

Making a Confucian country: Cultural discourses and representation of Confucian tradition in South Korea

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--What do you understand about Confucianism? Please cast away any prejudices against Confucianism! Open your mind to the real meaning of Confucianism.

--Do you think Confucianism is too outdated? Just look around. Confucianism is fused in our daily lives.

--Do you think Confucianism is a creature of the distant past? Now, at the beginning of the new millenium, please revalue Confucianism. A genuine person trained by Confucian idea is keenly needed today.

(Kyôngju World Culture EXPO 2000)

1. Introduction

Raymond Williams (1977) has written of tradition that it should not be viewed as a vestige of the past, but rather as a cultural power acting on the present. Traditions are selected with the intent of the present society; thus, we should focus on the “selective tradition,” which influences the definitions and identifications of the current society. As such, some traditions are selected and emphasized as constant and true values while others are discarded and ignored.

The discourse on so-called ‘genuine traditional culture’ in Korea can be traced back to the colonial period. Confucianism was seen as a means to create a more easily governed colony by some Japanese, including Governor-general Ugaki Kazushige, who lamented the lack of “true” Confucianism among ordinary Koreans. Hence, when the colonial government conducted its Rural Revitalization Campaign (1932–1940), Confucian principles such as filial piety, loyalty to the emperor, harmony, and frugality were advocated (Shin and Han 2000). Conversely, some Korean nationalists in this period such as Ch’oe Nam-sôn, Yi Nûng-hwa, and Son Chin-t’ae criticized Confucianism as a major cause for Chosôn’s colonization. Rather than Confucianism, these men sought the protoplasmic culture of Korea elsewhere: Ch’oe in the myth of Tan’gun, Yi in shamanism, and Son in folk customs (Kim Sông-nae 1990: 225-226).

Subsequently, full-scale discussion on ‘genuine traditional culture’ started anew when South Korea inaugurated its government in 1948. At first, government officials roused mainly the spirit of anti-Japan and anti-Communism incorporating these negative sentiments. Later on, however, the Park Chung Hee government (1961-1979) raised the issue of revitalization of traditional culture, emphasizing the importance of searching for national identity; this search was largely based on

Confucian figures and ideology. The opposition parties and intellectuals in this period also desired to revitalize traditional culture. However, they advocated folk culture as the 'genuine' Korean tradition. They insisted that Confucianism was exclusively for ranking officials and had nothing to do with the common people.

Domestic political power relations largely regulated the discourses on 'traditional culture' until the early 1990s. Afterwards, presidents were no longer of military backgrounds and the international political mood shifted towards globalization. The discourse surrounding traditional culture separated from the logic of 'the ruler' and 'the ruled,' and instead met the logic of forming a 'Korean identity,' which was expected to be different from others. Hence, 'traditional culture' was generally understood as 'genuine ourness' or 'true Koreanness' and as a result many aspects of Korean culture were put together and reborn as 'a true Koreanness.' This sentiment has been promoted continually, eventually ushering in an era of numerous culture programs and festivals bearing the banner of 'Korean traditional culture' in the late 1990s. My major concern in this paper is how Confucian tradition is represented among the many other Korean cultures in this atmosphere.

I will first examine how the discourses on traditional culture have transformed in South Korea comparing two periods: when political power was held by those from military backgrounds (1961-1993) and when non-military background leaders held power (1993-present). Along with this, in order to explore my major concern, I will investigate a single cultural event (Korean Culture Program for Foreign Employees of Korean Embassies Abroad) conducted by the Academy of Korean Studies in September 2000. I will analyze 'their' voices, i.e., the participants, focusing on Confucian culture and the manner of Confucianism represented by 'us.' I expect my paper will demonstrate how cultural discourse is presently shaping South Korea as a Confucian country.

