

State Rituals, Symbolic Space, and Korean National Identity

Kim Hyeon-seon

This article starts from the correlation between the identity and memory. As it was said that what is remembered is defined by identity, a group's identity can be explored from the types of memories remembered by that group. In this context, this paper analyzes the contents and uses of national symbols such as state rituals and symbolic spaces, which are the means used by the state for transmitting historical memory to the present, having been performed in contemporary Korean society since the nation's foundation in 1948. It also analyzes the process of reproducing historical memories through such national symbols.

There are state rituals which commemorate Korean historical facts, such as historic events related to the independence movement, the founding of Korea, the Korean war, the democratic movement, and historic figures like "Dangun," General "Yi sun-shin," fallen soldiers, and patriotic martyrs. There are also national cemeteries and memorial halls which commemorate the independence movement, the Korean War, and the democratic movement. These are types of historic memory reproduced by the state in contemporary Korean society.

However, the contents of historical memories mentioned above are produced and changed by the political needs of regimes and also civil society. Each regime has used the historical memory for legitimizing the dominant ideology or that regime's policy, and also for symbolizing the identity of regime. Nevertheless, what is represented as Korean national identity, like the Korean people or the state, has been reproduced unchanged compared to other historical things, through a national holiday like "Gaecheonjeol" (Founding Day of Korea) for example, as well as other symbolic forms. They are national symbols which generally reconstruct an image of Korea past, through which the state reproduces the belief of pureness and the eternity of national community.

Keywords: National identity, historical memory, nation, national symbol, state ritual, symbolic space

Introduction

As it is often said that “what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity” (Gillis 1996: 3), the identity of an individual or a group is often understood to have an intimate relationship with its memory of the past. If a specific incident or person in the past is recalled in the mind of the present individual or group, it is because such historical facts are selectively remembered according to the present character of an individual or a group. When the unit of a group extends as far as to a state, such historical facts remembered by the present state become a symbolic index to what the state is at the present. Accordingly, when we try to study national identity, it will be of help to study what is remembered by the state.

In the context of the correlation of identity and memory, this study aims at approaching the national identity of Korea in view of memory. Through the analyses of the kinds, contents, and uses of historical memory that the state in modern Korean society has transmitted by way of “realms of memory” (Nora 1996: 6), this study aims to review the formation and transformation of national identity in modern Korean society. Generally speaking, there are a variety of transmitting media of memory to revive and recall the history of a state and nation. Such mass media as literature, newspaper, TV, and movies have continuously reconstructed and iterated the past history of Korea from the ancient period through Japanese Colonial Rule and the Korean War to “Gwangju Hangjaeng” (Gwangju Democratization Movement), etc. Apart from these social media, the good examples a state in modern society uses to revive the past as its “realm of memory” are national symbols such as rituals, monuments, and memorial spaces.

Nowadays, every state in modern society has its own typical memorial days, e.g., such national holidays as Independence Day in the United States, the Emperor’s birthday in Japan, the Queen’s birthday in the United Kingdom, the Bolshevik Revolution Memorial in the U.S.S.R., and Kim Il Sung’s Birthday in North Korea. Most states in modern society also have national cemeteries for their war dead and other heroes and memorial spaces such as memorial halls celebrating historical events and figures. While the former ritual is a means of a repeated recalling of historical facts periodically by the practice of memory, the latter is a national symbol restructuring the memory of the past through the medium of space using such items as relics and monuments. After all, memorial rituals and national symbols of a state in modern society are typical social sys-

tems to preserve and sustain national memory by means of a fundamental “framework of remembrance” (Halbwachs 1980: 98) such as time and space.

This study will analyze two types of “framework of remembrance” which the state in modern Korean society has produced. From the nation building in 1948 up to recent times, the state rituals and national symbols celebrating historical facts are as follows: state memorial rituals classified into three types according to historical facts (Refer to Table 1), i.e. memorials celebrating personages, memorials celebrating historical events, and memorials celebrating personnel connected with historical events.

In addition to memorial rituals, there are two major national symbolic places to celebrate historical facts (Refer to Table 2). One type are national cemeteries such as Dongjakdong National Cemetery, Suyuri National Cemetery, or Mangweoldong National Cemetery in Gwangju, and the other type are the national memorial halls such as Dongnipginyeomgwan (Independence Hall) in Cheonan or Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan (the War Memorial Hall) in Yongsan.

The kinds of memorial rituals and places provide a clear indicator of just what history remembered by the state in modern Korean society is. Just as memory has not been fixed or stagnated but rather changed, the above-mentioned national memorials were enacted at and reflect different times. After enactment, some of them have been continuously celebrated whereas others have been abolished, changed, or reevaluated in accordance with the needs of the times. Taking this into consideration, this study will review the forming process and the contents of memorial rituals and places. This study will focus on such questions as to why and how memorial historical figures and facts have been celebrated, and how civil society has influenced and has been affected by them in the midst of official keeping or changing of historical memories. That is, this study aims at reviewing the reproduction process of historical memory, while focusing on the contents and uses of celebrating historical memory related to national identity in modern Korean society and on the conflicts within civil society concerning specific historical facts.

