extracted the myth from the *Wei Shu*, which is a primary source of Chinese history completed around A.D. 554. See James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 282. However, some ardent state intellectuals oppose calling the story of Tan'gun a myth despite its mythical details. For example, Chi Kyo-h'ön, a professor of the Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, argues that the foundation story is documented in various ancient history books, and therefore, calling it a myth implies that one does not acknowledge the historical facts. See his "Ch'öng'ong yullit'ui hy'öndaek'ök üüüwa g'ü sahoej'ök kin'ung" (Contemporary Significance of Traditional Ethics and Its Social Function), in *Ch'öng'ong yullit'ui hy'öndaek'ök jomy'öng* (Contemporary Perspectives of Traditional Ethics) (Seoul: Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, 1989); Association of National Ethics Studies, ed. *Hanguk'üi j'öng'ong sasang* (Traditional Thoughts in Korea) (Seoul, 1983).

16. For European and Indian examples of such inventions of national traditions and rit-

uals, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

17. Both Korean and foreign scholars of Korean history argue that the tribal state of Kochoson was founded in the fifth or fourth century B.C. See Carter Eckert, et al. *Korea Old and New: A History* (Seoul: Ilchokak/Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). Yet, all state intellectuals tend to insist on the longer history. See Han S'ung-jo, "Hanguk minjujuüüi kukkaronj'ök kijo" (The Theoretical Basis of the Korean State and Korean Democracy), in *Hanguk kukkaüi gibbon sönggy'ökkwa gwaje* (The Basic Nature of the Korean State and Its Problems) (Songnam, Korea: Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, 1988); *Kungmin j'öngsin gyoyuk ch'ujin wiw'önhoe* (Council for Furthering National Mental Education), ed. *Uri sidaeüi bor'ong saram dürukuwihayö* (For Ordinary People of Our Times) (Seoul: Koryowon, 1988); *Minjok munhwa ch'ujinboe* (Association for Proceeding National Culture), *Chont'ong yulli gyobom jaryojip I: Samguk—Koryö* (A Collection for Teaching Traditional Ethics I: The Three Kingdoms Period—Koryö) (Seoul, 1986); Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People: A History of Legitimacy on the Korean Peninsula* (Seoul, 1983); Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, *Hanguk sasangkwa yulli* (Korean Thoughts and Ethics) (Songnam, Korea, 1980); *Chollanamdo gyoyuk y'önguw'ön* (South Cholla Province Center for Education Research), *Uri gojangüi ch'ung hyo y'öl* (Loyalty, Filial Piety, and Chastity in Our Community) (Kwangju, Korea, 1978); Park Chung Hee, *Minjok jungh'ungüi gil; Our Nation's Path*; Ch'oe Ch'ang-kyu, "Hanminjoküi juch'es'öng" (Subjectivity of Korean People), *Kungmin yulli y'ongu* 1 (October 1973): 131–142.

18. Some official nationalists argue that the mythical transformation of a bear into a woman might signify an exogamy between Hwanung, a leader of a ruling clan, and a woman from a clan whose totem was a bear. See Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*.

19. This kind of androcentrism is not unique to Korean official nationalism. For example, between the 1870s and the 1930s, the construction of German national identity relied upon bourgeois German masculinity as the core of German national identity. See George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985).

20. Elsewhere I discuss family planning policy as an element of gender politics that contributes to the recomposition of gender hierarchy in South Korea during the period of rapid industrialization. See Seungsook Moon, "Economic Development and Gender Politics in South Korea, 1963–1992" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1994).

21. Metaphors that convey this kind of ontological difference between woman and man are constitutive of various myths and especially foundation myths of nations. See the appendix in Grayson's *Korea: A Religious History* for foundation myths of other tribal states in the Korean Peninsula. For cross-cultural evidence of these deep-rooted metaphors see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). In his analysis of myths from various cultures, Campbell discovers a universal theme that protagonists in all mythic narratives are heroes, while

women are designated as symbols of what the heroes should overcome or achieve. In other words, a woman is depicted as either a temptress with a subhuman origin or a celestial queen (or a heavenly beauty) that symbolizes a hero's successful adventure. This is interestingly similar to the Christian representation of a woman as whore/Madonna. De Beauvoir uses an essentialized gender dichotomy in her representation of man and woman who signify transcendence and nature respectively, in her explanation of women's oppression. See Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth, N.Y.: Penguin, 1972). For a critical examination of the dichotomy of women-nature and men-culture see Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974).

