

Nation, Migration and Women: Becoming a Proper Korean by Leaving Korea?

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Abstract

Despite increasing international migration, academic concerns regarding the relationship between women and nation have focused minimal attention on women who reside outside their national territory. By combining theories on gender-nation relationship and long-distance nationalism, this study explores migrant women's agency in their relationship with their home nation, contesting the conventional considerations of women based on traditional gender roles, by examining young Korean migrant women residing in the UK. In particular, this research investigates the migrant women's rethinking of their national identity and their intention to contribute active societal roles as a Korean, extending beyond distinct political activism or economical supports that previous studies were confined to.

The main factors influencing the thoughts of being a Korean woman in Britain are found in two dimensions — first, new experiences in the host country as migrant/ethnic minority to remind these women of their national identity in everyday life; second, the social atmosphere to respect success on the global stage in contemporary Korea. While these women have critical attitudes towards Korean society and have left Korea, they continue to try to be proper members of Korea. Yet this is not simply a confirmation of their loyalty. They strive to contribute to Korea and preserve Korean cultural values, but deny reckless patriotism or illiberal nationalism. By pursuing a successful career and contribution to Korea while at the same time living outside Korea, the migrants challenge domesticity (the key characteristic of women in national discourse) and reveal the ironic relationship between women's becoming desirable Korean citizens and leaving their country of origin.

Key words

nation, migration, transnationalism, citizenship, Korean women

Introduction

As expressed in a well-known Korean adage — “Everyone becomes patriotic in a foreign country” — it is not difficult to presume that geographical migration can influence one’s national sentiment. Given people’s increasing movement across national borders, questions arise regarding the significant and complex sociological effects of migration that cause people to reconsider their home nation(s) and how, in turn, their relationship of self-to-nation is reshaped. The present paper explores this issue from a gender-focused perspective by investigating the cases of young, South Korean migrant women in Britain.

As people’s geographical movements have increased and communication technologies have become more efficient and accessible, it is broadly recognised that new types of social spaces have been created that extend beyond strict geographical boundaries. The influence of a nation-state on its members (and viceversa) continues even after the members move across their national borders (Anderson, 1992; Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994). Accordingly, the idea of *nation* has been extended beyond a national territory. Migrants’ political, economic, and emotional ties to their country of origin have been examined by academic researchers in the fields of migration and diaspora studies over the past two decades (Faist, 2000; Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Portes, 1997; Vertovec, 1999). Despite the increased attention to migrants’ relationships with their home nation, gender issues within these relationships have not been pursued, with the notable exception of those cases involving women’s familial ties.

The (re)formation of emigrant women’s relations with their home country has largely been ignored, not only in transnationalism/migration studies, but also in gender studies. Although gender-nation relationships have been studied by a large number of feminist theorists, the relationship between nation and women who live outside the national territory were not fully examined. Those issues concerning women’s citizenship have been discussed only within the context of intra-national territory. That is, the discussions only focused on women nationals who reside in the country or immigrant/ethnic minority women’s rights and assimilation issues. Moreover, although many feminist studies have

criticised women's images as victims of national conflict and reproducers for the nation, their discussions regarding women's intra-national activities dealt solely with specific periods of national crisis, such as economic and/or political upheaval, rather than considering women's responses to everyday life situations.

To fill the lacuna in the existing studies, this paper combines two theoretical issues – long distance nationalism and gender-nation relationship – to explore the influence of international migration on young, South Korean (hereafter, Korean) women's relationships with their home country. This paper examines the key factors to re-shape this relationship in two dimensions – Korean social discourse surrounding globalisation and each woman's post-migration experiences in the UK. With particular attention to their location outside the national territory and their everyday lives, rather than special political activism during national crisis, this paper explores South Korean migrant women's understanding of their national identity and their practices as Korean women. By tracing these practices, this paper will illustrate the ironic relationship between women's becoming desirable citizens and leaving their country of origin and the challenges they raise against the conventional women's role in national discourse.

