

Special Feature

Memories of Migrant Labor: Stories of Two Korean Nurses Dispatched to West Germany

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“We needed migrant labor and thus invited them. But those who came were people.”
(German immigration officer)

Women’s Migratory Labor during the 1960s and 1970s

Using the oral life-history testimonies of two Korean nurses (*ganhosa*) dispatched to West Germany (*padok*), this article analyzes what these two women remember and how they give meaning to their migration experience. The nurses recall how they were treated in Germany, how Germany meant a land of opportunity to them, and how they felt about their image as “honeybees.” If what these two women are talking about is different from the official discourse that says their migration was engineered to bring in foreign exchange earnings and their migratory labor had the political economic effect of propelling Korean economic growth, then how should that discrepancy be understood?

Readers might ask, “What can we learn from the stories of two women?” What baffled me when I interviewed the two nurses was that in their memory their migration to Germany was based on their own choices. They maintained that, rather than experiencing discrimination as migrants, they were treated well by Germans, and Germany to them was “a land of opportunity.” While agreeing that it is a good thing if in fact their work contributed to Korea’s economic growth, the nurses do not seem to dwell much on their contribution to the national economy.

Recently, the migrant (*ijumin*) population in South Korea has been growing rapidly. As a result, discrimination, violence, and human rights violations against migrant workers are emerging as a major social issue. If we look back our recent past, however, we can easily find Korean individuals, from the late 1960s on, who suffered abroad in situations similar to what today’s migrant workers in Korea are facing. Among them are “workers sent to Germany” (*padok nodongja*). We know that many of them left Korea and spent their youth abroad because of economic difficulties, unable to make ends meet in Korea. How do they view their past and present today?

So far, not many scholars have paid attention to *padok* workers (among those who have are Yi Huiyeong 2005; Choe Jaehyeon 1992; Park Changyeong et al. 2003; Kim Yongchul 2006; and Na Hyesim 2008 and 2009). Even though the *padok* workforce from 1964 to 1972 was larger than those who went to other countries, as is shown in Table 1, these workers have been excluded from mainstream historical narratives. Although on occasion their role as “hidden actors

Table 1 Koreans working abroad: 1966 to 1975

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
West Germany	723	216	9	450	832	360	624	763	962	407
Switzerland	14						14			
Australia	39						20	19		
Spain	1									
Japan	233						47	78	78	
Vietnam (unknown)	-	-								

* Source: Kim Munsil et al. (2003):300.

of economic growth” is mentioned, historical accounts in large part perpetuate a stereotypical memory of *padok* workers as “those who left the country to earn money during the period when Korea was a very poor country and it was hard to make a living in Korea.”

What would have been the meaning of “nursing” to those who set off for Germany during the 1960s and 1970s? To answer that question, we must first grasp the meaning of “nursing work” in Germany during that period. In most European countries, nursing was closely related to religious good deeds and charity work for poverty relief. When nursing was done outside the home it was related to relief work for poor people in the street, and nuns were usually the ones who performed the work. Similarly, in the modern period, convents or municipal hospitals were charged with this line of work, and the work of providing service to poor people was regarded as a job only suitable for people of a similar impecunious background or even lower strata. In Germany too, the nursing work Korean women came to perform was something not preferred by local women, and generally church institutions were the main service providers. In short, when Korean nurses were sent to Germany, nursing work was one of the menial “3D” (difficult, dirty, and dangerous) jobs there (Na Hyesim 2008:279).

Historically, essential institutions for international migration between South Korea and Germany were lacking (Kim Yongchan 2006:3). Foreign worker hiring policy was implemented after the German minister of the Federal Department of Labor signed a support agreement with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs for the first time in December 1955. In its initial stage, foreign workers saturated the German labor market as Germany concluded state-level agreements with

neighboring European countries and Turkey. The number of foreign workers entering West Germany grew from 80,000 in 1955 to 2.6 million in 1973. But after 1964, applicants from European countries, which were witnessing much improved employment conditions, plummeted, and a labor shortage reached its peak in the period between 1967 and 1970. At this point, Germany decided to allow workers to stay longer than five years, departing from its so-called rotation policy. Even so, it became impossible to find nurses from within Europe, the boundary of foreign worker invitation policy up to that point. Increasingly, people from European countries did not approve of sending women abroad to work in hospitals, sanitariums, and nursing homes. For example, Turks and Greeks thought that living apart from family would not be safe for unmarried women and that their chances of marriage after returning home would be adversely affected (Na Hyesim 2008:263-72; Overseas Koreans Foundation 2003:441).

Roughly speaking, the *padok* history of Korean nurses can be divided into three stages. The first stage is between the late 1950s and 1966, during which Christian organizations initiated *padok*. The first *padok* of women occurred in 1959 through Steyler Mission, a German Catholic organization. This first batch of women went to Germany as students of nursing. When they completed language and social adjustment training and three years of professional education, they could expect to become regular nurses upon passing an examination. Korean women who went to Germany as nursing students called their move “study abroad in nursing” (*ganho yuhak*). We can understand this view more easily when we consider the fact that they belonged to a social group that had relatively limited educational opportunities,

Table 2 Korean nurses and nurse’s aids who went to Germany

Year	Number of workers	Year	Number of workers
1959~1964	1,043	1971	1,363
1966	627	1972	1,449
1967	421	1973	1,182
1968	91	1974	1,206
1969	837	1975	459
1970	1,717	1976	62
		Total	10,457

* Source: Overseas Koreans Foundation (2003):445.

compared to the rest of the South Korean population (Na Hyesim 2008:263, 273). Christian organizations that sponsored the migration of these women did so in order to provide general and occupational education to girls in poverty as part of developmental aid programs for poor countries. In the late 1950s, Dr. Yi Jongsu of Universität Düsseldorf tried to bring people to Germany to train service personnel, but the project initially stalled. Later, in March 1960 he accomplished his goal of sending people to Germany when he succeeded in mobilizing the help of the Secretary General of the Headquarters of Berlin Methodist Women's Mission and through that connection the Association of Korean Methodist Church decided to foot the travel expenses of the group. Germans changed their attitudes after witnessing the work ethic of the Korean women, and they invited 20, 26, and 82 more Korean women into Germany in 1962, 1963, and 1964, respectively (Asan Foundation 1988:125; *Chosun Ilbo*, 1963.11.3 and 1964.11.7).

The second stage began when Dr. Yi Sugil started a massive *padok* project in 1966 (Na Hyesim 2008:268). From this period on those who went through regular nursing training in Korea were sent to Germany, and the Korean Foreign Development Corporation (*Hanguk haeoe gaebal gongsu*) began to assume the role of a central coordinating body for the export of manpower. The third and last stage is the period when the *padok* became an inter-governmental business, after the Korean and German governments signed an official agreement on the hiring of nurses. The agreement set the quota for *padok* workers. This agreement had a fixed term until the end of year 1974, and the ratio between nurses and nurse's aids was set at 1:5. The actual ratio between them, however, failed to follow the agreement: the ratio in 1970 was 1:1.05, that in 1971 was 1:2.74, and in 1972, 1:1.3 (Na Hyesim 2008:265-6; Asan Foundation 1988:131-32).

The *padok* of Korean nurses is usually viewed as a government-controlled group employment project. But the government was not in charge of it from beginning to end. Some claim that it was one of the achievements of the Park Chung Hee regime, but, as we have seen, it was only in 1969 that an agreement was concluded between the two governments. Until then civilian organizations and medical institutions of the two countries played a prime role in employing these nurses. In addition, the Korean government lacked policy measures to assist *padok* workers. Support for their settling in a foreign country and their readjustment back in Korea after their return was almost nonexistent (Yi Sugil 2007:12).

In the case of mine workers, *padok* started in 1963 and continued until 1978. Until 1980, the Deutsche marks that a total of 7,936 *padok* miners and 10,032

padok nurses remitted to Korea were an important means of “foreign exchange earnings” (*oehwa beori*) and for solving the domestic labor surplus problem before the advent of a loan economy (*cha-gwan gyeongje*). At present, about 5,000 out of the over 20,000 *padok* workers continue to live in Germany, and some 5,000 *padok* workers eventually chose to immigrate to the Americas. Among Korean residents in Germany, the number of nurses is said to be about 500 today. The last Korean miner retired in 2003. From the perspective of international labor migration, these *padok* workers represented the largest voluntary emigration from Korea since the migration to Hawaii that occurred in the early twentieth century. Other distinctive characteristics of their migration include the fact that their migration history is rather short, compared to emigration to other regions of the world, and that subsequent waves of migration to Germany did not occur (Yi Suja 2006:193; Yi Yeongseok and Park Jaehong 2006:444).

