

# The Role Of *Doduk* in the Construction of Korean National Identity

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Contrary to the conventional wisdom of recent years, sometimes a concept as abstract as identity can be defined and distilled easily into its constituent parts. South Korea does this by formally instilling its ideological principles in the classroom setting. As a discipline completely separate and distinct from history or social studies (both of which are regular parts of the Korean middle school curriculum and are analogous to the their American namesakes) *doduk* (literally “morals/ethics”) is a fully-realized discipline formally taught in the classroom. Encompassing topics from proper behavior in specific social situations, Korean national heroes, to the portrayal of the Korean national character as a crucial cultural factor in explaining national growth, what distinguishes *doduk* as a peculiar epistemology apart from the other more traditional ones is its undisguised nationalist agenda formalized as a discipline of knowledge. The doctrine is not subtle, nor is it in any way tentative about the claims it makes. It not only poses moral questions - it gives the answers.

The ideological agenda is far more specific than a mere abstract “moral” education; it consciously defines Korean social norms and role expectations, and the proper citizen's role in the Korean state. The relationships between individuals in Korean society are complex and crucial to the proper functioning of the society as a whole. *Doduk* is essential to a society in which the “good person” is defined by one's ability to adhere to a myriad of strict social norms. These norms are clearly outlined and reinforced in Korean *doduk* textbooks, and crucially, are often juxtapositioned against different *foreign* cultural norms and traditions. In *doduk*, Korea is not evaluated solely on “neutral” terms, i.e., in terms of Korean norms themselves; rather, *doduk* outlines the idea of Korea, Korean culture, and the ideal citizen in relation to that which they are *not*. It is in this way that *doduk* undertakes its project of constructing the proper citizen in a Korean cultural context.

Most importantly, however, is that *doduk* is the official forum through which the state reinforces the dominant ideology of the Korean nation. *Doduk* is anything and everything that is part of dominant ideology, but the crucial difference is that it is not just norms of behavior that

are constructed as moral behavior - *norms of belief* gain a moral meaning as well. In much the same way that religion is not just a code of conduct, but a mode of belief, *doduk* takes on a new meaning as it relates the self to a set of proper beliefs about one's role as a member of three main group affiliations - the family, the school, and the nation-state. In the discourse of *doduk* in Korea, this is just one of several key conceptual relationships through which one must look in order to understand one's role in society. In this respect, the influence of Confucian teachings have had the most significant impact on the Korean moral tradition.

### The Chinese Tradition

The intellectual and educational traditions in Korea owe much to the influence of China, especially to philosophers such as Confucius. The concept of education itself rests on a very specific conceptual scheme. Confucius' formulation of the role of education in society is constructed as a linkage of three crucial concepts, each of which in succession rests on the previous: (☯) *sung* - which is a person's "nature," (☯) *do* - which is "the way," and (☯) *gyo* - which, translated roughly, means "teaching." There are obvious similarities to the philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that so influenced Western thought, especially as they relate to education: "Everything is good when it leaves the hand of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man."<sup>i</sup> In the Confucian framework, the *sung* is characterized by (☯) *sun*, which translates as "good," in the Manichean sense of good and evil. This is the innate goodness that Rousseau believes to be the common element of human nature.

*Do* is the "way," in the literal sense of the word in English. The translation gleaned from Korean is "the road which must be followed." This is a pronunciation familiar to many Americans as "*tao*." Although the entry into American intellectual thought has been via such popular texts as *The Tao of Pooh* and *The Tao of Motorcycle Repair*, the concept is taken far more seriously in Asia, and is one of the philosophical foundations of several Asian societies, and this is certainly true with Korea. In this conceptual framework, the "way," or the path one must take, is illuminated by the light of the aforementioned *gyo*, which is education.<sup>ii</sup> Similarly, Rousseau places great importance on not only the cultivation of the mind and the necessity of

education in forming the “complete person,” and bringing that person to adulthood, but the mode in which this enlightenment takes place. Specifically, formal education is a desirable means of showing this “way.” In Chinese, the language in which Confucius was writing and which influenced so many other languages (over 50% of Korean words are phonetic derivations from Chinese character pronunciations) the word for adult is (ㄱ~ㅣ—) *sung in*<sup>iii</sup>, whose meaning is literally “complete person.” In the same way, the concept of childhood itself is defined as (ㄱ~ㅣ~“ㅕ”) *mi sung nyun*, whose literal translation is “not yet complete in years.” Every person must traverse this path to adulthood, but must engage in this struggle in their own particular way. Quoting Rousseau, the similarity between Chinese (and hence Korean) conceptualizations of childhood and its relationship to education is obvious: “The way in which ideas are formed is what gives character to the human mind...The attitude, more or less great, of comparing ideas, and of finding a rapport and relationship is that which gives more or less character to the mind of man.”<sup>iv</sup> Not only education itself, but the tone which it takes, the pitch of the “pitch,” is vitally important to the production of good people and good citizens. At this point Rousseau's and Confucius's thought would likely diverge, as it relates to the place of the individual in the state, for Korean culture, deeply grounded in the Chinese philosophical tradition, concerns itself a great deal with the cultivation of its children into proper, right-thinking citizens, in sync with state conceptions of ideal citizenship. This is the point at which to begin an exploration of Korean education itself.

## Structure

But Marxist analysis offers another informative take on the relationship between individual and society, one of considerable importance when attempting to evaluate the role of nationalist ideology in constructing the citizen/subject. Louis Althusser used the term “educational state apparatus” to describe the main societal organ on which the “dominant ideological State apparatus” of a nation rests, a place it uses to promulgate itself throughout the body of the republic.<sup>v</sup> Viewed as the child prodigy of industrial development and capitalist

economic growth in the East, the case of Korea is a model example in many respects. However, the case of Korea does not lend itself to neat Marxist explanations relating ideology to the dominant class's need to “manufacture consent”<sup>vi</sup> from the masses. While a major part of the *doduk* agenda revolves around the necessary construction of a national ideology that justifies and reproduces the productive forces and relations of society, I will later contend that the scope of the project is much larger, having very much to do with not only the desire to reconstruct the Korean nationality into one useful to the state, but is informed by a perceived threat to the cultural survival of Korea itself. But before beginning any analysis of the politics and concerns of the Korean identity, an exploration of the former question - that of the relationship between state interests and education - we must take an in-depth look at the processes which brought about the development of education in Korean as a “state apparatus.”

### History

Korean nationalism finds its origins as a reactionary conservatism, a conscious effort to push out the perceived negative cultural influences of foreign powers. In the last half of the 1800s, Korea found itself concerned with Western imperialist encroachment, religious conversion in the form of Catholic missionaries, the Russians, the Chinese, and finally, the Japanese, who eventually drove out the former two powers. Anti-foreign sentiments began to form the core around which a sense of nation began to take shape.<sup>vii</sup> This was especially true during the Japanese colonial period, and was the most important process for the formation of Korean nationalism during the 36-year period of occupation. United against a common enemy, stripped of their nominal sovereignty, the Korean people could not help but see itself in a completely new light, over which the dark spectre of Japanese domination of their society and culture cast the darkest shadow.<sup>viii</sup>

Unlike other former colonized states, Korea was not colonized by a Western power, so Western influence did not hold the same negative connotations that other nations did for the West. In fact, Westerners, especially missionaries, had been viewed by some as sources of liberalism and progressive thinking. In contrast to countries which were oppressed by the West, Korea had been “liberated” by it.<sup>ix</sup>

Nationalism evolved from a rallying point against the Japanese to an ideal which would work towards the reunification of the peninsula. According to Sung Chul Wang, who quoted Sohn: “...unification, modernization, and democratization...[are]...the major tasks of the present Korean nationalism.”<sup>x</sup> However, I would disagree on the last point. While the focus of the present Korean nationalism is completely about modernization, the ability of the *doduk* curriculum to instill egalitarian, democratic values remains questionable. One of the things it reinforces are certain hierarchical relationships seen as “traditional” Korean ones; the *doduk* textbook’s emphasis of the importance of maintaining certain social relationships that construct society as a type of family, where everyone occupies a certain place and role. Stressed, of course, are the vertical relationships of power that define one’s identity - teacher/student, junior/senior,

eldest/youngest. The traditional social divisions that defined Korean society are reinforced and strengthened by the *doduk* curriculum, even if only by virtue of the fact the doctrines are focused via a standard curriculum. The state's interest in doing so is clear. In order to maintain the legitimacy of the present power structure, it is necessary to ensure that the socio-political fabric of society remains strong, the norms, mores, and values of society must be reproduced; and if they do not already exist in accordance with the goals of the state, then the "instrumentalist" education system is the ideal tool with which to rework them.

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 "Korean Education Past and Present" Kim Shinil

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According to Kim Shinil, professor in the education department at Seoul National University, Korean greatest problem in education is that it exists as nothing more than an organ for the state, an ideological state apparatus that serves to reinforce state ideologies about division: "...education has been utilized more thoroughly than any other sociocultural sphere of the [sic] national life as an instrument of the cold war after the division occurred at the conclusion of World War II as if it were a sacrifice needed for the stabilization of the half-peace state."

The problem of "instrumentalist education" is something that is the legacy of Imperial Japan, and gained real odiousness in Korea in the 1960s. The reason is simple to deduce. As we ask the question of how and why a nation could reapply the former tool of an oppressor onto itself, we find that the answer lies in the fact that the ideological agenda of a newly-industrializing Korea in the 1960s had taken on the same shape as that of Meiji Japan. When considered historically, the veracity of this historical analogy is difficult to refute. Of course, the ideological agendas of former Imperial Japan and South Korea were vastly different in certain respects, as Korea possessed no formal ideology of racial/cultural superiority, nor the belief in the "Manifest Destiny" of the Japanese people to expand throughout Asia. However, Korea eventually came to utilize the same means towards the accomplishment of state goals, even if the ends for which they were applied were completely different.

For South Korea in the 1960s, the goals of rapid industrialization and modernization, anti-Communism, as well as the maintenance of state power and authority, were the underpinnings of South Korea's entire nationalist consciousness. Indeed, it is difficult to even conceive of a Korean identity not significantly shaped by these aspects of national ideology.

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Korean Education Law's purposes:

- 1) to convert Koreans into faithful Imperial subjects
- 2) eradicate Korean culture and language
- 3) "administer a basic practical education to Koreans for a smooth operation of their colonial policy"

From the report of Ono, a colonial administrator in Korea involved with education policy, the reason for viewing the conversion of women as crucial lay in their belief that women made better converts because once converted, they remained that way. They would remain helpful allies in the greater effort to convert *all* of society, namely the men.

The Private School Law (1908) outlawed the education institutes which were hotbeds of Korean nationalist education. This was a threat to all of the objectives of the colonial state. Many of these schools simply changed into night schools or study centers. The Japanese took little time to respond.

Up to 1961 the old colonial practice of the Regulation for private study centers “was practiced verbatim.” Regulation for Private Study Centers addressed this problem. (WHEN?) Village study halls were also forums for the Korean nationalist agenda, and were suppressed with the Village Study Hall Regulation. (WHEN?)

Any criticism of Imperial Japan’s ideology was considered “subversive” and subject to censorship by a Korean Ministry of Education under strict Imperial control. The Japanese Residency-General created the following system of censorship:

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The prioritizing of state interests in relation to educational curriculum was the defining aspect of education under the Japanese. As part of the ongoing efforts to Japanize the Korean people, the Ministry of Education was made to set up a censoring system for textbooks used in Korean school. The conventional wisdom was that “Acquisition of learning for which there is no use is a sure way to make a person rebellious.” The not-so-subtle subtext here is the meaning attached to “...learning for which there is no use,” as each of the nine “deploring deviant” elements to be eliminated from the curriculum were critical, political attitudes that questioned the Japanese legitimacy to occupy Korea. Here was the exemplification of the state’s efforts to “manufacture consent”.

