

Special Topic Issue on "the Lifeworld of Divided Koreans"

Humanities for Unification aim to open various frames of thought on unification. The value and *raison-êre* of humanities in regard to the issue of unification are that they propose a more comprehensive, humane and wise alternative to unification, going beyond a mere one-sided perspective. Discussions around unification on the Korean Peninsula have been centered on politics. Unification was understood as a process of confirming the victory of an ideology. It was degraded into a simple process of creating growth and economic benefit for powerful nations. As a result, the value of human existence has been deprioritized whilst dealing with unification issues. The results of unification will inevitably vary depending on what stance humans, as agents of unification, take on. If unification proceeds as a process of different lives becoming one through mutual communication and understanding, then it will become more fruitful. If it doesn't, then it may exclude various agents and its results will not be properly shared. In this regard, Humanities for Unification is a new discipline that seeks to diagnose limitations of existing discourses on unification and to open diversity in preparation for a unified society of the future.

The theme of this issue's feature section is 'The Lifeworld of Divided Koreans'. The objective of the section is to look into the realities and consciousness of living cultures of North and South Koreans and to find a way to open up a road for communication. The division among Koreans has gone beyond merely defining political orientation, to rooting down differences in lifestyles and mindset born out of the former. No-one will deny that within the foundation of living cultures of North and South Koreans, there lies a basic form of ethnic (*minjok*) culture shared jointly by the two Koreas, accumulated across 5,000 years of history. However, there will not be many who believe that the living cultures of the two Koreas will be able to communicate without understanding one another. Although it is

evident that the common living culture shared between the two, accumulated across 5,000 years of history, is the most basic element constituting the commonality between the two Koreas, during the 70 years of division, this living culture has diverged not just in form, but also in its underlying meaning, leading to differences in everyday life.

Differences between the living culture of the North and that of the South must be respected as they are. Unification must not be pursued ignoring differences, unilaterally in one particular direction. Enforcing a particular lifestyle and culture, in itself, is a form of violence. The process of unifying living cultures needs to be a process of respecting differences and paving the path to communicating through open channels based on commonalities. Dichotomies such as 'nation vs. post-nation', 'state vs. post-state' and 'homogeneity vs. heterogeneity' will most likely repeat themselves not just during the unification process, but also afterwards as well. Such dichotomies are, as a principle, based on continuous exclusion. We must reflect on the fact that a mindset structures on exclusion can be transformed into one structured on communication. Complete integration with the aim of unification can only be accomplished through the internal minds of humans, who are the agents of unification. After all, unification is not about end results but about consciousness.

The feature section of this issue is composed of three articles – “A Study Comparing the Living Cultures of South Koreans and North Korean Defectors” by Chung Jin-A, “Arirang as the Cultural Code of the 21st Century North Korea” by Jeon Young-Sun and “The Invention of Tradition: Political Familism of Koreans Divided by the War” by Kim Myung-Hee. The feature articles are about assessing the realities of living cultures, understanding differences in policies and consciousness regarding discourse on ethnic (*minjok*) tradition, and analyzing familisms discussed between the two Koreas, respectively.

“A Comparative Study on Everyday Life of South Koreans and North Korean Defectors”, by Chung Jin-A, makes a comparison between the living cultures of South Koreans versus North Koreans, which had changed after new governments took helm on each side. As manifested by the process of nearly 30,000 North Korean defectors adapting to South Korea, there are large discrepancies between

the living culture of South Koreans and that of North Korean defectors. Chung's thesis is based on the results of a survey performed between 3rd January and 28th February 2011, on 501 South Koreans and 109 North Korean defectors residing in Seoul, Suwon and Namyangju.

North Korea understands most part of its living culture through the prism of ideological meaning and symbolism while the living culture of South Korea is more influenced by westernization and globalization. Nationalist consciousness permeates through much of the living culture of North Koreans, and in the case of South Koreans, individual taste and convenience. These are the results of political orientations of the two Koreas making their way into the living culture for more than 70 years. South and North Koreans showed great differences in all areas of their living cultures including food, clothing and shelter.

The results of the survey show that compared to North Korean defectors, everyday customs of South Koreans have become more westernized while North Korean defectors maintained more traditional customs. Nonetheless, it seems that commonalities in customs acted as a mechanism maintaining a sense of community among South Koreans and North Korean defectors, who had lived for a long time in different systems. In the case of everyday customs, although the form had changed to befit the lifestyles of the modern era, the essence was maintained across generations. However, in day to day awareness and values, there were great differences due to the experience and habits formed under the different systems of capitalism and socialism. Differences were most pronounced in views on marriage and career, showing that the living cultures of South Korea and North Korea have both changed tremendously. This change, in itself, is completely natural. However, if such differences are left to continue without any effort to communicate, then integrating the living cultures will become that much more difficult. This is why attempts to communicate in the area of living culture is so important.

"Arirang as the Cultural Code of the 21st Century North Korea", by Jeon Young-Sun, aims to analyze North Korea's state ideology focusing on 'Arirang' related works since 2000. From 2002 until 2013, North Korea regularly staged a massive performance involving 100,000 people. According to Jeon, just the fact

that such a performance was staged regularly for several years is significant, and he analyzes the hidden codes behind it. Preparations for *Arirang* started in 2001. It was confirmed, at the time, that a large-scale performance was being prepared to be staged in 2002, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il- Sŏng. Initially, the title of the performance was *The Song of the First Sun*, signifying the absoluteness of the Great Leader. It was understood as a regular yearly performance because a large-scale ceremony usually takes place every decade in North Korea in honor of the Great Leader.