Memorial Days and Reproduction of Historical Memory

The present memorial rituals in Korea were partly enacted during Japanese colonial rule but mainly after the nation building in 1948. Those rituals made during the Great Han Empire did not thrive in the course of Japanese colonial rule and

were not transmitted to modern society either. The present rituals in modern Korean society are those made before or after nation building in 1948. Accordingly, nation building was the starting point of the modern memorial rituals full scale. The periods of enactment and remembered historical facts of the concerned rituals are as follows:

Table 1. State Rituals and Historical Facts

Classification		Type		Date	Year Enacted	Historical Facts (Period)
Historical Figures	Person	<i>Chungmugong tansinil</i>	April 28	1967	Admiral Yi Sun-shin (Joseon Dynasty)	
		<i>Gaecheonjeol</i>	Oct. 3	1949	Dan-gun, Founder (Ancient Joseon)	
Group		<i>Hyeonchungil</i>	June 6	1956	The War Dead(The Korean War in 1950)	
		<i>Sungukseonyeol ui nal</i>	Nov. 17	1997	Patriots (Japanese Colonial Period)	
Rituals	Historical Facts	<i>Samiljeol</i>	March 1	1949	March 1st Movement (1919)	
		<i>Daehanmin-guk imsijeongbu surip gineomil</i>	April 13	1989	Korean Provisional Government Established in 1919	
		<i>Sailgu hyeokmyeong gineomil</i>	April 19	1973	April 19 Student Revolution (1960)	
		<i>Oilpal minjuhwa undong gineomil</i>	May 18	1997	Gwangju Democratization Movement (1980)	
		<i>Yugiosabyeon gineomil</i>	June 25	1973	The Korean War (1950)	
		<i>Jeheonjeol</i>	July 17	1949	Enactment of Constitution (1948)	
		<i>Gwangbokjeol</i>	Aug. 15	1949	Liberation, Foundation of Korea (1945, 1948)	
		<i>Haksaenguinal</i>	Nov. 3	1953	Gwangju Students Uprising (1929)	

Source: Remade on the basis of “*Gukyeongile gwanhan bomnyul*” (Laws on National Holidays) (October 1, 1949), “*Gakjong ginyeomil deunge gwanhan gyujeong*” (Regulations on Various Memorials) (March 30, 1973-June 19, 2002), “*Gukgyeongil beopjeongginyeomilui yeonhyeok*” (The Origin of National and Legal Holidays), etc.

The twelve rituals shown above were established by the state in order to commemorate Korean historical facts. This study will review the contents and uses of historical memory in due order of their enactment.

The first rituals enacted after nation building were four national holidays, i.e., “Samiljeol”, “Jeheonjeol”, “Gwangbokjeol”, and “Gaecheonjeol” in accordance with *gukgyeongile gwanhan beopryul* (A Law on National Holidays) enacted in October 1949. These four national holidays, above all other memorials, have been continuously celebrated as the most joyous occasions since their enactment in 1949 up to the present time. The common historical characteristics of these four national holidays are to celebrate independence from Japanese colonial rule and the nation building of the Republic of Korea in 1948.

But “Gaecheonjeol” (October 3) is dissimilar in character to the other three national holidays. Though the four holidays have something in common in cele-

brating nation building, “Gaecheonjeol” celebrates not the nation building of a modern state in 1948 but that of Gojoseon (Ancient Joseon), which is regarded as origin of the Republic of Korea. It celebrates not only the nation building of Gojoseon but also its founder King Dangun himself “to inherit his ideology of *Hongik ingan* (Devotion to the Welfare of Mankind) and to pray for the everlasting prosperity of the descendants” (Ministry of Government Administration 1997b: 10). “Gaecheonjeol”, celebrating both King Dangun symbolized as the “father” (a word of “Gaecheonjeol” song) of the nation in modern Korean society and King Dangun’s founding of Gojoseon, was enacted in 1949 but actually started being celebrated during Japanese colonial rule.

Through memorial ceremonies during the Japanese colonial rule, Dangun was gradually regarded as “the founder of Koreans” (*Chosun ilbo*, November 19, 1925) and he was effectively used as a mythical character to emphasize that the present Koreans are “a single race of pure blood” (*Chosun ilbo*, October 27, 1946). Thus, the ceremonies celebrating Dangun have continued after the liberation and have also been used as a means to urge Korean solidarity to promote “the morale and unity of Koreans” (*Maeil sinbo*, November 8, 1945), to recover aspirations toward national construction and long-lost racial self-esteem, and to achieve “independence as soon as possible” (*Chosun ilbo*, October 29, 1946). The contents of this memorial have been cherished since nation building to present times, and the memory of *Dangun* has concentrated on emphasizing the racial purity and eternity using phrases such as “the permanent prosperity of Korea and Korean people with history from time immemorial” (President Park Chung Hee’s Congratulatory Speech on “Gaecheonjeol”, October 3, 1964).

