Post-democratic Activism

Modern Korean Society
Professor Sorensen
November 26, 2013
Recalling "Military Modernization"

Seung-sook Moon's argument is that after democratization and the development of consumer society in the 1990's South Koreans moved from being "dutiful nationals" (kongmin) to "rights-bearing citizens" (simin). In the educated middle classes people participated through NGOs such as PSPD, Citizens Coalition for Economic Justice, Korean Women's Association United, and the development of consumer society in the 1990's.

Activities in the working classes people participated through labor union...
History of Fighting for Democracy

Constant demonstrations against Yusin in 1970s

Kwangju Uprising 1980

July 1987 nation-wide demonstrations for democracy

Great Labor Offensive (Koo) 1987-1989

Korean Uprising 1980

Constant demonstrations against Yusin in 1970s

Labor in 1996 prevented the Kim Young Sam administration from implementing neoliberal labor reforms.
June 13, 2002, two middle school girls, Shin Mison and Kim Hyosun, were crushed by American tanks in formation. Internet blogging raised this to a big issue, and by September issue of SOFA agreement raised the issue to a political level.

Soon nationwide candle-light vigils raised the issue. Rho Mu Hyun’s election was influenced by this. Should SOFA be revised, should US forces be withdrawn?

November US military court-martial acquitted the tank driver of negligent manslaughter. Should SOFA be revised, should US forces be withdrawn?
How to interpret this?

Anti-American youth ready to end Cold War political alliances?

Heterogeneous individuals participating in a carnivalesque display? (>Mikhail Bakhtin = literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style of atmosphere) Former explanation assumes political structuration, the latter focuses on individual motivation.

Alliances?
Jiyeon Kang

Interprets through 2006 candlelight demonstrations

Ostensible issue was Myung Bak Lee’s “caving” to US demands to open the South Korean market to US beef. Was President Lee sacrificing Koreans’ health for the US alliance?

Rumors—Americans eat imported Canadian and Australian beef and export Mad Cow disease. Koreans were feeling threatened by neoliberal reforms and lack of protection from imported foreign competition.

Korean farmers wanted protection from foreign competition and were feeling threatened by neoliberal reforms. Ten of thousands of protestors were marching through 2006 demonstrations. Were Koreans feeling threatened by neoliberal reforms and lack of protection from their government?
Movement Repertoire

Anti-Americanism had emerged as a result of the Kwangju uprising. Some Koreans through the US could and should have stopped the massacre. Many activists concluded that the US was more interested in anti-communism than democracy. The 1997 current crisis was blamed by some on Wall Street and the IMF wishing to open the South Korean markets. Some Koreans thought the US could and should have stopped the massacre. Anti-Americanism had emerged as a result of the Kwangju uprising.
Iconicity of City Hall Plaza

Sacred space—of country and sovereignty, but surrounded by nearby U.S. symbols

Occupied rarely

1964—normalization of relations with Japan
1978, 1980, 1987—democracy protests
2002—World Cup soccer match
Youth associated candle-lit vigils with non-political events—Soccer World Cup, High school youth camps in which candles were used to heighten emotions—remembrance, appreciation, indebtedness, feeling of unity and solidarity and justice, but forgetting of the ideological content. Older people more politically motivated trope of panmi versus chuhan migun ci p’irysong.

Non-political corporeal memory of youth
Conclusion

2002 anti-Americanism was important

Protests of 2006, however, were by and large not highly ideological—illustrating a new protest repertoire.

Some retrospectively understand 2002 in terms of high school and emotional repertoire and forget ideological issues.

Some continue with politicized consciousness.

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2002 anti-Americanism was important

2006
Breast cancer discourse in South Korea is an indicator of stresses and strains in Korean society. Only the liminality of being a cancer patient legitimizes advocating personal rest and recreation. Currently, South Korea is linked globally, so international discourses on breast cancer are pervasive. These are largely the same lifestyle factors implicated in scientific studies. Discourse of stress reflects the impossibility of women's roles in current South Korea. The liminality of being a cancer patient legitimizes advocating personal rest and recreation.
Lifestyle Factors

- Higher calorie, higher fat diet
- Early menarche, late menopause
- Late child-bearing (if at all)
- Lack of breast-feeding
- Signs of Westernization (alien?)
- Discourse of personal responsibility

급증요인

Life-style Factors
Response to diagnosis

Fear and secrecy

Treatment

Change in lifestyle

Community service

Yoga, exercise, stop drinking

Cutting back on service to in-laws
Stress as cause

Stress as cause

Self-treatment reduction of stress, bit activism not about

## Concrete stresses

- Instability of spouse’s income
- Taking care of in-laws or sick family members
- Having economic responsibility for their families

Stress as cause

Witchcraft explanation (explain Evans-Pritchard on Azande)
What's Political about this?