Another notable aspect is that around 2002, when the Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance *Arirang* premiered, series of popular music, novels and works by ordinary citizens using *Arirang* in their title started to be created and performed. The author points out that through these processes, 'Arirang' became the major cultural code of 21st century North Korea. Concepts such as 'Military First Arirang' and 'Arirang People' became natural among the population through the North Korean media. Jeon's article focuses on what the series of Arirangs that appeared in North Korea after 2000 mean, and what concepts like 'Arirang People', coined in relation to 'Arirang', aim to achieve. The various versions of Arirang that have been reinterpreted from a more modern perspective in North Korea reflect the differences in the sentiments of North Koreans and South Koreans as the result of the prolonged division, but at the same time become a way to gauge the possibilities of cultural integration in the future.

Arirang, performed in North Korea, aimed to expand the image of unification and Strong and Prosperous Revival by overcoming the history of hardships endured by the Korean people. Popular music, with titles containing the word 'Arirang', also contains the themes of unification and Strong and Prosperous Revival. Representative cases are 'Arirang Celebrating Unification' and 'Arirang of Powerful and Prosperous Revival'. Such 'Arirang' songs symbolizing unification and Strong and Prosperous Revival were publicized en-masse through the media. Aside from popular music, the same goes for novels and other works of literature that won writing contests, all including 'Arirang' in their title. They all emphasize nationalist sentiments, and at the same time, they can be interpreted as attempts to spread the idea of ethnic superiority, through concepts such as 'Arirang People'

and 'Kim Il-Sōng People'. North Korea is expected to continue spreading the idea of ethnic superiority of the 'Kim Il-Sōng People', in line with its succession of power for the third generation. A clear sense of awareness and approach are indeed necessary when dealing with issues of nationalism and ethnicity in relation to unification.

"The Possibility of Intimate Public Sphere: Political Familism of Divided Koreans", by Kim Myung-Hee, is an article attempting to analyze the familism discourses of Korea. Kim asserts that discourses around Korean familism merely emphasize traditional factors or remain in the realm of how Korean familism corresponds with mobilization strategy of a developmental state and functions in a transformative manner. Thus, she says that the discourses are unable to break from the normative argument of public vs. private and egoistic vs. moral. The author then seeks to find the possibility of prospective interpretation by revisiting competing hypotheses on factors and characteristics of contemporary Korean familism.

She points out that existing discussions on familism can be generally categorized into cultural causation theory (Confucian familism theory), industrialization causation theory, historical structure approach and sociopolitical approach.

As many scholars commonly point out, the prevailing view on Korean familism regards familism as an output of Confucianism or traditions. Regarding Korean familism as the product of Confucian traditions or a cultural product was the prevailing view for a very long time. On the other hand, cultural causation theory closely resonates with industrialization causation. Many studies view familism as the result of rapid social change, such as compressed industrialization.

However, according to Kim, these studies have been reproduced without fully examining cultural causational implications. Research performed under a historical structure approach propose the issues of state legitimacy and developmentalist mobilization strategy as important factors. She assesses that such an approach successfully opened possibilities of new type of thinking in regard to familism, which emerges from the relationship between the state and the family. At the same time, such discussions are limited as they keep silent about the sociopolitical conditions of the 1948 regime, which came before the developmental state of

1960's and 70's. She also argues that social history studies with a sociopolitical perspective, which shed light on the relationship between formation of a nation and familism, often previously neglected, prove that Korean familism was already structured in the 1950s through historical experiences of colonization, war and division.

According to Kim, familism of divided Korea is a political construct formed via colonial modernity and historical experience as a war state, and can be better understood as an outcome of 'the invention of tradition' as insisted by Eric Hobsbawm. This study conceptualizes intervening conditions as being the unique mechanism of civil rights in a divided state conceptualized as a family status system, which is the combination of the National Security Act, implicative system and patriarchal Family Law, which are the twins of the 1948 Constitution of the Republic of Korea. It also proposes the potential of 'political familism' innate in family-centeredness of Koreans divided by the war to be considered as part of an intimate public sphere.

She goes onto emphasize that Korean familism should be understood comprehensively in connection to structural and institutional conditions surrounding families, the justness of the state and the historical experiences and political consciousness of family members interacting with such environment, and that agent dynamics and potential of familism as a historical component of colonial modernity need to be interpreted prospectively.

In addition to the three feature papers, there are three general papers in this edition. Min Won-Jung's "Post-unification Inter-Korean Intercultural Communication: Examining the Impact of History Education on New Identity Formation" looks into the different identities that have formed in South Korea and North Korea due to the nearly 70 years of division, and analyzes what historical factors can be mobilized to bring out mutual and positive understanding and conciliation between the two Koreas. "Theoretical Basis of Translating the *Chosŏnwangjosillok*", by Song Hyŏn-Wŏn, is an article that shows clearly the basic principles and the foundation that must be adhered to during the translation process of the *Chosŏnwangjosillok*. Last but not least, "New Goddesses at Paektu Mountain: Two Contemporary Korean Myths", by Robert Winstanley-Chesters and Victoria Ten, explains how images

of mythical females related to the Paektu Mountain are differently transformed and consumed within the socio-political circumstances of South Korea and North Korea.

The three feature articles in this issue of *S/N Humanities* show how reflection on everyday life, consciousness and division can contribute to both unification and change of mindset. We must remind ourselves, by looking at the example of the German reunification, where the political realities of the two Koreas and goal-oriented unification discourse will head towards, if unification of the Korean Peninsula does not base itself on humanities-led process of mature introspection.

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