NATIONALITY AND NEW KINSHIP
“Old” Kinship

- Kinship systems analyzed as rule-based and normative
  - Culturally defined system of kinship reckoning
    - Korea: patrilineal
      - “I belong to the kin group (lineage) of my father, and not my mother”
      - Distinction between agnates (patrikin) who belong to my same lineage (ch’injok 親族), other blood relatives (woech’ŏk 外戚), and affines (inch’ŏk 嫡戚)
      - Agnates have the same surname (sŏng) and clan origin (pon, pon’gwan)—e.g. Chŏnju Yi, Namyang Hong, Kimhae Kim, Andong Kim
Kinship terminology

- Korea: bifurcate (semi-)merging with Sudanic (crypto-Eskimo) kinship terminology

  - Bifurcate merging
    - maternal and paternal uncles are differentiated
      - i.e. mother’s brother is woesamch’on (“outside three inch”) while father’s brother is k’ŭn/chagŭn abŏji
    - father and father’s brothers are partially merged
      - i.e. Big daddy (k’ŭn abŏji) and Little Daddy (chagŭn abŏji) partially merge lineal and non-lineal ancestors

  - Sudanic cousin terminology distinguishes all cousins (sach’on, ijong sach’on, kojong sach’on, woejong sach’on)—but in contemporary Korea when all cousins are called sach’on and distinguished from siblings that would be Eskimo
New Kinship

- Analyzes kinship as a shifting and contingent
- “field of meaning” rather than a fixed rule-based system
- Sees improvisation and innovation in varying contexts as basic aspects of kinship behavior
- This kind of analysis works well for modernizing societies in which a variety of conflicting kinship norms and strategies have been introduced
- Influence of mass media is important consideration
New Kinship in Korea

- North Korea—institutionalization of Marxist regime introduced changes in kinship
  - “bride purchase” and family registry systems abolished
  - Gender equality proclaimed
  - Result—”new democratic patriarchy” (each married man gets to be his own patriarch)

- South Korea—initial conservative restoration of tradition
  - Feminist pressure to reduce patriarchal power and equalize inheritance among males and between males and females only began to bear fruit after democratization in 1987
  - Citizens groups devoted to revision of family law got the family registration system abolished in 1998 along with the Overseas Korean Act (allows dual citizenship but distinguishes capitalist from communist overseas Koreans)
SK example 1: Transnational Adoptees

- Transnational adoption began in South Korea as a consequence of the Korean War
  - Context: traditionally in Korea children were adopted only for purposes of succession, and such adoptions were limited to children of agnates
  - Initially war orphans and mixed race children of GI fathers and Korean mothers (mostly illegitimate) were the targets of a US media campaign
  - Subsequently the South Korean government saw overseas adoptions as a way to solve the “social problem” of out of wedlock births, or too many births in extremely poor families (consequence: many adoptees had known parents and families, and thus were not true “orphans”)

Forces for change in adoption

- 1988 Olympic Games
  - Foreign press brought attention to South Korea’s transnational adoption practices criticizing it as “exporting children”

- 1991 movie “Suzanne Brink’s Arirang (수잔 브링크의 아리랑)
  - Adopted at age 3 in Sweden, experienced abuse, abandonment, racial discrimination, and single motherhood before becoming an Olympic skater
  - Image of female adoptee victim 해외입양자
Neoliberal Rhetoric

- Following 1997 currency crisis, neoliberal reforms introduced into Korea
  - “neoliberal” refers to thinking of citizens primarily in terms of their economic contribution to the nation, and using state policy to economically “incentivize” desired behavior
- With regard to adoptees, rather than thinking of them as victims they became redefined as “overseas compatriats” 해외동포
Why “Overseas Compatriots”

- In neoliberalism the state’s role is not to protect citizens from foreign competition (whether through subsidies or tariffs) but to facilitate competitiveness within global capitalism.

- Thinking of citizens as “human capital” involves regarding them as engaged in “entrepreneurship of the self”.

