

Special Feature

An Archeological Approach to
the Birth of the *Gungmin* in
the Republic of Korea

Kwon Hee-Young

Introduction

The term *gungmin* 國民 (people of a nation or national people) is one that is now generally employed to refer to people who not only reside in a certain country, but also boast the nationality (citizenship) of that particular country. Thus, it stands to reason that individuals who live in a certain territory inevitably become citizens of any new country that takes root within that territory. Such an interpretation can however be regarded as a purely legal one. In order to ensure its survival, a country must possess organic elements that make up such an entity. Furthermore, the consolidation of these organic elements requires not only the physical infrastructure, but also a *gungmin* sharing a common *raison d'être* that is capable of simultaneously operating the human and physical infrastructure. In this regard, all countries make efforts to transform those who reside within their territory into a *gungmin* following the birth of a new country.

A unified *gungmin* makes it easier for a country to wield overwhelming power in terms of its defense, politics, economy and culture. The formation and preservation of a *gungmin* requires the establishment of a common identity. One essential element of efforts to establish a common national identity is what can be referred to as identity politics. Identity politics revolves around the examination of identities that sometimes compete and sometimes combine with other identities, and the determination, based on the prevailing circumstances, of the priorities that should be implemented in terms of the pursuit of such identities.

The Republic of Korea had to go through complex historical experiences before it could secure an identity amongst its people. The emotions caused by the term *gungmin* (nation) tended to be very complicated before the term gained a legal or natural meaning. On top of this, other words such as *sinmin* 臣民 (subjects or citizens), *inmin* 人民 (people), and *minjok* 民族 (ethnic nation or race) competed with the term *gungmin* to create the concept we have today.¹

The establishment of the concept of the *gungmin* (national people)

1. For more on the conflicts and amalgamations of the notions of *gungmin* and *minjok*, see Yun Yeong-sil. 2009, "Gungmingwa Minjogui Bunhwa." *Sangbeo Hakbo* 25 (February): 79-114.

within the Republic of Korea involved a process that was more complicated than is usually the case. This is because Korea went through a complex process that saw it move from a monarchy system to being a colony before achieving independence amidst the division of the nation into North and South Korea. This very complex historical path led to the formation of a unique concept of *gungmin*.

Let us now attempt an archeological analysis of the concept of *gungmin* in a manner that focuses on how this concept used to exhibit a sense of belonging to a certain group has been able to safeguard its identity amidst an aggressive competition with various other identities. This analysis can also be regarded as a review of the history of this concept from the standpoint of the political history of identity.

Ambiguity between *Sinmin* (Citizens), *Gungmin* (Nation), and *Minjok* (Ethnic Race or Group)

The notion of the *gungmin* proved to be difficult to form in Joseon, a dynasty which regarded the ‘Three Bonds and Five Relations’ (*Samgang oryun* 三綱五倫) as the fundamental principle with which to rule the country. To this end, while the morals of the king and scholar officials (and the *sadaebu* class who became scholar officials) were regarded as the basic governance principle, it was not applied to the commoners. These commoners, or *pyeongmin*, were regarded as subjects to be governed. As such, the most widely promoted moral attribute within the state and society during the Joseon era was that of filial piety (*hyo* 孝) that lay at the center of the relationship between father and son (*Buja yuchin* 父子有親).

Filial piety (*hyo*) was the virtue that had the greatest appeal during the Joseon era. By the time the planning of a modern state had begun, the main task became that of finding ways to transform this notion of filial piety (*hyo*) into the notion of loyalty (*chung* 忠) to the state. To this end, it became necessary to transform the king’s subjects (*baekseong* 百姓) into a *gungmin*. Moreover, love for family had to be transformed into love for the state (Kim Hyun-ju 2010:460).

However, the achievement of the concept of *gungmin*, which should be regarded as the final stage of the planning of a modern state, proved to

be difficult to bring about. Here, attention should be drawn to the process through which this was achieved. The term *gungmin* emerged relatively early in Korea. In 1896, *The Independent (Dongnip Sinmun)* released an article in which it stated, “The number of telegrams dispatched from Joseon to foreign countries by the *gungmin* from both at home and abroad has been on the rise” (*The Independent*, August 15, 1896). Given the fact that *The Independent* was a newspaper published by the Independence Club (*Dongnip hyeophoe*), and that its publisher was Seo Jae-pil, we can conclude that the term *gungmin* was used herein to simply refer to people from many countries as was the case in western nations. Moreover, the term *gungmin* was used to refer not only to the residents of foreign countries, but also to those of Korea. Here, *gungmin* did not possess any political overtones. For this very reason, the term *gungmin* was at the time not frequently used.