However, in South Korea after World War II, this prioritizing of state interests in relation to education was an inevitable result of the dire conditions in which the newly-divided Koreas found themselves. Under Syngman Rhee, the government followed a very pragmatic ideology. “One skill for one man” was the spirit of the day, and made sense, given the need to reconstruct the economy and rebuild a country ravaged by war. After 1960, this pragmatic tendency became even more focused, as education became a tool for modernization and development. The Ministry of Education, in an effort to “modernize the fatherland”, reformed the curriculum via educational policies embodied in slogans like “education for economic development” and “education that contributes to modernization.”<sup>xi</sup>

It was in this way that Pak Chung Hee recognized the utility of developmental education in cultivating “the second economy” that would be necessary to support the “first economy.” This “second economy” was the one of belief, value systems, and attitudes, the first being the economy proper. In Pak’s view, the first could not exist without the second, and if the second economy did not develop commensurate with the first one, the success of the first economy would be in jeopardy. To this end, the New Village Movement, the *saemaul undong*, was launched, as part of the economic program.<sup>xii</sup>

The 1970s saw the complete fusion of doctrines of development and the education system. According to Kim, “Education that produces” was a slogan to be found in any public school at the time. After the Yushin Declaration in 1972, totalitarian ideology dominated the curriculum, and it was during this time that many books were rewritten, and the specific goals of the developmental agenda were able to be put into action. Also, Pak must have know that to undertake developmental education in the fullest sense, the state must have a great deal of power.

Allocation of human resources according to the needs of the states was the next logical step for as ultimate extension of

They both follow the same pattern. Education was not valued for education's sake, but rather for its ability to construct compliant citizens for the economic and developmental interests of the state. In both cases, these were situations when the state had free reign over the development of power over its own citizenry, but chose a form of education that was nothing more than ideological indoctrination coupled with the necessary knowledge demanded for developing a "useful" unit of production.

The true tragedy is the fact that the education students receive was lacking:

After Liberation, we ought to have had the self-reflective and self-analytical power to throw away the instrumentalist educational philosophy. We ought to have endeavored to find out what the real, intrinsic value of education would be when education stopped being a mere instrument. The value of education lies in its ability to raise the intellectual and moral maturity of and the act of education promotes this intellectual and moral maturation discarding the elements the elements that hinder this process. The value of education, therefore, stands, of necessity, in opposition with the economic value sought after by the educational theory that trains man as a faithful productive machine...<sup>xiii</sup>

Developmental education theory views education only as a means to amass greater human capital towards the purpose of furthering economic and developmental progress. What is problematic about this conceptualization is the that this tends to simply increase economic inequities and gloss over other socio-economic inequalities. Everything is done in the interests of the people at the top, while creating a more pliant and (LESS QUESTIONING) work force. Quite literally, the citizen is being reconstructed as a state subject in economic and ideological terms.<sup>xiv</sup>

p. 15 (end)

How is this different from the repositioning that the Japanese attempted? Not much. Colonial education benefited only the colonial masters. Although the agenda at the time was the eradication of the Korean culture, along with the creation of faithful subjects to the Emperor, the overall goal was definitely not the intellectual or moral of the Korean people in and of itself. In fact, this was not the goal of the

Education for education's sake? Look at the status of subjects that lie outside of what are seen as necessary subjects. In many schools, even the electives are do not occur in the American sense of the word. A more appropriate way of thinking about a subject such as French or German might be as a mere "extra" that the entire school is forced to study. The structure of the school being what it is, there would be at most one teacher responsible for teaching the entire subject, for the entire school. Hence, the high school students receive no more than one or two hours of instruction per week in the given subject. Additionally, since the subject has no relevance at all to what is most important - the college entrance exam - minimal mental energy is given to that subject, simply by virtue of the fact that it does not increase one's of entering the university.

The same is true with the choice of major in college. Not designed for the student's intellectual development, but rather for the good of the state. If one wants to change majors, they must retake

the entrance exam. An “unqualified” switch into a department is undesirable, as well as a possible numerical imbalance according to the popularity of certain majors. In the end, it all goes back to values of production.

1) Shinil’s assertion that the education system is a means of social control is a compelling one. Only the elite from certain schools have any chance of becoming part of the aristocracy, as one would have it.

2) This process is self-preserving. What does it take to become “the best?” Expensive tutoring, cram schools, are the norm, not the exception.

There seems to be little interest in fostering higher education for anyone who desires it - it is purposely kept to an elite. We only need so many people.

The most significant and odious remnants of colonial rule in Korea:

1) the distribution of social positions via educational bodies as a means of social control

2) the control of education by the government

3) An education ideology *conducive* to instrumentalist education.

TALK ABOUT THESE THREE POINTS IN-DEPTH

The territorial division pits two opposing models of nationalism against one another, and each is fervently attempting to prove the other wrong. This is another factor that helps maintain the shape and boundaries of the Korean national character.

During the first year of middle school, the bulk of the project to construct the model Korean citizen/subject begins. For the student, this time entails a marked change and a significant transition from child to young adult. An analysis of the intellectual nature of *doduk* cannot take place without understanding the psychological shifts in thinking that the structure of the middle school engenders. As a middle school teacher in Korea, it was apparent to me that the change in life is stark and disruptive to some extent. This is not to imply that the experience is necessarily traumatic, only that it is a significant change in lifestyle that elementary school students can dread, but also a rite of passage to look forward to as a sign of maturity. Here it is interesting to

note that much of the structure of the Korean education system comes from outside cultural influences, but have been adopted as acceptable, even desirable aspects of a decidedly Korean system.

Korea under Japanese occupation underwent massive and permanent changes, one of the most far-reaching taking place in the education system. Korea was deeply affected by Japan's occupation from 1910 to 1945, absorbing many of its “nationalistic and militaristic educational and cultural values,” and these influences did not simply disappear with liberation in 1945.<sup>xv</sup> One legacy of the Japanese-style school system is the physical organization and structure of the school itself, which will be discussed in more detail later. The United States, in its role of liberator/occupier/superintendent of Korea after liberation in 1945, also heavily influenced the Korean education system.

Whereas the Americans emphasized the promotion of democratic educational philosophy and practices, the Korean leaders in the Ministry of Education and other government organizations emphasized the need to eradicate colonial residues in education and culture while recognizing the importance of democratic education....efforts made by the American military government brought about the rapid increase in the number of schools.<sup>xvi</sup>

One effect of American influence is apparent in that the school system is completely analogous to the American kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school levels. After the establishment of a Korean government in 1948, the Ministry of Education officially adopted the principle of (° ĀĀ— ‡) *hong ik in gan*, which “stressed the development of national spirit,” and the concept of (ĪÈ/≈) *il-min*, meaning “one people.”<sup>xvii</sup> The continued existence of the *doduk* textbook itself stems from these two doctrines of thought.

For Korea, the 36-year experience of colonialism had more immediate import than did the superficial structural changes to Korean education which took place during occupation by the United States. The prolonged and harsh occupation left a lingering legacy in Korean that would not quickly disappear along with their former Japanese overlords.

## *Japan*

Precious are my parents that gave me birth,  
So that I might serve His Majesty.

-Poem by Sakura Azumao,  
frequently quoted by the  
Japanese Thought Control Bureau<sup>xviii</sup>

Such was the rhetoric used in Imperial Japan - the direction of the loyalty of the citizen/subject to one of central authority. Even after the war, however, it is important to understand that the relationship between state and education changed scarcely at all. When Ienaga Saburo, an accomplished Japanese historian, was commissioned by the government to write *New History of Japan*, a history textbook for high schools in 1952, He performed his job too well. His was dangerous history. The problem was that he covered subjects such as “the Rape of Nanking, germ warfare experiments on prisoners of war, and the conscription of Korean and Chinese women ‘as comfort girls’” in the narrative.<sup>xix</sup> Reflecting a major shift in public perception of Japan’s relationship with nuclear weapons and war victimhood in the mid 1950s, the Ministry of Education began to demand that Ienaga delete all sections on wartime atrocities. He refused, and after long struggle with the Ministry, began his suit against the government in 1964 for infringement of his right to freedom of expression. On March 16, 1993, the Supreme Court finally ruled that “the government had the right to decide educational content.” The right of the government to exert ideological control over the populace superseded Ienaga’s claim that “the ministry’s review procedure violated his constitutional right to freedom of expression and denied students the freedom of education.” Ienaga’s history was counter to the interests of the state.<sup>xx</sup>

What Ian Buruma, who wrote a book entitled *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, claims many Japanese nationalists are defending is not a return to the military state of Imperial Japan, but rather the integrity of Japanese traditional culture from contamination from the West. The “culture” in question is the concept of the family state, whose traditional values have been passed down for hundreds of unbroken generations.<sup>xxi</sup> The Imperial period, then, is not a source of shame for nationalists, but a time when Japan was in best form, resisting Western imperialism and trying to make an Asia for Asians (under Japanese rule). The attack on Pearl Harbor was not “treachery” from an Imperial/nationalist point of view, but unavoidable in light of the fact that the United States had cut off Japan’s flow of precious mineral goods and was trying to starve Japan out. Japan was fighting a war of liberation for the good of Asia.

Ienaga was undermining the Ministry of education’s efforts to instill these ideals in the nation’s youth.

His zeal to make people reflect on the past...has strayed a long way from the proper aims of teaching Japanese history, which are to acknowledge the historical achievements of our ancestors, to raise our awareness of being Japanese, and to foster a rich feeling of love for our people.<sup>xxii</sup>

This is the crux of the issue, and its usefulness to a study of the situation of Korea is clear at this point. Ienaga’s interests in writing his *New History of Japan* was at odds with those of the state,

so the government asserted and maintained the right to decide towards what end and in the ideological circumstances in which education should take place.

This kind of ideological strains of thought is an only-slightly diluted version of the old-school Imperial party line - the preservation of traditional Japanese culture from being too caught up with the west, while at the same time fostering a sense of national unity. Although possessing a different emphasis from that of Japan during its most Imperial period, the state's ideological agenda in Korea is preserved via the same control over educational content. Even though there was some degree of emulation of the Western educational tradition, the Meiji government's stated purpose was the construction of an education system grounded in the Japanese tradition. South Korea in the 1960s was little different from those stated in *The Principles of Education* in 1879 Japan - the Korean government was trying to reconstruct a distinctly Korean education system while promoting the specific state agenda of industrialization and modernization.

The core of education lies in the clear teaching of benevolence, responsibility, loyalty, fidelity and in mastering knowledge and the arts so that one can serve the people. This is the basic principle given by our ancestors and national literature which is commonly accepted for the instruction of all, high or low...Although the advantages of Western culture were adopted and resulted in spectacular effects for the moment, once it leads to a tendency to neglect benevolence, responsibility, loyalty, and fidelity and becomes merely a competition to introduce Western manners, there is a fear that in the future no one will know responsibility between the Emperor and his subjects.<sup>xxiii</sup>

A similar fear is expressed countless times in the doduk textbook. Even though the Korean education system places itself squarely alongside the West, as the agenda in Korea is primarily one of development and modernization, there is felt a distinct need preserve an essential Korean center.