Speaking of the use of national holidays, “Gaecheonjeol” has diminished in its national importance compared to other national holidays. On the contrary, “Samiljeol” (March 1) and “Gwangbokjeol” (August 15), connected directly or indirectly with modern state building in 1948, have been used effectively in modern Korean society. For instance, in terms of whether a president attended the national holiday ceremony and delivered a congratulatory speech or not, not a case on “Gaecheonjeol” could be found under the Rhee Syngman regime during 1948-1960. During 1961-1987, during the Park Chung Hee and Jeon Du Hwan regimes, there was a presidential congratulatory speech every year, but there were none from Roh Tae Woo’s regime (1988) to Kim Dae Jung’s regime (2002). The same tendency could be applied to “Jecheonjeol”, but on “Samiljeol” and Gwanbokjeol there has always been a presidential congratulatory speech every year, except for a few instances during the Korean War under the Rhee

Syngman regime. After all, “Samiljeol”, celebrating the struggle for independence against the Japanese colonial rule, and “Gwangbokjeol”, celebrating liberation and nation building, have provided important historical memory positively used by the state in modern society since the foundation of Korea. After nation building started and up present times there has been no discrepancy in congratulatory contents regards both “Samiljeol” and Gwanbokjeol. The March First Movement, celebrating the March First National Independence Movement in 1919, has always been the peak of proud “racial independence” (President Roh Tae Woo’s Congratulatory Speech on “Samiljeol” on March 1, 1988) and has also been symbolized as a racial “compass, signal, and milestone” (President Park Chung Hee’s Congratulatory Speech on “Samiljeol” March 1, 1965). Gwanbokjeol, celebrating both historical facts about the liberation on August 15, 1945 and nation building commencing August 15, 1948, has passed on to the present the pleasure of liberation and independent nation building. After all, “Samiljeol” and “Gwangbokjeol”, celebrating historical facts that were the direct or indirect origin of modern nation building, have been the most important national holidays urging Korea’s legitimacy and sovereignty, regardless of changes of regimes.

Even though the key congratulatory points of the two national holidays have been reproduced without remarkable change, their uses have been altered according to the shift of regimes. The same memory of two historical facts for independence and nation building has continued as a means of urging the legitimacy of regimes and the justification of their “yes” policy. For example, the spirit of independence of the March First Movement was used to justify the “*Seunggong*” (Destroying Communism) policy by Rhee Syngman’s regime, especially during the Korean War, and to justify “the military coup d’etat on May 16, 1961” and the “*Yusin*” (the October Revitalizing Reforms) by the Park Chung Hee regime. Without any exception, from Chun Doo Hwan’s regime to Kim Dae Jung’s regime, the memory of the March First Movement has been recalled and reproduced to urge their legitimacy or to justify a series of their policies like “Northern Policy,” and “*Gyeongje wigi geukbok*” (Dealing Successfully with Economic Crisis).

The same thing can be said of “Gwangbokjeol”. What is particularly noteworthy of “Gwangbokjeol” is that there has been continuous discussion as to “the completion of the restoration of independence” or “new nation building” up to the present. The discussions about nation building that generated primarily centering around “Gwangbokjeol” are as follows: “*Saenara geonseol*” (New

Nation Building) during the Rhee Syngman regime (President Rhee Syngman's Inaugural Speech July 24, 1948), the "Second Restoration of Independence" (President Park Chung Hee's Congratulatory Speech on "Gwangbokjeol" of August 15, 1966), "Nation Reconstruction" (President Park Chung Hee's New Year Speech on January 1, 1962), "New Korea" (President Kim Yong Sam's Inaugural Speech February 25, 1993), and the "Second Nation Building" (President Kim Dae Jung's Congratulatory Speech on "Gwangbokjeol" of August 15, 1998). As mentioned above, the spirit of independence and nation building inherited through "Samiljeol" and "Gwangbokjeol" has been used to urge policy and legitimacy according to the needs of regimes. The tendency for regimes to celebrate historical memory according to their political needs can be applied to other memorial days enacted afterwards.