The proclamation of the Daehan Empire in 1897 did not help to foster the use of the term *gungmin* 國民 (national people), but rather provided the opportunity to spread the use of the term *sinmin* 臣民 (citizens). In this case, the term *sinmin* carried with it clear political implications.

The proclamation of the Daehan Empire was met with great joy by the people of Joseon who believed that, like the major powers, Joseon had finally met the qualifications for independence. At the very least, this marked the emergence of an independent country from a legislative standpoint. Here attention should be paid to how under such circumstances the citizens of the Daehan Empire made use of the terms *gungmin*, *inmin* 人民 (people), and *simin*. The decision as to which of these terms should be used was one that was based on ideological differences. In this regard, let us take a look at the following article from *The Independent* that was published during the Daehan Empire about the duties of the *inmin*.

All *sinmin* who intend to preserve the Daehan Empire ... implement celebrative events for the Daehan Empire by inviting *gungmin* from both home and abroad to the Dongnipgwan Hall to join in the hailing of our great emperor and the proclamation to the world that Daehan is an independent empire ... inviting the government’s high-ranking officials, foreign ministers, and consular officials, and the *inmin* from foreign residential areas... Mr. Yu Gi-hwan will give a speech regarding the development of the Daehan Empire... for the *inmin* of Daehan to spread their wings... (*The Independent*, November 13, 1897)

The article makes use of various similar terms. While *inmin* and *sinmin* were practically used as synonyms, *inmin* and *gungmin* were in fact used as synonyms when making general reference to Korean citizens and those of foreign countries. Thus, the use of the terms was determined based on who the speaker was referring to. While the same term was used to refer to people from Korea and other countries, the term *gungmin* was used to refer to the combination of a national representative and people. However, the term *inmin* was used in cases where only the people were being referred to. Similar usage was made of the terms *sinmin* and *inmin*. Thus, while *sinmin* was used to denote the meaning of the emperor's subjects (*baekseong*), *inmin* was used to refer to everyone except the emperor and his representatives. The term *sinmin* is a political expression that was used to denote that as Joseon had become an imperial state, the people or *inmin* had become the emperor's *sinmin* (subjects). These notions were clearly exposed in the State Law (*gukje*) of the Daehan Empire announced on August 17, 1899.

Article 1. The Daehan Empire shall be officially recognized by all nations of the world as an autonomous and independent empire.

Article 2. The Daehan Empire is an autocratic monarchy, which has continued over the past 500 years and will continue unchanged forever.

Article 3. The Great Emperor of the Daehan Empire shall have infinite imperial authority. This is, as in international law, an establishment of the polity in his own exertion.

Article 4. Any **citizen (*sinmin* of Daehan Empire)** who makes any attempt to violate the **Great Emperor's** imperial authority shall be regarded as being devoid of citizenship, regardless of whether he actually committed the act or not. (*The Official Gazette*, August 22, 1899)

Let us now examine the appellation method used by *The Independent* after the proclamation of the Daehan Empire.

All government officials and the people (*inmin*)...all individuals residing in this country shall abide by state laws and orders, regardless of whether they are citizens (*sinmin*) of this country or another... All the countries in the West... the laws of other countries are not appropriate for our people (*inmin*)... (*The Independent*, November 7, 1899)

As we can see from this article, *The Independent* referred to all those other than the ruler and officials as *inmin*, and to domestic and foreign nationals as *sinmin*. The terms used in this article have a political meaning in that they are meant to promote a legal system in which a monarch (*gunju* 君主) establishes the laws and the citizens (*sinmin*) abide by them.

Meanwhile, the term *minjok* 民族 (ethnic nation or race), a term that would be frequently used later on, appeared on the scene at a relatively late date.² In fact, the first instance in which the word *minjok* emerged in Korea occurred in 1900 when it appeared in an article contributed to the *Hwangseong Sinmun*.

There are three countries in East Asia; Korea, Japan and China. During the early period of the Yuan dynasty, the **eastern race** (東方民族) crossed the deserts and conquered the mountains and rivers in Europe. However, all that remains of such conquests are a few graves and relics. The **white race** (白人民族) has now risen to the point where it is able to invade the East like the great rivers in the past. Just how this situation will play out in the future remains to be seen... (January 12, 1900)

The term *minjok* 民族 as it was employed in this article had a meaning that was closer to that of an ethnic race. For example, the three nations in East Asia were referred to herein as the eastern race (*dongbang minjok* 東方民族) while the Western powers were called the white race (*baegin minjok* 白人民族).