22. This information does not appear in Grayson's *Korea: A Religious History*.

23. Sometimes an exact frequency of invasion—931 times—is used. It appears that official nationalists quote the frequency as a way to make "true" their claim that national defense overrides any other issue. For example, see Council for Proceeding National Mental Education, *Uri sidaeüü bot'ong saramdürül wihayö*, pp. 13–15; Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, p. 16, p. 25, p. 26.

24. See, for example, Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, *Hanguk Yulli Sasangsa* (A History of Korean Ethical Thoughts) (Songnam, Korea, 1987); Association of National Ethics Studies, *Hangugüi jönt'ong sasang* (Traditional Thoughts in Korea) (Seoul, 1983); Association of Mental Education Research, *Kungmin yulli I: Hangugui gunin jongsin* (National Ethics I: Korean Soldiers' Spirit); Korean Education Development Institute, *Hangugin sangui t'amgu* (An Investigation of the Image of a Korean); Park Chung Hee, *Our Nation's Path*.

25. In contrast to the nationalist claim, the Korean Peninsula was not unified by Silla. The Unified Silla (A.D. 668–936) coexisted with the kingdom of Parhae (A.D. 713–926) which was founded by Tae Cho-Yöng, a General of the extinct Kingdom of Koguryo. Parhae occupied Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean Peninsula above the Taedong River.

26. Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, p. 143; Han Sung-jo, "Chönt'ongjök kach'ikwangwa hyöndae minjuüü," p. 74; Association of Mental Education Research, *Kungmin Yulli I*; Park Chung Hee, *Minjok jonghungui gil*, p. 22; *Our Nation's Path*, pp. 39–40.

27. Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, p. 18; Park Chung Hee, *Minjok jonghungui gil*, pp. 13–14.

28. Research Center for Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, pp. 19–20.

29. In the end of Yi Dynasty, *üibyöng* from Confucian scholars protested not so much in favor of national independence as against the undermining of the Confucian social order that was ultimately centered around the imperial order of the Chinese Kingdom. Ironically, the nationalist narratives document that the Confucian *üibyöng* rose up fervently after the royal decree of hair-cutting in the first decade of the twentieth century.

See Min Dong-gün, "Hanguküi chont'ongjök yulli sasangüü balgyön" (Discovery of Korean Traditional Ethical Thoughts) in *Hanguginüü Yulligwan II* (Korean People's Perspective on Ethics) (Songnam, Korea: Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, 1984), p. 62. The removal of a hair top-knot was perceived by the Confucian scholars as a symbolic violation of the Confucian order. This kind of insistence on a certain appearance as the core of a challenged identity has been observed in many Third World countries since the late nineteenth century. See Haleh Afshar, "Behind the Veil: The Public and Private Faces of Khomeini's Policies on Iranian Women," in *Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernizing Asia*, ed. Bina Agarwal (London: Zed Press, 1988); Emelie A. Olson, "Muslim Identity and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey: 'The Headscarf Dispute,'" *Anthropological Quarterly* 58 (1985): 161–69.

30. Kim Nam-guk, *Kungminüü kündae, küdürüü kündae* (People's Army, Their Army) (Seoul: P'ulbit 1995), pp. 57–58.

31. These phrases are from the announcement made by the junta government immediately after its takeover of the state. See Sejin Kim, *The Politics of Military Revolution in Korea* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 93–94.

32. Park, *Our Nation's Path*, p. 40.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 75, p. 80, and p. 92 (my translation and emphases).

34. The growing public interest in something Korean is illustrated by the proliferation of popular publication in the forms of fictions and essays on Korean culture, history, and identity since the mid-1970s.

35. Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, pp. 129–130.

36. Ch'oe Üi-t'ae, "Hyöndae kungmin yulli kyoyuküü ponjilkwa kü kinüng"; Han Süng-jo, "Kungmin chöngsin kyoyuküü inyömkwa yönsu gyoyuküü gwaje," "Sae chöngsin munhwaüü inyömjök kijo"; Kim Kwe-gon, "Hanguk chöngsin munhwaüü kijo"; Hwang Du-hwan, "Kungmin yulli kyoyuküü kyoyuk kwajöng punsök" (An Analysis of the Curriculum for National Ethics Education), *Kungmin Yulli Yöngu* 12 (Dec. 1981): 351–374; Yi Ch'ang-wu, "Kungmin yulli kyoyuk mökjöküü jöngnip" (Establishing the Goals of National Ethics Education), *Kungmin yulli yöngu* 10 (Nov. 1980): 159–67.

37. This kind of problematic construction of national tradition is also found in Indian nationalist discourse. Indian male nationalists in the late nineteenth century equated Indian tradition with the Hindu Scriptures, i.e., the tradition of the male Indian elites. See Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debates on SATTI in Colonial India," *Cultural Critique* (Fall, 1987): 119–56 and Uma Chakravarti, "What Happened to the Vedic Dasi?: Orientalism, Nationalism, and a Script for the Past," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989).

38. See Yi Sun-kwön, "Yöksa kyoyukkwa minjokjuüü" (History, Education, and Nationalism), in *Hanguk minjokjuüü ron II* (Theories of Korean Nationalism II), eds. Song Kön-ho and Kang Man-gil (Seoul: Changjakgwa bip'yong, 1983) and Kim

Jin-kyun and Hong Süng-hui, "Hanguk sahoeü kyoyukgwa chibae ideologi" (Education and Dominant Ideology in Korean Society).

39. Han.Sung-jo, "Hanguk minjujuüüi kukkaronjök kijo" (A State Theory of Korean Democracy) in *Hanguk Kukkaüi giban sönggyökgwa gwaje* (The Basic Nature of the Korean State and Its Problems) (Songnam, Korea: Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, 1988), p. 10, p. 50; Han Süng-jo, "Chönt'ongjök kach'igwangwa hyöndae minjujuüi" (Traditional Values and Contemporary Democracy) in *Chönt'ongjök gach'ik-wangwa sae gach'ikwanüi jongnip* (The Establishment of Traditional Values and New Values) (Songnam, Korea: Institute of Korean Mental Culture Research, 1980), p. 86; Park Chung Hee, *Minjok junghüngüi gil* (A Way to National Prosperity) (Seoul: Kwangmyong, 1978), pp. 23–24.

40. See note 38.

41. Unlike the Judeo-Christian God, the Heaven's Mandate speaks neither to the ruler nor to the ruled. It does not demand specific responsibility from a ruler in relation to the ruled. It supposedly manifests itself through natural disasters—e.g., drought, famine, flood, etc.—when it is violated. See William T. De Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) for an excellent discussion of the problems of the notion of Heaven's Mandate.

42. *Pakdal* comes from the name of a tree in the Tan'gun myth. According to the myth, Tan'gun founded the Korean nation under the *pakdal* tree.

43. Yi Tong-jun, "Chönt'ongjök kach'igwanüi hyöndaejök söngch'al," pp. 13–15; Han, Chönt'ongjök kach'igwanüi hyöndae minjujuüi," p. 86; Park, *Minjok Chunghungüi Kil*, pp. 13–15, 17–19, 68, 74, 140.

44. *Investigation of the Image of a Korean*, p. 77.

45. See Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*.

46. Peace and Unification, *The Identity of the Korean People*, p. 147.

47. Some official nationalist intellectuals indicated Taoism as an element of *hwarangdo* instead of Son'gyo. For example, see Lee Tong-jun, "Chöngt'ongjök kach'igwanüi hyöndaejök söngch'al." However, Taoist influence in Korea was very much limited and Taoism never formed any school in Korean religious history. See Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*.