This study uses qualitative data drawn from this author's project on Korean migrant women's identities in the UK, conducted between 2004 and 2008 (fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2007). Interviewed were twenty-one Korean-born women between the ages of 20 and 35; their length of stay in Britain ranged between seven months and eleven years were performed. By applying a biographical approach, individual replicate interviews (two to three times per person) by listening to self-reported life stories that included pre-migration, life after migration, and future plans. In addition, in order to access groups of Korean women and observe the details of their lives inside UK migrant-composed Korean communities, the author conducted participant-observation studies in three beauty salons owned by Korean migrants and a Korean church located in New Malden, a suburb of London that has the highest Korean population in the UK.¹

Particular consideration was given to the socio-economic background of each participant – an important component in forming consideration of

home country; like many other Korean migrants in the UK, these women came from urban areas (Seoul and other metropolitan cities in Korea) and are highly-educated (most of the interviewees finished or were completing university-level education). In terms of occupation, they are students (undergraduate, postgraduate or language-training course), professionals, or the wives of resident workers of Korean companies. Rather than gaining direct economic benefits, their purpose of migration is related to investment in their future careers and gaining new cultural experiences. Despite each having sufficient economic and social resources, their status remains unstable and uncertain given their current situation as migrants requiring a visa to legally reside in the UK, their need to develop career prospects, and most importantly, their status as an ethnic minority in Britain.

Nation, Citizenship and Women Overseas

Women and Nation

Feminist studies have challenged traditional nation-women relationships by revealing that nationalism consists of gendered discourse; women are crucial to the construction and reproduction of nationalist ideologies (Brah, 1993; Mayer, 2000; Parker, Russo, Sommor & Yaeger, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 1997a). The way in which women belong to a given nation is never the same as for men, and nationalism does not guarantee the same rights for women as men because women are not typically

¹ Regarding Korean population in the UK, there are approximately 40,000 Koreans residing in the UK. The vast majority of Korean migrants in the UK entered for the purpose of study and training (especially English language). According to the internal resource of Korean Embassy in the UK (2006), apart from small proportion of Koreans having UK citizenship or denizenship, fifty-one percent of these migrants are students and their families, and the others are employed (resident workers in the Korean companies' UK divisions, in particular) or run their own business. While there is no significant difference in numbers between women and men who've migrated to the UK, almost twice as many women as men among Koreans have UK citizenship. Like other contemporary Korean emigrants, this population subset is mainly from urban, middle-class, college-educated backgrounds (see Yoon, 2004 for the general features of contemporary Korean emigration).

considered active players or representatives (Iveković & Mostov, 2002; McClintock, 1993). Women are considered to be territorial markers and sometimes even the property of the nation, requiring men's protection (Iveković & Mostov, 2002). As Radcliff and Westwood (1996) argue, "Men appear in the histories of battles, governments and monarchs, whereas women appear as icons of national domesticity, morals and 'private' sociality" (p. 147).

The relationship between women and nationalism is complex. Although women are considered as the object of exploitation in nationalist discourse, being reproducers rather than subjects (Kandiyoti, 1994; McClintock, 1995), women's histories have shown that women cannot be merely passive objects or victims by their active roles. This is especially true of women who actively participate in nationalist movements which may serve to empower women (Bystydzienski, 1992). As seen throughout the history of Third World feminists, participation in national movements for independence from colonialism can be perceived as an emancipatory movement for autonomy. Women's activism — even through conventional female characteristics, such as motherhood — provide a stepping stone towards transformation of the public sphere, which is structured as authoritarian and predominantly controlled by men (Werbner, 1999). That is, by such political activities, women have created "opportunity spaces" that changed the pattern of gender relations and transformed women's sphere of activities as domestic by giving their voices in political activities (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Waylen, 1996). However, contradictions are also evident. After national independence or social reform has taken place, women are not guaranteed the ability to enter the public sphere (Werbner & Yuval-Davis, 1999).²

Throughout these debates on the nation-women relationship, it is noticed that the discussion of women's agency and the possibility of

² Indeed, women are often mobilised for independent movements and modernisation projects. From the Orientalist point of view, their status is used as a criterion of a nation's development, while from the nationalist point of view, it is considered a standard of the failure or success of modernisation in the nationalist project (Kandiyoti, 1991; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996). For this reason, women's political activities and education are encouraged, but they remain caught up in women's domestic roles, such as those of educator and mother (Yuval-Davis, 1997a; Kandiyoti, 1994; Chatterjee, 1989; Boehmer, 2005).

women's empowerment through national discourse is narrowly focused on women's political activities such as participating in movements for independence or democratization.