Life Stories of Two Women: Park Hanmwam and Shin Gilsun

There were no prior personal connections between these two interviewees and myself when I conducted interviews with them. The interviews, however, went smoothly because the two interviewees were very active in the interview process and rather frank in talking about their private lives. Park Hanmwam and I shared an identity as researchers, and in the case of Shin I tried to create a relaxed environment by pointing to the fact that we are both “Seoulites.” Park lived in Germany for 26 years while Shin stayed there for 4 years, and their life trajectories show many differences.¹

Park Hanmwam²

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1. Shin returned to Korea early on—in 1972—and thus her resettlement in Korean society was rather easy. She lives a stable middle-class family life, although she once suffered from a serious illness of encephaloma.
 2. Park’s life history is as follows: 1948 born in Buyeo; 1967 became nursing assistant at National Medical Center (*Gungnip Jung-ang Uiryowon*); 1968 was part of tuberculosis personnel at Buyeo Public Health Clinic; May 1970 went to Germany as nurse; August 1970 to April 1979 was delivery room nurse at the Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic at Berlin Municipal Hospital, and worked at Urban Hospital and Berhring-Zehlendorf; April 1980 entered Freie Universität Berlin; 1980 on DAAD educational funding studied at Ewha Womans University graduate school (sociology and social education), experienced the “Spring of Seoul” and the Gwangju Struggle that year, and studied at Korea University (family sociology); 1984 German husband passed away in a hiking accident; March 1985 earned an M.A. from Freie

Park Hanmwam was born the eldest daughter among seven siblings (five boys and two girls) in Yang-am-myeon, Buyeo, in Chungcheongnam-do Province. As a young girl, she had to walk 10 to 20 *ri* to get to school. Thanks to her middle-school diploma, she was able to study for a year at the National Medical Center and work at the Buyeo Public Health Clinic for two years as part of their tuberculosis personnel. After going to Germany in 1970, Park worked as a nurse at the Berlin Municipal Hospital for nine years. At that time nurses worked under a three-shift system and their salaries were not low, compared to those of other occupations.³ Many German nurses shunned the graveyard shift and thus many Korean nurses ended up working in the night shift. Park had to work at night but also managed to attend a night school. She was thus able to sleep only several hours a day, and sleep deprivation was the hardest thing for her during those days. Still, despite all the difficulties she thinks that nursing, which everyone expresses thanks to, is the best possible profession.

Later, in 1980, she entered the Freie Universität Berlin (Berlin *Gungnip Jayu Daehak*) and earned a doctoral degree in sociology. She felt indignation when she saw the early, favorable attitude of the German media toward the May 1980 Gwangju Struggle changing around June of that year. She thought that it was because of U.S. influence. She also experienced campus life at Ewha Womans University in 1980, which was under heavy surveillance by the military and the police at the time. She is active in the Association of Korean Women in Germany (*Jaedok Hanguk yeoseong moim*), an association of *padok* nurses. And, as she herself says, she is still in the “trial and error” stage of adapting to Korean society. She is living in a farm house near the Green University in Hamyang. It has been hard for Park to readjust to Korean life since returning to Korea in 1996, after the death, in 1984, of her German husband, who had buttressed her life for ten years. As she put it in her interview,

Still, I thought that Hanshin University was the best in the activist movement (*undong*) in our country (*uri nara*) and the best, after Seoul National University, in terms of social activities, I came here thinking that. But in actuality even faculty members, I realized, did not want to take even one step if they didn't see

Universität Berlin (thesis: Status of Women in Nineteenth-Century Korea and Japan); November 1990 earned a Ph.D. degree in sociology from the same school; 1996 returned to Korea and taught at Hanshin University and Seoul Women's University. Currently Park is working at Green University (*Noksaek Daehak*) in Hamyang, Gyeongsangnam-do Province, in alternative education and support of multicultural families.

3. As of October 1966, 297 nurses were earning between 100 and 199 dollars, and 595 nurses were making between 200 and 299 dollars (800-1,196 marks). In other words, 66.7 percent of the nurses were making 800 marks or more. Asan Foundation (1988):138.

there was something in it that addressed their interests. I had a really difficult experience. So I began to think, “Ah, this is not a place for me to stay in Korea and in order to do something I need to do it in Seoul.” Thus I arrived at Seoul Women’s University and stayed there for three years. It was so hard. I was about to make a decision that it was not a place for me to live and I’d better go back to Germany when I saw the Green University on *Ohmynews* site. So I went to Hamyang without even knowing where it was located. I like Hamyang very much. Now, even until last year I couldn’t see [the vision]. But now, I think that if I suffer about two to three years more, I picked year 2012 as my target, by 2012 I might be able to start what I really want to do....

The Green University, which is an alternative education institution, is an unlicensed school with very weak infrastructure, and all Park Hanmwam was offered was a small office. It was hard for her to adjust to the Korean college environment as a person who went through college and graduate school in Germany and who has no personal connections or friends who could help her in Korea. I kept wondering if this university, where she was given little support, was the right place for her.

Shin Gilsun⁴

Shin was born in Hyochang-dong, Seoul on July 5, 1948 and grew up in a relatively well-to-do family. Although polio inconvenienced her life physically, her businessman father and her mother, who worked in the ice cream business, provided her with a comfortable life in her youth. Her physical disability and talent for art might have been the reason for her parents’ special fondness of her over other siblings. Her father encouraged her to apply to Seorabeol Art College because of her talent for art. It seems that it was also because her father wanted to realize his own life-long dream of studying art by proxy through his daughter. But Shin failed to get into college, and while preparing for the following year’s entrance examination,

4. Shin’s life history is as follows: 1948 born in Seoul; 1967 graduated from Sangmyeong Girls’ High School in Seoul; December 1968 went to West Germany as nurse (Stuttgart Böblingen); 1972 returned to Korea; 1975 married (1 son, 1 daughter); since 1976 has participated in the *Padok Nurses’ Friendship Society (Padok Gambosa Ujeonghoe)*, worked as assistant instructor at Goethe Institute of Korea, worked as interpreter for Kyunghee Medical Center, the Ministry of Justice, etc.; 1998 diagnosed with brain tumor and was cured by alternative medicine, especially hand acupuncture (*sujichim*) treatment. She is currently engaged in various educational activities for *Goryeo Sujichim* in European countries.

she decided to go to Germany. Her decision reflected the deteriorating financial situation of the family, which made supporting her college education difficult. Her journey to Germany, for which she had no preparation whatsoever, was delayed for a while because the East Berlin Incident.⁵ After arriving in Germany she gained recognition at her hospital because her German language skill improved faster than other Korean nurses. She was more persistent than others in learning German, combining language study with her nursing work. She wanted to go to school but could not do so for various reasons. Still, she did not give up hope and tried to become a computer programmer and an interpreter. In her fourth year of stay in Germany, she entered Korrespondenz Schule in Stuttgart, a school for translation and interpretation. In 1972, however, West Germany, deep in economic recession, forced Korean *padok* nurses to return to Korea, and Shin came home after four years abroad. She got married in Korea and has since been active in educational activities and as an interpreter for the Goethe Institute of Korea, Kyunghee Medical Center, and various embassies. She is learning Spanish now and dreams of speaking five languages. In the late 1990s she was diagnosed with a brain tumor and came close to death. She was able to recover from the illness using Goryeo sujichim, an alternative medicine. She is working to educate people in Europe in the Goryeo sujichim method and continues to work as an interpreter.

In the Name of a Daughter

Looking back, Park Hanmwam remembers,

the way we lived in those days seemed quite good although we were poor. Good for health, good for memory. All seem like good memories. But it was really poor and dirty, it was hard to make ends meet, and thus I didn't think about going to high school or college. To help my poor family I needed to go to a vocational

5. The East Berlin Incident was an espionage case the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) announced on July 8, 1967. The KCIA at the time claimed that 194 Korean students and Korean residents in Germany and France had received espionage training by North Korea through visits to the North Korean Embassy in East Berlin and to Pyongyang, and that they worked to spread communism in South Korea. Among the people included in the espionage ring were the composer Yun Isang and the painter Yi Eung-ro. Korean residents and students identified as spies were kidnapped in West Germany by KCIA personnel and forcefully transported to South Korea, provoking a diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

school, a nursing school, I thought that I had to do so...I took an examination to enter a nursing school in Gongju, but failed. In Gongju I saw students reading books in groves of trees, in groves and on hillsides, and I envied them very much. How come they are so fortunate as to being able to study like that. I was on a bus thinking about that and in those days countryside roads were unpaved. You know how dust was really bad on that kind of road. Then my bus passed the bus in front of us. At that moment I conjured up a hope, a hope that, even though I failed in the exam, I could build a good life. I never forget that memory.

Park Hanmwam, who was unable to continue her study because of the economic situation of her family and thus chose a nursing school, and Shin Gilsun, who failed to get into a college and was preparing to retake the college entrance examination, both experienced a certain inferiority complex, especially when looking at friends who were attending college. Similar experiences often appear in the memories of women preparing for *padok*. The Korean Foreign Development Corporation (KFDC) was located near Ewha Womans University, and the women, when getting on the bus with German language textbooks, were afraid of being asked whether they were students of German Language and Literature Department of Ewha (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:27).⁶

Before the August 1969 agreement between South Korea and West Germany, a total of 2,080 workers went to Germany, sponsored by Christian organizations, Dr. Yi Jongsu, and Dr. Yi Sugil. Table 3 shows the number of nurses and nurse's aids that the KFDC dispatched to West Germany (Overseas Koreans Foundation 2003:302; Asan Foundation 1988:131):

Table 3 Nurses and nurse's aids dispatched to West Germany by KFDC

	Prior to 1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	Total
Nurses	870	723	216	9	450	832	360	624	763	962	407	6,216
Nurse's Aids	0	297	191	0	62	875	988	815	419	255	63	3,965
Total	870	1,020	407	9	512	1,707	1,348	1,439	1,182	1,217	470	10,181

6. Yi Yeongsuk (1953-) was born the eldest daughter among seven siblings in Haenam county, Jeollanam-do. She earned a nursing assistant's license in 1971 at the KFDC and left for Germany the next year. She passed Abitur, a qualifying examination for college, and entered the medical school at Tübingen University, while working, until 1977, at Essen Catholic Hospital. Her German husband, who went through two brain surgeries, passed away in 1987 after suffering a relapse. Afterwards, she worked at private hospitals and at Tübingen University hospital while raising her son by herself. She herself was diagnosed with a brain tumor and lung cancer in 2005, and spine cancer in 2007, but after radiation therapy, she is doing well now. I have used Yi's autobiography in a limited way to complement the oral testimonies of Park and Shin.