Other memorial rituals after enacting four national holidays in 1949 were the "Students' Day" enacted in 1953, the "Memorial Day," and "*Yugio sabyeon ginyeomil*" (the Korean War Memorial) enacted in 1956 during President Rhee Syngman's regime. Among these memorials, Students' Day, celebrating Gwangju Students' Anti-Japanese Uprising in 1929, and *Chungmugong Tansinil*, celebrating Admiral Yi Sun-shin's birthday (he fought against the Japanese invasion during the Joseon Dynasty), had been observed non-officially after liberation or from Japanese colonial rule. They were officially enacted as national holidays in 1953 and 1967 respectively. Both of the above historical facts remind Korean people of the spirit of independence and patriotism.

Students' Day on November 3 is a memorial day celebrating the students' independence uprising during Japanese colonial rule. This day had been observed after liberation and was officially enacted as a national holiday in 1953. Gradually, this day became of no use to the state so was abolished in 1973 by Park Chung Hee, but was restored again in 1984. Compared with other historical facts relating to independence movements enacted and celebrated as national holidays, it is interesting for this day to have been neglected and abolished. This day will be reviewed in detail and compared with the "Anti-Communist Students' Day." Very probably, this day was abolished because of the political purpose in which Park Chung Hee's regime wanted to strengthen its ideology, i.e. anti-communism on the one hand, and to stop students' anti-government demands and movements on the other.

Followed by Students' Day, there were other memorial days such as "Hyeonchungil" enacted in 1956 and *Yugio sabyeon ginyeomil* (the Korean War Memorial) officially enacted in 1973 but observed unofficially by Rhee

Syngman's regime during 1950s soon after the Korean War. The war memorial was a typical case of emphasizing anti-North Korean sentiment and anti-communism until the 1980s. Up to the 1980s, North Korea had been regarded as "communist puppet," or "communist gang," etc. (President Park Chung Hee's Commemorative Speech on the Korean War June 25, 1966), and also regarded as the "enemy" who had invaded liberalist South Korea (President Rhee Syngman's Commemorative Speech on the Korean War June 25, 1957). After all, the dichotomy that North Korea was evil and South Korea good was inherited to, and strengthened by President Park Chung Hee's regime, and also used to justify the "Defeat Communism" and "Victory over Communism" spirit upheld by military regimes. But the contents of memory have been changed superficially since 1990s. In particular, the antagonistic expressions against North Korea began to disappear because, around 1990, the government took a more peaceful posture toward North Korea, and, in due course, Kim Dae Jung favored the "Sunshine Policy" instead of the "Defeat Communism Policy."

Besides other war memorial days, "Hyeonchungil" which commemorates the war dead has passed on to us, as with other war memorials, advocating anti-communism and anti-North Korean sentiment. Particularly, the war dead have been respected as national heroes in modern Korean society since the enactment of "Hyeonchungil". The war dead represent pillars of anti-communism and patriotism and act as symbols of a divided country; they have also been chosen almost as "gods" that support the present nation. The death of these patriots was respected and commemorated as "torches for national independence and prosperity" (President Park Chung Hee's Commemorative Speech on "Hyeonchungil" on June 6, 1972), "the great sacrifice for liberty and democracy" (President Kim Dae Jung's Commemorative Speech on "Hyeonchungil" June 6, 2000), and "safeguards for national foundation" (President Park Chung Hee's Commemorative Speech on "Hyeonchungil" June 6, 1966). Thus, the war dead were not only symbolized as national safeguards but have been used in reality to enforce such national ideologies as anti-communism and patriotism.

During the 1960s-1970s, Chungmugong Tansinil was enacted as a national holiday in 1967, and the "April 19 Student Revolution Memorial" was enacted in 1973. Unfortunately, the latter was commemorated to justify President Park's regime, assumed by a coup d'état. But at the beginning Park's regime he superficially celebrated the April 19 Uprising as a "monumental achievement of democratic ideology" (President Park Chung Hee's Commemorative Speech on April 19 Student Revolution Memorial April 19, 1962), praising its democratic ideolo-

gy. In the latter part of the 1960s, it ceased to be observed as a memorial day. It could be easily assumed that President Park's regime regarded the student force that brought down President Rhee Syngman and had fought against his authoritative regime as a threat and a burden. For example, President Park's regime did not celebrate the "April 19 Students' Revolution Memorial"; it even suppressed the students' own celebration physically.

Kim Yong Sam's regime during the 1990s revitalized the "April 19 Revolution" which had hitherto only been observed just for the sake of observing it. It emphasized the emergence of the first democratic regime in history, launched a series of propaganda urging its democratic legitimacy, and accordingly reevaluated the student revolution. In 1994, it changed the existing term "uprising" into the present "revolution," and in 1997 upgraded the student cemetery to a national one. Recently, the student revolution was highly regarded as the "flames of democracy and justice" (President Kim Dae Jung's Commemorative Speech on April 19 Student Revolution Memorial April 18, 1998).