The military elite in Japan had taken control of societal reins, and strove to construct a militarized society based on an Emperor leading the nation as naturally as a father does his children. This took place outside of the realm of education as well, as the adults of the nations were not indoctrinated under the Imperial education system. In *The Pacific War*, Ienaga minces no words about this. "The Meiji political systems gagged and blindfolded the populace." Political repression and censorship became the norm as the government continued in its program to reform every citizen into an extension of the state.<sup>xxiv</sup>

It was the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, however, that "dressed Confucian moral precepts in the garb of modern nationalism."<sup>xxv</sup> The family-state model of society was promulgated with the intent of redirecting local loyalties towards the central government, symbolized by the Emperor. Each person would be "bound personally and directly to the Japanese government," as loyalty to one's parents, teachers, commander, and especially Emperor all took on the same moral/ethical import. One could no more disobey the desires of a superior officer, for example, than one could a one's father, or the Emperor himself.<sup>xxvi</sup> The morals curriculum began to take on particular importance in the new education system. More and more the vessel of Imperial ideology, the discipline defined the good subject in no uncertain terms. Fundamental to the smooth working of society, the morals curriculum stressed the "natural morality of family life," which emphasizes which duty played in familial relationships, friendships, and love. The Emperor was regarded as the "ideal patriarchal model for the people," and it was to him one pledged undying loyalty, and in his name wars would be fought. The Prime Minister at the time, Yamagata Aritomo, said that "education, just like the military, ought to

possess an imperial mandate." In times of national need, all Japanese were taught to offer themselves "courageously" to the state, and "thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne."xxvii

It was no coincidence that during this period, Imperial Japan began putting into motion its designs on dominating Asia. Indeed, it was out of fear that this "organ" would once again lead to the disease of Japan's rabid nationalism that ethics as a discipline of study was abolished in Japan after the war, and government control over educational materials, especially textbooks, ended. To characterize the importance of ethics education in Japan during the colonial period, I quote Ian Buruma at length.

This is how such national values as self-sacrifice, military discipline, ancestor worship, and the imperial cult were bred. And as was true in most countries in the first half of the century, military heroes were held up as the cardinal models to follow. Kimigayo, a prayer for the everlasting imperial reign, was sung as the national anthem, and the Rising Sun flag hoisted all over Asia. It was the duty of all Japanese to spring to attention at the very mention of the divine emperor. every Japanese school had a shrine with the emperor's portrait. A speck of dust on the picture and careless hanging were reasons for severe punishment.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Behind the Army, the education system was looked upon as the most important concern of the government. As the Army protected the physical boundaries of the nation, the Ministry of Education defined and preserved the ideological ones. Moreover, the link between military service and the school was crucial to the continued smooth functioning of the Japanese war machine. The education system created pliant subjects, while actual military training turned them into soldiers. The loyalty instilled in the soldiers ran high. Suicide missions and captured Japanese soldiers taking their own lives shocked American sensibilities, as this kind of unlimited dedication was difficult to understand without an idea of the historical context in which such attitudes came to be.

The Japanese were almost blindly obedient. The arbiters of authority were the "petty emperors" who received their orders from their superiors. In this kind of hierarchical structure, decision-making processes were removed from the subordinate, and the societal system was one that necessitated nothing more than the enforcement of a superior's decisions. It required an adequate system of control. "Actions were judged according to their conformity to external norms, rather than in terms of individual motivation or conscience." The only responsibilities and obligations to others were defined in terms of the hierarchical relationship to them.<sup>1</sup> The main social expectation became to do as one was told, especially in the military atmosphere of Imperial Japan at war. "As a result of this lack of personal responsibility, the average Japanese was blindly obedient to persons in authority."<sup>xxix</sup> This was the ideal taught in school. In a ritual before the beginning of instruction each day, students were required to swear this oath of allegiance:

One, I will be loyal to the Emperor and dutiful to my parents, and I will become a sincere subject of Japan. Two, I will discipline my mind and train my body, and I will become a powerful member of strong imperial Japan. Three, I will follow the teachings, make efforts in my studies, and make our tombstone shine brightly.<sup>xxx</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This brings to mind Ruth Benedict's comparison between Western "guilt culture and Japanese "shame culture."

The subjects in which the bulk of formal ideological training took place were history and morals. Students were specifically instilled with ideology and propaganda to make them better soldiers, and the elimination of creative or individual thinking was crucial to this process. According to historian Toshio Iritani,

Fanatical patriotism and an emotional attachment to achieving the objects of war were encouraged in school texts. Children were told stories of laudable wartime events by their parents and teachers who would often shed tears of emotion in the telling. Teaching materials produced by the army were used to train students mentally and physically.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Ienaga Saburo remembers his own experiences as a child growing up under this system:

I was in elementary school during the most liberal years of the prewar period. Yet through middle school I soaked up jingoistic ideas and never questioned them. When the Manchurian Incident occurred shortly after I entered high school, I was incapable of understanding its real nature. I was shocked to discover classmates who rejected the orthodox views and ideology I had accepted as gospel truth....The latter part of 1932 was the turning point in my own intellectual and spiritual growth. To escape the snares of my "education," I rejected most of what I had been taught in the public schools. It took another twenty years to overcome the handicap of that early indoctrination and be able to grapple with fundamental questions.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Imperial policy instilled in youth the doctrine of Japanese supremacy to not only defend its claims to hegemony, but to instill hatred and loathing towards the people against whom the country was waging war. Ienaga Saburo cites teaching materials which not only exhorted children to "guard and maintain the prosperity of the Imperial throne," but instilled in a foundation upon which to build a hatred of them as well. In an elementary school ethics class, children were shown pictures which "described in exciting detail how our loyal and brave officers and soldiers drive the pig-tailed Chinks to P'yongyang, keep hammering away at them and finally capture the vile enemy's positions." An example of a "war report" was placed on a bulletin board described an average day's activities:

September 22, 1894. Battle Report. Japanese troops defeat Chinese at P'yongyang and win a great victory. Chinese corpses were piled up high as a mountain. Oh, what a grand triumph. Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, so stupid and they stinka.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

A Japanese schoolchild in the 1930s who was squeamish about dissecting a frog was sharply admonished: "Why are you crying about one lousy frog? When You grow up you'll have to kill a hundred, two hundred Chinks."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

It was no different when Japan's power elite began to prepare the Japanese public for war against the United States. Having had more time to evolve, and having been continuously built upon through the first three decade of the century, Japanese ideology, though essentially the same as it was when it began to take form in the 1890s, was much more highly refined by the

time *The Way of the Subject* was published in August 1941, five months before the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan.

*The Way of the Subject* was a malleable chunk of ideology, reworkable into diverse situations, and it was the set of defining principles for which the Japanese people were fighting. It was passed out to every member of the military, and was a reference work on the ideology for which they were expected to die. Additionally, it was issued to all schools as a guideline for determining curriculum. It was “a chronicle of the destructive values, exploitative practices, and brutal wars” of the West, an unrelenting polemic proving the West’s inferiority. Early in the war, it offered the quick victories and many successes against the American military as evidence of the weak temperament of Western society; as things turned for the worst for Japan towards the end of the war, it became proof of the brutal and amoral nature of the West, especially after the United States began the practice of mass city bombing.<sup>xxxv</sup>

With the increasing militarization of society into strict social relations constructed to seem as natural as familial ties, coupled with ideologies of racial and cultural superiority, Japanese society was reconstructing itself as no other nation had done before in all of history - as a country ready, capable, and eager to expand not only its economic and industrial base, but its territory and people as well. It was via such strict educational and social controls that Japan created not only faithful and unquestioning citizens, but ones righteous and patriotic enough to perform suicide runs in the Emperor’s name, or take pleasure in gang-raping and then disemboweling, from vagina to chin, Chinese women in Nanjing.

In the broader picture, according to Iritani, “*Gleichschaltung*” is necessary for mobilization of the people behind a national agenda. This belief in an ideology of “similar thought” was essential in order to “overcome the deadlock in the Japanese domestic economy through the use of military force and to secure her *Lebensraum* through the domination of world markets in her occupied territories. At the time, the majority of Japanese people were convinced of the rightness of these objectives.” The author’s use of that particular German term is apropos, as this was one area where Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan shared a common ideology and expansionist objective.

There are ample historical lessons to be learned from the German state as well. However, before beginning an analysis that includes Nazi Germany as a case study, it may be useful to offer the disclaimer that this argument, by comparing Korea’s system with the educational models of two relatively sinister political regimes, does not assert that the Korean state shares the other negative aspects of either Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan. However, in terms of a system which uses the educational system as a direct means of ideological control and maintenance of state power, there is little difference in means. Although the school was a vessel for state ideology, it is vital to remember that Korea’s particular ideology differs a great deal from that of Nazi Germany’s or Imperial Japan’s.<sup>2</sup>

As much as Germany is often used as a model study of state ideological control, the magnitude of that former Nazi regime’s ideological hold on its populace pales in comparison to that possessed by Imperial Japan. Many of Japan’s economic and educational reforms were informed by Prussian (Hozumi Yatsuka, one of the most influential creators of the “family state ideology” during the 1880s and 1890s, had been educated in Germany)<sup>xxxvi</sup> models, but Japan was an apprentice who possessed the ability to surpass its master.

Even the Japanese national anthem, the *kimigayo*, was deeply influenced by the

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<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the fact that I do argue that early Meiji Japan and Korea after the 1960s shared common self-stated goals of industrialization and modernization.

Prussian military tradition. Although influenced by a Western tradition in form, the anthem was still Japanese in content and meaning. Originally composed in 1880 by Hiromori Hayashi from an old collection of Japanese poems, a German composer working at the Japanese Ministry of Navy added a certain militaristic pomp and circumstance that would characterize much of Japanese war songs. Sung as marching troops pass in review, with the Japanese national flag raised high, while huge crowds yell “Banzai!” (10,000 years) - this was typical fascist pomp and circumstance aimed at creating a feeling of unity and fervent pride in the nation.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Superficially, this is exactly the sort of grandiose, nationalistic ritual practiced by the Germans - troops passing in review, raising their arms in the Nazi salute, yelling “Sieg, Heil! Heil, Hitler!” - but the different strains of ideology are clear. While the new Third Reich was alleged to have a life-span of 5,000 years, Nazi soldiers pledged their allegiance to Hitler, the man. In fact, it is unclear what the Third Reich would have been without Hitler at the reins. This sort of thinking is most likely what led to two assassination attempts on Hitler’s life - the Third Reich being his vision, without him, it would likely crumble. However, the shout “Banzai,” means “Ten Thousand Years!” of long life to the Empire, via allegiance to the Emperor. Swearing allegiance to the empire meant allegiance to the state. Emperors were but the representation of the state. The man would change, but the state would endure.

In Germany, like Japan, there was a reconsolidation of authority from the Führer on down, a redistribution of loyalties towards the state, via Hitler. However, under the Meiji Constitution, since the Emperor was reconstructed as both the secular and religious symbol of authority, at the same time a divine figure descended from the founder the Japanese people, Emperor Jimmu, and the leader of the state, he was the “Sovereign Leader,” and anyone and everyone in the power structure under him possessed the mandate of heaven.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The other major difference the extent to which each was a proactive leader; in the case of the Emperor, he was more of a state justification of authority rather than an actual architect of state policy.

Hitler’s influence as the controlling political figure in the Nazi state was great, and Germany’s systems of indoctrination and the extent of the German state’s ideological control were considerable, but they were not boundless. Nationalist youth organizations wielded control over the undeveloped mind throughout childhood. However, this control was never absolute, nor permanently established. Indeed, just as the ideological control of Hitler’s regime even began to gain momentum, the Nazi state was already deeply engaged in war, without having had the considerable time with which to fundamentally reconstruct the social relations in society, as Japan had. Helmut Kohl made reference to the “blessing of being born late.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

The crucial difference between Japan and Germany was that the Hitler Youth and other similar bodies existed outside of the influence of the school, which remained separate and distinct from Hitler’s totalitarian control. The 1936 Law on the Hitler Youth contained the proviso that Hitler’s control did not extend “without prejudice to the parental home and the schools.” Of course, the school system did not stand inviolate against Hitler’s powerful influence, but it not recreated into the complete arm of state control that was the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Some significant changes, however, took place during Hitler’s attempt to “reorganize” the school system according to its designs:

Corporal punishment was reintroduced; parent and pupil participation was abolished; the introduction of the 'Führer' principle bolstered the power of head teachers at the expense of the rest; and much time was wasted with a politicized morning assembly and in observing the regime's self-celebratory calendar. Inevitably, some teachers patrolled the school corridors in Party uniform, harassing anyone who was not quick enough with their 'Heil Hitler,' and generally taking it upon themselves to disseminate the 'spirit of National Socialism' in the school concerned.<sup>xi</sup>

Here, the similarity with the Japanese system of strict ideological and physical control is overwhelming, and this despite the fact that the countries were not actively emulating one another; they simply shared similar state interests and goals, and the practice and ideologies developed accordingly. As Hitler consolidated his power against that of Reich Minister for Education and Science Bernhard Rust's, who "succeeded in curtailing the influence of the Hitler Youth within schools," structurally, the school increasingly resembled the Japanese model. Head teachers and Hitler Youth leaders used corporal punishment and intimidation to enforce ideological correctness, rituals designed to increase nationalistic pride and loyalty to the state became the norm, and the concept of *Führer* (leader) began to take on new meaning outside of the persona of Hitler.