2.0 Genealogy of 'traditional culture' discourses

2.1 Confucianism and non-Confucianism: Rival traditions as genuine national culture

Discourses on 'traditional culture' were constantly discussed after South Korea entered the era of rapid modernization. The Park Chung Hee government announced major projects for developing the nation such as modernization, reforming social discipline, developing national culture, and promoting diplomacy. For developing national culture, the government first destroyed shaman shrines and campaigned against shamanic practices since these were deemed detrimental to modernization. Moreover, it enacted the Cultural Assets Protection Law (Munhwaje poho-pôp) in 1962 and the Culture and Art Promotion Law (Munhwa yesul chinhûng-pôp) in 1972, proclaiming the need to preserve and transmit tradition and art in order to revive national culture. After this legislation, the Korean Culture and Art Foundation (Han'guk munhwa yesul chinhûng-wôn) opened (1973) and carried out the First Culture and Art Promoting Five-year Project (1974-1978), aiming "to establish a correct historical view and to create new national art."¹ Consequently, generals such as Kim Yu-shin, Kwôn Yul, and Yi Sun-shin, who fought bravely for the country, were resurrected and their statues erected for inspiring the importance of loyalty (Kim Kwang-ôk 1991; Moon Ok-pyo, 2000). The government was criticized for only promoting military figures as national heroes by pro-Confucians, and thus it launched a new project to elevate Confucian scholars and relics as honorable figures and precious national treasures. For example, Tosan sôwôn, where Yi Hwang (1501-1570),

¹ Korean Culture and Art Foundation, brochure (1985: 22).

the ‘Great Confucian scholar,’ studied, was reconstructed, the thought of Yi Yul-gok (1536-1584) was highly praised, and Andong, where many Confucian scholars lived in the Chosôn period (1392-1910), was brought into relief as it demonstrated a high degree of loyalty (Moon Ok-pyo 2000: 83). Clearly, Confucianism and its cultural vestiges had become the standard-bearers for what was promoted as traditional Korean culture by the government.

Despite the effort by the Park government to create a proud national identity, anti-government sentiments arose after the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Japan (1965) and the adoption of various friendly policies such as encouraging Japanese investment and allowing Japanese to be taught at high schools. This chain of incidents led the anti-government group to start another movement for reviving tradition in order to shape a ‘true’ national identity. They criticized Confucianism as being exclusivist and only for the elite and high-ranking officials. Instead, they advocated shamanic practices and folk customs, insisting these were the very traditions that defined Koreans. Thus, shamanic rituals (*kut*), masked-dance dramas (*t'alch'um*), and farmer’s music (*nongak*) were performed largely as part of anti-government movements (Kim Sông-nae 1990; Kim Kwang-ok 1991).

The Fifth Republic (1981-1988) led by Chun Doo Hwan, proclaimed as major goals undertakings such as the realization of a society based on justice, accomplishing a democratic and welfare state, improving the economy, upgrading the national image to international society and so on. In addition, the government amended the provisions of Fifth Economic Development Project (1982-1986) and added a clause relating to culture and art. This stated, in part, that the effort to preserve national cultural inheritances and transmitting these should be reinforced to establish national subjectivity among the rapidly changing social environment which could cause confusion of the peoples’ values (Yi 1984).

Consequently, the government encouraged people to participate in reviving traditional culture by sponsoring cultural campaigns based on Confucian ideology. Examples include, Searching for Noblemen Movement (Yangban chatki undong), Tracing the Roots of our Ancestors Movement (Chosang chatki undong) and the Movement for Recovering Etiquette (Yechôl chatki undong).

Contrarily, resistant intellectuals, the opposition party and college students declared the Fifth Republic to be illegitimate as it sprung from the bloody Kwangju Uprising in 1980. They condemned its authoritarian rule, nepotism, and corruption, and conducted shamanic rituals as part of anti-government demonstrations. One example is the memorial service for Yi Han-yôl, a university student who died while participating in an anti-government demonstration, that was performed and followed by a shamanic ritual even though Yi and his family were Christian. In this period, not only political congregations but also college festivals adopted many shamanic rituals.² As a counter discourse, anti-government groups searched for the ‘true’ roots of Korean culture in shamanic rituals and folk customs, designating them as the peoples’ culture (*minjung munhwa*), which allowed the venting of frustrations resultant from oppression and hardship of military dictatorship.

2.2 ‘Our culture’ versus ‘other’s culture’: National culture and foreign culture

The 1990s witnessed a dramatic change in the international mood with events such as the German unification. Political and ideological boundaries among nations became blurred and the need for new forms of globalization and economic regulation was realized. Ultimately, the Uruguay Round (12-1993) negotiations were

² See Kim Kwang-ok (1991: 155-157).

concluded, urging countries to open their markets to free trade.