As women's sphere of activities and their social interactions changed during periods of economic crisis and political repression, so the ways that they imagined themselves – and the ways in which others imagined them – were subtly yet powerfully transformed. (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996, p. 159)

That is, only in situations of economic or political crisis are women less likely to be considered primarily domestic and maternal. Moreover, women's "opportunity spaces" to place a culture of resistance and a gender agenda into nationalist movements tend to be discussed within a relatively narrow definition of political action, such as organised political movements and activism. For these reasons, the attitudes surrounding national identity and nationalist discourse amongst women who are not activists in political movements have hardly been explored. Here, important questions remain: if women are not facing a major national calamity such as war, a colonial situation, or economic disaster, and they are not directly involved in political activism, what are their agency and/or capability for self-empowerment like? How do women deal with their sense of belonging to their nation, with their sense of national citizenship, in their everyday lives?

The issue of nation-migrant women relationship can be also understood as women's citizenship, given that "citizenship is an important way in which the relationship between the individual and then nation-state has been theorised" (Waylen, 1996, p. 14). The term citizenship has been expended and used in various ways. Rather than relying on the formal definition referring to a juridical status granting rights and duties as a member of a state, citizenship in this paper refers to "a set of moral qualities thought to be crucial for the existence of the good citizen" (Martiniello, 2002, p. 116). Instead of seeing citizenship as simply legal/formal rights and membership, this discussion on nation-women relationship employ a broader meaning of citizenship (Lister, 1997): "total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions,

institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (Werbner & Yuval-Davis 1999, p. 4). In particular, the benefit of examining the citizenship issue to understand migrant women can be found in the features of citizenship, given that people have different rights and memberships depending on status, such as gender, class, and ethnicity (Lister, 1997; Vogel, 1991; Walby, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1997b).

In the Korean context, the construction of women’s roles in the national project may be characterised as “sacrifice-based”, depicting a mother disregarding her personal ambitions or a daughter working in a factory instead of seeking higher-education, both sacrificing in exchange for the welfare of her family.³ Meanwhile, women’s own activities in claiming their rights have been primarily evident in their participation in political movements. Examples of women’s self-empowerment can be found in Korean female workers’ strong labour movements occurring in the 1970s (Chun, 2003; Matsui, 1998) and the large number of women participating in student activism in the 1980s and 1990s (Cho, 2002). By participating in such movements women gained the opportunity to become active subjects of political activism, to appear in the public sphere, and to speak out about their gender-sensitive agendas.

Again the question remains: in the relatively stable political and economic situation of contemporary Korea, how do Korean migrant women establish their relationship with the nation they reside in, and what shapes these women’s activities for the achievement of full citizenship? In the case of migrant women, especially, the fact that global media and international travel have become increasingly prominent in people’s lives is of great interest in exploring these questions.

³ Korean nationalist discourse, which is associated with the national modernisation project of the 1960s and 1970s focused on the creation of dutiful nationals — *kukmin* (Moon, 2005) and defined women based on traditional gender roles — for example, *Alttael-Jubu* (meaning a wife who economically and effectively organises the household, thereby connoting that their duties ultimately contribute to the national economy), *Sanup Yökkun* (literally meaning the military for industrialisation), and *Suchul Yökkun* (meaning the military for export). Such nomenclature stemmed from the key roles played by young female workers in economic growth stimulated by industrialisation, particularly in light industry (Chun, Yoo, Kim, & Shin, 2005). Despite these variations in titling, all these women were conceived and identified primarily as wives/daughters supporting their families — all essentially gendered identifications.