Alas, **compatriots** (*dongpo*) around the nation, let us consider the situation of our Daehan. While Japan lies to our immediate south, we are also adjacent to Manchuria and Russia in the north. They have tempted us in the past by feigning to put in measures to protect and maintain our sovereignty. On every one of these occasions we did not realize the danger we faced until our proverbial roof had been burnt to the ground. This unfortunate situation has been the result of our belief in their lies and our inability to see the risks that lurk right before our very eyes. It is too late to establish

2. Previous variations of the term *minjok* include Yu Gil-jun's use of the term *iljok inmin* 一族人民 in *Seoyu Gyeonmun* 西遊見聞 (*Observations on Travels in the West*) and of *jongmin* 族民 in his essay published in *Mansebo* 萬歲報 in 1907. See Kwon, "Sin Chaeo", *Hankuk Geunhyeongdae*, 8.

any strategy now. Can we trust Japan? This power from the southeast is so strong that it can be likened to a huge wave that cannot be contained by any embankment. Can we trust Russia? The danger emanating from the northwest stands to tear apart what has been the territory of the descendants of Dangun and Gija for some 4000 years. Our twenty million **ethnic brethren** (*dongpo minjok*) are left to lament our fate ... We ask our individual **compatriots** (*dongpo inin*) to protect our rivers and land from these foreign invaders, to establish measures to protect our nation based on the belief that there is no future for us and our family if our land is usurped, and to unite around our own inner strength. Then maybe we can stop our fatherland from being eaten by these foreign races (*minjok*). Alas, our compatriots (*dongpo*). (June 9, 1903)

In the above article, the words *minin* 民人, *dongpo* 同胞, *dongpo minjok* 同胞民族, and *dongpo inin* 同胞人人 were used in an interchangeable manner. The population as a whole was referred to as *jeon gungminin*. In addition, a further sense of collectivity was added to the common bond known as *dongpo* (brethren) by introducing the term *dongpo minjok* (ethnic brethren). Moreover, the individuals within this common bond were also addressed by using the term *dongpo inin* (individual compatriots). Thus, the term *minjok* was used to bestow the meaning of collectivity. Therefore, the use of the collective-oriented terms *minjok* and *gungmin* to refer to the people of one country was interspersed. In this regard, the *Daehan Maeil Sinbo* published an editorial on July 30, 1908 that dealt with the “distinction between *minjok* and *gungmin*.”

Despite both being nouns, *gungmin* can be distinguished from *minjok*. It is however commonplace amongst those who do not know the difference between these two terms to use them indiscriminately... *Minjok* refers to individuals who share the same bloodline, territory, history, religion, and language. ... *Gungmin* refers to those who not only share the same bloodline, territory, history, religion, and language, but also spirit, perceptions, and actions in a manner that is internally akin to the various functions of the human body, and externally akin to the military. (Park 2004:245)

Rather than using the two words as distinguishable terms, this article seeks to spell out the various stages of development respectively associated with the terms *gungmin* and *minjok*, and then to develop an understanding that

is based on the superiority of one over the other. Thus, while *minjok* is regarded as denoting a tribal and cultural group, *gungmin* becomes a term that can only be used when the members of a collective share a common spirit akin to that which prevails within the military. To this end, while *gungmin* is a proud concept which is granted to only those *minjok* that have achieved the necessary level of political development, *minjok* is a term that can be applied to the scores of nations that have not yet reached the *gungmin* stage. The article goes on to state that there is no room for *minjok* in the modern world as “any *minjok* that does not possess the qualifications to be a *gungmin* will find itself stripped of its territory.” Thus, only the *gungmin* can survive (Kwon 2005:13).