In South Korea, the UR negotiations stirred the people's emotions, especially the demands to open the rice market. In Ch'olla province, farmers demonstrated under the slogan of "Rice is our base of living, origin of our lives and symbol of our happiness. Let's throw the bloody Americans out of Korea..."³ Also the slogan 'Body and Land are One' (*shint'oburi*) became popularized. Placards with '*shint'oburi*' hung in front of major buildings and streets, and a song entitled *shint'oburi* became popular:

Who are you? Who am I? We are all born in this land and our bodies cannot be separated from this land. Oh! *Shint'oburi*! ... Look at the mannequin in the store window dancing with its body wrapped with foreign products. Oh! Rice! Barley! Beans! Red beans! Our bodies should have our products; why are you looking for others? Oh! Red pepper paste! Bean paste! Kimchi! Radish Kimchi! Don't forget that you and I are all Korean! Oh! *Shint'oburi*!

The opening of the Korean market to Japanese popular culture also struck a chord in the South Korean psyche and aroused an urgent need to establish a strong Korean identity, protecting Korean culture from foreign cultural influences. Han Kyông-gu argued that the arrival and influence of foreign cultures on an indigenous culture can result in urgent movements to either revive or recreate cultural traditions. Accordingly, Han proposed that in the search for cultural identity, new cultural discourses arise pursuing localization while simultaneously advocating globalization (2000: 74).

In this strong atmosphere of searching for 'our Koreanness,' Kim Young Sam was elected president in 1992. Voices proclaimed the need for establishing concrete cultural policies. For example, in a special New Year's article entitled "Munhwa ûi kkoch'ul p'iuja" (Let's Make the Flower of Culture Bloom) Shin Yông-hun, an expert adviser on cultural properties, criticized the low budget allocation for culture (less than 1% of the total) and insisted on the necessity of a concrete cultural policy for developing national culture to give Koreans a richer spirit and philosophy.⁴ Similarly, Ch'oe Tong-ho, a professor at Korea University, emphasized the effectiveness of cultural policy, stating that he was pleased that the need to create 'Korean-like culture' was discussed throughout society and maintained that the state would further develop through pride and subjectivity in traditional culture.⁵

The Kim government quickly established the Ministry of Culture and Sports (Munhwa cheyuk-bu), with expanded functions and organization. Additionally, the Korean Culture Policy Institute (Han'guk munhwa ch'ongch'aek kaebal-wôn) was formed in 1994 to elaborate strategy for unifying South and North Korea's cultures and eventually developing a culture for the Korean nation.⁶ Following this lead, Seoul City announced 'Globalization of Seoul Culture' and planned festivals for enriching traditional culture.⁷ Moreover, many mayors stated the importance of preserving local tradition and promoting cultural programs. For example, the mayor of Kwangju sought to develop culture based on resources in Kwangju such as *p'ansori*, calligraphy, ceramics, and folk customs; the mayor of Inch'ôn, cited the

³ See www.gonong.jinbo.net/index/juyodong.htm

⁴ *Chosôn ilbo*, 1-4-1993.

⁵ *Chosôn ilbo*, "Munmin shidae wa munhwa ch'ongch'aek" (The Era of Civilian Government and Cultural Policy), 8-3-1993.

⁶ See www.kcpi.or.kr/

⁷ *Chosôn ilbo*, "Ch'oech'o ûi munhwa ch'ongsajin" (The First Culture Blueprint), 5-19-1995.

historic nature of the city with sites such as Kanghwa Island's Mount Mani (where an altar of Tan'gun is located) that could be developed for education and as cultural tour sites.⁸

Cultural discourses became an even hotter issue during the 1997 presidential campaign after the severe economic crisis of late 1997. Opinion held that the new president should be a 'cultural president' and all candidates pledged to make Korea a world cultural leader by investing in Korean traditions for both nurturing national pride and economic recovery.⁹ The new president, Kim Dae Jung, declared that the twenty-first century would be the century of culture and the cultural industry would be adopted as a national strategic industry. As such, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism replaced its predecessor, declaring that they would develop traditional culture by promoting cultural festivals and designating special cultural areas for tourism.¹⁰ Subsequently, the budget reached 1% of the total and a wide array of cultural events and festivals were begun.

The search for 'traditional culture,' once used for producing ideology to mobilize national power or for gathering people's power to end the military dictatorship, became unified in one voice 'promoting our genuine culture' which differed from 'theirs' as Korea headed into the globalized world-order.