Early on, the proportion of nurses from Seoul area was high, but gradually those from the countryside, especially from Jeolla provinces, grew. According to the *1966 Overseas Employment White Paper*, 53.1 percent of nurses came from Seoul, 10.7 percent from Gyeongsangbuk-do, and 8.5 percent from Jeollanam-do. But the December 1973 statistics quoted in Asan Foundation (1988) put the percentage of those from outside of Seoul at 86.7 percent, while Seoulites occupied 13.3 percent, reversing the ratio. Among those from the provinces, Jeollanam-do people were most numerous (21.3 percent), followed by those from Gyeongsangbuk-do (13.2 percent) and Jeollabuk-do (13 percent). The reason the proportion of Jeolla nurses grew rapidly was because the area, from early on, saw the establishment of schools sponsored by various religious groups and women from poor farmers' families possessed nursing skills. Nursing education was offered at the nursing and maternity facilities they went to work to earn a living. The fact that there were many nurses from Jeolla and Gyeongsang provinces boosted a sense of community among them, and newcomers were often helped by nurses from their home provinces (Asan Foundation 1988:124, 144-6; Kim Yongchan 2006:10).

Next, let us look at the educational backgrounds of *padok* nurses. According to the *1966 Overseas Employment White Paper*, published before the 1969 agreement, 14 percent of the *padok* nurses were four-year college graduates, 5 percent were two-year college (*chodae*) graduates, 78 percent were high-school graduates, and 3 percent were middle-school graduates. Over 97 percent of the nurses had a level of schooling beyond high school. The core of this group was comprised of nursing high school graduates. A survey of nurses who were sent out in December 1973 shows that 18.9 percent of them were middle-school graduates while high-school graduates were 65.7 percent, two-year college dropouts and graduates were 11.8 percent, and four-year college graduates were 3.5 percent. What is noticeable is the fact that the proportion of middle-school graduates jumped over six times in comparison to the 1966 statistics. The reason for this is related to the increase in the dispatch of nurse's aids following the 1969 agreement, in which the Korean side suggested the nurse to nurse's aid ratio to be 1:5. When trainees to fill nurse's aids positions were recruited in Korea, people with middle-school background were allowed to apply (Asan Foundation 1988:142-43; Yi Sugil 2007:17).

What propelled the two women to Germany? Park Hanmwam recalls: "[In 1967] at the National Medical Center it was a one-year thing. Because I at least had a middle-school diploma, I was able to apply. Middle-school graduates were to become nurse's aids. In other words, they were hiring public nurses. In

Chungcheongnam-do Province, in Buyeo-gun County....There were people who went [to Germany] ahead of me, from Buyeo. I, at that time, my mother's town was Chunghwa, and I worked in Chunghwa-myeon, my mother's village. From Guryong-myeon and Yesan-myeon there were people who went to Germany. I heard about them and they suggested that I join them in Berlin, saying that I didn't need to be afraid of Berlin and I could go to school there. That's why I went."

As we have seen, Shin Gilsun applied to go to Germany looking for a new vision, when she realized that her college education might put an undue burden on her parents. She recalls: "...I did not want to get a job, in Korea. At the time, everybody wore a [college] badge. [She laughs.] My friends were showing off their badges, this and that college badge, but I didn't have that, and I was going about cramming for entrance examination with a flaggy outfit. I didn't like that at all. So I took off. I liked it when I got to Germany. I got to travel here and there, which in my country I could never even dream of doing...."

In some cases women left for Germany after being persuaded by their fathers or other family members. For eldest daughters, a prescription to be a "good daughter" who not only avoids putting a burden on parents but also sacrifices herself for the family weighed heavily on them. The aforementioned Yi Yeongsuk also recalled that she was not a child but a "little adult" who was in charge of arbitrating family affairs, large and small.

[T]he responsibility as the eldest child was grave and heavy. When there was a family feud or conflict resulting from financial difficulties...I, as the eldest daughter had to intercede as if I were a judge. What was peculiar was that my parents respected my opinion and in that way conflicts were resolved.... I had become a little adult going through a childhood laden with worries. (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:28)

The same dynamics are revealed in remittance practices of *padok* workers. In 1965 Korean *padok* workers sent 2.7 million dollars to Korea, which jumped to 5.7 million dollars in 1967 (Kim Yongchan 2006:7). To assess this we need to find out how much wages *padok* nurses earned. Kwon Ijong, who went to Germany in 1964 as a miner, earned a monthly wage of around 600 marks, which could buy, in Korea, ten sacks (*gama*) of rice and was worth seven to eight times of the monthly salary of government employees (Kwon Ijong 2007:85). For *padok* nurses, wages were rather irregular before the 1969 agreement. In the early days a nursing student

trainee made less than 100 marks a month, over 100 marks when she became a student after a year, and 200 to 300 marks after three years. Wages of nurse's aids and nurses were also not fixed in those days. In October 1966, nurse's aids were making 400 to 796 marks and 66.7 percent of nurses were earning at least 800 marks. Even for nurse's aids actual take-home pay after deducting taxes, insurance premiums, and dormitory fees was around 350 marks, which was 3.5 times higher than wages for nurses in Korea. The standard labor contract after 1969 set monthly minimum wages for *padok* nurses at 792 marks in large cities and 767 marks in other cities, based on the wage and compensation agreement of the Federal Republic of Germany. In addition to monthly minimum wages, married nurses received family allowance of 52-60 marks as a "separate allowance" (*byeolgeo sudang*). In addition, there were no real differences between the wage levels and work hours of nurses and nurse's aids, except that aids did not have responsibility toward patients and did not have a chance to be promoted. As we can see, nurses worked under guaranteed conditions on a three-year contract and received equal treatment in wages and in other aspects of their work. In addition, migrant women marveled at Germany's health insurance system, which provided need-based services, and at the free education system, open to both citizens and foreigners (Kim Yongchan 2006:7; Yi Suja 2006:203; Kim Sang-im 2004:63; Asan Foundation 1988:138-39).

Both Park and Shin sent the bulk of their earnings to their families and contributed to enlarging the land holdings of the family or augmenting family wealth. In 1967, *padok* workers' remittances to Korea represented 36 percent of the total foreign exchange holdings of the country. *Padok* workers even took in second jobs such as gas station work or so-called "black arbeit" jobs—temporarily working at other hospitals during vacation times or during the day when they were on night shift—to increase their income. Considering the fact that *padok* nurses continued to help increase their family's economic assets through remittances, we can conclude that their relationship with their family remained close, even though spatially they were far away. Sacrificing their chances to enjoy cultural life, individual leisure, and hobbies, the two women sent much of their earnings to Korea. In Shin's case, she even got a loan to help her parents remodel their house. Park lived the same way. As she recalled,

[A]t the time [my monthly wage was] about 7.5 million won, 750 marks, about that much. My wage was, then out of that we seemed to have used less than 50 marks, each month. We saved. We saved. Other people bought

clothes, and actually, to live in a way befitting the cultural level of the place you needed to use up that money. I lived like an uncultured person, like now. Well, what I mean is, wearing the clothes I had brought with me from home.

She went on to say that

When school was over at night, it was about 9 pm. 6 o'clock, the school started at 5 or 6, and ended at 9, and at 10 the night shift began. When leaving for night shift work, it was like walking toward death, really. And other kids were going out to have a drink, or going to a movie theater, and I had to go to work. I earned money and bought eight *majigi* of rice paddies for my father. Because I had to do it, I never spent money to buy clothes. I spent money for studying....

Nevertheless, such devotion on the part of the women did not always result in an improvement of the financial hardships of their families in Korea. For Shin Gilsun, because her family's economic situation was relatively better off, this aspect was not noticeable. But in Park Hanmwam's case and in other cases, family situations did not improve much despite the remittances from Germany. On the contrary, parents were often occupied with thoughts of diverting the remittance money to sons, and poverty kept being reproduced as if filling a bottomless pit. Park Hanmwam put it this way:

It seems that eldest daughters almost always play the role of a sacrificial lamb. In any family, that seems to transcend national boundaries too. Those who are not eldest daughters seem to address their own needs and interest to a degree. But the eldest daughters, they seem to play such a role.... I'm also the eldest daughter in my family,...rather than helping my brothers, things like that, I bought rice paddies for my father, I did that, but in the end it went to my brothers....

On another occasion, she recalled:

My mom felt uncomfortable after seeing the steep bills [expensive hotel fees]. It was using the money that she was hoping to give to her sons. So I removed all the attached [price] tags, so that my mother could not see them. I lived like that; actually it was not expensive, compared to what it was like in Germany.

This situation led the women to emphasize two memories in relation to remittances. One memory is that they lived a frugal life and sacrificed cultural and leisure life in Germany to be able to send money to their family in Korea, and the other one is that even though they sent money home there was almost nothing that they received in return. In such context some people, Yi Yeongsuk included, began to gradually reduce the amount of remittance and distance themselves from their families. When Yi came back to Korea the first time after her migration to Germany, her father expected her to bring a large sum of money that, he believed, she had accumulated in Germany. She was hoping to study at a college in Korea. “I felt a tremendous burden about the fact that my family, still in a tight financial situation, expected so much of me. As much as I felt joy about meeting them I felt a sense of heavy burden on my heart” (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:69-70).

A survey of *padok* migrants who returned to Korea shows that before long-term stay in Germany became a possibility, they sent 66 percent of their average income to Korea, but after that time the rate of remittance to Korea dropped to 26 percent while the portion used for living expenses and savings in Germany increased to 45 percent (Yi Yeongseok and Park Jaehong 2006:459). As we can see, *padok* did not really allow women to free themselves from the bonds of familism, even though they stayed “temporarily” in an unfamiliar place abroad.