Be that as it may, the German state had neither the time nor power to consolidate itself completely over the minds of its youth. Although the Germans have often been used in historical examples to demonstrate the excesses of state ideological power over institutions, in fact, the German state never came close to Japan's ability to instill state ideology so unequivocally and completely into the minds of the people. Working in tandem with other state organs, the Japanese Ministry of Education was able to increase its efficacy to the fullest extent possible. Even though "racism replaced the Weimar Republic's imperfect experiment in political pluralism," Hitler simply had neither sufficient time, nor the support, to completely establish an "ideology of the elect nation"<sup>xii</sup> in such a complete way as did the Japanese.

Japan's military elite, from the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, however, created a program of indoctrination and control which sharpened and tightened its hold over the minds of generations of people, and the authority of the Ministry of Education was complete. In contrast, the German equivalent was inconsistent in its ideologies and curriculum, and constantly competed for Hitler's favor against other political suitors. The Japanese, over time, completely restructured the relationship between the subject and the state, and had complete institutional control of this process. Unlike Japan, Nazi Germany had neither the time nor such effective mechanisms with which to carry out its agenda.

As stated earlier, the Japanese model of the state linked the Emperor and subject together in a direct, natural link, as natural as the bond between mother and daughter, father and son. More than just this, this particular father figure had even more significance as not only the religious head of state, but as a direct descendant of the progenitor of the Japanese people itself. The Emperor being another descendant in the "unbroken line" stemming from the first, Emperor Jimmu, the Emperor was constructed as the corporeal embodiment of Japan and the Japanese people.<sup>xiii</sup>

This "family state" model of society is crucial to understand in order to grasp the meaning and scope of Imperial ideology's claim of right to rule over all of Asia. The analogy used to describe the Emperor as the holy father for the people extended far beyond the realm of Japan. This ideology was a central foundation for the Japanese people's sense of entitlement and even duty to rule over the rest of Asia, and was also a myth central to the Japanese belief in their innate superiority, by virtue of both their divine origin and racial purity.

Although the belief in the superiority of the Japanese people was as insidious and dangerous as Nazi Germany's, the foundations for this ideology was also deeply based in the myth of a common origin and common destiny. Imperial conceptions of the "new order" of the world are vividly outlined in a 6-volume document bearing a completion date of July 1, 1943 called *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus*. 3,127 pages long, the document neatly summarizes the goal of Imperial policy and Japan's relationship with Asia. Most valuable to historians is the document's conveyance of a clear conception of the origins and meaning of Japanese racist ideology.

John Dower's treatment of the document in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* is probably the best available in the English language, and is one of the most valuable contributions to the present analysis. Dower aptly identifies the "assumptions of permanent hierarchy and inequality among peoples and nations that lay at the heart of what the Japanese really meant by slogans such as 'Pan-Asianism' and 'co-prosperity.'" In other words, Japan would fight on behalf of its Asian compatriots against the ravenous, capitalist West, in the hopes of making a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," but the race at the top of a hierarchical relationship between the Asian races would be the Japanese, by virtue of their divine origin and destiny as a chosen people. Dower identifies a clear relationship between Nazi ideology and Japanese racial thought, but he does not conclude that one influenced the other. In order to best convey the complexity of Dower's analysis, I quote him at great length:

The overlap between borrowed ideas and indigenous attitudes in Japanese racism can be illustrated by two popular phrases in the ministry report: "blood and soil" and "proper place," the first a transparently alien expression and the second, on the surface, almost quintessentially "Oriental." The blood-and-soil rhetoric reflected indebtedness to Nazi sloganeering (the words, in fact, were almost always placed in quotation marks); and the impression of a general affinity with Nazi thought is reinforced by other aspects of the report, such as demands for "living space," affirmations of a "family-centered" morality transcending bourgeois law, and an emphasis on "organic" relationships, especially in the form of a racially bonded organic community or "Volk." [The Japanese concept of *minzoku* is similar. - MH] The fact that the government's researchers were obviously familiar with Nazi doctrine and sympathetic to it, however, does not necessarily mean that they were decisively influenced by it. They did not, for instance, carry their racial prejudices to formal policies of genocide as their Nazi allies did. Moreover, for concepts such as the family system or the organic community, they were not really beholden to the Nazis at all. Here it is more accurate to speak of conceptual affinities rather than influences.<sup>xliii</sup>

Like Germany, Japan's educational system was strict, harsh, and conformist. The Korean school of today resemble those of the Imperial Japan model in terms of both ideology and structure; as most of Korean education during the occupation was structured after the Japanese model, the influences of the Japanese are undeniable.

As much as there was a drive on the part of the people and government to rid themselves of the influence and reminders of Japanese colonial rule, it is interesting to note that

the physical organization and structure of the Korean school system itself remains to the present-day almost unchanged since occupation. This was a source of puzzlement for me as I taught in Korean schools patterned after Japanese ones, even as anti-Japanese sentiment still runs high in the country. A most surreal experience was listening to my students half-jokingly (half-not) proclaim that they hoped Japan would sink into the sea, even as they stood in the organizational structure that the Japanese had built. However, when considering Japanese policy for Koreans placed in schools under the Japanese, the apparent contradiction disappears. With the goal of erasing Korean culture and identity from society, the Japanese used not only the Althusserian “state apparatus” of military and police force, but recognized the supreme importance of school as an “ideological educational apparatus” to reinforce the legitimacy of its rule:

The colonial government issued an ordinance in August 1911, which stated that the purpose of education in Korea was to produce “loyal and obedient” and useful subjects of the Japanese emperor. It adopted a system of four-year primary education, a four-year secondary school program for boys and a three-year secondary curriculum for girls...The ordinance made the study of the Japanese language compulsory at all approved schools and banned instruction in Korean history and geography.<sup>xliv</sup>

Before 1945, Japan's project to erase the culture of Korea would escalate from the discouragement of teaching the Korean language to an outright ban on speaking it in all public schools. Recitation of the imperial Japanese “Pledge of the Imperial Subjects” was mandatory at all “political, religious, educational, or social” gatherings. The picture of the Japanese emperor hung at the front of each classroom, and students the ritual of bowing in the direction of Tokyo was required during school functions.<sup>xlv</sup> The similarity of the “Pledge of the Imperial Subjects” to the ideology in *The Way of the Subject* is clear. It was an ideology to create citizens loyal to the state, as embodied in the Emperor. Koreans’ peculiar status as Imperial subjects (albeit second-class ones) created a situation in which Japanese ideology was repackaged and adapted for consumption in Korea, designed to eliminate the Korean identity and replace it with a new one. It easy to see why such memories loomed large in the minds of a formerly subjugated people immediately after liberation, and remain burned into the psyche of the Korean national consciousness to this day.

The Korean government after liberation was indeed eager to dismantle the state apparatuses that were the legacy of the Japanese, but not disposed to indiscriminately dismantle all vestiges of colonial influence – specifically the structures, whether physical or psychological, were still of some utility to the new nation. For example, some historical interpretations recognize that despite the odiousness of Japanese invasion and occupation, the colonial government established some structures which were of benefit to Korea's development. Although the forced industrialization and urbanization of Korea were initiated “to service the empire,” on an objective level, the rate of development was abnormally rapid. Even though most of industry's physical structure was destroyed through the country's civil war, some important structures, including the railway system and the textile industry “remained as a framework for reconstruction in the 1950s and for rapid export-led growth in the 1960s.”<sup>xlvi</sup> In a similar way, there were many elements in the education system that remained as a useful “framework for reconstruction” that were still of utility to even a stable, independent Korea.

The ideological educational apparatus used by the Japanese was as much in place in the Korean psyche as were the vestigial physical structures still on the peninsula, education being a necessary tool for reinforcing ideological hegemony over the minds of its populace. Partially as a result of the colonial experience, and as a national identity forged in the fires of resistance – both an external and internal struggle began to take shape in the collective mind of the Korean people. As mentioned above, the nationalistic doctrines of *hong ik in gan* and *il-min* became the defining aspects of Korean nationality. It had always been one of the main organs of the Japanese societal body.

At least since the Imperial Revolution on Education of 1890, Japanese education had been an exercise in imperial propaganda. The Prime Minister at the time, Yamagata Aritomo, said that “education, just like the military, ought to possess an imperial mandate.” He said that in national crises, all Japanese should be taught to offer themselves “courageously” to the state, and “thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne.”<sup>xlvii</sup>

It was no coincidence that during this period, Imperial Japan began putting into motion its designs on dominating Asia. Indeed, it was out of fear that this “organ” would once again lead to

the disease of Japan's rabid nationalism that ethics (*doduk*) as a discipline of study was abolished in Japan, as well as government control over educational materials, especially textbooks. To characterize the importance of ethics education in Japan during the colonial period, I quote at length from Ian Buruma's *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*:

Ethical studies were given extreme importance. This is how such national values as self-sacrifice, military discipline, ancestor worship, and the imperial cult were bred. And as was true in most countries in the first half of the century, military heroes were held up as the cardinal models to follow. *Kimigayo*, a prayer for the everlasting imperial reign, was sung as the national anthem, and the Rising Sun flag hoisted all over Asia. It was the duty of all Japanese to spring to attention at the very mention of the divine emperor. every Japanese school had a shrine with the emperor's portrait. A speck of dust on the picture and careless hanging were reasons for severe punishment.<sup>xlviii</sup>

In the Korean classroom, the physical vestiges of culture under Japanese occupation remain. In the center of every classroom is a picture of the Korean flag, to which all students salute with hand over heart, reciting a oath of loyalty to the Korean republic much like the oath of allegiance to a picture of the Emperor Korean students were made to recite during occupation. Physically, the students are homogenized to the greatest extent possible, in the manner that Japanese students were; uniforms and close-cropped hair for boys, short bobs at the ears for girls were and still are the norm. Uniformity is strictly enforced in the middle school. Typical infractions for which students receive severe scolding or corporal punishment range from the wearing of brightly-colored shoelaces to having hair longer than regulation. Corporal punishment for failure to complete homework or getting low test scores is common, as is corporal punishment for transgressions of almost any kind. Another legacy of the traditional Japanese school system is the teachers' room. Teachers have their desks and materials in one central room, and take what they need with them to the classroom scheduled for that hour. Students remain in a particular classroom all day, with a student “class leader” responsible for them. Because of the strict nature of most of the teachers, students generally fear treading into the teachers' room. At best, it is a place where students are forced to bow and humble themselves to multiple teachers at

a time; at worst, it is a place of punishment and humiliation (not to mention the haunt of the vice-principal, whom the teachers also often fear). Recent educational reform is aimed at changing the environment of the school to a more student-oriented, comfortable one, but, as I argue, both the physical and mental structures of the Korean system are difficult to break down, and there is little motivation to do so, as these structures serve their purposes well.

Despite the fact that many parents nowadays find corporal punishment of their own children loathsome, tradition dies hard. In the high school of another foreign teacher working in the southern part of the peninsula, a student died as a direct result of a teacher's extended physical punishment; the school quietly encouraged the early retirement of the teacher and the incident was forgotten. This is an extreme example, of course, but one begins able to comprehend the power of the teacher in Korean society. I once witnessed a teacher slap a student in front of his mother – at which point the mother hastily apologized for the student's behavior. This too, although not an everyday occurrence, does make clear the high status and social power that the teacher, along with the school system in general, holds in society.