The year 1908 is regarded as being of great significance in terms of the notion of *minjok* in that it marked the point in time in which conceptual differences between *gungmin* and *minjok* began to really take form. The establishment of these new terms and the inclusion of new meanings can be regarded as having emerged during the process of entrenching the concept of public sovereignty (*inmin jugwon*). In his essay, “Imperialism and Nationalism,” published on May 28, 1909, Sin Chaeho used the term *minjok juui* (ethnic nationalism). Sin regarded nationalism as a tool with which to resist against imperialism. He asserted, “The Korean brethren (*dongpo*) should endeavor to establish nationalism (*minjok juui*). Based on the slogan our country should be represented by our nation, they should endeavor to protect the nation (*minjok*)” (Sin 1909). In this passage, Sin used the literary expression ‘*dongpo*’ to stress the solidarity that exists between people of the same bloodline (*dongjok* 同族), a term that was traditionally used to denote the meaning of ‘tribe’ (族). While the modern version of this notion of tribe was ‘*minjok*,’ the political entity based on this ‘*minjok*’ was the ‘country’ (*guk* 國). To this end, ‘ethnic nationalism’ (*minjok juui*) was regarded as the exercise of national sovereignty by the nation (*minjok*). At this stage, *minjok* and *minjok juui* were regarded as modern terms that could be used to replace the outdated ones of *gungmin* and *gungmin juui*. Once this stage had been reached, the next natural denouement was that of popular sovereignty (*inmin jugwon*).

State (*Gukga*) as Absence and Nation (*Minjok*) as Being

The Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty had the effect of usurping the internationally recognized independence of the Daehan Empire and incorporating its territory into Japan. To this end, it begins as follows.

His Majesty the Emperor of Japan and His Majesty the Emperor of Korea, having in view the special and close relations between their respective countries, desiring to promote the common wealth of the two nations and to assure the permanent peace in the Far East, and being convinced that these objectives can be best attained by the annexation of Korea to the Empire of Japan, have resolved to conclude a treaty of such annexation and have, ...

Article 6. In consequence of the aforesaid annexation, the Government of Japan assumes the entire government and administration of Korea, and undertakes to afford full protection for the persons and property of Koreans obeying the laws there in force to promote the welfare of all such Koreans.

Article 7. The Government of Japan will, so far as circumstances permit, employ in the public service of Japan in Korea those Koreans who accept the new regime loyally and in good faith and who are duly qualified for such service. (Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of 1910)

As such, Korea was incorporated into imperial Japan. What did the incorporation of Korea by Japan mean? One meaning that can be gleaned from the annexation treaty above is that imperial Japan annexed Korea. This should not be construed to mean the amalgamation of Korea and Japan. Rather, it should be understood to mean that Korea was annexed to Japan. Thus, Japan not only became an empire that possessed a colony, but assumed the position of mother country within the empire. Korea and Koreans did not disappear; the Japanese government simply assumed responsibility for ruling Korea. As such, Korea became a country without a government, and Koreans had to accept the Japanese government as their own.

If one perceives a state as being endowed with an independent government, then Koreans did in fact become stateless. Koreans did not have their own

government. Nevertheless, Koreans did not disappear. While Korea existed under a situation in which its power had been usurped, Koreans continued to exist as nationals of Korea. In other words, Koreans' acquisition of Japanese citizenship after annexation did not from a political standpoint result in making them Japanese nationals. Under these circumstances, we can clearly understand the meaning of the 'national' discourse (*minjok damnon*) associated with the March 1st Independence Movement.

Let us take a look at the Declaration of Independence published in opposition to Japan's annexation of Korea on March 1, 1919, a declaration that sought to restore the political independence of Korea. Here, the most important element that should be highlighted is that of the 'national' discourse (*minjok damnon*).

1. We hereby proclaim the independence of Korea and the liberty of the **Korean people** (*Joseonin*). We announce this ... in order to preserve forever **our people's just rights to self-preservation** (*minjok jajon*).
2. We declare this in witness of our history of five millennia, and in the name of twenty million united **people** (*minjung*) so as to insure the perpetual, permanent, and unrestricted progress of our **nation** (*minjok*), ...

...

Pledge of the Three Principles

1. Ours is an undertaking on behalf of life, humanity, righteousness, dignity and honor at the request of our **nation** (*minjok*). Exhibit our spirit of liberty; let no one follow his instinct to agitate for the rejection of others.
2. Let each and every person demonstrate to the end our **nation** (*minjok*)'s rightful wishes and desires.
3. Let all our actions be orderly and solemn so that our demands and our attitudes may be honorable and upright.

However, the 'class' discourse (*gyegeup damnon*) soon emerged to compete with the 'national' discourse (*minjok damnon*). More to the point, the 'national' discourse that burst onto the scene in 1919 was subsequently influenced by the 'class' discourse. Here, it is important to note that rather than being the dominant variable, the 'national' discourse in effect became a dependent variable of the 'class' discourse.

Progressive laborers and farmers in Korea have gone from an awareness that was rooted in the narrow task of the liberation of Korea from Japan to one that is rooted in the Proletariat and the international solidarity of laborers oppressed by colonial powers.