48. Park, *Minjok junghüngüi gil*, p. 21.

49. This kind of exclusive male camaraderie is often haunted by homophobia. George Mosse explores this issue in relation to German nationalism. See his *Nationalism and Sexuality*. Some argue that the institution of *hwarang* is an example of a homoerotic military elite which has its parallels in Japanese Samurai and the Ottoman Janissaries. See Stephen O. Murrar, "The Hwarang of Ancient Korea," in *Oceanic Homosexualities*, Stephen O. Murrar, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992).

50. Chi, "Chöngt'ong yulliüi hyöndaejök üüüwa gü sahoejök kinüng"; Association of National Ethics Studies, *Hangugüi jönt'ong sasang*; Kim Kwe-gon, "Hanguk chöngsin

munhwaüi gijo"; Son, "Hanguginüi chönt'ongjök kyoyuk üisikgwa hyöndae gyoyuküi che munje."

51. Min, "Hangugüi chöngt'ongjök yulli sasangüi balgyön"; Association of National Ethics Studies, *Hangugüi jönt'ong sasang*.

52. Grassroots movements under military rule involved factory workers, students, dissident intellectuals, and politicians. See Cho Hwa-Soon, *Let the Weak Be Strong: A Women's Struggle for Justice* (Bloomington, Indiana: Meyerstone Books, 1988); Carter Eckert, et al. *Korea Old and New: A History*, chapter 19; George E. Ogle, *South Korea: Dissent within the Economic Miracle* (London: Zed Books, 1990).

53. Elsewhere I deal with the women's movement for family law reform more extensively as a crucial dimension of gender politics which the Korean state is involved in the process of economic development. See Seungsook Moon, "Modernization of Gender Hierarchy in South Korea: Politics of Family Law Reform," *The Journal of Modern Korean Studies* (Summer 1996), forthcoming.

54. Kim Chu-su, "Kaejöng gajokpöpi gaejöng gyöngwiwa gwaje" (Issues in the Revision of the Family Laws), in *Kaejöng gajokpöpi kwa hanguk sahoe* (Seoul: Korea Women's Development Institute/Korean Family Laws Studies Association, 1990); Kim Chu-su, "Hyönhaeng gajokpöpi sangüi namnyö ch'abyöl" (Sexual Discrimination in the Current Family Laws), *Yösöng* 91 (May 1973): 5–10; Kim Söng-suk, "Kaejöng gajokpöpi naeyonggwa munjeöm" (The Content and Problems of the Revised Family Laws), *Yösöng Yöngu* 26 (3): 119–148; Pak Pyöng-ho, "Kaejöng ch'injök kwangyeüi je munje" (Problems of the Revised Kinship Relations), in *Kaejöng gajokpöpi kwa hanguk sahoe*; "Mimböp sange natanan namnyö ch'abyöl" (Sexual Discrimination in the Civil Law), *Yösöng* 91 (1973): 16–17.

55. See note 52.

56. Yi Hyo-jae, *Hanguk yösöng undongsa* (A History of the Women's Movement in Korea) (Seoul: Jongwusa, 1989); Yi Sang-uk, "Yösöng üi pöpjök jiwü wa gajokböp gaejöng non" (Legal Status of Women and an Argument for the Revision of the Family Laws), *Yösöng munje yöngu* 13 (1985): 343–359.

57. Yi Hyo-jae, *Hanguk yösöng undongsa*, p. 226, pp. 247–49.

58. Ok-Za Yoo, "Korean Women in the Home and Work Place: Their Status Since 1945," *Korea and World Affairs* 9 (Winter, 1985): 820–872. See p. 830.

59. John McBeth, "A Family Feud for Confucians and Women," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (26 Feb., 1987): 38–41. See p. 38 and p. 40.

60. This particular movement is an example of gendered activism. I am aware of the paradoxical ability of this kind of women's movement to reproduce the essentialized link between women and domesticity. Although in their reform attempts women step outside the domestic sphere, they are still involved in family issues. Yet, the distinction between domestic and public is already undermined in official nationalism, which deploys "family" as a primary metaphor for a Korean nation rooted in "collective orientation."