Migrants and Home Nation

Another important question related to the nation-women relationship can be culled from migration studies, particularly from the research involving long distance nationalism and transnationalism. Although transnational practices and identities are not fixed within national boundaries, this does not mean that they are necessarily “boundless” or “placeless” (Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier, & Sheller, 2003; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Smith, 2005; Yeoh, Willis, & Fakhri, 2003). Rather, “transnational identities, while fluid and flexible, are at the same time grounded in particular places at particular times” (Yeoh, Lai, Charney, & Tong, 2003, p. 3). In this sense, the transnational lives of people are still under the influence of their home country as well as the new settings in their host country. The continued control of states is regarded as “long-distance nationalist” (Anderson, 1992), where a “nation-state stretches beyond its geographical boundaries” (Basch *et al.*, 1994). Despite theoretical and empirical development regarding this issue, only limited discussions about women’s transnational ties with their families have been included, and the impact of gender has yet to be fully investigated. In an age of increasing geographical mobility, how does the logic of nationalism’s influence on women operate in the migrant context? In order to examine this, the discussion about nation-gender relations needs to be connected to long-distance nationalism.

“Long-distance nationalism” is defined as “a claim to membership in a political community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland” (Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 2001, p. 4). According to Basch *et al.*’s (1994) observation, states consider their diaspora population as their citizens so that a new form of nationalism develops, with some countries promoting the use of emigrants for nation-building projects. Homeland governments consider this dispersed population as a resource, and appeal for them to support government projects (Foner, 1997). In addition to the needs of nations, Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) propose another standpoint for long-distance nationalism — subalterns sharing their subordination and disempowerment in relation to global capitalists. Considering the case of Haitian migrants, whose long-distance

nationalism is motivated by Haitian history and by racism in the US, Glick-Schiller & Fouron (2001) contend that “long-distance nationalism reflects the tensions generated by the global reach of corporations and banks, continued political division of the world into separate and very unequal states, and longings of disempowered people to lead lives of dignity and self-respect” (pp. 4-5). That is, constant relationship with and attachment to the country of origin can be characterized by two aspects – a government’s need to tie overseas population in its governmental dimension as well as migrants’ wishes to improve their condition in both their host and origin countries.

Now, consider the currentday Korean situation. Governmental and public attitudes toward overseas Koreans and Korean descendents are strongly related to contemporary Korean discourse of globalisation, and are relevant examples of long-distance nationalism. For instance, the Overseas Koreans Foundation was established in 1997 with the purpose of “helping overseas Koreans share our national spirit and become respectable citizens of the host states” (Overseas Koreans Foundation, 2008). However, rather than mere sympathy for people who share an ethnic background, the approach to overseas Koreans often focuses on how to strategically use these perceived national assets by developing Korean overseas networks (Im & Chun, 2006). That is, as an outcome of the interplay between globalism and nationalism, Korean governmental practices have aimed to create and strengthen the global Korean community (Shin, 2006), also known as a “pan-Korean economy” (Lee, 2003).

The potentially significant role of transnational membership in the nation can be more clearly seen in the recent spotlighting of some public figures, including actors, sports players, and businesspeople, who have helped to *introduce Korea to the world*. Their contribution is part of the globalisation discourse in Korea, which has predominated since the late 1990s. Particular stress on economic survival amidst international competition and a discourse, pushing people to become cosmopolitan, promotes more than just a global mindset and respect for other cultures. Taking a line from the past national modernisation agenda – to “catch up with advanced countries” – it cultivates respectable Koreans who compete successfully on the world stage. Stories of Koreans/Korean

descendents who have attained world-wide renown and celebrity have been promoted. Being known on the world stage is praised as a personal achievement as well as a national one, and such stars are considered Korean regardless of their legal citizenship or place of birth. Such attitudes show which factor most influences people's perceptions about who qualifies as an exemplary member of a specific ethnic/national group. It can also help us to understand the background of Korean migrant women's thoughts regarding national citizenship. The rest of this paper deals with how Korean women who have migrated internationally, in this case to the UK, subsequently rethink their relationship with their home country and how they go about modifying or improving it.