Middle school is a place where social relationships are clearly and unmistakably defined, and deviation from the norm is harshly punished. It is like a microcosm of society, where everyone fits into a hierarchical structure, surrounded by a strict set of rules that defines one's place in it. Even within the student body, hierarchical social rules are more strictly enforced, and there is no room for those who will not abide by them. It is significant that these rules are also outlined in the first-year *doduk* textbook. Taken as a whole, middle school is where one begins to “know one's place,” as a citizen and as a person. *Doduk* makes no pretense of subtlety in this respect. Indeed, frankness in dealing with the meaning of nationality is the very nature of the discipline itself.

This analysis will examine in detail the tenets of Korean ideology as expressed in a present-day *doduk* textbook. However, there are certain limits to the claims that can be made based solely on the information gleaned from a reading in text

itself. There are limits to ideology, and there are problems in relying on the source of state doctrine alone, given the fact that even with the most efficient means of social control, reality tends to not completely reflect the ideal. So to look to the *dojuk* textbook as something representative of the beliefs and desires of everyday people would be to err. However, it is important as a representation of the ideal which the state holds for itself, as well as in terms of the fact that the set of ideals in such texts do hold influence over the people by virtue of the fact that exposure happens on a mass scale; in many ways, the ideals set forth in the book do reflect reality, but only because it reconstructs it anew for every reader, for every student. This is the power of education, especially in a state in which the bounds to its power extend so far and wide. Any attempt to understand the relationship between state power and ideology must realize the extent to which the state completely controls education, and to that extent (and that extent alone), controls the minds of its people. *Doduk* as a definition of who and what is Korean, as a way of defining the interests of the state, and as an epistemology in itself is one that finds quarter among most people, for better or for worse.

According to Douglas C. Lummis, who reinterpreted Ruth Benedict's book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Benedict's famous analysis of Japanese society suffers from a fundamental flaw, as she doesn't see that "To a very large degree, what [she] extracted out of Japanese society was what the Meiji planners and ideologues put into it...It was an orderly and consistent pattern of values because it had been carefully made that way by its fabricators." Her distinctions between the Japanese "shame culture" and Western "guilt culture" are now infamous, and endlessly assailed. The traditional culture that both she and many Japanese people saw, is arguably no more than a modern reconstruction, a purposeful redefinition and refocusing of previous aspects of Japanese culture that were of use to the new regime.<sup>xlix</sup>

In this analysis, it is vital to remember the critical difference between the ideology of Korea and the one of its former oppressor, Japan. In Korea, although ethical studies is used as a state tool in the same way it was used in Germany and Japan, Korean nationalism takes place in a spirit of reconstruction and reassertion of national pride, and will not likely result in wars of expansion, plans for world domination, or justification for acts of genocide. The defining characteristic of Korean nationalism is defined in its birthing moments, by the ways in which Korean identity itself existed as a form of resistance and a strategy for survival. In the present day, the state's desire to define Korean identity concretely, by laying out a Korean *way to be*, is not necessarily reactionary, nor does it have to legitimize a Korean cultural identity by delegitimizing others.

The expansionist drive of Japan or the cruel and rapacious nature of its soldiers cannot not be ascribed to simply an inherent flaw in Japanese culture, but as the result of the power of nationalist ideology and state control. Nationalist ideologies were eagerly and uncritically consumed, then expressed in thought and action by great number of people in Japan; in this way, reality did indeed reflect the ideals promulgated by the state. But an informed understanding of the processes in which this “reality” is formed is the key point to understand; the distinction between inherent aspects of culture and constructions of state ideology is one that cannot be forgotten. When reading a text such as *Doduk*, it is vital to remember that concepts such as “tradition” or “Korean culture”, as they are presented in the texts, are inherently problematic. The way in which cultural identity is reconstructed is the fascinating process I will attempt to cogently analyze and convey; these are the motivations for my critical dissection of Korean ideology. That this analysis might offer insight into the ways in which “reality” is constructed in other countries and contexts is the hope of the present writer.

## Ideology

A well-known adage states that “you can't judge a book by its cover.” However, even a cursory glance at the *doduk* textbook reveals some fairly telling clues into its agenda. Splashed across the front cover is a color picture of several pink and white *mugunghwa*, the national flower of Korea. An oft-used metaphor for the “blossoming” of the Korean republic, the symbolic significance of this image is not lost on anyone. Indeed, a recent Korean bestseller relays the story of the reunification of the erstwhile divided Koreas waging war against a US/Japan alliance. The book culminates in a Korean nuclear strike against Japan; its title – *The Mugunghwa Has Bloomed* – was unapologetically nationalistic, and its thinly-veiled symbolic meaning – the nuclear cloud “blossoming” over a Japanese city - clear to the Korean people. Opening the cover, the Korean flag stands out prominently, under which follows the text of the

oath usually recited during the playing of the national anthem: “Standing in front of the proud national flag of Korea, for the fatherland and the eternal glory of our people, by dedicating my body and heart, I firmly pledge my loyalty.”<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning of the book, the student knows what is expected of him or her; there is no hidden agenda. On the second page of the glossy section, there is a picture of the rising sun peeking out from behind clouds that veritably jumps out of the page. The caption reads: “The hope of a new morning.” Taken alone, this is fairly innocuous, but in the context of the next few pictures and captions, the shape of the greater *doduk* project becomes more distinct. On the next page, showing in full color glory Korea's technological coming of age is an aerial shot of the 1993 Taejon Expo, followed by pictures matching the following captions: “The development of the chemical industry,” “Computer dairy farming prepares us for internationalization,” and “One of our fishing ships parts the seas.” This short section concludes with (significantly) a picture of women in traditional dress performing a Korean folk dance. Even without a close reading of the text, the themes to be outlined in the book are clear: the importance of economic development and the preservation of traditional Korean culture. Moreover, for the middle school student reading the text, the color section is over, and the bulk of the reading is about to begin, in black and white, printed on cheap, recycled paper. The serious lessons for the student are about to begin, and they will hold authority and truth for the reader. It is these themes that we will presently explore.

From the introduction, the arguments of the book are clearly outlined. Acknowledging that the student has to some extent already learned most societal norms, the textbook adds that it will assist the student in considering more deeply one's everyday thoughts and actions, especially, it adds, “*as a Korean.*” The book, the reader is told, will be divided into the following parts: “I: Life and Ethics,” “Family and School Life Etiquette,” “Society and Ethics,” and finally “Country and People.” The reader is told at the end of the foreword: “However, it isn't enough to simply know the norms and beliefs of ethical behavior.” They have to become second-nature, one has to perform them in practice without a second thought, as a natural part of one's own standards of behavior.<sup>li</sup> The textbook begins this process on the small scale, moving towards the large; beginning with one's role as an individual in a small group, the scope expands continually

until the canvas becomes one upon which the student sees him or herself against the backdrop of the entire society. All the while, the book emphasizes the analogous nature of the various groups and bodies to which the individual belongs. The subtext to the main one is that non-conformity to one group implies a lack of allegiance to all. In the family, school, the factory, and the nation, the roles vary, but the duties and obligations remain strikingly similar. The agenda is to define the student as a “fine” or “good” person<sup>lii</sup> – or more importantly, as a useful social being.

The first chapter, “Human life and ethics,” the book asks the student to consider the “life worth living.” It asks the question of whether the student is a mere “*nan saram*” or a “*daen saram*.” Though difficult to translate into English, the *nan saram* is a person who simply possesses a name and is only a person by virtue of the fact that others have defined him or her as such. This person can “either occupy a high position in society or have property and participate in many of societal activities.” However, beyond this, a *daen saram* (a “developed person”) is “a person of high character and full of refinement and taste, a humanely mature person.”<sup>liii</sup> This is a concept that will be defined in more detail later – the cultivation required in order to form the desired, mature social and personal identity. However, what is important to understand at this point is the fact that the Korean definition of a “good” social individual entails far more than the construction of the useful subject in the strict Marxist sense, for state interests related to capital and control. The textbook will, of course deal with this aspect of “good” citizenship,” but what makes *doduk* and (Korean nationalism in general) so interesting are other state interests that are not economic, and therefore not explicable in strictly Marxist, reductionist terms.

Ringed of classical Chinese precepts which will be explored later, the first chapter tells the reader:

For us, that which lights the path on the way to becoming a “*daen saram*” is *doduk*. While *doduk* gives us the judgment standards for good and evil, right and wrong, from related situations it becomes the underlying principle for our thoughts and actions.<sup>liv</sup>

In answering the question “What makes an moral person?” the book draws explicitly on the

classical Chinese philosophical tradition, making reference to the four main fundamental aspects of a stable, well-functioning social being: “*in*,” “*eui*,” “*ye*,” and “*ji*.” *In* is a Chinese character whose literal meaning is “humanness.” From this, every person feels some sense of obligation to fellow human beings. This is what motivates us to save a drowning stranger from a pond, while *eui* is our sense of “justice,” which is the literal translation of that character. The example given in the textbook is one of a taxi driver returning a lost briefcase containing a great deal of money to the police station. The subtext here is a one of “law and order,” the morality specifically based on proper behavior towards others as social beings. In order to be an honest citizen, one must possess a “righteous heart.” The difference between *in* and *eui* is subtle, but the examples given in the text makes clear the distinction between obligations to others as human versus social beings. The third crucial concept, *ye*, literally means “propriety.” Every person should have “a spirit of restraint and concession” in relations with others, as this is “a basic rule for the maintenance of societal order.” Quoting the “golden rule” almost verbatim, the textbook admonishes that “one should treat others as you would want to be treated.”<sup>lv</sup> Interestingly enough, the textbook characterizes this concept of “*yangshim*” (the aforementioned “yielding spirit”) as an “Eastern” one, the first of many instances in which the text characterizes itself in distinction from the West.<sup>lvi</sup> Using the textbook's metaphor, one can understand the relationship between the three *in* as a root, and *eui* as blossoming flower, *ye* is the literal “fruit.” Finally comes *ji*, meaning “knowledge.”<sup>lvii</sup> Through intellectual pursuits, one can uncover the underlying principles of the world, indeed, even come to understand the preceding three principles. The world needs those who have come to this point via the three others; this is the “life worth living.”

Outlining a range of examples of ethical behavior ranging from cutting in line at the bank, giving up one's seat on the bus, or helping out an old man with a heavy load, the second chapter defines the *doduk* concepts of “knowledge, belief, and practice” concretely.<sup>lviii</sup> A person who can “harmonize” these concepts by not only knowing just behavior in a given situation, not only believing they should be carried out, but by actually reflecting this in one's behavior, can be called an *in gyuk ja*, a “man of character.” Mentioning examples from other cultures, the text places this concept in a universal tradition, sharing the same category with other eastern

countries' "man of virtue," or the concept of the "gentleman" in the West.<sup>lix</sup> In a fascinating comparison, the text ends the chapter with the "favorite maxims" of Ben Franklin (e.g. "Waste not, want not.") with those of one of Korea's most revered scholars, Toegye, characterizing them both as "concrete examples of moral principles put into practice."<sup>lx</sup> The textbook clearly sets up its moral principles in a Korean ethical framework, while not hesitating to find a place for itself in the Western tradition. There is no hostility to exposing students to foreign concepts and ways of thought in the objective sense. However, the text does later define the desirable limits of outside influence.