3.0 Korean cultural programs and the representation of Confucianism

Cultural discourses arouse national consensus on the importance of promoting 'our' traditional culture, and thus various cultural events and programs have been initiated. The Academy of Korean Studies (AKS)—a leading institute in promoting Korean studies and culture abroad—operates various cultural programs.¹¹ Of particular interest to this paper, is the first AKS Cultural Program for Foreigners Working in Korean Overseas Governmental Agencies (ACP) held in 2000.¹² According to the president of the Academy, the institute endeavors to explore the essence of Korean culture while searching for a healthy sense of values and spiritual compass for the future of Korea since its opening (6-30-1978).¹³

As a 'Mecca of Korean studies,' the Academy initiated the ACP program in 2000, subtitling the event as 'Fourteen Days of Exposure to Korean Culture.' The purpose was described as "to enhance partnership of local employees who work in Korean overseas governmental agencies...through exposure [to] Korean culture and promote better understanding of Korea and its culture."¹⁴

3.1 'Their voices' on Korean culture and Confucianism

The fourteen-day program included Special Lectures on Korean Culture, Traditional Korean Culture Workshops, Historical Sightseeing in Seoul, and

⁸ *Chosôn ilbo*, "Minsôn kwangyôk tanch'ejang ege tûnnûn uri chiyôk munhwa ch'ôngsajin" (Local Culture Blueprint from Listening to Locally Elected Officials in the Era of Local Self-Autonomy), 9-4-9-23-1995.

⁹ See *Chosôn ilbo*, "Taet'ongnyông hubo 21 segi munhwa chôngch'aek sogê" (An Introduction of the Cultural Policies of Presidential Candidates), 11-20-1997.

¹⁰ *Chosôn ilbo*, "Munhwa kwangwang-bu ômmu naeyong pogo" (A Report of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism), 4-17-1998.

¹¹ Korean Cultural Policy Institute (1997: 94).

¹² The program ran from 9-25 through 10-7-2000. It is also being offered in 2001.

¹³ The Graduate School of Korean Studies and Korean Culture Program, "Greetings from the President," 1999: 3.

¹⁴ Program Guide Book, 2000: 7.

Excursion Trips. I, as one of guides, participated in all activities and visited all places along with the participants. I used this opportunity to gain insight into participants' impressions of Korea and established rapport with some members during the program. My major informants 'A', 'B', and 'C', who came from France, Belgium and the U.S. respectively, and had all been doing Korea-related work for over ten years. Among them, C, with whom I conducted an in-depth interview, had a strong Korea background, having majored in Korean studies. They voiced many aspects concerning Korea and its culture. In terms of Confucianism, the three informants all shared the same feeling that Confucianism still exerts a great role in South Korea. I can divide their opinions about Confucianism into three large themes: the idea that Confucianism could be regarded as a universal value, that Confucian values require too many obligations, and the danger of searching for Korean identity in only Confucianism.

For example, A pointed out that the ties between family members in Korea are ascribed to Confucianism, but these values are also present in Europe. He told me "I have a sixteen-year old daughter; I love her and want her stay with us as long as she can. In Hungary and France where I was respectively born and raised, we should respect our parents and elders."

C also emphasized how education, being a good student and son—all highly emphasized in Confucianism—have been important to his life: "Both of my parents were the first ones in their families to go to college. So their feeling about education was very strong. Now it is banned, but when I was young I got hit with a '*hoech'ori*' (switch) many times. If I did something bad, I was paddled. In school, if you get into a fight, if you didn't listen to the teacher, the same thing happened. I saw in a Korean drama when parents spank their children they say 'I, who am hitting you feel more pain than you, who are being hit.' The funny thing was I heard the same thing from my parents: 'It hurts me more than it hurts you.' I didn't believe it though. It was my butt not anybody else's."

While I was confirming that the values emphasized by Confucianism such as strong family ties and the importance of education could be universal, I noticed that they seem to have lighter social requirements and fewer obligations to realize those values.

For example, C told me that he was expected to study and get good grades, but he did not get spanked for poor grades. He said his parents did not really care what he did in the future. He elaborated: "I mean they never said 'we want you to be a doctor or car mechanic' as long as I was happy and can live comfortably, they didn't care. I think their idea of what makes me a good son is that I enjoy what I do. I am not robbing a bank, and killing somebody. I send e-mails and call them on the telephone regularly. And send gifts for birthday and Christmas. Regular contact makes them happy probably. It isn't that difficult—it only takes a minute or two. They want to know what I am doing and I listen to what they are doing. That is just being a human...but one of my Korean friends does a lot more to be a good son. He goes very often to his parents' house and does many things with them. And when his dad was in the hospital, he went there and all his family members were there too and stayed there all night. Being at his parents' place is important. To go home and be there."