Contrasting this, *Chungmugong Tansinil*, enacted as a memorial by President Park's regime, is different from other memorials in view of its political uses. Admiral Yi Sun-shin is the only real person whose birthday has been celebrated as a memorial in modern Korean society. The celebration of Admiral Yi Sun-shin, revived as a "great man of a nation" (*Chosun Ilbo* May 26, 1932) during Japanese colonial rule, was inherited after nation building. The President Park regime reevaluated Admiral Yi as a "sacred hero of the nation" (President Park Chung Hee's Commemorative Speech on *Chungmugong Tansinil* April 28, 1970) symbolizing national pride, loyalty, and sacrifice. Of course, this memorial was not only observed as a cult and celebration of personality but was used and inherited in accordance with the political purposes of each regime. In particular, President Park's regime actively took advantage of this memorial to justify his military regime, enhance national loyalty, and strengthen "Korean-style" democracy. In spite of the discrepancy of the political aims of each regime, Admiral Yi Sun-shin has been remembered as a "hero of the nation" who represents national pride up to the present time.

The above memorials enacted by Rhee Syngman's and Park Chung Hee's regimes during the 1950s-1970s were observed without failure but new changes took place during the 1990s. The transition from a military regime to democratic government in the 1990s fundamentally caused these changes to occur. The first change aimed at securing the legitimacy of the regime at the time apart from

past military regimes. The second change that occurred was for the democratic regime to meet the civil demand of restoring historical facts forgotten by past oppressive regimes. The former cases were “*Imsijeongbusurip Ginyeomil*” (Memorial for Establishment of the Provisional Government) enacted by the Roh Tae Woo regime in December 1989 and “*Sungukseonyeolui Nal*” (Memorial for Patriotic Forefathers) enacted by Kim Yong Sam’s regime in 1997. The latter case was “*Oilpal Minjuhwa Undong Ginyeomil*” (Memorial for the May 18 Democratization Movement) enacted by Kim Yong Sam’s regime in 1997.

The above memorials enacted by Roh Tae Woo’s and Kim Yong Sam’s regimes during the 1990s resulted from the needs to establish their identities. In other words, the most popular and useful events cutting off the military regimes and promoting identity during the 1990s were to find out historical facts and figures relating to independence movements during Japanese colonial rule. Of course, the typical events to symbolize the national identity in such legal cases as the constitution and national rituals of the past were connected with independence movements. In reality, historical events and figures connected with anti-communism could be said to be more popular and useful. Accordingly, a series of restorations of historical facts and figures relating to independence movements during the 1990s were not so much the restorations of the memories of forgotten independence movements as the intentions of negating military regimes that had been based on anti-communism and anti-North Korea. These changes began to occur when the provisional government of Korea despised by President Park Chung Hee’s regime in 1962 was again inserted in the preamble of the revised Constitution in 1987.

Also, a memorial for the “*Imsijeongbusurip Ginyeomil*” of April 13, 1919 was enacted. Another memorial called “*Sunguk Seonyeolui Nal*” for patriotic forefathers who had fought and died for independence movements during Japanese colonial rule was enacted by President Kim Yong Sam’s regime in the symbolic context of clearing remnants of Japanese colonial rule. But a question remains unsolved as to whether the historical memories of these two memorials enacted to symbolize each government’s identity were really restored not from a legal viewpoint but from a practical social point of view.

Apart from the above memorials actively enacted by the state, the memorial for the Gwangju Democratization Movement was enacted to meet social demand. The Gwangju Incident that occurred in 1980 and was regarded as “anti-nation,” “revolt,” or a “riot” was reevaluated as a “national activity” that

“contributed to the development of democracy in Korea” (A Law on Honorable Treatment of Persons of Merit in the Gwangju Democratization Movement). This was an epoch-making turning point because the historical fact oppressed and forgotten by the state was reevaluated as the “torches of protecting democracy and leading the future of democracy” (President Kim Dae Jung’s Commemorative Speech on May 18 Democratization Movement May 18, 2000) and was also enacted as a national memorial.

The above-mentioned memorials, including the Memorial for May 18 Democratization Movement in Gwangju, enacted during the 1990s are indexes to changes of rituals celebrating the historical memory after liberation up to the present. Moreover, the restoration of the current historical memory was started, in the context of each regime’s symbolization, primarily to break from the military regimes of the past and to emphasize the newly born democratic regimes. Consequently, among the present national memories there coexist the history reflecting the ideology of extreme leftists during the Cold War and the history symbolizing democracy against authoritative national power. Thus, the irony that opposing historical facts and figures have over time been assigned as the same official memorials by the state can also be seen in other national symbols.