- Self-help activism
- Use of the internet
- Global connectivity
- Confrontation with modernity and Western civilization?
Any one parent will do—fatherhood and educational migration

Normal pattern

Kirgi kajok (appa, gamma)

Chogi yuhyak—early study abroad

He flies to them on holidays (like geese’s seasonal migration)

Father stays in Korea to earn money to support them

Wife and children migrate to English speaking country while that
Reinforce Gender Ideology

Father the breadwinner
Mother the nurturer
Role based marriage
Danger of love affairs on both sides, however, and lonely for the fathers and mothers
Hierarchy of Place and Language

- English the prestige language and United States, Canada, or Britain
- Especially upper middle class suburbs with good education systems (Bellevue, Washington DC, etc.)
- New Zealand, Australia, Singapore cheaper, but less prestigious accents
- Some who can't afford English turn to Chinese or Japanese
- Huge numbers of students in Beijing or Qingdao
- English the prestige language and United States, Canada, or Britain
Custodial Fathers in Singapore

Does this undermine traditional gender hierarchies?

Revenue generating activity

Man is not the breadwinner (or is he?)

Saving gender face

Most men claim to be "in business" or have some other

Man is the "fun father" rather than the stern disciplinarian,"
Conclusion

“Fathers’ caregiving practices have not sufficiently challenged the dominant ideas of gender and family” p290
Human capital: Transnational Korean Adoptees and the Neoliberal Logic of Return

Feel envious of the latter, and don’t see why they should have privileges in Korea (Toby Dawson)—2007

Feel sorry for former, and wanted to forget about them (Susan Brink)

Feel envious of the latter, and don’t see why they should have privileges in Korea (Toby Dawson)—2007

From pulssanghan haeoe iyangan (poor overseas adoptees)

To puyuhan haeoe tongpo (rich overseas co-ethnics)

Eleana Kim
People thought of as “human capital” that involves “entrepreneur of the self”

Government values people by their contribution to the economy, and tries to incentivize self-improvement.

Neoliberal Logic

How do adoptees fit into this logic?

They are Korean (blood notion of ethnicity), but they have “expensive” foreign educations—It’s a way of thinking of adoption as study abroad.”

This is “adoption as study abroad”—“adoption as study abroad” involves foreign educations and tries to incentivize self-improvement.
Reasons to Embrace Adoptees

From the government’s point of view:
- Encourage them to re-link to Korea, or even live there.
- They have foreign contacts that can be useful.
- They can contribute to the globalization of Korea by providing language and other skills.
- They are Koreans with an expensive education (similar to early study abroad).
- There for the Korean national should reach out to them.

Therefore, for the Korean national should reach out to them.
Discrepant Cosmopolitans

Model—middle class adoptee who comes to Korea seeking roots

Many adoptees feel that their foreign upbringing makes it impossible for them to become fully Korean, but they don’t want to return to their country of raising either. Fit in neither country.

Should overseas adoptions be stopped?
Return of runaway industry

Remember the large-scale garment industry started moving overseas in the 1980s leaving many working class women unemployed.

Seoyoung Park

Stitching the Fabric of Family (Tongdanim in 2008-10)

Work that is supposed to be characteristic of industrial societies reversed the separation between home and production, returning as small-scale family factories in “flexible” enterprises.
Misun

1. First factory a home factory
2. Factory on the first floor, home on the second floor
3. Separation but women fluidly moved from one space to another
4. "Fired" husband when he wasn't diligent
5. New factory on second floor of commercial building, but another
6. Factory on the first floor, home on the second floor
Rapid Production

- Family-centered enterprises
- Labor activists lament the lack of labor consciousness in
  fast-paced decision-making
- Social ties—married couples, family, extended kin allow
  relations spread throughout the market
- Achievable through network of personal and intimate

Rapid Production
Large scale factories with contract workers (kaekkong)

Hierarchy from oya (膘), to sida (掭), to podo sida (騰)

Master often worked at piece rate sharing income with sida,

and podo sida

Large scale factories left in the 1980s and 1990s, and

unemployed women set up sewing machines at home
When heterosexual couples work together, the man may be a cutter, or he may engage in outside business. Many "sunset divorces" happen in the area near Tongdaemun.