At this point, the text diverges from its traditional philosophizing to offer the readers the meaning of youth and middle school life. In its efforts to establish the principles that make up the ethical person, the text stresses the importance of this time to one's greater personal development. The student's physical, mental and social maturation are crucial to the development of a healthy societal member. Referring to a French philosopher, the text talks of "the second birth" of youth. The first birth produces life itself, while second birth produces people capable of living.<sup>lxi</sup> The student is told that this is the time he or she develops an interest in the opposite sex, begins to form an identity, and starts to see a future for him or herself. The text underneath a picture of girl students talking to a male teacher tells us "Youth is the most beautiful and precious time of our lives," while a pair of pictures, one showing a row of boys working with electronics equipment, the other showing a female scientist looking up inquisitively into a beaker, has as a caption: "Youth is a time of many opportunities and possibilities."<sup>lxii</sup> It is interesting that the beauty of youth is characterized by a picture from school, while even more significant that life's possibilities are defined in terms of science and industry.

Youth is also the time of confusion. According to the text, even as middle schoolers begin to develop a sense of their desires in life, they begin to develop a desire to be perceived well by others. So one begins to form a concept of self, a social self-awareness that begins to define specific goals and desires. When individuals' desires begin to clash with others', conflict occurs. According to the text, "This is the role of social rules."<sup>lxiii</sup> The proper learning of social rules in this period of youth is emphasized as crucial to one's proper development: A straight-

raised sapling grows into a straight tree; a crooked sapling becomes a crooked tree.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

The textbook continues after the third chapter into the second section of the book with the title “Proper Behavior at Home and School.”<sup>lxv</sup> Here the text begins to strictly define the social relationships and responsibilities of the student *as* a student, as a son or daughter, and then as a citizen, outlining the conceptual framework of society. After two pages outlining the growth of Korea into an industrialized society with a nuclear family structure (from an agrarian, extended-family system), and all its concomitant changes, the text makes the first clear connection between societal structures, those of family and school: “As the family is called the 'nest of love,' the school is 'the locus of education.’”<sup>lxvi</sup> The text goes on to assert that family is essential for learning basic human relations, but school is equally essential for the proper learning of the deep social relations required to function well in society. As harmonious family relations are essential for the continued functioning of the family, the text explores the specifics of proper etiquette within the household. 1) Family members must understand and yield to one another, 2) everyone must act according to their roles and responsibilities, 3) there must be adherence to modicum of manners and etiquette, 4) there must be effective communication between all members of the family.<sup>lxvii</sup> If any one member neglects his or her responsibilities, there can be no harmony in the family.<sup>lxviii</sup> Interestingly enough, the text goes into detail in commenting on the responsibility of parents to understand their children – “if the parents cannot understand their children, and the children cannot fathom the meaning of their parents, how can there be harmony?”<sup>lxix</sup> It hints at the necessity of a democratic understanding between family members, slightly different from the traditional Confucian doctrine that places the father, teacher, and King in the same category, as unconditional rulers over their respective domains. Assuming that the family is a model for the proper functioning of society, the importance of this “social contract” -like relationship becomes desirable, even as it does not interfere with the traditional hierarchy of the Korean family/society. The section ends by explicitly stating that society is simply a huge, extended family.

Next comes an extended section outlining the essential elements of proper behavior in relation to those outside of the immediate family; this includes extended relatives, friends,

neighbors, and strangers. Not staying on the phone for longer than it takes to relay necessary information, especially on public phones, proper bowing procedures to people of different social statuses, proper table manners (including not eating loudly), and appropriate attire (i.e. not too modish or risqué clothing)<sup>lxx</sup> – these examples struck me as particularly interesting, as they seem to be sites of rapid change and contention in Korean society. Although at first glance these examples seem clearly grounded in what might be called Korean “common sense,” at the same time, it does not seem merely coincidental that one occasionally reads in the newspaper about a person being stabbed because he/she was taking too long on the phone, or that older Koreans often complain about the erosion of traditional values, often surprised by the raciness of youth culture and dress. As a foreigner often reminded by Koreans that it was natural in Korea to noisily slurp one's soup, it is somewhat surprising to see this defined as bad etiquette. All these examples seem responses to a definite awareness of rapid changes in Korean society, where the prescription of clear remedies might be seen as potentially useful by the Ministry of Education. Responsible for the people as a controlling body, the crucial concept for which the text sets up the reader is that of “*hyo*.” The importance of this concept rounds out this section of the textbook, and figures prominently as one of the most important uniting concepts presented thus far.

(, ㄴ) *Hyō* is a concept difficult to translate into one word, yet it is easy to understand. A narrow translation might yield “filial piety,” while a more open translation might simply read “duty.” Duty to one's parents and elders begins the text's investigation of the concept, but the text makes clear that the most important aspect of *hyō* does not lie in behaving according to its precepts, but in being sincere about doing so. The book, quoting Confucius, asks:

When most people say the word “*hyō*,” they know about supporting their parents only by feeding and clothing them, but how is that different from raising a dog or a horse?<sup>lxxi</sup>

The crucial factor here is sincerity. The writers of the text pose a question of their own to help

illustrate this point:

When you were an elementary school student and you showed your father and mother a picture you drew of them, or when you hung a poorly-made carnation from art class on your parents' chest, how happy do you remember they were? Why do you think they were so happy? ... It was because it was something made out of sincere love and respect for them that they were deeply touched. The spirit of keeping your parents happy and pleased is honest *hyo*.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Quoting Mencius, another Chinese philosopher, the book makes the crucial point that the concept of *hyo* extends not only to parents, but to other people's parents as well, and by extension, to all elders in society. However, the writers argue, with the onset of modernization and the dominance of the nuclear family structure, “our people's” old values are changing; however, it is critical that Koreans maintain the values that undergird Korean society.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

The argument extends to the school as well. “Even as the parents in the family give children their love and attention, the teacher in the school does the same. In the same way that parents in the family influence us the most, the teacher in the school gives us out most important lessons.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> Here, the text presents the appreciation of Helen Keller for her teacher , as her amazing success in life would not have been possible without the help of her one determined teacher. The book asks the question, “Then in the spirit of always being thankful to our teachers, in our life as students, what are the basic methods and manners that we must possess?”<sup>lxxv</sup> The answer is fairly simple; what follows is an explanation of the proper way to behave in school and around teachers, as well as the proper way to ask a question, which is with a sense of (공손) *gong son*, which translates roughly as “humility and politeness.”

In order to demonstrate the importance of subtle semantics and the subtle assumptions that are inextricably woven into the structure of language itself, an exercise in semantic analysis would prove useful. In unpacking the word from which I am translating, I think it crucial to break down the meaning of *gong son* to its constituent elements. Since the *doduk* text analogizes each element of its society in a steady progression outward, the manner in which students are told to question deserves critical analysis, as the subtext here is very much tied up in the language itself.

From a small character dictionary made for foreigners studying Korean,<sup>lxxvi</sup> a search for the meaning for the character (공)gong yielded “respect.” Interestingly enough, there was no listing of the character son in this smaller dictionary, which listed all the 1800 characters taught up to the secondary level of school in Korea. A quick run to the *Myung Moon New Chinese Character Dictionary* defined (·)son as meaning “sa yang,” in Korean, which translates roughly into “restraint,” or “to refrain from.” The meanings here are conflated into this concept of “gong son,” and the two separate concepts bound up into one word seem to complement each other in an unconscious, yet insidious way. A sense of restraint is linked to the idea of respect. The message in the text seems to imply that even in questioning, there are boundaries. This is not necessarily a radical or repressive concept in and of itself, as even in the “individualistic,” and/or “irreverent” West, there are certain modicums of behavior and simple respect for teachers' authority. However, in my experience teaching in Korea, there always seemed to be much less separation between simple questioning and/or challenging of material and the questioning/challenging of the authority of the teacher. As the book goes on to stress the importance of adherence to hierarchical social structures within the school itself, the meaning of the concept of “questioning” becomes more important.

In all schools, within the student body itself, there is a formal social structure created and reinforced by the students to which all students must adhere. First-years have certain social responsibilities to those senior (older) than themselves. This is usually determined by year. The sunbae/hoobae (senior/junior) relationship is a crucial part of any and every school system, including the university. Numerous times I have heard students complain about the difficulty the juniors have questioning their seniors; even disagreeing with the opinion of a senior is tantamount to disrespect, so students generally seem to avoid doing so. This is also true of the teacher/student relationship. Questioning the assumptions of the teacher means doubting his or her credibility. Inherent in deference to authority is the notion of yielding to it; this is a problematic characteristic in any education system. This is something with which Korean society is presently coming to terms.

The example that springs to mind is a situation relayed to me by a Korean-American

friend working for an engineering department in Samsung. One of the most frustrating things about being a young hotshot in the company was the fact that the working group always had to try out the ideas of the most senior among them first, despite the fact that other ideas seemed a little more promising. According to my friend, it reduced efficiency and raised frustrations in general. How much can traditional values fit into a modern world? This is the question which the textbook occupies itself in section III: “Society and Ethics.”

The third section of the textbook attempts to contextualize young people into society as both individuals and subjects, while balancing between ancient and modern traditions. According to the text, unlike the West, the Korean people have, “from ancient days on, enjoyed a traditional culture that emphasized morality and proper behavior.” However, recently Korea finds itself faced with a moral crisis,” one created by the exigencies of a new industrialized society.<sup>lxxvii</sup> In an effort to characterize the nature of Korea's present-day existence, the text looks to first define the traditional culture of the past. These are not simply the old traditions passed down by habit, but precious ones seen by the ancestors as one crucial towards defining the Korean identity. The text asks the question, “What is the reason for criticizing traditional culture?” The problem is that traditional *doduk* and modern-day changes do not mix well in many cases. The goal, therefore, must be adapted: “In passing down the proper traditional values, we must apply the ones that are right for the present-day, and it is our responsibility to always encourage [societal and economic] development.”<sup>lxxviii</sup> This is not a new concept in Korea. Indeed, Marx concluded that Confucianism in the East was a hindrance to development. According to his analysis, Korea's Neo-Confucian aristocratic elite opposed economic and social reform on the basis of traditional philosophical precepts.<sup>lxxix</sup> The elite of the time considered fundamental societal change harmful to the welfare of a healthy Korean social body. This is the same issue which preoccupies Korea today, even though Korea has already “signed on the dotted line” in terms of its decision to pursue economic development for itself. The management of the undesirable side effects of “progress” is Korea's sticky issue. What is the element that will act as the fulcrum that will keep the delicate balance between progress and preservation of tradition? What will keep an industrializing Korea – a Korea that is losing the need for many of its traditional values –

distinctly Korean? What is an irreducible element of *Korean* culture? The text brings offers a story allegedly told by a foreigner who had been living in Korea for over 20 years:

I've already lived in Korea for about 20 years now. Anyone can see that in that period, Korean has achieved much economic development. However, the continually-erecting buildings and apartments makes one get the dreary feeling that Korea is beginning to look like any other city in the world.

However, if one looks a little more harder, this feeling immediately fades away and one can get the comfortable feeling that "Despite this, people do indeed live here!" When one sees, in crowded buses and subways, sitting passengers cheerfully taking the heavy loads and bags of standees and hold them in their laps, or the faces of people loudly shouting greetings to each other across busy streets, I too feel *jung*. (Outside of Korea, this is something that can rarely be found.)<sup>lxxx</sup>

The crucial element is (Ô◇) *jung*, a central concept in the Korean language and culture, which finds no easy translation into English, for it is a purely Korean concept, one without analogue in Western culture.

*Jung* can be defined as many thing as once: a feeling, an emotion, and/or intimacy with another person – most importantly, it denotes an emotional connection with another person. It is significant that the textbook use a foreigner's "point of view" to characterize the *jung* that permeates and defines Korean society. Some concrete examples of *jung* are useful at this point, and I will use my experience in the manner that the *doduk* textbook utilizes specific examples to illustrate a point as much as possible in explaining the concept if *jung*.