Symbolic Places: National Cemeteries and Memorial Halls

The national cemeteries and memorial halls constructed in Korean society after liberation up to now are the typical “places of memory” to reconstruct and transmit historical memories through the medium of space aside from the above-mentioned rituals at that time. There are three places designated as national cemeteries at present: the National Cemetery at Dongjakdong, the April 19 Cemetery at Suyuri, and the May 18 Cemetery in Mangweol-dong, Gwangju.¹

1. The National Cemetery at Dongjakdong began its function as a military cemetery in 1954, unknown soldiers were buried there from 1956, and a law on constructing a military cemetery was enacted as presidential law in 1956. Soon, it reached the end of its capacity. A branch of the national cemetery was planned and began to be constructed in the middle of the 1970s. Burials began in 1982 and it officially became a national cemetery in 1985 (Daejeon). The April 19 National Cemetery began to be enlarged and consecrated from 1993 onwards, and it officially became a national cemetery in July 1997. The May 18 Cemetery, originally made after the Gwangju Incident in 1980, began to be enlarged in 1994 and was finished in 1997. It officially became a national cemetery in July 2002 (Presidential Law No. 17667) after people related to

Table 2. National Symbols and Historical Facts

Classification		Kinds	Year Enacted	Historical Facts (Period)
Memorial Spaces	National Cemetery	<i>Dongjakdong & Daejeon</i> April 19 National Cemetery May 18 National Cemetery	1956 & 1985 1997 2002	The Korean War (1950) & Independence Movement (Japanese Colonial Rule) April 19 Revolution (1960) Gwangju Democratization Movement (1980)
	Memorial Hall	Independence Hall War Memorial	1987 1994	Independence Movement (Japanese Colonial Rule) The Korean War (1950)

Source: Remade on the basis of “*Gungnip (gun) myojiryjeong*” (Statute on the National Military Cemetery) (April 13, 1956 - December 20, 1997), “*Gungnip 4.19 myojigyujeong*” (Regulation on the National April 19 Cemetery) (April 25, 1997 - July 10, 2002), and “*Gungnip 5.18 myojigyujeong*” (Regulation on the National May 18 Cemetery) (July 10, 2002).

There are also two places designated as memorial halls: the Independence Memorial Hall at Cheonan and the War Memorial Hall at Yongsan.² Table 2 below shows the kinds of memorial places and historical facts relating to the spaces.

The national cemeteries and memorial halls shown above are the major memorial spaces that have been established by the state in modern Korean society. This study will review the contents and uses of the historical memory they symbolize in due order of their establishment.

The National Cemetery at Dongjakdong designated as a national cemetery in 1956 was the first of such national symbolic spaces. The original military cemetery at Dongjakdong for the war dead during the Korean War began with the burials of patriots and fighters for national independence and has been a national cemetery since 1965. However, while over 90% of the buried were from the military, over 80% of them were war deaths: 10% is the police, patriots, people who contributed to the national growth. I just want to emphasize that the national cemeteries are in fact centered around the war and soldiers. In a word, the symbolic spaces of the national cemeteries at Dongjakdong and Daejeon were

the Gwangju Democratization Movement were designated as persons of national merit in January 2002.

2. Work started on Independence Memorial Hall in 1982 and it opened in 1987. Work started on the War Memorial Hall in 1990 and it opened in 1994.

formed as places that honored and remembered all those who died in the war. The memorial towers and monuments at national cemeteries stand for the crystallized spirit of loyalty and sacrifice for the nation. The sacrifice of the soldiers who “died as safeguards of the nation” (An Epitaph for the War Records of Ranger Troops) and the patriotism in a verse such as “The country and people are my love” (A Dedicated Poem for *Chungyeoldae*) are the typical contents of memory reproduced through the national cemeteries.

The national cemeteries at Dongjakdong and Daejeon have been the most typical symbolic spaces in terms of size, symbolism, and political use up to the present. The national cemetery at Dongjakdong integrated and constructed for the war dead of the Korean War is the national ritual place either on “Hyeonchungil,” commemorating the war dead, or on “Yugiosabyeon ginyeomil,” Korean War Memorial Day. Besides this, the national cemetery is not only a ritual place of worship after national ceremonies such as “Samiljeol” and “Gwangbokjeol” but is also the place at which the president and politicians pay reverence after a presidential inauguration or other political events.

In modern Korean society, the war dead symbolizing the divided country and anti-communism have been worshiped as “gods” of the nation through the space of the national cemetery, which has been developed together with the construction of other symbolic spaces, i.e. the memorial halls. While the national cemeteries make us recall historical memory directly through various rituals commemorating the buried there instead of the facts themselves, memorial halls are spaces that do precisely that and recall historical facts. There are two memorial halls: Dongnip Ginyeomgwan and Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan which opened in 1987 and 1994 respectively. The historical facts commemorated at both memorial halls are the independence movements, and the war, which are not so different from what is observed at national cemeteries.