One aspect of the story of migrant women we need to pay special attention to is the memory of how *padok* influenced their place within the family. There are small differences between them, but both women desired to get away from poverty and from the limited vision of their families. The *padok* as nurse/nurse’s aid intervened in that juncture. The journey to Germany that they remember pivots around the notions of an escape from poverty, study opportunities, and a lack of prospects in Korea. German migration was a scary choice, yet a decision backed by hopes of helping the family economy and achieving what they wanted, including education. Like Park Hanmwam and Shin Gilsun, Yi Yeongsuk also chose to go to Germany with the hope of taking the college qualification examination (*geomjeong gosi*) and entering college after returning home. For her Germany represented not a sad choice but an invaluable opportunity for her future. She was not alone in remembering that “my country and family did not offer me a chance to develop and use my capacity” (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:33). And relative autonomy from family bonds allowed them chances to nurture their own individual possibilities through language learning and schooling. In that sense it is in a way natural that they are thankful for their German experience. Let us now trace the two women’s memories of how the decision to go to Germany was made.

Decision: To Germany

Shin Gilsun recalls:

My family was not really poor. My father was an employee at a factory that produced aluminum ware and my mom had her own business. One night, there were six siblings, brothers born one year after another and a younger sister who was a year and a half old, and well, I had a sister two years younger, I heard mom and father sharing their worries, thinking the kids were all asleep: “I wish those kids ... that daughter of ours, would get a job, but she’s talking about preparing for the exam again.” They were worried about how to deal with our education. I felt a bit uneasy about it, and then somehow I saw in the newspaper that if I go to Germany and study nursing I can make money. So, since I’m a really nice daughter [laughs], ah, then I will go....

Park Hanmwam was the eldest daughter of a typical family in rural Korea, and her desire to support the family economy and her hope to pursue further education for herself in Germany coexisted in her motivation. Shin Gilsun wanted to seek a new life by going to Germany after her failure in the college entrance examination. As such their motivations differed somewhat, but for both women labor migration to Germany was the answer. In 1970 Park made the decision after people she knew at her work place (Buyeo clinic) suggested it to her, and in 1966 Shin did so after hearing about the option from her acquaintances. Park’s mother did not like the idea of a marriageable-age daughter going abroad like a housemaid (*singmo*), and Shin’s parents also opposed sending a young daughter to a foreign land. Park Hanmwam’s mother cried loud saying that her daughter was being sold to Germany like a housemaid. Park recalls, “My mother cried bitterly. You send sons to the military for three years. Going there [Germany] for three years is like going as a live-in housemaid. Why do you have to go? You are at a marriageable age, and it is better to hurry to do that [get married]. Why do people even pay premiums to go there? Ha, ha. I did not pay a penny for that....” According to a survey of 538 people who decided to go to Germany, 40.1 percent of the people pointed to financial reasons as their motivations, while 59 percent stated other reasons. For unmarried nurses in particular, educational expenses, support of family livelihood, debt service, saving for marriage were most common reasons (Yi Suja 2006:203).

During the Park Chung Hee government, there was a need to export manpower

as a way of dealing with possible unemployment and overpopulation crises, the possibility of which was increasing with industrialization. The promulgation of the Law on Emigration in 1962 verifies the validity of that explanation. At the same time Germany faced deepening labor shortage problems, and in the social market system installed after 1945, it was a major issue. The laborers that Germany needed at the time were service-sector workers with low skill levels, and nursing workers were included in that category (Na Hyesim 2008:267, 270). When Germany implemented a policy of allowing employment of foreign workers (*anwerben*), it tried to accept only temporary labor—so called “guest workers (*gastarbeiter*)” whose guest status limited the length of their stay—which had to be replaced by new applicants after three, or maximum five, years of work. The policy also prohibited family members from joining the workers in Germany, revealing the intention of “purchasing” only the labor power, without taking on social responsibilities for the foreign workers. Regardless of the intention of the government, however, migrant workers began to settle as members of the German society. In December 1959, at last ten high-school graduates and two students from Korea landed at Düsseldorf Airport in Germany. From this time until May 1976, about 10,032 Korean nursing workers left for Germany (Na Hyesim 2008:262).

The Korean Foreign Development Corporation was established in this context as a brokerage institution for migration. Unlike Shin Gilsun, who left for Germany in the 1960s, Park Jaesin was sent through the KFDC. From the middle of 1965, the KFDC, whose creation was initiated by the KCIA, monopolized the manpower-export business from its Cheongjin-dong office in Seoul (Yi Sugil 2007:37). During the selection process, screening committee members conducted clinic dialogues and interviews, and applicants also went through background checks and a brief practical training course (Yi Sugil 2007:24). Neither Park nor Shin remembers cases of corruption or solicitation in relation to the selection process. Park recalls,

In my memory, the KFDC seems to have been in Hyehwa-dong. Its location is vague in my mind but it was near the Daehak-ro area. I went there. But there was no such thing as paying premiums or things of that sort. So I went there, at that time the person who interviewed me there introduced himself to me, he knew my mother’s family. He knew my mother’s family. So I wondered to myself, “Was he my mother’s boyfriend?” (laughs). Because he knew my mother. By the way many went from Buyeo....

In reality, however, bribery and corruption scandals were reported by newspapers. To list several examples, Dr. Yi Sugil himself exposed pressure exerted by a government office that was in charge of the 1966 selection process. It was said that people of age thirty or over were selected and “only pretty faces can go to Germany.” Another newspaper report says that in 1966 when a person named Günter, who was working at the ILLI Language Center, got permission from the Ministry of Health and Society and brokered the dispatch of over 150 nursing personnel to Germany, bribes changed hands. Also the Association of Refugee Relief (*Nanmin Gujehoe*), in which Dr. Yi Jongsu was active, received from the *padok* nurses 20 marks as donation for hospital construction and 2.5 marks as membership fee each month during their three-year contract term (*Chosun Ilbo*, 1967.8.1), but the hospital was never built, causing a scandal. Also a travel agency, run by a family member of Dr. Yi Jongsu, double-charged travel expenses and committed other fraud, leaving many victims in his path (Yi Sugil 2007:24, 65, 69; *Dong-a daily*, 1966.12.14 and 1966.12.21). In 1974, *padok* nurses were victimized by an official in the Ministry of Welfare in West Berlin, who sexually harassed the nurses, forced them to buy life insurance, and embezzled the premiums they paid (*Chosun Ilbo*, 1974.5.19).

Domestic opinion was not favorable to the outmigration of nurses either. One of the reasons presented was that by sending licensed nurses to Germany the shortage of nurses in Korea might get worse. In fact, domestically a nursing personnel shortage was very severe, and in 1966, over 6,000 more nursing workers were needed. Especially because of the massive overseas employment of Korean nurses, the annual turnover rate of hospital nursing staff rose above the 50 percent level, resulting in substantial confusion in clinic nursing work, the mass hiring of nurse's aids, and a decline in the quality of nursing care as a consequence. Another reason behind the unfavorable public opinion was that manpower trained by foreign developmental aid would be diverted to Germany. The United Nations, the Third World Support Group, the Association of Nurses (*Hanguk Ganhosa Hyeophoe*), and the media all criticized the nurse *padok* project. Germany was criticized because it intercepted the fruits of developmental aid, and Korea was accused of essentially engaging in transactions of women for foreign exchange earnings (Na Hyesim 2008:263, 269; Asan Foundation 1988: 127; Kim Munsil 2003:303).

In terms of preparation for *padok*, minimal German language training and anti-communist education are all the nurses interviewed remember. The government's effort at educating and preparing them for life in Germany, including language and practical training, was not sufficient. Most education sessions were

perfunctory, and the head count was what mattered. In 1967 the Law on Nurse's Aid (*Ganho bojowonbeop*) was promulgated in order to tackle the nurse shortage problem, and in it people who went through nine months' of training at a private educational institution (*hagwon*) or at a training institute after graduating from high school were defined as nurse's aids (*ganho jomusa*). As nurse's aids sought overseas employment beginning in 1969, private training institutes mushroomed. Between 1970 and 1973, 34 institutions produced over 7,000 nurse's aids each year, and those who stayed in Korea caused oversupply problems (Kim Munsil 2003: 306). Shin Gilsun recalls, "In those days there was an organization called the KFDC. Prof. Shin Chasik was at the KFDC. Now I socialize with him personally, he came back from Germany after majoring in German literature. So he taught us several sentences like 'Guten morgen' and things like that, but more than that, they really emphasized anti-communist education stuff, such as 'be careful with the table of random numbers (*nansupyo*)' or things like that."

Based on the material I have consulted, there is little basis for thinking that women went to Germany thinking about foreign currency remittance for national economic growth. Rather, the national historical system of meaning about *padok* was constructed after the fact. The reason women in their early twenties departed for Germany was because the country and the family did not offer or guarantee opportunities for education, jobs, and self-realization for them. Occupations for women in Korea in those days were limited to nursing, teaching, secretarial, clerical, and accounting help, and hairdresser and dress-maker jobs (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:31). In this narrow social terrain for women, Germany was understood as a land of opportunities and is remembered as such today.

The government did not abide by its promises to *padok* workers in terms of finding jobs for them after returning home or petitioning to lengthen the time limit of their stay abroad. Some *padok* miners and others criticized the government for "lying" to them. A clear example is a criticism that Park Chung Hee did not follow through the promises he had made during his visit to Germany, which included providing workers with jobs upon their return, prevention of forceful repatriation, and the raising of exchange rate for workers' remittances to Korea (Kwon Ijong 2004:14, 76-77). But for *padok* nurses, whether they went to Germany for four years or 26, positive memories of *padok* experience overshadow negative ones, partly because it was relatively easy for them to prolong their stay. Let us examine the reasons why they remember Germany as their second home and a place they are grateful to, starting from the moment they landed in Germany.