Korean laborers and farmers have gone from the general hatred toward all Japanese, and this regardless of whether they were laborers or capitalists, to an awareness of the commonness of Korean and Japanese laborers. Koreans are no longer swayed by nationalists' concept of the "oneness of 20 million Koreans." They understand that there are two Koreas: one is a pro-Japanese, bourgeois and anti-revolutionary Korea and the other a revolutionary Korea. (Nam 1925:87)

Thus, while some regarded successful class warfare as the key to the resolution of all national problems, others clung to the *gungmin* discourse while refusing the tenets of the 'class' discourse. While this tenuous situation prevailed during the 1920s-1930s, things changed drastically following Japan's invasion of China in 1937, a denouement that coincided with Governor-General Minami Jiro's promotion of the slogan, "Japan and Joseon are one" (*naeseon ilche* 內鮮一體). From that point onwards, the terms used by Japan to refer to Koreans underwent some important changes.

The Oath of Imperial Subjects (Hwangguk Sinmin Seosa 皇國臣民誓詞),
October 2, 1937

For adults

We are imperial subjects. We pledge to submit our loyalty to the imperial state.

We, imperial subjects, pledge to concretize our unity based on trust and cooperation.

We, imperial subjects, pledge to enhance the imperial way by strengthening our power through training.

Needing to foster their integration into the Japanese empire, the Japanese government suddenly changed gears and began to refer to Koreans as imperial subjects (*hwangguk sinmin*) or *gungmin* (Jeon 2005:262-264). However, this attempt at integration was one that did not include any political concessions. The actual integration of Korea into Japan required that Koreans be endowed with the same rights to participate in imperial

politics as those given to Japanese citizens, including the right to elect representatives to the imperial cabinet. Therefore, this was in reality a discourse designed to bring about mobilization that involved only the burden of added responsibilities without any additional rights. While the Governor-General made frequent mention of the ‘nation’ (*gungmin*) and referred to Koreans as nationals (*gungmin*) during this process, the nation (*gungmin*) being referred to was not that of Japan, but rather the second-class nation of Korea. Based on such a mentality, the goal of transforming “Japan and Joseon into one” (*naeseon ilche* 內鮮一體) became impossible. It was under such circumstances that Korea was liberated.

Moving from Ethnic Group (*Minjok*) to Nation (*Gungmin*)

Regardless of the process through which this was achieved, the liberation of Joseon inevitably resulted in the birth of a new state (*gukga*). More to the point, this denouement marked the moment in which the Japanese colonial possession known as Joseon was reborn as an independent state. One of the main tasks of the newly-born Korea was that of identifying the manner in which the nation (*gungmin*) should be created within the liberated space. It is here that the political dynamism of the Republic of Korea (*Daehan Minguk*) becomes evident. Regardless of the extent of the chaos that emerged within the post-liberation space, a state could only have come into being through the creation of a nation (*gungmin*). The following appeal by An Ho-sang represents a salient example of the mindset during this period.

30 million *dongpo* (compatriots), let us drop all the emotions, partisanship, and intrigues and let us analyze the reality of politics based on human nature and the national (*minjokjeok*) conscience ... if we miss this opportunity, our fatherland and nation (*minjok*) will be slaves forever.
(*Kyunghyang Newspaper*, January 25, 1948)

Under such circumstances, what kind of entity was the *gungmin* of the Republic of Korea perceived as? Moreover, what kind of entity should they aspire to become? The following is taken from the Constitution of the Republic of Korea.

PREAMBLE

We, the people (*gungmin*) of Korea, proud of a resplendent history and traditions dating from time immemorial, upholding the cause of the Provisional Republic of Korea Government born of the March First Independence Movement of 1919, having assumed the mission of rebuilding a democratic independent state of our homeland and having determined to consolidate national unity with justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love, and
To destroy all social vices and injustice, and
To afford equal opportunities to every person and provide for the fullest development of individual capabilities in all fields, including political, economic, social and cultural life by further strengthening the basic free and democratic order conducive to private initiative and public harmony, and
To help each person discharge those duties and responsibilities concomitant to freedoms and rights, and
To elevate the quality of life for all citizens and contribute to lasting world peace and the common prosperity of mankind and thereby to ensure security, liberty and happiness for ourselves and our posterity forever,
Do here by amend, through national referendum following a resolution by the National Assembly, the Constitution, ordained and established on the Twelfth Day of July anno Domini Nineteen hundred and forty-eight.
(July 17, 1948)