“I will contribute to Korea.”

National Identity, Rights, and Duties

Going abroad has gained huge popularity among young Korean women, and most Korean migrant women in this study commonly expressed their complaints about their native Korean society throughout their pre-migrant life stories, citing the particularly stressful impacts of urbane life and patriarchal atmosphere. However, these revelations can not simply be translated as hatred towards their home country or a wish to completely sever their relationship with Korea by going abroad. Rather, these migrant women appeared to rethink their national identity in response to residing outside of Korea's geographical borders. Furthermore, they verbalized affection for their home country and their intentions to contribute to Korea. Eun-Sook⁴ (age 28, pre-master course student) stated that reassessing her national identity was possible only after moving to the UK. For her being in a foreign place created the opportunity to consolidate her identity as Korean.

Hmm . . . Seriously, I didn't feel [my Korean identity] before emigrating. Though I was interested in social issues, I didn't

⁴ All the interviewees' names in this paper are pseudonyms.

really love my country and wasn't very proud of being a Korean. I didn't think about it much. But after I came here . . . it is my identity and will never change even if I wanted it to, right? Korean. Woman. That's my identity. A Korean woman. A Korean woman who is studying in the UK. Well . . . when someone who doesn't know me well first meets me, the standard for judging me was only my nationality and gender. So, I realised, Ah! The standard for identifying me is Korean and woman! That's the story. And, as you know, the North Korean Nuclear issue and Minister Ban being elected [as UN secretary general] came out at almost the same time. Though I wanted to hear more about Ban, people only talked about the North Korean nuclear situation instead of asking me about Ban. And they disregarded Korea . . . In such situations, I feel my [Korean] identity strongly. (Eun-Sook)

Experience outside the home territory makes migrants rethink their identity in relation to other people, as well as giving themselves the opportunity to reflect on their home and identity. As Davies puts it, "re-negotiating of identities is fundamental to migration" (1994, p. 3), especially given that inside the host country, nationality is one of the questions most frequently asked by people wishing to identify someone (Gray, 1996).

In fact, most interviewees said that when they were in the UK, they identified themselves primarily with Korea as they navigated relationships with people from various backgrounds. Bo-Ram (age 27, resident worker's wife) said that the main activities in her language class consist of speaking to others about one's own home country and comparing it to the others. Students exchange and compare different countries' customs and social features, and each student is initially defined by his/her national identity. What is more, So-Ra (age 25, undergraduate student, designer in Korea) and her Korean classmate frequently worked together, cajoling each other by saying things like "We should study harder. As Koreans, we should not be bad students," and criticising other Korean students who do not work hard enough. Yet all this does not mean that their identity suddenly flourishes and they immediately have

pride in their being Korean. On the one hand, this stems from the Korean environment, which formed in them a collective identity over a long period of time. On the other hand, personal reflection is inspired by their new setting, which makes them explore relationships with others while reconsidering Korea's history and position in the world.

Eun-Sook, who describes herself as the sort of person who has a strong national identity, expressed her wish to contribute to Korean society in the future.

I am not content and I think there are a lot of things to change in Korea . . .but I think, what made it possible for me to grow up and study abroad is not just my parents' support, but rather my entire background, Korea, my mother country, which are represented as parents. I think I ought to contribute to Korea in any way I can once I complete my studies and go back to Korea, because I have benefited [from Korea] and because our country is wealthy enough [to send me to study abroad]. . . . I am not so happy that our country is not good enough in social aspects, comparing its economic status . . .but, it's my mother country anyway, people I love are there, and it's where I grew up . . .Yeah, I have quite a strong [Korean] identity.
(Eun-Sook)

The primary reason behind Eun-Sook's desire to contribute back to Korea, therefore, stems from her reconsideration of the relationship between herself and her country. Expanding the meaning of her *family's support* to the broader sense of *Korean support*, she identifies her reciprocal relationship with Korea. In Eun-Sook's case, she considers Korea's economic growth a condition that directly enabled her movement abroad. Her strong belief that she ought to return such benefits to society is directly related to her idea that Korea is her supportive background.