Becoming a Padok Nurse

Park Hanmwol recalls,

I stayed at my first work site, a place called Urban Municipal Hospital...Its construction was not completed at the time and luckily we got to study at the Goethe Institute without having to work at the hospital. Other people had to combine their work with study at Goethe, but we were fortunate enough to concentrate on studying... It was a municipal hospital and fifty, or almost sixty, Korean nurses were there. Probably one-third of Korean nurses worked there.

Today's South Korea is a country where geographical mobility, including international travel, is unrestricted, but in the mid-1960s, the situation was quite different. Only people who belonged to a special category were able to obtain a passport and visas for travel abroad. In fact, only a little over 8,000 people (out of a population of 30 million) traveled abroad in 1960 for private and public purposes, and to get a passport took more than six months and twenty-four seals from four bureaus, a process only a tiny minority could successfully traverse (Yi Sugil 2007:27).

The two women we are following arrived in West Germany after nearly twenty-eight hours of travel that crossed over Alaska, a route prescribed by the fact that direct route through the Soviet Union was not possible at the time. As soon as they arrived, nurses from their assigned hospitals picked up the women. That was a moment in which vague expectations and fear intermingled in the minds of the *padok* nurses. They had high hopes for their new life in Germany but had little specific information about their work. Yi Yeongsuk recalls her feelings at that moment: "We felt that we were leaving for a world unknown to us. Other than the German that we studied for six months, the only thing we knew was that Germany had recovered from the Second World War and had become an affluent country again, and that their national character [*gunghminseong*] was strong" (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:32).

At which hospitals did *padok* workers begin their work? At the time, Germany lacked a government office that controlled all aspects of migration and settlement of foreigners, and each state had different policies on the matter. For example, southern states pursued strict, restriction-oriented policy on migration and settlement, while states like Hesse and Bremen were moderate in comparison (Kim

Table 4 Employment size of *padok* nurses at German hospitals (1966)

Number of nurses employed	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	Total
Number of hospitals	29	28	16	6	12	91

Yongchan 2006:6). The hospitals Korean nurses worked can be categorized into public hospitals such as university, state, and city hospitals, religious hospitals, and private hospitals. Table 4 shows the size of the Korean nurse workforce at the 91 hospitals where *padok* nurses worked as of October 1966.

All thirty-five cities where *padok* nurses were sent to were large cities, and they were geographically well dispersed across the ten states of Germany, from Hamburg in the north to Munich in the south. Among them Munster, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Köln, and Bonn received the most nurses. According to a December 1973 document, 3,412 nurses and 2,711 nurse's aids worked at 452 hospitals, showing a five-fold increase, in comparison to the 1966 statistics. During this period, university hospitals in Frankfurt and Munich in particular hired many nurses. The heaviest concentration was still in Nordrhein-Westfalen region, which took in 23.3 percent, followed by Berlin (21.1 percent) (Asan Foundation 1988:137-38, 149).

After the nurses arrived at their hospitals, some were immediately put to work, while others spent several months learning German before starting their work. The education they received in Germany varied, but usually two weeks of language training was followed by eight weeks of language study combined with work. Most women lived in dormitories. Sometimes they lived in Korean-only quarters, with bath and shower facilities, a kitchen, a telephone, and a living room eventually equipped with a phonograph and a TV (Yi Sugil 2007:32, 54).

But for the women who entered a totally foreign environment, the difficulties came in droves. The most commonly remembered obstacle was the language problem. The labor process the nurses found themselves in was quite different from what Korean miners encountered; as nurses they had to communicate with patients and understand doctor's instructions. Therefore, they felt the need for "unhindered communication through German" most keenly. For both of the women interviewed, the reason for their relatively fast adjustment to German life, despite their lack of college-level professional nursing education in Korea, was the speed of their "language acquisition." German hospitals treated Korean nurses

differently based on their verbal communication capacity, regardless of their status back in Korea. Language problems led to miscommunications between Korean and German nurses. Especially for those who had worked as nurses in Korea, yet did not speak German well, the tasks of cleaning excrement or changing bed sheets were resented as inappropriate assignments that caused undue hardship for them. Yi Yeongsuk recalls that she was so nervous that when she checked patient's blood pressure her heartbeat sounded louder than that of the patient (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:39). Park Hanmwam and Shin Gilsun tried to learn German diligently, squeezing in as much time as possible for learning, and that effort helped them go through life in Germany relatively easily.

Shin Gilsun recalled:

I think that I studied German harder than the others did. When I lived with Koreans in Germany, old houses had key holes through which one could look in from the outside. When [people pressured me] to go out and have a good time, go dance, then, because I didn't like to do that, I covered the hole completely with a black handkerchief, and did not go out, even if they pounded on the door and said all kinds of things. I continued my study in the room. In the morning, that young kid—now I marvel at how I did it—as sleepy as she was, set the alarm to go off at three. Put it near the door, because if I put it on the bed it was likely that I would turn it off and fall back asleep. I got up thirty minutes earlier [than other nurses].

Park Hanmwam remembers that

among the nurses who had graduated from nursing school in our country, we went as nurse's aids and thus we were at the bottom. We were given clothes of different color. But in Germany if one can speak [German] well, one was recognized and treated well. So I studied German hard and received many benefits. There were nursing college graduates also. They took it hard when they were not treated well because they didn't speak German well.

On the question of racial prejudice, Shin Gilsun recalls that she

experienced it a couple of times. When we would go in to measure blood

pressure, and we uncovered the sheet like this, [some patients] shouted “Get back, get back,” ...and kept saying “Get lost, you yellow one.” There were people like that. I heard that Germans harbor a sense of superiority about their national character, but it seemed like they did not behave that way to us because we worked so hard. When German nurses stood smoking, drinking coffee, and lounging around, we continued to work. Therefore, except for the language barrier there was nothing [to hold us back]....

German proficiency, however, cannot explain every difference. In addition to the question of whether nurses adjusted to their hospital environment, what was important was whether they understood the nursing system of Germany. The two women regarded basic nursing duties as given, but there were women who thought otherwise. Regardless of their status in Korea as a nurse or a nurse's aid, all *padok* nurses had to perform basic nursing duties, which included bathing, clothing, assisting urination and bowel movements, changing sheets, delivering meals, and cleaning up the rooms of the nurses and nuns who worked with them. This resulted from the social-service-oriented nursing system of Germany, which was different from the Korean system. Most nursing personnel worked at hospitals, but some were employed at nursing homes and sanatoriums, or as community nurses (*gemeindeschwester*), who served patients at their homes on request without a set time schedule. This also was related to the historical tradition of nursing labor in Germany. Nursing work in Germany meant, rather than medical treatment itself, a wide range of service labor, including various physical servicework related to patient care. Also there was no distinction between nurses and nurse's aids in Germany in terms of work and wages, and thus Korean nurses with college diplomas felt unsatisfied about their work assignments and treatment. Older women who used to work as head nurses in Korea had a particularly hard time adjusting to the new situation. Some were discontent and felt their national pride wounded, thinking that German nurses gave Koreans the most menial work of all because they wanted to flaunt their status as German nationals (Yi Suja 2006:207). This situation led to a rash of media criticism after 1966, which focused on the fact that licensed nurses with college diplomas went to Germany and ended up doing tough work. This, however, was the nature of nursing labor in German society. What Germany wanted from Korean nurses was this type of basic nursing work, and labor migration of Korean nurses was essential for the smooth operation of hospitals in Germany. Sometimes Korean nurses found no German nurses, except for nuns,

at their worksite. German nurses also had the same duties, and therefore it was not a case of discrimination against Korean nurses (Na Hyesim 2008:264, 275; Yi Yeongsuk 2009: 37, 43).

Shin Gilsun addressed the subject this way.

Even if they had been international examen nurses, in Rome one must do as the Romans. But those people said they were not the type of people who did these kind of things. If we use our word for it, it was *yogang*. The thing we used on the beds. We washed things like that. But in Korea nurses don't do that. [They] couldn't adjust to that.... [The system we have in] our country is international examen, but the German system is called *sozial wholes*, which is totally [based on] a social-service mechanism. *Real Schule* is a practical training school. Those who graduate from *Real Schule* work at hospitals, and when they eventually finish the three-year process, they become nurses. They don't become international nurses. They only learn duties nurses need to perform. Like bed-making, caring for patients....in our country's terms, they might be at the level of *ganbyeong-in* [a patient care assistant].

Park Hanmwam elaborated on this issue in the following way.

We didn't clean the corpse like that. We cleaned up feces for patients and also washed faces, which was basic nursing, in Germany. [That is] very important work. We don't do basic nursing at hospitals. Basic nursing means feeding, washing face, cleaning feces, this is basic nursing....[In Korea that work is] performed by *ganbyeong-in*, but that is not the work of *ganbyeong-in*. Since we resort to *ganbyeong-in*, patients are burdened with that and worried, because they have to pay for the *ganbyeong-in*. They feel burdened. And among middle-class people, demands are made on what daughters-in-law should do, daughters should do, and they suffer a lot. If hospitals take on the work, that's the end of the story. No reason to put these demands [on daughters or daughters-in-law]. Structural changes are needed. In Germany, we performed that work. That's why they liked us.