Dongnip Ginyeomgwan (Independence Hall) is the space recalling the historical facts concerning the March 1 Movement and other minor activities. Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan (War Memorial Hall) is the space remembering the historical facts about ancient wars, but mainly the Korean War which started in 1950. The core of memory commemorated at both memorial halls is patriotism itself such as the state-protection spirit, the victory of national demonstrations and sacrifices. While the national cemeteries are rather symbolic spaces of recalling and worshipping, the memorial halls are not only spaces of recalling the historical memory but are also the practical places where real education takes occurs.

The educational function of memorial halls is fulfilled by visuals such as pictures, photos, artifacts, etc. in exhibition rooms. For example, such subjects as “Love of Country and People, Indomitable Independence Spirit” (statue of invincible Koreans) in the Independence Hall and “Heroes Who Defended the Country against War” (statue of heroes who defended the country) are the contents of memorial halls that teach “the lessons of history” to the postwar generation through historical facts about independence movements and the War. Memorial halls are used as “practical places of real education to root the lessons of war in the mind” (President Kim Yong Sam’s Opening Speech on War Memorial Hall June 10, 1994).

While symbolic spaces such as national cemeteries and memorial halls have been used to commemorate independence movements and wars since the 1950s, other symbolic spaces to celebrate the historical memory have been built since the latter part of 1990s. They were the cemeteries in Suyuri, Seoul, and Mangweol-dong, Gwangju designated as national cemeteries in 1997 and 2002 respectively. The Suyuri Cemetery for the victims of the April 19 Revolution in 1960 and the Mangweol-dong Cemetery in Gwangju for the victims of the Gwangju Democratization Movement are memorial spaces commemorated by civil society and organizations including relatives and students, and became the national ritual places under the President Kim Yong Sam (Sailgu) and President Kim Dae Jung (Oilpal) regimes. The historical facts relating to the above two places concern democratization movements and they were designated as national symbolic spaces to urge each government’s democratic legitimacy. One type is the Dongjakdong and Daejeon National Cemeteries for the war dead, and the other is the Suyuri and Mangweol-dong National Cemeteries for the victims of democratization movements. However, from the viewpoint of practical and political usage, the three sanctuaries are not quite the same. Nowadays, the most symbolic places explicitly showing the national identity of Korea are the *Dongjakdong* and *Daejeon* National Cemeteries. As was mentioned above, major national ceremonies such as “Hyeonchungil”, “Samiljeol”, and “Gwangbokjeol” take place at these places. No president fails to visit and worship these places when he takes or leaves office.

In spite of a considerable difference in view of their political uses, it is regarded as a significant turning point that the meaning of such symbolic cemeteries as Suyuri and Mangweol-dong were maintained for the last fifty years since 1950s has been divided. Up until now, “the dead for nation” during the colonial rule and the war have been respected as national patriots as “the dead

for nation” but “those killed by the nation” have been reevaluated as national patriots recently in modern Korean society. In short, the spaces symbolizing anti-communism or democracy testify to the changes of government from oppressive military regimes in the past to democratic regimes from the 1990s onwards. As a result, an irony has occurred in that opposing facts and figures in character are altogether revered as national “gods.”³

Commemoration: Symbolic (Re)Construction of Korean National Identity

Up to now, this study has reviewed the process of reproducing historical memory through national rituals and symbolic spaces in modern Korean society after nation building. Two distinctive features can be found relating to the ways of promoting national identity. First, the primary feature is the way of promoting the identity of nation and state of Korea itself, reviving the ancient. Above all, *Dangun* has been the most popular subject to promote the identity of modern “Koreans” or the “Republic of Korea”. *Dangun* has been used to reproduce the belief in the purity and eternity of the Korean people who “have continuously maintained homogeneity” (President Park Chung Hee’s Congratulatory Speech on “Gaecheonjeol” October 3, 1975) for five thousand years. In particular, the tendency of indulging in the origin of nation and state through “Gaecheonjeol” resulted in promoting this eternity, emphasizing “the everlasting prosperity of nation and state in long historical succession” (President Park Chung Hee’s Congratulatory Speech on “Gaecheonjeol” October 3, 1964).

The emphasis on the ancient origins of the state and nation have resulted in reproducing and strengthening the belief in the everlasting continuity of state and nation in the future, urging the idea of succession from ancient times to the present. This tendency can generally be found in the symbolic forms to reproduce nation and state. For example, the expression of the eternity of state and

³ Relating to this, there is a discussion whether or not to include communists as fighters for national independence during Japanese colonial rule. If honorable treatment for communists is legally realized, Korean national identity will be more complex, and even more complicated after the unification of Korea. From now on, a series of symbolizations by the state should not be used temporarily according to the political needs of successive regimes, but should be the long-term duty of the state in order to positively cut off the past and establish a new Korean national identity.