Here, the people (*gungmin*) are defined as the main actors in the establishment of the state. The establishment of the government in 1948 was defined as the rebuilding of the state, and this was to be followed by the mobilization of the *minjok* based on “the determination to consolidate national unity with justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love.” Lastly, the era name of the Twelfth Day of July anno Domini nineteen hundred and forty-eight was adopted as the national symbol. As such, the Republic of Korea, which was premised on the notion of an ethnically homogeneous state, adopted its constitution in a manner that was designed to consolidate family-oriented national unity. As evident in the following quote attributed to the first Minister of Culture and Education An Ho-sang, “It is only natural that we as members of Republic of Korea make exclusive use of the Korean alphabet system (*hangeul*) ... What language would the *gungmin* of Korea use other than *hangeul*?” (*Kyunggyang Newspaper*, October 2, 1948). The *gungmin*, which had by then become regarded as one family, were expected to use one

language. In addition, the members of the Republic of Korea were expected to worship national heroes that everyone could respect, such as Admiral Yi, who was described as follows, “His body is the state and his heart is the nation” (*Dong-A Ilbo*, December 8, 1948).

The newborn Republic of Korea inevitably adopted anti-communism as an implement to help foster the formation of a national identity. In China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) finally grasped political power after the civil war between itself and the Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist Party). The CCP intended to spread communist reforms to backward areas such as Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the CCP intended to integrate Korea under the communist system, even if this meant resorting to war. This clear and present threat helped facilitate the strong sense of solidarity needed to foster the national unity required to cope with the threat of communism. This was not the fruit of the inverted slave consciousness of an anti-communist satellite state” (Kim Ye-rim 2007:325). Rather, it was the only method available to the government of the Republic of Korea to counter the communist party and unified front that sought to foster the internal collapse of the newborn government. This is the standpoint from which Syngman Rhee’s one nation ideology (*ilmin juui* 一民主義) should be understood. Moreover, we can also see that anti-communism represented an integral part of Syngman Rhee’s one nation ideology.

It is impossible to counteract communism with democracy. This is because its ideology is too simple to resist against communist propaganda from a theoretical standpoint. As such, it is essential to establish one party, and based on the one nation ideology (*ilmin juui*), four political principles (*sadae jeonggang*) designed to condemn communism on the one hand and establish a permanent base for democracy on the other. (*Kyunghyang Newspaper*, April 23, 1949)

Based on the above conception, Syngman Rhee introduced four principles which can be summarized as follows.

1. Overthrow lineages and pedigrees and promote equal rights, “unite into one ethnic nation (*minjok*) under the one law of one state”
2. Reap the benefits of the market based on joint cooperation between land holders, capital and labor

3. Establishment of equality between the sexes and national unity
4. Elimination of class divisions and regionalism (factionalism)

(*Kyunghyang Newspaper*, April 23, 1949)

The first principle is evidence of the fact that the concept of the “one (ethnic) nation (*minjok*) of Korea” lay at the heart of the efforts to create a *gungmin* (national people). While Syngman Rhee advocated the unity of the *gungmin* over the class struggle promoted by communism, the term which he used to encompass such unity was that of one ethnic nation (*minjok*) of Korea. The second principle calls for the struggles between landlords, capital and laborers to be replaced by the sharing of the profits gleaned from the market. This principle sought to refute the communist logic that labor could only gain advantages for itself by overthrowing the landlords and capitalists. The third principle calls for gender equality and labor rights. This was designed to counter communism’s claims that only it championed gender equality. Finally, the fourth principle was intended to overcome the regionalism that had plagued the Joseon era.

The notions of *minjok* and anti-communism continued to be used as tools with which to create a *gungmin* (national people) during the Park Chung-hee regime. During a ceremony to commemorate the 54th anniversary of the March First Movement, President Park Chung-hee promoted the nationalist perception of history (*minjok sagwan*) when he stated, “We should not allow any historical perception that views a specific class or party as the main actors” (*Kyunghyang Newspaper*, March 1, 1973).

In this regard, it remains very difficult to distinguish the identity of the *gungmin* from the overall Korean national identity. The situation remains generally unchanged despite the growing criticism of the myth of the single ethnic nation (*danil minjok*). The discordant nature of this situation is clearly evidenced by a look at the related amendments that have been made to the Constitution of the Republic of Korea.

While the phrase, “having determined to consolidate national unity with justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love” was removed from the Yushin Constitution of 1972 (amendment of the preamble, Article 8 of the Yushin Constitution, December 27, 1972), it was subsequently restored under the Chun Doo-hwan government (amendment of the preamble, Article 8 of the Yushin Constitution, Article 9 of the Constitution, October

27, 1980) and remains in place under the current Constitution (amendment of the preamble, Article 10 of the Constitution, October 29, 1987). The inclusion of this passage can be regarded as the subconscious expression of the belief that there is no better way to ensure national unity than by advocating the notion of *minjok*.