In addition to that, in Germany jobs were assigned regardless of the nurse's gender in order to increase job efficiency, to the extent that women nurses were sometimes

assigned to male patients. Park Hanmwam remembers the difficulty she experienced in relation to that: “I had to clean patients like this, but it was hard to work at the male-patient ward. To clean them we had to handle their genitals, and if I fear that and hate to do that, then how bewildered would the patient be? So I didn’t do that. It was originally a men’s job. But since they didn’t have men, women did that in their stead.” But when women requested a transfer to a female ward, they faced questions from German nurses about why they were so sensitive about gender when they were supposed to treat patients as patients. Unlike Park Hanmwam and Shi Gilsun, there were cases of Korean nurses fiercely protesting their assigned jobs of cleaning public bathrooms, changing sheets for patients, setting up breakfast, et cetera as menial work. But for Germans who were not in the habit of distinguishing noble and lowly labor, it must have been hard to understand the attitudes of Korean nurses (Yi Suan 2008:92-93; Yi Suja 2006:208).

Another difficulty migrant nurses faced in adapting to life in Germany was food. These rice-, kimchi-, garlic-, and fermented bean curd-loving Koreans took a great deal of time to get accustomed to stodgy German fare of bread, milk, and sausages. Park -Hanmwam recalls,

They had heard that Koreans eat rice, so they prepared cooked rice with milk [milch rice; a kind of rice pudding] for us, which was supposed to be eaten with sugar. To us it was absolutely nauseating. But that was their notion of hospitality. They brought the dish to us with flowers, like that. They seemed quite sincere about it.

She continued,

from time to time my mother would send over a package of dried persimmons or dried vegetables. Dried squid, and things like that, you know how pungent they smell. The Germans [in the wards] would squeal and run away, saying, “it smells.” I felt bad when that happened. But I desired that kind of food and was hungry for it. Sometimes a doctor would come up and say, “Oh, that looks delicious, what is it? May I try some?” (laughs). and he would tell us, “Oh, this is delicious!” [Calling out to the other staff] he would say, “Why don’t you try some? This is really scrumptious.” Poor guy, he was really trying hard to be courageous. There was no way dried persimmons or dried squid tasted delicious for them.

Shin Gilsun states,

Some of the nurses from Gyeongsang and Honam provinces even recieved pickled seafood by mail. Sometimes even tubs of fermented soybeans (laughs). [And this] in the winter, and without letting the door open [for ventilation]. And they would collect young bracken ferns and and lay it on the radiator to dry. You can imagine the strong odour that stuff emits. So people began to complain to the hospital that it's impossible to live with these Korean nurses. But as we were good workers, they couldn't kick us out. So finally the hospital provided us a big house in the middle of the forest behind the hospital grounds. The Koreans could go live there, doing whatever they wanted.

Some of the other migrant nurses also have strong memories of the milch rice dish. Apparently, of the seventeen migrant nurses, none ate it, and the German head nurse who had prepared the food was flummoxed by the refusal, unable to understand the reason. In stark contrast to the bland taste of milch rice, the strong smell and flavours of kimchi, garlic, and chilli pepper paste were something the Korean nurses could not do without. Those were tastes the Germans could not get used to easily. In a way, these differences over food served as a medium through which Korean nurses came to confirm their collective identities (Yi Suja 2006:211). As Shin recalls, sometimes Germans arranged separate lodgings for Korean nurses, unable to tolerate the smell of Korean food.

Along with food, there were a number of other cultural differences between life in Germany and life in Korea. Shin Gilsun recalled,

A postcard arrived [from Seoul]. My sister had written, "Sis, Gwanghwamun [downtown Seoul] has been transformed like this" and I was so proud. So I showed it to my German friends. Amongst them was a male student, a medical student. [After looking at the picture] he asked, "Wow, you even have cars in Korea?" I was absolutely mortified at this and scolded the student. But that's what it was like then. German people had no idea about Korea. They would ask us if we ate eggs in Korea. Walking down the street little kids would come up to us and ask, "Where are you from?" I would tell them "Hanguk, Korea," but they had no idea.... "Is Korea part of China or Japan?" they would ask.

Yi Yeongsuk also recalls sensing the perception in German society that equates Koreans with savages, people from an underdeveloped country, and remembers incidents that made her feel like a second-class citizens in Germany. She tells of an instance of this prejudice. Koreans were known to eat dog meat, she recalls, so when a neighbour's pet dog disappeared the owners went through the rubbish bins outside Korean dwellings to search for incriminating dog bones (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:38).

To a certain extent all of the migrant nurses, whatever their hometown or level of education, had been brought up in a patriarchal Confucian education system. Since their infancy, females had been taught to internalize a value system that discriminated against them on the basis of their sex. For the migrant nurses one of the most difficult experiences they faced was that of moving from an environment where they had been brought up under the constraining protection of the patriarchal family to the relative freedom from family monitoring that they encountered in Germany. In domestic Korean newspaper articles from around 1972 we can find a representative discourse on the dangers of female migration, especially targeting the extravagant life styles and sexual immorality among Korean nurses in Germany. In 1974 German newspapers themselves began to pick up on this story of sexually loose Korean nurses in their midst. "West Germany's Lonely Korean Nurses" was one article's headline, and according to the article the Korean nurses, having realized that they were being depicted as sexually loose in Korean papers, were reluctant to grant interviews to journalists. "Even if I talk to them, who knows what they are going to write?" one worried. Meanwhile they were inundated with letters from Korea to "forget about making money and come straight home" (*Chosun Ilbo*, 1974.9.7). In addition, nurses who went travelling on vacation to relatively expensive destinations like Africa and South America were openly criticized for extravagance (Asan Sahwe Bokji Jaedan 1988:142). This coverage reveals how apprehensive people were at the idea of Korean nurses travelling to Germany so soon after the 1968 revolution and experiencing the pressure for social and cultural freedom that characterised those days in Europe. Yi Yeongsuk remembers the enormous culture shock she received when she first arrived in Germany and saw young men dressed like hippies with long hair and couples holding hands publicly and kissing in the street (Yi Yeongsuk 2009:38).

Shin Gilsun recalls,

When I returned to Korea, I had a hard time getting married....That was

in 1972. If you look through [contemporary] records, you will know. There were all sorts of negative stories...about the nurses who had gone to Germany. More than our supposed extravagance...they focused on how sexually loose we all were. Professor, it might be too presumptuous...but really...I myself...my father had always been ... in a word I was a girl who wasn't even allowed to go swimming. My father would say what kind of a girl gets undressed where other people can see. That's how strictly I was raised. If a boy even touches your hand, he is trying to take advantage. If you start holding hands with a boy, then you have to marry him. That is how it was in those days. So I was always baffled by things like cigarette smoking. And alcohol too, I avoided it because I had made a promise to my father that I would never touch alcohol. That's what it was like....

Other nurses tell of receiving letters from their younger siblings quizzing them about rumours of how nurses in Germany supplement their income after their daytime hospital shift by prostituting themselves in the evenings. Some were even told to think carefully about returning to Korea if they wanted to find a decent husband (Kim Yongchul 2006:292). This reveals, paradoxically, the effect of the dominant discourse that prescribes that migrant nurses too should be put under the control of patriarchal protection. The period also witnessed the rise of a similar discourse on the extravagant life style of female college students. As “future mothers” and “household managers” female college students became a source of anxiety. An article in the June 1965 issue of *Yeoseong*, entitled “For Female College Students: Duties and Responsibilities of Women in Korean Modernization,” shows that contemporary women leaders wanted female college students to become exemplary “good wives and wise mothers” (*hyeonmo yangcheo*). The target of their admonition was primarily housewives of middle-class households, and the utilization of their “idle labor.”

Here is an example of such thinking:

A wife is one who gives her husband understanding and love. Home is a refuge. When members of the family are troubled by fatigue and the demands of competition, her love restores their strength and provokes a desire to have a better life. Her role in [the country's] modernization is to help build environmental conditions for modernization with creativity and rationality....

Furthermore, male intellectuals exhibited an almost allergic reaction to consumption and pleasure-seeking activities of female college students in the public realm. The poet Yang Myeongmun denounced female students who “move their shoulders up and down, clap to the rhythms, and shriek in peculiar voices in dim-lit music halls.” According to him, their actions were similar to those of lunatics and “the phrase ‘being rotten’ is exactly pertinent to this situation...it is really pathetic and depressing to think that this type of *ganpanpa* girls⁷ would get decent marriage partners and become brides, housewives, and mothers.” We can interpret this as an expression of a “sense of crisis” emanating from a suspicion that the motherhood credentials of some women were lacking, since the household these women would be put in charge as “future housewives” was deemed the crucial basic unit of the national project of fatherland modernization.

In addition, contemporary newspapers ran stories of *padok* nurses that dealt with mental illness, rape, unwed pregnancy, and suicide, and criticized those who abandoned the contract with Germany. Among 133 reports as of December 1973, 34 cases (25.6 percent) involved sexual relations, 21 cases (15.8 percent) were about maladjustment to German society due to homesickness and lack of communication, and 15 cases were about the nurses who returned home early, not fulfilling their contract terms (Asan Foundation 1988 : 142). For example, “Pregnant Women and Mentally Ill Persons Found Among *Padok* Nurses” (*Chosun Ilbo* 1970.5.2), reads one headline. Another article reported a gruesome story under the headline of “A Nurse Sent to Germany Murdered in Dormitory by Strangulation” (*Chosun Ilbo* 1976.2.7). In 1976, a scandal involving Dongbanggyo broke out.⁸ Some of the *padok* nurses diverted part of their remittances to a religious organization called Dongbanggyo without their families’ consent (1976.2.18). Another much-discussed problem was how quite a few Korean nurses had sought immigration to the United States or Canada before they fulfilled their three-year contract terms. Their move was aided by Korean American employment agents, who set up offices in German cities such as Frankfurt after the beginning of *padok* in 1966 and actively recruited Korean nurses with the help of American embassies. German newspapers naturally were very critical of those Korean nurses who violated contract terms and moved to

7. *Ganpanpa* is a derogatory term for women students with extravagant tastes and habits who boast of their college student status, yet do not engage in study.