When I arrived in America for the first time in two years, I was a mere 260 frequent flyer miles short of a domestic round trip ticket, which I begged the phone ticket agent to overlook. She said she could not, because of airline policy, and would not do so. Frustrated and disappointed, I remember knowing, absolutely *knowing* that a Korean ticket agent would have helped me out, given the right amount of begging and gentle coercion. I knew my chances were almost certain if I were to beg in person. Indeed, the more the agent *saw* me as a person, the greater my chances would be. This is a significant choice of wording on my part. In my time teaching, anytime I would threaten to do something particularly odious to the possessions of a

student seized during class, the student would beg and plead in Korean, “Look at me!” While losing a lot in the translation, the meaning remains clear. Look past the rules and the roles, and look at *me*, make a connection with *me*. Being the pushover American teacher I did, and often overlooked small infractions that other teachers might not have. So for the students with whom I had established some rapport, their appeals to my sense of *jung* usually worked.

*Jung* exists on more significant levels in Korean society. I have listened to many female teachers in the lounge complain about their lazy, inconsiderate husbands whom they claim not to really love, but with whom they have developed a great deal of *jung*; they cannot help but feel affection for their husbands. Young women ready to shed their boyfriends cite the buildup of too much *jung* between them as the reason for their inability to cut the rope. Indeed, a recent popular song entitled “Jung” related the story of a girl who “stood by her man,” regardless of his desire to break up with her, for whatever reason - even stating the desire to wait for him if he decided to date another girl. This is a situation which many Westerners would probably find difficult to understand, simply by virtue of the fact that it is a concept that has no analogue in contemporary Western culture.

*Jung* is a clearly-defined basis for social relationships that by definition often ask the social actors to violate accepted social norms in a given situation. Some would even argue that it is the maintenance of traditional *jung*-based social connections that is responsible for what the West would call corruption. “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” is the way Americans might characterize favors that create obligations. Many Koreans might just call it *jung*. In the above example with the middle school students, I might have been accused of playing favorites, as I was being soft on students with whom I had developed a closer, personal relationship. However, this relationship is seen as a desirable one to cultivate between people, and is a defining concept in Korean interpersonal relations. But as a social glue, the textbook goes on to ask, how effective and desirable is it?

The textbook places Korean societal development into an inevitable scheme of forward progress. What characterized the Industrial Revolution, according to the text, was the process in which the citizens of small social groups began to cease to see each other in terms of *jung*

relationships, and only in terms of personal gain and loss. The growth of a “mercenary lifestyle” accompanied the development of industry and urbanization. The habit of calculating the worth of others in the cold terms of gain and loss made all citizens see each other as competitors.<sup>lxxxii</sup> What the text is referring to is the creation of societal rules only to protect citizens' and the state's narrow interests. Marx would agree, but he is, not surprisingly, not mentioned in this quite appropriate section, not is mention made of Korea's own experience with seeing its workers “only in terms of loss and gain.” A glaring omission, but nevertheless unsurprising, given the extreme anti-Communism that has characterized South Korea.

So is this simply a search for new ethics in an industrial society? The textbook writers would answer with a resounding “no.” The other key event in the West that now holds import for the East was the “citizen revolution,” specifically the French Revolution. Here the reader is shown a picture of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, next to a painting of angry citizens storming the Bastille. It was a time when society found as its new basis the freedom and equality of its citizenry; the Reformation is also mentioned as a result of this new movement towards equality. However, the book makes no mention of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, but quotes Calvin at length, the text establishing God's “justification” (in the Biblical sense) for capitalism. No longer is the accumulation of property and material goods a sin, but rather a sign of God's grace, the manifestation of one's hard work, thrift, and *justification*; for only one enjoying the God's grace – holy salvation – could enjoy material benefit. According to the text, this thinking, the result of the various Revolutions working in tandem, changed the social relationships and the nature of citizenship in the particular way that best facilitated the growth of capitalism.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Without referring explicitly to the “Protestant work ethic,” as this might entail mention of the M-word<sup>lxxxiii</sup>, the book chronicles the birth of capitalism, devoid of moral judgment.

This would seem a strange segue for a book professing to deal with “morality,” but it serves the interest of the state in characterizing itself in a morally positive way while justifying its mode of existence. By making explicit comparisons to the “national character” of other countries, the textbook defines the traits most worthy for a fast-developing country like Korea to

emulate. Reading like a laundry list, Americans are exemplars of “the Frontier Spirit,” while France is laudable for its freedom, equality, and philanthropy. Most notable is the French people's frugality, according to the textbook. Even though France is the world capital of fashion, the average French person doesn't live a life of chic excess. England is the country whose citizens enjoy the most degree of personal freedom in the world, and the people also treat each other with kindness and politeness. As a fine citizenry, the English people exemplify the principles of the refined “gentleman.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Interestingly (and uncomfortably) enough, the country that comes out on top in the Korean reckoning of national character traits is Germany. From the German people's powerful sense of “group consciousness,” they were “able to lift themselves up from the ashes of WWII and create a startling amount of economic growth now called the “Rhine river miracle.”<sup>lxxxv</sup> What the text fails to mention, however, are the pitfalls of “group consciousness” that got Germany reduced to “a lump of ash” in the first place. Underneath this whole section is a pair of pictures depicting on the left, German consumers frugally going through a fruit market, and on the right, the towering apparatus of what appears to be a chemical plant.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> This is the “Rhine river miracle.” But the text goes on to define what it does not desire from the West, despite the myriad benefits of Western culture. What Korea is endeavoring to prevent is a loss of what is essentially Korean, even as it enters into the club of “developed” nations. For Korea, becoming developed cannot mean a loss of cultural distinctness.

At this point the writers juxtapose Western *yulli* (another term for “ethics/morality”) and Korean *doduk* as opposing elements in Korean society to be balanced against one another, Western *yulli* being held in appropriate check. On page 173, the reader is presented with an actual picture of a scale, balancing “Our traditional culture” against “Western citizen ethics,” the main difference between the two lying in the idea of “yielding” and *jung*.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> The goal is one of taking the strong points from Western culture and integrating them “harmoniously” with Korean traditional culture: “In this way, our society can become, more than any other one, the world's leading society in terms of *doduk* and ethical values.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

It is at this point that the fourth and final section of the textbook (“Country and People”) begins its attempt to define the Korean people as an entity itself. Before undertaking this final section, I preface my coming analysis by asserting that the Korean people are unabashedly ethnocentric, and this is reflected/reinforced by the doctrines found especially in the last part of the textbook. However, I use the word “ethnocentric” with a slightly different shade of meaning from the one usually found in American multicultural discourse.

Korea<sup>lxxxix</sup> is engaged in an on-going project to define itself as a nation, a culture, and a people. Although the West once called Korea “the hermit kingdom,” South Korea now finds itself dubbed one of the “tiger countries” of Asia, and steadily vies for power and prestige as a major player in the world economy. A country having undergone rapid industrialization and development, the necessity of Korea's renegotiation of its national ideology in order to complement a substantial structural change in society is obvious. However, the case of Korea is not so easily reduced to the exigencies of politico-economic change. It is complex in an unexpected way.

Starting with the heavy cultural influence of China, periodically invaded from every direction for most of its history, subjugated as a colony of Japan from 1905 until liberation 40 years later, and being subjected to Japan and the West's influence via media and money, Korea has been forced to be preoccupied with the question of its cultural identity as it copes with the influences of the outside, as well as the changes it finds itself undergoing as a rapidly developing *international* country. What is at stake is the nation's cultural identity in a way that is not simply a response to socio-economic factors.

I define Korean ethnocentrism as reactionary. When I use this term “reactionary,” I do not mean to characterize the Korean national identity as desperate, knee-jerk parries to each attacker's hurried thrust. This would falsely characterize the Koreans as hopelessly besieged defenders, helpless to shape their own discourse with the outside - thrust, parry, thrust, parry. When I use the metaphor of force and counterforce, I do so in a way that is more suggestive of Korea's ongoing renegotiation with the outside - an analogy that comes to mind is that of a lone

cell floating in a current of rapid flux and change. Korean ethnocentrism, like the force that maintains the life and shape of a cell, is that internal pressure which keeps the walls from collapsing in on themselves, despite the raging swirls and eddies outside. Even as a cell is fluid, with no definite shape, it is no less a definable body, a real, solid mass. Even as these cell walls shield, and by their very existence, define the cell from the outside, it is permeable, breathing through a process of osmosis. It allows exchange with the outside and responds to a slowly-changing environment or can accommodate a rough-and-tumble world in flux.

With this in mind, let's examine the question the textbook asks the reader: "What is a people?" The word used in Korean for "people" is *minjok*, literally meaning "people type/brethren." It has one meaning in Korean, but translated into English, *minjok* can mean people, ethnicity, or race. The concept of the Korean people is very deeply rooted in the idea of common origin, of sharing a common blood. Indeed, the quote that "Blood is thicker than water" is well-placed in the beginning of this section of the textbook.<sup>xc</sup> The concept of "us" is defined not only in terms of blood, but in time, as pointed out in the oft-cited fact that Korea has endured for 5,000 years of history:

A people share the same lineage, utilize a common language, and as they live through the same history and culture, form a group based on the concept of "us," made from a shared sense of unity.<sup>xci</sup>

A people is nothing more than "a big family," and in the same way, even if a member finds oneself far away, one cannot simply cease to be a part of it. It is in this way of thinking that Korean-Americans find themselves in when they visit Korea. No matter what nationality one holds, one is always Korean; if one cannot speak the language or function as a member of Korean society, then something is wrong. The standard is always consistent, always Korean; a certain Korean-American is never an American who has gotten pretty good at speaking some of the "old tongue." He or she is a Korean who speaks the mother tongue badly. This is the kind of thinking that goes on in Korea, and is reflected in the text; it hardly needs to be reinforced – once

a Korean, always a Korean.

Indeed, the concept of “us” is reflected in everyday speech in Korea. More than hinting at the “group consciousness” of the Korean people, “we” is the word of choice when describing even those things that Westerners would consider “mine.” In the common language, no one ever says “my school.” People say “our school,” “our house,” and “our country.” As bizarre as it may seem to Westerners, the linguistic usage of “our wife” or “our husband” is standard in everyday speech. When Koreans refer to their country in English in such ways, the ring is uncomfortably nationalistic: “In our country...” It is not a simple linguistic accident, nor do I think this feeling is imagined; the words “our country” are said, even in Korean, with a real sense of pride in the nation and the culture.

According to the textbook, the accomplishments of the Korean people are many. Not only is the Korean written alphabet always shown off as an example of Korean intellectual accomplishment (the Korean alphabet has been cited by many linguists as the most efficient, well-designed in the world), the metal printing press was, according to the text, invented in Korea, in 1234, over 200 years before Gutenberg was even learning to write. The Koreans invented the rain gauge also 200 years before the West, as well as using armored ships with which to soundly thrash the invading Japanese well before the West. Indeed, the book tells the student that “Our people inherit a proud culture.”<sup>xcii</sup>

The text also sets up Korean culture as one particularly suited to development and advancement. From ancient times, “Our people's cultural excellence is the peculiar characteristic that allows us, by combining old culture with new, outside influences, to make a completely original culture, expressed in a Korean way.”<sup>xciii</sup> This is not just a reflection of Korean culture's ability to absorb new types of ceramic pottery into the culture, which is the context in which the previous quote appeared, but the *doduk* textbook stresses the importance of this trait to the cultural survival of the Korean people: “If we lose our Korean traditional culture, not only would our living existence become impossible, but it would even be difficult to find the meaning of life.”<sup>xciv</sup> The text characterizes assimilation as a most horrid fate for the Korean people, and the student is told that he or she must actively promote Korean culture, and preserve it as not

only a connection to the past, but as a bridge to the future.<sup>xcv</sup>

While extolling the virtues of Korean culture in comparison to others (the word “excellence” in Korean can also connote “superiority”), the book makes clear that it is not practicing an “ultranationalism” in the sense that Etienne Balibar would define. Korea definitely draws on the ““ideology of the elect nation,” indeed, in Korea, this “ideal entity” is the “imaginary core of the nation,” involving a sense of purity; this “entity” comes “long before the nation and goes far beyond it in space and time.”<sup>xcvi</sup> This the core around which *doduk* clearly constructs its nationalism. However, even as he claims that “...the building of the nation-state...is closely associated with class domination,” the analysis must go deeper than an economically reductionist one would allow. Letting the text fend for itself, it states:

However, the inheritance of a people's cultural traditions does not mean an intolerant ultranationalism or exclusionism. In the same way that we think of our own culture as precious, so must we preserve an attitude that recognizes the preciousness of other cultures as well.<sup>xcvii</sup>

So Korean ethnocentrism (in theory) does not come at the cost of a diminished respect for other cultures; on the contrary, it comes as the result of the desire of the Korean people to preserve what is deemed as its most precious defining elements. There is nothing wrong with the influence of outside culture; the only important thing not to forget is the importance and value of Korean culture itself.