According to B, the obligations Koreans bear seem very contradictory to her since Koreans perpetuate and pass on these duties to subsequent generations. She told me about one of her Korean friends: "I know married Korean women have many difficulties due to responsibilities to their in-law family. I worked with a girl from Korea. We were close. But she finished her duty and went back to Korea and married.

We are still in touch, but whenever we talk over the phone, she complains about her hard work for her in-laws on holidays and for ancestor memorial services. I listened to her but I don't understand her since when I asked her not to work she answered that she had to. Then when I asked her not ask her children to do same thing when they grown up, she asked how she could get rid of those customs in a single day. Why do they want their children to do the same things that they didn't like to do."

C later on stated his impression on the mood of contemporary Korean society searching for identity in Confucianism in an in-depth interview and pointed the absurdity of making a single identity by using the collective pro-noun 'we.' "I thought about the identity issue when A commented in the lecture that he had met many Koreans and found their identity was strong, but wondered why they were saying that their identity is being lost. He asked, 'How on earth was their identity strong before?' I remember the lecture was about the spirit of Democracy being comparable to Confucian values. This seemed interesting but not accurate. If we look at *The Analects* or *Mencius* with tunnel vision, we can find some words or a sentence and say "oh it's democracy," but only if we don't consider the context. I know these days Koreans are trying to find their identity in Confucianism or Confucian ideals, but we have many identities. Korean identity is huge; I don't think people in any period absorbed a single culture or one value in a vacuum. When we talk about identity using 'we,' who do you think 'we' is? Confucianism sounds very idealistic, but there are no women. Then who are we?"

The three informants voiced that Confucian values seemed virtuous for identifying what they held as important in their own cultures, but that the practices seemed contradictory. Moreover, by creating a unified identity of Koreans as Confucian, it will result in the marginalization of other identities.

3.2 Representation of Confucianism as a mirror, a standard, and a vision

The participants attended lectures on South Korea and workshops to learn about playing *samul-nori* instruments, calligraphy, and meditation. They also traveled around Korea visiting temples, Confucian shrines, and historic places. As the informants described, I witnessed that Confucianism has been resurrected as the representative and most valuable Korean culture, and thus stands apart from other Korean cultures such as art or folk customs. While those were represented as mere cultural events, Confucianism was audio-visualized and substantialized with a special zeal and passion as a mirror of the past, a standard for the present, and a vision for the future. It was breathing next to us as a virtue of Korean culture for the universe.

The first lecture for ACP was "Korean Identity in Global Perspective." The main idea was that Confucianism had contributed to making a democracy in South Korea and is fertile soil for creating universal values. The speaker emphasized the roots of democracy in the Confucian philosophy of *minbon*, or that people are the root of society and should be considered foremost by policymakers. His lecture can be summarized by his insistence that democracy was brought about in South Korea by a deep-rooted Confucian tradition of *sarim* (Confucian scholars with similar aims) that emphasized fairness—this was particularly seen in the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Elections—and further held that statistics proved that there was an "unmistakable consensus" that Confucian traditions such as *minbon* were needed for the future of Korea. He closed by stating that the new millennium required a strengthening of Korean identity through Confucianism.

The second day of the field trip took us to Ojukhôn in Kangnûng. As the bus

drew closer to the entrance, I was shocked to find Ojukhôn totally different from what I remembered. I pictured it in my mind as I had seen it in the late 1970s, at which time it was surrounded by trees with a few buildings; now it was immense and I could not see the end of the square. In the bus, I explained, here was where the Confucian scholar Yi Yul-gok (1536-1584) was born and spent a great deal of his time studying. Further, that he was known for his superior integrity and being a great scholar who developed and enriched Confucian theory. One participant who was woken up by my explanation in the bus said that he (Yi Yul-gok) must have been very rich. I did not know how to answer his comments at the time, but later I found that Ojukhôn had undergone several reconstructions. First, it was designated as a National Treasure in 1963 and then the first reconstruction was carried out in 1976. Subsequently, the Folk Culture House (Hyangt'o minsok-kwan; 1992) and Historic Culture House (Yôksa munhwa-kwan; 1997) were built and the Municipal Museum was moved to its present location adjoining Ojukhôn. Consequently, the grand scale of Ojukhôn of today was formulated.

A guide at Ojukhôn praised the thought of Yul-gok as he guided us, saying:
It is really shameful that some people put the 5,000 *wôn* bill in their mouths, not knowing that the great scholar Yi Yul-gok is on it. They shouldn't do that because it is disrespectful. They have no idea about our roots, where we originated from. I heard there are many scholars studying the thought of Yi at places like Harvard, but we are only concerned with Western studies. I believe there is only one thing to study in this world: the thought of Yul-gok.