8. Dongbanggyo is a new religious group that existed in the 1970s. It was prosecuted when it was revealed that the church, in the name of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Daehan Gidokgyo Jangnohoe), extorted money, used violence on members, and forced donations.

another country. “Troublesome Korean Nurses” was the title of one such newspaper article, and in some cases hospital administrators declared that they would no longer employ Korean nurses (Yi Yeongseok and Park Jaehong. 2006:468; Yi Sugil 2007:44). Let us now turn to the question of how migrant women themselves gave meaning to their service labor despite these outside criticisms.

Yellow Angel

Shin Gilsun recalls,

The work started at 6:30 in the morning. We left the dormitory at 6:00 on a bus and arrived [at the hospital] 10 or 15 minutes later. After changing clothes, we started work in the hospital wing at 6:30. Meal in the morning... what do you call it?...at the cafeteria we ate. It was 60 pennies in those days, very expensive in our situation. If calculated in Korean currency....So we got to eat breakfast around 8:00 a.m....we took turns. We couldn't go eat together. Then at about 1:00 p.m....ah, it was noon. From noon to 3 p.m., it was Mittags-pause. They always took a rest like that in the afternoon. They took a nap, even though they seemed like diligent people. And in the evening, at about 7:00, the day's work was over.

How the *padok* nurses remember their migratory labor in Germany and talk about it today? As the section title, *Yellow Angel*, shows, the *padok* nurses produce positive memories of their migrant work. Labor conditions were much worse for *padok* miners and fatalities among them were not rare (Kwon Ijong 2004:41, 50). But in most nurses' memory, work was difficult yet not of the worst kind. Of course, they had to endure certain “difficult work” that nurses in Korea did not perform, including cleaning excrement, making beds, bathing patients, and caring for seniors with dementia at nursing homes. But German hospitals and German society showed favorable attitudes toward these Korean nurses in the context of the acute nursing labor shortage. The two women I interviewed repeatedly emphasized that they were not subject to discrimination or racial prejudice in German society and that they were well treated and valued as “honeybees” or “ants,” those who embodied the values of “kindness,” “cheerfulness,” and “patience.”

I'd like to reproduce here several notable memories of these two women. Park

Hanmwam remembers,

Since we are short, we got on a chair and spread the comforter. We made sure it didn't touch the floor, and the patients showered us with compliments saying that we were so clever. You know, our hair is all black. Germans have diverse [hair] colors, but we were like ants, and they said that you all have black hair and come and go, come and go, like ants. They liked us so much....

Shin Gilsun says her “nickname was *kleine biene*. ‘Biene’ means ‘honeybee,’ and ‘kleine’ means ‘small.’ ‘Small honeybee,’ that was me. You can imagine how hard I worked since the head of the hospital often looked for me, saying ‘Where are you, *kleine biene*?’” Shin continued,

I feel really bad about the situation that [migrant] workers who come to our country are in. They are not treated well at all. But we received equal treatment and we were really diligent. Because of that, the Germans who invited us treated us very well; sometimes they were even more generous to us than to their own nurses. I observed that those who didn't speak their language well were not treated well. “Bring this, bring that,” they were ordered around. So I studied German as hard as I could.

As we have seen, for these two women, nursing work in Germany opened up a space in which they were recognized for their individuality and able to pursue knowledge and education that they could not imagine having in Korea. In that sense, Germany was a land of opportunity for them. For Park Hanmwam, Germany was the land that taught her everything she has learned. For Shin Gilsun, it is a place that recognized her and taught her German language skills that have been useful for her ever since. That is why she still plays German music and eats German bread every Saturday, feeling nostalgic about her life there. For these two women, home might exist in two places. Do they have any memory of discrimination during their life as migratory workers? As mentioned before, their recollection is consistent in this regard, as is shown in their often-repeated statements, such as “There was no discrimination,” “I'm thankful,” “We were treated well,” and “We benefited very much.” Let us examine this aspect in more detail.

According to Park Hanmwam, In Germany, Asian women were not subject to that kind of discrimination, especially those from East Asia. Men seem to have had

a harder time. I have not experienced discriminatory treatment. On the contrary, I benefited more, because there were many who wanted to help us. They listened to us carefully, even when we couldn't express ourselves well. When we faced the police, the policemen took our side. When riding a bicycle, there were occasions like that. The police, when we had a crash, sided with us... On the contrary, like this, there were many times we benefited more than the Germans themselves....

Shin Gilsun stated,

It might be presumptuous to say this, but I have no regrets about my life. I'm always thankful. Even though there I did not graduate from the Korrespondenz Schule [a translation-interpretation school], since returning here, I, you know, there are people who are capable of teaching one *mal*'s worth with one *doe*'s worth of education, and also those who can't even teach a *doe*'s worth when their education amounts to one *mal*'s worth.⁹ In my life, I was able to benefit from my education, disproportionately, by making creative applications of it.

She then declared,

[Discrimination was] not almost non-existent. It was non-existent. Sometimes patients were that way... about three times we saw that... but we left [the room] with a peaceful mind. Because I was a person they did not know, because that person is a patient... We never experienced discriminatory treatment. Rather, we were well treated, as nurses... When we were about to leave the hospital... the head nurse took me to the Frankfurt Airport, using her vacation time. When there was a farewell party, even the head of the hospital came.

What is the reason the representation of discrimination is notable by its absence in these two women's memories? There clearly is a possibility that they actually experienced discrimination at work or in everyday life. Shin Gilsun's case might be a bit different since her stay in Germany lasted only four years, but Park Hanmwam has a memory of an occasion in which the occupational differences of Korean nurses and Turks were revealed. Recalling that incident, she mentioned "Germany is a class society."

9. Both *mal* and *doe* are units of measure. Ten *doe* equal to one *mal*.

If we had gone there as janitors, we wouldn't have received good treatment. Since we were nurses and were not engaged in dirty work, we received good treatment... Among the Turks there were so many illiterate people, and most of them were janitors. Foreigners—our country is the same way, but—they take dirty work, you call it “3D” work, right? Difficult, I mean like nursing work that requires late-night labor, since Germans do not want to do that, dangerous work such as miners' jobs, occupations like that...

On the other hand, other records reveal everyday discrimination. Yi Sugil's autobiography records a case in which a nurse was assigned the job of cleaning patient rooms by herself for one whole year, and another case in the book records indignation against unfair actions of a German nurse who based her decisions on personal feelings. A German senior citizen, according to one story, insulted Koreans on a bus saying, “Why do you try to produce and raise your baby with our tax money? Go back to your country!” (Kim Sangim 2004:64; Choe Jaehyeon:121-122; Yi Sugil 2007:49-50). As we can see, there must have been minor incidents of discrimination or racism around the *padok* nurses. But in the memories of these two women life in Germany remains as the time and a space that opened up precious opportunities for them for college education, language study, and acquisition of an advanced culture. Even though it was hard to take on night-shift work in order to go to school, and even though they had to do additional *arbeit* (part-time) work to compensate lost income resulting from reduced work hours, the two women remember that the work allowed them to live the life of an interpreter or a college student.

It might not be an important issue whether discrimination is lodged in the two women's memories or to what extent. What matters is why today these women remember their lives in Germany this way. We can investigate the context of their particular ways of remembering through an essay Shin Gilsun contributed to a newspaper. On May 9, 2005 *Chosun Ilbo* ran an article that claimed that Korean nurses sent to Germany were assigned the job of cleaning corpses all day long. Shin Gilsun, after reading the article, sent in a reader's column, which says in part,

I am the former secretary of the Friendship Society [*Ujeonghoe*], which has as members over 700 nurses who had worked in Germany. Several days ago through the German Embassy in Korea, I had a chance to read a letter that Dr. Yi Sugil, who resides in Meintz, Germany, sent to the Foreign Minister

of Germany. Dr. Yi is the one who arranged the *padok* of Korean nurses in 1966. In the letter he stated that the claim made in the newspaper article that Korean nurses cleaned the corpses in German hospitals was [based on] a very rare occurrence. His argument is that Korean nurses were not subject to discrimination by the German government or hospitals. Based on our own work experiences in the country, we can say that there was no occasion in which nurses were made to take care of the corpses in the hospital wing. Especially, the expression that nurses cleaned the corpses while crying is a sheer exaggeration. The *padok* work was hard, but it was also very rewarding and we are proud of it. I am grateful that the newspaper treats *padok* nurse-related news with affection. But, please consider that, as Dr. Yi's concern shows, repeating inappropriate cases or unpleasant expressions can be harmful to the good relationship between the two countries and also hurts us *padok* nurses' feelings.

The reason Shin was upset was because the article belittled the work *padok* nurses performed in Germany as menial work represented by cleaning corpses. It must have been hard for her to accept that disparaging portrayal because even though her stay in Germany was short it was the space and time that enabled her to move into the status of an instructor and an interpreter after she came back to Korea. The same was true with Park Hanmwam. She was not from a poor farmer's family, but she believes that neither her parents nor the government provided her with a chance to realize her potential through higher education. In Germany, where she went to escape from poverty, she married a German husband and earned a doctoral degree. Her life trajectory was something unimaginable to a young woman from a little town in Korea in the late 1960s, and that is why she thinks that she "learned everything" from Germany.