When talking about taking in outside influences, the text reminds the reader that as long as this is done in a “creative, generative spirit,” in which the good aspects of other cultures are added in useful ways to one's own, there is no problem with cultural syncretism. However, if this is done at the expense of Korean culture, in a way that degrades it and makes it seem inferior, then, the textbook asserts, it becomes a problematic issue:

However, recently, there have been some people who degrade our traditional culture as inferior, or even assert that we have no traditional culture at all. With that, there are some youth who seem forgetful of the preciousness of our culture, and there is the influence of the West which they blindly imitate and follow. While many youth know nothing of our native *pan so-ri* [a traditional form of Korean singing/performance] or traditional folk songs, they act as if the songs sung by foreign singers, whose meanings they do not understand, are the best in the world, and follow blindly.<sup>xviii</sup>

The situation is more complex than this. I am reminded of the times I sat in the movie theater and watched the preview for a upcoming Korean movie. Sometimes with abysmally low production values and “homegrown” actors, some (not all) Korean movies do indeed seem laughable when compared to the movie everyone came to see, or the other previews of the (usually American) movies people often want to see, usually American, big-budget fare. The lines blur in many places, as distinctly American musical styles are Koreanized and become massively popular, but somehow, to the American ear, have gained something that separates it from the genre from which it came, while to a traditional Korean ear, the same music sounds distinctly and gratingly foreign. It is clearly a matter of who is doing the defining, and for what purpose. Many of my middle school students argued that a popular music group, *Seo Taiji and the Boys* was distinctly, unmistakably Korean, while I listened to the musical styles clearly sampled and lifted wholesale from American musical groups. However, both sides were partially right; even as the style was ostensibly “gangster rap,” the message urged runaway kids to “Come Back Home” to their parents and take advantage of the bright future we all possess by virtue of youth, a likely bizarre theme to the American rap group whose style was being copied – *Cypress Hill*. The 75 year-old grandfather of one of these students would likely hear the same music and just think, “bizarre.”

Cultural syncretism takes place in many loci in Korean society; it would be difficult to define the proper way to engage foreign influences in every instance, but *doduk* simply endeavors to define the spirit in which the encounter takes place. If Koreans go forward intent on forgetting their collective past, then Korea will lose its meaning *as* Korea, as a national culture distinct from any found in the West.

Korea holds the same capitalist precepts as most of the developed countries in the

world, but fervently holds onto its belief that there is something more to existence than the accumulation of capital alone. Through state organs such as the Ministry of Education, the ideological hold on the populace via projects like *doduk* remains unbreakable. Standing in a stadium full of elementary and middle school students chanting “Tokdo nun oo-ri ddang!” (“The Tokdo Islands are our land!” – a nationalistic song created out of an ongoing territory dispute with Japan), it occurred to me to be disturbed by the shameless jingoistic display going on around me. However, that thought found no quarter in my mind and quickly turned into the realization that as narrow and simplistic as the Korean worldview may often be, the essence of Korean nationalism and national pride is not rooted in ideologies of inherent superiority or the necessary degradation of other cultures in order to elevate one's own. It is very much rooted in a need to assert itself in the Hegelian sense of gaining “recognition” – for different reasons, gaining recognition in the eyes of North Korea, its economic and ideological competitor, in the eyes of Japan, its former oppressor, and in the eyes of the world, as a powerful nation commanding international respect.

Forged in the fire of subjugation, occupation, and war, Korean nationalism is like a rugged survivor, made strong by the forces which would have destroyed it. This is the defining characteristic of Korean nationalism that sets it apart from the “dangerous” nationalisms that have wreaked havoc on our planet in the last century – the fascisms, racisms, and ideological fundamentalisms that have come and gone, some of which we can still find today. What is different about the Korean strain of national pride is that it is benign and regenerative for the Korean people in much the same way that a Korean puts on a *hanbok* (traditional Korean attire). It is a reminder of not only what you were, but what you no longer are. The *hanbok* celebrates a traditional Korean aesthetic, even as it sometimes seems dissonant with present, modern reality. But significantly, for the Korean people, the wearing of the *hanbok* has also been an act of resistance. No longer is it kept literally under wraps, nor worn in secrecy; now the infamously loud colors of the *hanbok*, simple and bright, stand out as a glaring assertion of pride in the Korean culture and nation.

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<sup>i</sup> Emile, as quoted in *The Great Thoughts*, Seldes, George. *The Great Thoughts* . (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985) p. 357

<sup>ii</sup> Lee, Dong Hwang. *Thoughts on the Nature of Life (Shin Myung Shin Bo Gam)*. (Seoul: Korea National University National Culture Research Institute, 1996) *Shin Myung Shin Bo Gam*, p. 23

<sup>iii</sup> using the Korean pronunciation

<sup>iv</sup> Emile, in *The Great Thoughts*, p. 357

<sup>v</sup> Althusser, Louis, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* . (New York: Monthly Review Press, p.152

<sup>vi</sup> Borrowing a term from Noam Chomsky. This term means instilling in the people an attitude of not questioning the legitimacy or authority of state acts. When consent in manufactured, force - even persuasion sometimes - is not necessary.

<sup>vii</sup> Yang, Sung Chul, "The Evolution of Korean Nationalism: A Historical Survey," *Korea and World Affairs*. 11, no. 3 (Fall, 1987) *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. XI, no. 3, Fall 1987, p. 464

<sup>viii</sup> Yang *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. XI, no. 3, Fall 1987, p. 464

<sup>ix</sup> Yang *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. XI, no. 3, Fall 1987, p. 467

<sup>x</sup> Yang *Korea and World Affairs*, vol. XI, no. 3, Fall 1987, p. 470

<sup>xi</sup> Kim, Shinil, "Korean Education: Past and Present," *Korea Journal*. (April, 1987), *Korea Journal*, April 1997, p. 13

<sup>xii</sup> Kim *Korea Journal*, April 1997, p. 13

<sup>xiii</sup> Kim, *Korea Journal*, April 1997, p. 13

<sup>xiv</sup> Korea Journal, April 1997, Kim, p. 15

<sup>xv</sup> Nahm, Andrew C. *Korea: Tradition and Transformation* . (New Jersey: Hollym, 1988) Andrew C. Nahm, *Korea: Tradition and Transformation*, p. 497

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid, p. 498

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid, p. 498

<sup>xviii</sup> Robert King Hall. *Shushin: The Ethics of a Defeated Nation* . (New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University Teachers College, 1949) p. 13

<sup>xix</sup> Karl Taro Greenfield, *The Nation*, "War and Amnesia", 12/16/93)

<sup>xx</sup> Buruma, Ian. *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*. (New York: Meridian Press, 1994) Buruma, pp. 196-197

<sup>xxi</sup> Buruma, p. 199

<sup>xxii</sup> Buruma, pp. 199-200

- xxiii Tokiomo Kaigo. *Series on Japanese Life & Culture, Japanese Education: Its Past and Present* . (Tokyo: The Society for International Cultural Relations (Kokusai Bunka Shinkotai), 1965) pp. 53-54
- xxiv Saburo Ienaga. *The Pacific War: 1931-1945* . (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) p. 15
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- xxvii Buruma, p. 191
- xxviii Buruma, p. 191
- xxix [Iritani, Toshio. \*Group Psychology of the Japanese During Wartime\*](#) . (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1991) [Iritani](#), pp. 13-14
- xxx Iritani, pp. 164-165
- xxxi Iritani, p. 161
- xxxii Ienaga, p. 31
- xxxiii Ienaga, p. 23
- xxxiv Buruma, p. 173
- xxxv [Dower, John W. \*War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War\*](#) . (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) [Dower](#), p. 24
- xxxvi [Lummis, C. Douglas. \*A New Look at the Chrysanthemum and the Sword\*](#), p. 72
- xxxvii [Iritani, Toshio. \*Group Psychology of the Japanese During Wartime\*](#) pp. 167-168
- xxxviii [Iritani, Toshio. \*Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime\*](#), p. 2
- xxxix Michael Burleigh. Wolfgang Wipperman. *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* . (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 207-208
- xl Burleigh and Wipperman, p. 210
- xli A term borrowed from Etienne Balibar, in his article "Racism as Universalism" in
- xlii [Dower](#), p. 228
- xliii [Dower](#), pp. 265-266
- xliv [Dower](#) ~~Ibid~~, p. 250
- xlv ~~Ibid~~, pp. 255-256
- xlvi ~~Ibid~~ Korea: Old and New, pp. 390-391
- xlvii ~~Ibid~~ The Wages of Guilt, p. 191
- xlviii ~~Ibid~~ The Wages of Guilt, p. 191
- xlxi [Lummis](#), p. 75
- <sup>1</sup> [Doduk](#) textbook, first page. From this point on, unless otherwise specified, page numbers come from the *doduk* textbook.
- li [Doduk](#), p. 1-2
- lii In Korea, these terms ("hoolunghan," and "chakhan," respectively) are very commonly used to describe a person laudable as a person with refined manners and behavior)
- liii [Doduk](#), p. 5
- liv [Doduk](#), p. 6
- lv [Doduk](#), pp. 9-10 ~~of the~~
- lvi [Doduk](#), p. 11
- lvii [Doduk](#), p. 11
- lviii [Doduk](#), p. 34
- lix [Doduk](#), p. 40
- lx [Doduk](#), p. 43
- lxi [Doduk](#), p. 45
- lxii [Doduk](#), p-p. 46-48
- lxiii [Doduk](#), pp. 52-53
- lxiv [Doduk](#), pp. 54-55
- lxv [Doduk](#), p. 69
- lxvi [Doduk](#), p. 74
- lxvii [Doduk](#), p. 77
- lxviii Interestingly, there is a picture of a two young girls bowing to their grandparents as all adults sit looking on approvingly, smiling magnanimously. All are in traditional dress.
- lxix [Doduk](#), p. 78
- lxx [Doduk](#), pp. 90-94

- lxxi .p. 107
- lxxii .p. 107
- lxxiii .pp. 109-110
- lxxiv .p. 113
- lxxv .p. 113
- lxxvi Bruce K. Grant's *A Guide to Korean Characters*, p. 156
- lxxvii *Doduk*, p. 138
- lxxviii .p. 146
- lxxix Carter J. Eckert, et al. *Korea, Old and New: A History*. p. 410
- lxxx *Doduk*, p. 147
- lxxxi .p. 159
- lxxxii .pp. 161-162
- lxxxiii Marx!
- lxxxiv .pp. 163-164
- lxxxv .p. 165
- lxxxvi .p. 165
- lxxxvii .p. 173
- lxxxviii .p. 173
- lxxxix When I use the word "Korea" in this way, I refer to the state apparatuses that reinforce state ideologies, in this case, the Ministry of Education.
- xc *Doduk*, p. 205
- xc1 .p. 206
- xcii .p. 217
- xciii .p. 217
- xciv .p. 220
- xcv .p. 221
- xcvi Balibar p. 203
- xcvii .p. 222
- xcviii .p. 223