nation by exhibiting traditional materials can be found at Dongnip Ginyeomgwan and Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan. At the Dongnip Ginyeomgwan, there is the Korean-style roof of the hall, a copy of the main shrine of *Sudeoksa* Temple constructed during the Goryeo Dynasty, the “Gyeore-ui Tap” (the Tower of the Korean Nation) designed according to *Taegeuk* (the Great Ultimate), a statue attesting to the natural beauty of the heaven pond on the top of Baekdu Mountain, and a tower symbolizing *Sasindo* (a painting of the four deities). At the Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan, the design of *Taegeuk*, the statue of Chungmugong, and the Stele of King Gwanggaeto Tomb during the Goguryeo Dynasty, etc. are used to express the identity of the nation and state. These memorial halls have symbolized the eternity of the nation and state using these materials, emphasizing the “imperishability of the nation” (“Gyeo-ui Tap” at Dongnip Ginyeomgwan) and “everlasting prosperity” (“Hoguk chumosil” at Jeonjaeng Ginyeomgwan).

In modern society, the state has effectively used ancient figures and traditional materials in the process of reproducing historical memory through rituals and memorial spaces in order to promote the present identity of the state and nation, and furthermore, into the future. In other words, in modern society, one of the most important materials to promote nation, state, and the identity of state is “the ancient.” It can be easily understood that the state has quoted and politically used the historical reality of the nation and state in the contemporary society. The idea that a state has taken advantage of its nation via political discourse and ideology for powerful social integration can be regarded as modern. But it can be interpreted that this phenomenon is not so much an entirely artificial creation or fabrication that did not exist in the pre-modern age.

The second feature is related to the way of emphasizing the identity of each government. While the first case mentioned above has continued and reproduced without conflict or change, this second one is the case of abolishment, distortion, or restoration. The memorial days and national cemeteries created during the 1990s and beyond are good examples. Of course, “Ban Gonghaksaengui Nal” (the Anti-Communist Students’ Day), enacted by President Park Chung Hee’s regime alongside the previous Students’ Day, is another example made in the same context. This day, enacted in 1956 and abolished in 1973, was case used by the regime to strengthen its ideology of anti-communism instead of promoting a Students’ Day evaluated as being “the biggest struggle for national liberation after the March 1 Movement” (*Chosun Ilbo*, November 3, 1949).

The memorial days and national cemeteries relating to liberation and democ-

ratization movements enacted and established in the 1990s were born in the process where President Kim Yong Sam's and Kim Dae Jung's regimes tried to deny previous military regimes' legitimacy in order to create distinctive identities of their own. A characteristic is shown above where historical memory has been reproduced through antagonism and conflict between the state and civil society. A few good examples are as follows: the state newly enacted a memorial day for forgotten patriots relating to liberation movements during the 1990s, and the Uprising in *Gwangju* that was previously viewed as anti-state was reevaluated as a pro-democratization activity.

The above-mentioned reproduction of historical memory refreshed by the state in Korean society was due to, primarily, changes of regimes and the demand and struggle of civil society against the one-sided institutionalization of historical memory manufactured by the state. On the one hand, this process shows that the historical memory institutionalized by the state in Korea has paralleled the influence of civil society to a considerable degree. Particularly, this case can be clearly shown in the incidents connected with anti-communism and democratization that happened in modern times after nation building. On the other hand, this process also shows that even historical memory reproduced solely by the state in modern Korean society has failed to last long without national consensus, and even historical memory which the state tried to efface from society has not been forgotten either. After all, this phenomenon shows that in modern Korean society there is a limit to the one-sided and oppressive way of memory production in the process of the state's institutionalizing and reproducing historical memory.

Conclusion

The "paces of memory" produced by the state in modern society are social systems that connect the past of a nation to the present, the present to the future, thus forming the present national identity. The ones a state will choose and celebrate among the various historical facts available depends on the character of the state, and such is then handed down to the future. In this respect, this study has reviewed the contents and uses of historical memory reproduced by the state through rituals and memorial spaces in modern Korean society.

After nation building in 1948 and up to the present, the most conspicuous change in the historical memories used by the state was the emergence of demo-

cratic regimes during the 1990s. The trend of change during this period was to restore facts and figures relating to liberation movements during Japanese rule and to reevaluate the democratization movements in light of the state's oppressive rule in modern times. Historical memory that had continued up until then since the building of the nation was added to the former, whereas new historical memory has been added to the latter.

In addition to the conspicuous changes, the historical memory has been used and transformed to symbolize the identity of government and to promote political interests up to the present. But the materials and methods that symbolize the identity of the Republic of Korea as a state and nation have been passed down without any remarkable change until the present time. In conclusion, to emphasize the eternity and purity of the state and nation by means of traditional materials of the past, the typical way the national community of the "Republic of Korea" has been formed from a symbolic point of view, urging that the present "Republic of Korea" is a continuation from ancient times to the present and into the future.

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Kim Hyeon-Seon received her Ph.D. in sociology from The Academy of Korean Studies. Her major field of study is sociology of history, politics, and culture.