When the policy of terminating the employment of Korean nurses materialized in 1975, however, Park and her fellow nurses did not accept it as fair. Against the demand that Korean nurses return home, which arose in the context of economic recession in Germany beginning in 1974, Korean nurses responded collectively and in a well-organized way. With "We are not things!" as their slogan, they were able to obtain the support of the German media, and in the end a senate bill guaranteeing them the status of a "unique group of workers who could reside indefinitely in the country" passed. Park Hanmwam recalled that when the nurses organized a signature gathering drive in 1975 with a slogan of "We are not things that you can bring in

when necessary and discard when no longer necessary...there was nobody who did not sign” the petition. “Oh, we need nurses,” they would say. “But they were making the Turks leave” at the same time, she added. It was hard for the Korean nurses to accept the idea of eviction from Germany in order to give work to Germans after toiling so diligently at nursing work that Germans shirked. Park and other Korean nurses appealed to German society not to see them as labor power alone, using all the means available to them.

My first question was how the Korean nurses remember their migratory labor in Germany. Their memory of *padok* experiences is mostly positive, although it does not mean that they unconditionally admired German society. Rather, they are grateful to German society, which provided them with opportunities for free education, language learning, and economic betterment, and remember and appreciate the fact that they gained recognition as women and as individuals through their *padok* experiences. Often the motivation behind *padok* was explained in economic terms, but for Shin and Park it was a story of achieving their dreams, which was not possible in Korea. Clearly, their memories are different from the mainstream memory of the *padok* labor.

Fear and a Wobbler (hoesaekin)

Shin Gilsun’s initial journey to Germany was not a smooth one. She recalls, “I was turned away at the airport. I was supposed to go to Berlin. But the East Berlin Incident occurred, and we had to turn back after arriving at the airport.” As noted before, the education she received from the Korean government was concentrated on “anti-communist education stuff, such as ‘be careful with the table of random numbers (*nansupyo*)’ or things like that.” For Park Hanmwam too, the East Berlin Incident cast a lasting shadow. She recalled that she did not feel “free” about going to Berlin.

During the Roh Tae Woo era there was a declaration. It was a declaration that Koreans residing outside Korea could go visit communist countries. In August, or sometime around then, a long time ago. At that time I was really surprised. I was living in Berlin and I majored in sociology. I thought that I had already discarded things like that, I expunged all those from my mind. Since I studied sociology, mentally, I thought that I was living not bound by that ideology. But I realized that I have never gone there. I was shocked. It was possible for me to go. I had German citizenship. August, 1981, since that time, I had [German]

citizenship, and conditions to go, it was close by, and conditions to go visit [communist countries] were all there, but I did not go. So at that moment [upon hearing the declaration] I went to Prague....I visited Prague, and Hungary over there. I was so shocked. The anticommunist education we received, no matter how we try to [overcome it], how it dominates you, I was really surprised about myself at that time. I studied sociology and I thought that I had transcended all those things, but it was not true. I was really shocked.

In the memory of the two women, Korean residents in Germany other than nurses and miners were people they had to be on guard against. The 1969 East Berlin Incident played a major role in this development. This incident had a big impact on the lives of Korean residents in Germany, whether they were directly related to the incident or not. The distrust and division in the Korean community in Germany was amplified by the incident (Yi Yeongseok 2008:336).

Therefore, the atmosphere of the Korean community in Germany in the late 1960s was quite frozen. Koreans could not trust other Koreans in the neighborhood as arrests and kidnappings were occurring. Warnings like “Koreans you meet might be spies. If they are kind, beware” circulated. Although she majored in women’s studies and sociology, Park Hanmwam was not free from the taboos she had internalized through anticommunist education in Korea. The anticommunist education the two nurses received before their dispatch to Germany helped condition them to be fearful of the Korean community in Germany and keep their distance from it. Park, who had lived in Germany for 26 years, recalls that she was surprised at the effect of the “internalized anticommunist consciousness” in forming her subjectivity, when she realized that she refrained from visiting East Germany until 1990. Park seems to have kept her distance from the Korean community in Germany despite her long-term stay in the country. A complicated memory emerges in that regard. It was because of her undecided position in the Korean community in Germany, which, despite its location in Germany, was not free from the impact of the Cold War and the division of Korea. Koreans in Germany were under the heavy burden of making choices between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic Republic of Korea.

Park Hanmwam recalls,

I could not participate in the social movements of the Korean community.

If you go there, you have to side with either the North or the South. People like me who didn't support either side, I was like a spy [a person in between, a wobbler]. I didn't like the people from the North or the people from the South. I didn't see Koreans that often. I wanted to learn from German society, that's what I wanted. [I learned from] the feminist movement there. And the Koreans I met there, the men in academia, they worked at the Freie Universität Berlin. They had good jobs. But those Koreans didn't introduce themselves to me. They probably knew who I was, you know that Koreans, when they come, are supposed to introduce themselves saying who they are. Only the painter Yi Eungno [residing in France], only he introduced himself to me. They don't introduce themselves to women. Other men too. I was so surprised....

She continued,

I didn't see such things [North Korean propaganda materials]. I didn't go to Berlin for that, I went to earn money. I didn't know anything about it. I went there in May 1970 because I was so poor, and wanted to study and make money. That's why I went there. And I wanted to learn about Germany, that's the reason I went. I didn't go there for a political reason. And it seems that we exaggerated such things too much.

Conclusion

The stories of migrant labor that Park Hanmwam and Shin Gilsun tell us differ from the dominant narrative on *padok* nurses. There is a great void between their stories and the story of migrant worker contributions to the nation's economic growth or the success stories of Koreans who emigrated abroad. Of course, to argue that their stories represent all the memories of the migrant women workers who went to Germany is not the intention of this essay. The point is that their stories and the dominant discourses of the day diverge quite significantly. The dominant narratives highlight the suffering of *padok* migrant women workers who toiled in hospitals, hotels, and sanatoriums as manual service workers helping with housekeeping and cleaning, and turn a critical gaze on those migrant women who fell into extravagant and sexually loose lifestyles away from patriarchal protection. If, as Gabriel García Márquez said in his autobiographical writing, *Vivir para*

contarla (*Living to Tell the Tale*), “Life is not the lived life of a person itself, but what he remembers now and how he remembers it in order to talk about it,” then the life in Germany for the two women is remembered today as something positive, a great opportunity in their lives. And both Park Hanmwam and Shin Gilsun hold on to various memories to tell the story of their life, a life of migration through which they gained recognition by Germans and by themselves.

Of course, labor migration for Korean nurses, including these two women, was not possible either based solely on individual choices for family and self, or on forceful actions of the state alone. In 1960s South Korea, societal rifts resulting from increasing urban-rural disparities and rising unemployment rates following a massive migration of rural population to the cities during the process of state-led industrialization became a major issue. In that context, the export of women’s labor for their foreign exchange earnings represented a fitting development in the framework of export-led industrialization. Germany too needed to secure migrant labor for the social service labor of nursing, which German women shirked, in order to maintain its social market economy. Germany recovered rapidly following its defeat in World War II with the help of the United States. South Korea supplied an essential labor force to Germany. In other words, Korea assisted Germany in the area of service labor. Clear differences in views on the nursing occupation and other historical differences between the two countries constitute an important part of *padok* history. For the two women, however, who were burdened by a sense of responsibility to their families as the eldest daughters and who wanted to overcome poverty in their lives, migration to Germany meant an opportunity. Their memories might deviate from the macro-level history of *padok*, but we should not overlook what their memories are and how they tell their stories.

I would like to wrap up this essay by suggesting future tasks for research. First, it is imperative that we conduct an in-depth study on former *padok* nurses still residing in Germany. The chances of these women, who are now in their fifties and mid-sixties, returning to Korea, are not high. It is urgent that we interview those in Germany, while continuing the work of collecting primary materials, both written and oral, about Korean *padok* workers who have since returned to Korea. Secondly, a comparative study of nurses and Korean *padok* miners is necessary. The two groups’ labor conditions differed from each other, but they shared similar migration experiences, and they also have forged common memories through marriage and community life. Comparative research on these two groups of migrant workers, especially on the questions of how they began to come together through marriage

and community ties and how different labor conditions and experiences shaped their subjectivities, will yield important insights. Thirdly, we must expand the scope of our research to include the study of diasporic Korean communities in Germany as a whole, as well as communities of former *padok* workers in particular. The usual approach to the Korean community in Germany has been one focusing on its role in the struggle for South Korean democratization. As we have seen in this essay, however, Korean communities in Germany cannot be defined as one instance (*cheungwi*). It is necessary to collect and analyze the diverse memories of Koreans residing in Germany, including conflicts and difficulties they experienced before, during, and after their *padok* labor. The same also applies to the communities of those *padok* workers who opted to relocate to other countries.

(translated by Hwasook Nam)

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Abstract

Making use of the oral life-history testimonies of two Korean nurses dispatched to West Germany (*padok*), this article analyzes what these women remember and how they give meaning to their migration experience. The memories and narratives of *padok* nurses were quite different from the dominant narrative on *padok* produced by the South Korean government, which emphasized the dispatched workers' contributions to rapid economic growth and development of the nation. The memories of two Korean nurses that this article is based on, of course, do not represent all the memories of *padok* nurses. Nevertheless, their memories show us that their labor migration to West Germany was not forced upon them by government, but was, in large part, an individual choice made by the nurses themselves. The *padok* was important for the rapid economic growth of South Korea during the Park Chung Hee period. At the same time, West Germany, due to a shortage of labor in social service sectors, such as nursing, needed nurses from Korea. That is to say, *padok* nurses were indispensable to the social market economy of West Germany. The migration to Germany provided important opportunities for nurses seeking to escape from poverty and the fetters of patriarchy. The memories of these two Korean nurses reveal to us that the official narrative on the reasons and effects of *padok* in macro-historical terms do not fully capture the actual experiences of Korean workers. Therein lies the significance of *padok* women's testimony about what they themselves remember and how today they evaluate their migration experiences and contributions. They deepen our understanding of the *padok* history of South Korea.

Keywords: migrant women, memory, nurses dispatched to West Germany (*padok ganbosa*), oral history