Conclusion

From the standpoint of international law, the birth of a *gungmin* (national citizenry or people) begins with the establishment of a country. However, as it involves the process of psychologically accepting something that has already been established a legal manner, a long period of time is needed to establish the identity of a *gungmin*. Viewed from this standpoint, the formation of the *gungmin* should be regarded as a process. It becomes essential during the process of creating a *gungmin* to develop politics of identity that can at once secure the emotions needed to form the identity of the *gungmin*, while at the same time drawing on various kinds of identities that existed in the past.

In the case of the Republic of Korea, the people of Korea only became *gungmin* of the Republic of Korea after having gone through a process that saw them be identified as *inmin* of the Joseon dynasty, *sinmin* of the Daehan Empire, and *sinmin* and *gungmin* of the Japanese empire. Fifty-one years elapsed from the establishment of the Daehan Empire in 1897 to the birth of the Republic of Korea in 1948. Therefore, the *gungmin* of Korea had to go through changes to the above-mentioned identities.

The concept of *minjok* can be regarded as having been the most important psychological resource used during the process of creating the identity of the Republic of Korea. The fact (or myth) of the single nation (*danil minjok*) proved to be the most effective tool as far as appeals to national unity were concerned. The fact that Korea was colonized by Japan helped promote the notion that it was the Korean nation that had liberated itself from the rule of another *minjok* as the most effective method of transforming *inmin* into *gungmin*.

For all of the above reasons, the notion of *minjok* has played an important role in the politics of identity in Korea as the notion of *gungmin*. North

Korea has also made frequent use of the notion of one *minjok* (ethnic nation) as part of its united front approach to South Korea. As such, the *gungmin* of Korea should be perceived as having had to face and deal with the notion of *minjok* as part of the wider politics of identity.

References

1. Primary Sources

- An, Ho-sang. 1948. Dongnip agwan 獨立我觀 [My personal view on independence]. *Kyunghyang Newspaper*, January 25.
- Chil, U-saeng. 1900. *Seose dongjeomui giin* [The causes of the West's encroachment on the East]. *Hwangseong Sinmun*, January 12.
- Constitutional Law of the Republic of Korea, preamble. http://likms.assembly.go.kr/law/jsp/Law.jsp?WORK_TYPE=LAW_BON&LAW_ID=A0001&PROM_NO=00001&PROM_DT=19480717. (accessed June 29, 2011)
- Dong-A Ilbo*. 1948. *Chungmugongui wihun chumo* [Commemoration of Admiral Yi's great achievement]. December 8.
- Hwangseong Sinmun*. 1903. Jaepogo jeonguk minin 再佈告全國民人 [Re-declaration to the *minin* throughout the country]. June 9.
- Dongnip Sinmun* [The Independent]. 1896. Miscellaneous section. August 15.
- _____. 1897. Daehan Jeguk inminui jingmu [The duties of the *inmin* of the Daehan Empire]. November 13.
- _____. 1899. Miscellaneous section. November 7.
- Kyunghyang Newspaper*. 1948. Hangeul jeonyong beomnyuran ildokhoe [Draft of the law concerning the exclusive use of the Korean alphabet system]. October 2.
- _____. 1949. Ilmin juui jeongsingwa minjok undong [The spirit of the unified nation and the national movement], April 23.
- _____. 1973. Gyegeup sagwaneun jeoldae buryong [The class-based perception of history should never be accepted]. March 1.
- The Official Gazette*. 1899. Daehanguk gukje [State Law of the Daehan Empire]. August 22.
- Wikisource, s.v. "*Gimi dongnip seoneonso* 己未獨立宣言書" [Declaration of

independence]. <http://ko.wikisource.org/wiki/%EA%B8%B0%EB%AF%B8%EB%8F%85%EB%A6%BD%EC%84%A0%EC%96%B8%EB%AC%B8> (accessed June 29, 2011).

Wikipedia, s.v. “*Hwangguk sinmin seosa* 皇國臣民誓詞” [Oath of Imperial subjects]. <http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/%ED%99%A9%EA%B5%AD%EC%8B%A0%EB%AF%BC%EC%84%9C%EC%82%AC> (accessed June 29, 2011).