  - Self=“set of (economic) skills and capabilities” that can be enhanced through investment or reduced through obsolescence.
Early Study Abroad

- Because of emphasis on learning English (and difficulty for Koreans in doing so) early study abroad (in which one acquires (1) English (2) Chinese (3) Japanese (4) any other language) gives one an advantage in “human capital development”

- Wild geese fathers (기러기 어버지)
  - Usually children live with mother abroad and father flies back and forth like a migrating goose from Korea to see them
  - US England or Canada are best but New Zealand Australia or Singapore will do in a pinch (and are cheaper)
Hegemonic notion of masculinity/femininity=father as breadwinner mother as homemaker

What happens with stay-at-home fathers?
- “taking a break” to start a new business
- Consumption of entertainment as male perogative

From “strict father/caring mother” 엄부자모 to “disciplinary mother/carefree father”
Adoption and human capital

- South Korean government changes law
  - Reclaims “overseas brethren” to return and contribute to the globalization of Korea and enhance competitiveness
  - Model: overseas Chinese (huajiao 華僑)

- Transnational adoptees now objects of envy—early education abroad
  - Speak English, often well-educated, often lived a comparatively comfortable life
  - Have right to remain in Korea for relatively long periods
Toby Dawson syndrome

- Adopted abroad into a relatively affluent Caucasian family
- Became an excellent skier and got bronze medal in Torino Winter Olympics in the freestyle mogul competition
- Comes to Korea and is reunited with his father and younger brother
  - Eleana Kim “performance of filiality to the nation” (in the Lotte Hotel)
- N.B. This Olympic phenomenon can be seen among many Americans with dual citizenship (not just Koreans)
Adoptive Resident Returnees

- Most common demographic—males from the US (but both genders and many countries are represented)

- Most teach English but in so doing are they “squandering” national human capital?
  - Most South Koreans see them as belonging to their nation of citizenship

- Is overseas adoption an “exploitative colonial enterprise”?
  - Are adoptees “discrepant cosmopolitans”?
  - Does the current emphasis on English in South Korea reveal neocolonial structures?
Tongdaemun New Kinship

- Tongdaemun historically speaking
  - Chosŏn Period market
  - Post liberation—small merchants renting stalls (ground floor) or manufacturing spaces (upper floors)
  - within large buildings called “markets” (P’yŏnghwa Sijang

- In the Chŏn T’ae-il era (seventies) women toiled in relatively large-scale sweatshops

- After 1987 garment-making fled high wage South Korea

- Now “flexible production” of “on the spot” quick design and production of fashion items
Seo Young Park’s View

- Current production family-centered with little “class conciousness”
- Informal relations critical for flexible production
- Women’s time is shared & performed through relationships that are geographically flexible
- Tongdaemun small workplaces are still called “factories” (kongjang) no matter how small
Historical labor relations

- Factories in central Seoul hired mostly contract laborers (객공) who were technically self-employed.

- Hierarchy of seamstresses (硯니)
  - Podo sida (補導~) guided subordinate
  - Sida (>J. shitayuku下役 “subordinate”?)
  - Oya (pay sharing with assistants, >J. 親 “parent”)

- Often women (sisters) took on sewing while men were the cutters.

- Relationships of trust created through this system important.
Ch’angsin-dong

- Informal demarcation of spaces—is it a home or a factory?—unregistered as saŏpchang (work site)
- Informal demarcation of work time
- Face to face cash transactions with informal accounting
- Delivery even by chige (back frame)
- All women sisters (ŏnni)
New Division of Labor

- “inside/outside distinction”?
- Some married couples work side-by-side
- Problem of “sunset divorces” (hwanghon ihon)
- Men often want an “outside occupation”
  - Many start their own (larger scale?) businesses (and often fail)
  - Others become titular business heads without doing much but appearing to pay the bills
Microfactories and Korean Kinship

- Does contingency create the family or does family structure labor?
  - Can we identify rule-based behaviors here (conforming to social norms)
  - Or is everything contingent and the structure of labor relations is determining the structure of the family
  - Or do we see interaction between labor and family?