In Kyôngju, the representation of Confucianism reached an apex, demonstrating that it is the only cure for the ills of modern society. Under the catch phrase of "Big World, Big Dream," the Kyôngju World Culture EXPO 2000 was underway with about twenty different exhibitions when we arrived in Kyôngju on the third day of the trip. The EXPO consisted mainly of programs such as a World Puppet Drama Festival, Asia-Europe Folk Festival, and a Cyber Character Show. There was also an Asia-Europe Forum that centered on a discussion of culture in the cyber age. Among these various events, a pavilion for Confucianism occupied the EXPO Square in an exhibit hall designated as the House of Friendship.

At the entrance was a big sign reading Cultural Exhibition of Human Virtue. The sign, however, did not reveal what the exhibit would be. As I entered, I found a large portrait of Confucius just inside the entrance, and along the hall, there was a portrait of Mencius and phrases from the Confucian Classics, all under a dim and soft light. A sign reading '*hoech'ori*' informed that it, the *hoech'ori*, was the symbol of Confucian education which considers 'filial piety' of great importance and teaches people to act like humans. At the center of Confucian education, is the *hoech'ori*, for building the character of humans. Another sign informed that Confucianism respects life. However, today's people have experienced a rapid collapse of morality, correlating with the speed of modernization. Living in a society where practices like abortion, murder, or despising disabilities is easily observed, we should look back on how our ancestors lived. Here is the reason we should relive our ancestors' lives: because they greatly respected life. Passing these signs, the adjoining exhibition hall had a very different atmosphere. A mural covered two walls; one side was dark and the other was bright. On the dark side, people were demonstrating holding placards reading 'Reform the Education System' and 'Our Students are Dying.' On the bright side, young teenagers being arrested for prostitution was portrayed against a background of a red-light district. Many other photos in the very darkish hall

depicted the dead from wars or children starving in famines around the world. Playing in the background was the wailing of people, gunshots, and a fighter jet. Passing through the hall, three flags fluttered from the ceiling, reading 'lost our conscience,' 'lost our etiquette,' and 'collapsed morality.'

As the quotation at the beginning of this paper states, the promoters of this pavilion held that Confucianism could cure all of modern society's ills, and this was relayed at the exit of the exhibition.

4. Conclusion

Confucianism, first introduced to Korea during the Koguryô Kingdom in 372, has continually influenced Koreans' way of life in varying degrees depending on the period. Yet, despite the ordeals of colonization, modernization, and extinction of certain cultures, Confucianism did not die out, and was even revived as an ideology for governing and upheld as virtuous principles. Although once rejected by anti-governmental groups in the 1970s and 1980s, by the 1990s Confucianism thrived in the mood of globalization with the reappraisal of various aspects of Korean culture. The rulers, intellectuals and people agreed upon the importance of culture for preserving national pride and reviving the economy in light of the influx of foreign culture and the opening of domestic markets.

In this mood, many aspects of Korean culture have been resurrected and promoted. Among them, Confucianism is given the highest status due to so-called humanistic characteristics such as filial piety, loyalty, consideration for life, and emphasis on education. In light of 'their' voices (the participants for ACP), the way 'we' (Koreans) represent Confucian values sounds agreeable and universal. However, while 'they' praised Confucian values, 'they' rejected the obligations inherent in observing Confucian principles as too burdensome.

It is useful here to examine the three aspects of identity that are manifested in society as described by Manuel Castells (1997: chap.1). First, there is legitimizing identity which rationalizes domination by the institutions of society vis-à-vis social actors. Second, resistance identity that is generated by those in positions of domination and encourages resistance. And third, project identity where social actors, build a new identity—based on available cultural resources—that redefines overall social structure.

According to Castells' classification of project identity, the cultural discourses for creating a Korean-like culture in South Korea have given rise to cultural programs shaping Korea as a Confucian country. However, by selecting Confucianism as esprit of Korean philosophy and the prototype Korean culture, other aspects of culture and custom became symbols of the past and merely individual items in cultural events or festivals. While cultural programs are striving to establish Confucianism as 'our' identity, those who have lived and thought in accordance with other social/belief systems are isolated from 'us.' Nonetheless, it is certain that Confucianism will survive in the twenty-first century in South Korea. However, we should be cognizant that the burdensome responsibilities and obligations of Confucianism will also be part of Korean lives.

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