2. Secondary Sources

- Park, Noja. 2004. Gaehwagiui gungmin damnongwa geu sokui tajadeul [The national discourse and concept of others during the opening period]. In *Geundae gyeonggi jisik gaenyeomui suyonggwa geu byeonyong* [The acceptance and transformation of the concept of knowledge during the modern enlightenment period], 223-256. ed. Ewha Women’s University Korea Culture Institute. Seoul: Somyeong Publishing.
- Jeon, Gyu-chan. 2005. Gungminui dongwon, gungminui hyeongseong [Mobilization of *gungmin*, formation of *gungmin*]. *Hanguk Eollon Jeongbo Hakbo* 31 (Winter): 261-293.
- Kim, Hyun-ju. 2010. Sin Chaeho soseolui geundae gungmin gukga gihoege gwahan yeongu: “Ryuhwajeon” gwa “Ingmocho” reul jungsimeuro [The planning of a modern nation-state in Sin Chaeho’s novels: with a special focus on “Ryuhwajeon” and “Ingmocho”]. *Hanminjok Eomunhak* 57 (December): 447-469.
- Kim, Seong-ho and Myung-ho Choe. 2008. 1948 nyeon geonguk heonbeop “urideul Daehan Minguk” ui jeongcheseonggwa jeongdangseong [The identity and justification of “our Republic of Korea” as viewed through the Constitutional Law of 1948]. *Hanguk Jeongchihak Hoebos* 42 no. 4.
- Kim, Yerin. 2007. Naengjeongi Asia sangsanggwa bangong jeongcheseongui wisanghak [The Asian imagination during the Cold War era and the status of the identity of anti-communism]. *Sangheo Hakbo* 20 (June): 311-345.
- Kwon, Hee-young. 2005. Sin Chaehoui sanggosa damnongwa minjok juui [Sin Chaeho’s discourse on ancient history and nationalism]. In *Hanguk geunhyeondaewi sanggosa damnongwa minjok juui* [The ancient history discourse in Korean modern and contemporary era and nationalism]. Seongnam: The Academy of Korean Studies.

- Nam, Man Chun. 1925. Polozhenie krest'ianstva i ego dvizhenie v Koree. *The Krest'ianskii Internatsional* no.8-9: 72-88.
- National Institute of Korean History. 1972. Hanil hapbang joyak [Korea-Japan Annexation Treaty]. In *Gojong sidaesa 6* [History of the Gojong era 6]. Seoul: National Institute of Korean History.
- Sin, Chaeho. 1972. Jeguk juuiwa minjok juui [Imperialism and Nationalism]. In *Danjae Sin Chaeho jeonjip II* [Collection of Sin Chaeho's works II], 377-378. Seoul: Eulyu Munhwasa.
- Yun, Yeong-sil. 2009. Gungmingwa minjogui bunhwa [The differentiation of *gungmin* and *minjok*]. *Sangheo Hakbo* 25 (February): 79-114.

Kwon Hee-Young (kwonhy@aks.ac.kr) has been a professor of history at the Academy of Korean Studies since 1989. He is a graduate of Seoul National University. He obtained his M.A. from the University of Paris 7, and his Ph.D. from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. He has been interested in socialist movements, problems of ethnic minorities, women's history and, currently, the comparative history of East Asia.

Abstract

This study conducts an archeological analysis of the notion of *gungmin*, and focuses in particular on how the term *gungmin* used to indicate the sense of belonging to a group has ensured its own identity amidst an intense competition with various other identities. A review of the history of notions is also implemented herein from the standpoint of the political history of identity. In the case of the Republic of Korea, the people of Korea only became *gungmin* of the Republic of Korea after having gone through a process that saw them be identified as *inmin* of the Joseon dynasty, *sinmin* of the Daehan Empire, and *sinmin* and *gungmin* of the Japanese empire. The concept of *minjok* can be regarded as having been the most important psychological resource used during the process of creating the identity of the Republic of Korea. Here, the notion of *minjok* can be seen as having played as important a role in the politics of identity in Korea as the notion of *gungmin*. Not only has North Korea made frequent use of the notion of one *minjok* (nation) as part of its united front approach to South Korea, but the latter has also employed policies that have been based on this same notion in its dealings with the North. As such, viewed from the standpoint of the politics of identity, the notion of *gungmin* in Korea can be said to have been routinely confronted by, and interacted with, the notion of *minjok*.

Keywords: *sinmin* (subjects), *gungmin* (nation, people), *minjok* (nation, ethnic group or race), *inmin* (people), *gyejeup* (class)