61. *Hangukin sangüi tamgu* (Investigation of the Image of the Korean) 1974, p. 196: my translation.

62. Ministry of Culture and Information, *Hangukui chont'onggwa kwansup* (Korean Tradition and Custom) 1982, p. 13 and p. 21: my translation.

63. Korean Women's Development Institute, *Yösöng goyong ch'okjin böpch'e guanhan yöngu* (A Study of Legal Promotion of Women's Employment) (Seoul, 1985), p. 4.

64. It appears that the state was quite aware of the possibility of labor disputes in factories hiring a large number of young women workers in the early 1970s. The Bureau of Labor undertook studies of the working conditions of factory women. See Bureau of Labor, *Yösöng küllöja sil'ae josa gyölkwa bokosö: kongdan jiyökkwa ch'ongkye p'ibok sang-ga jiyöngül jungsimüro* (Report on the Working Conditions of Women Workers in Industrial Estates and Ch'onggye clothing shops), 1974, *Kullo yösöngüi hyönhwang* (The Working Conditions of Women), report, 1974, *Yösöng küllöja sil'ae josa bogosö: chejoöpch'e, unsuöpch'e jungsimüro* (Report on the Working Conditions of Women Workers in Manufacturing and Transportation Companies), 1973.

65. There were quite a few reported incidents of labor control in which male managers either alone or in collaboration with company-hired thugs manipulated sexual stereotypes. They attempted to discourage women workers from organizing by deploying culturally constructed male sexual aggression—i.e., they confronted defiant female workers, mostly young and unmarried, with their naked male bodies or made gestures as if to assault them sexually. In some cases male supervisors used rape as a means to control female workers. See Cho Sun-kyöng, Yö Nan-yöng, and Yi Sök-jin, "Yösöng nodong-gwa söngjök t'ongje" (Women's Labor and Sexual Control), *Hankuk yösönghak* 5 (1989): 164–185; Sin Illyöng, *Yösöng, nodong, pöp* (Women, Labor, and Law) (Seoul: P'ulbit, 1988), pp. 294–297.

66. Ewha Womans University, "Minjok minju undonggwa yösöng haebang undong" (National Democratic Movement and Feminist Movement), *Ewha* 46 (1991): 247–270, see p. 258; Pak Ün-sik, "Hangugüi yösöng nodong undong: 5. 15 putö yusinsijöl kkaji" (Women's Labor Movement in Korea: From May 16th to the Yusin Period), *Yösöng* 275 (Sept., 1990): 24–27, (Aug. 1990): 20–23, (June, 1990): 32–35; Pak Sök-bun, "Ch'abyöltüi sasürül ttulk'o jöngjinhanün yösöng nodongja undong" (The Process of the Women Workers' Movement Breaking the Chains of Discrimination), in *Yösöng* 3 (Seoul: Ch'angjakkwa bip'yongsa, 1989).

67. By modernization of gender hierarchy I refer to the fact that although women have increasingly more access to formal education, are more often employed outside the home and have fewer children, they continue to be subordinated to men in the economy, politics, culture—i.e., the production of arts, meanings, and knowledge—sexuality, and within marriage/family/kinship.



ELAINE H. KIM

Men's Talk:

A Korean American View of South Korean Constructions of Women, Gender, and Masculinity

This paper is based on interviews conducted mostly between 1987 and 1988, during a crucial moment in recent South Korean history—between the massive protests for democratic reforms that ushered in a new civilian government and the opening ceremonies of the Seoul Olympics. The paper looks at how men from various walks of life in Seoul in the late 1980s talked about women and about themselves as men, with some attention to how a man's social status informed and was implicated in the views he expressed. It also provides a glimpse into how women from various backgrounds adhered to and rebelled against patriarchal attitudes and practices, and how these attitudes and practices influenced their relationships with and their views of one another.

Originally, I had planned to interview only women, but I understood