Su-Min (age 27, language student, photographer in Korea) expresses a similar set of beliefs. She hopes to improve aspects of Korean culture that she perceives as problematic.

I hated Korean culture, which is full of phoniness and

hypocrisy. When I talked about the problem with my friends, we concluded that it was inevitable because our country had not had enough time to develop a mature culture. There was the colonial period under Japan and the Korean War, and the country achieved only economic growth without cultural development. So we cannot simply blame everything on this. But anyway, I hated such things. However, I have changed my mind since I came here. One of my acquaintances told me, “You should see how lucky you are because you are among the one percent of Koreans who can study abroad. And you should never forget you are a Korean. You could not come here by yourself, Korea let you come here.” . . . If I work hard so that I will be able to do something, I can contribute to making Korean culture better and changing the problems I hated in Korea. (Su-Min)

Su-Min tries to understand the source of her discontent with Korea in the context of Korea’s contemporary history. Her intention to contribute to Korea is based on her sense of responsibility as a privileged person who was fortunate enough to go abroad. Education in a foreign country is seemingly an individual project, but getting the opportunity for higher education in the UK is understood within the framework of the nation. If Korean women’s dissatisfaction with the negative aspects of Korean society – such as its authoritarianism and gender discrimination – implies a claim to certain “rights” as Korean, their intention to contribute is related to their “duties” as a Korean.

Furthermore, Na-Ra (age 35, office manager) and Jee-Soo (age 24, student in community college) extend their national identity to their identity as Asians, identifying Asia as another recipient of their contributions.

When it came to writing my dissertation during the summer term, I thought about going back to Asia. Well . . . I’ve got such an ambitious idea. I was keen to return and do something to contribute to Asia, it was vague though. (Na-Ra)

Jee-Soo, who completed her undergraduate studies in China, also expressed a desire to contribute to East Asia in her post-graduation future.

I thought that the countries in Europe have much interchange of people, and they do well [keep power], as we can see from the EU. But China, Korea and Japan don't do it that way, although they have a lot in common. I thought Korea, China, and Japan should step forward. I imagined how I could help such a process . . . Because I'm interested in Japan as well, I can speak basic Japanese. So . . . I wish to contribute to exchange between Korea, China and Japan . . . north-east Asia, whether cultural or economic. Is this too ambitious? (Jee-Soo)

In addition to both women's deep considerations of Korea and Asia as points of origin and their sense of belonging to their home society, they are concerned about another aspect that makes them wish to contribute to Korea/Asia: Korea/Asia's marginalised position in the world. The generally undervalued and subordinate status of this region motivates their need to contribute to Korea/Asia. This resistant quality of their viewpoint – they regard themselves as underprivileged – justify their speaking of nation without a sense of guilt about their nationalism, which they distinguish from European-based nationalism.

Although some Korean women demonstrate their desire to contribute to Korea, they deny any reckless patriotism or illiberal nationalism. While resistant nationalism and illiberal nationalism certainly do coexist, the term nationalism is confusedly used to refer to both in Korea. In this situation, women often need to show their attachment to the nation in a very sensitive manner in order to avoid being misunderstood. Moreover, because of the emphasis on a “global citizen” mindset, being a nationalist is sometimes considered shameful and outdated. Soo-Hee (age 25, preparing postgraduate course) said “I've got another long-term future plan. I will translate and publish Korean books in English or French.” However, after vocalising this plan, she stresses that her hope to introduce good Korean novels is not about nationalism.

However, there is no intention to enhance national glory in my plan. It's not for Korea at all. Rather, I just want to introduce some good books that I appreciate but that have not been published here yet. I think it could provide diversity for people here. I don't like that kind of thing, you know, nationalism. (Soo-Hee)

For a similar reason, some women criticise other people's excessive attachment to Korea.

I came to realise how important national background is, as I live in a foreign country. It is sometimes helpful to live here if you are from a rich country. But if someone takes that [their home country] too seriously . . . let's say he/she thinks that it determines more than half of her/his condition [laugh] . . . his/her foreign life may be tough. (Jae-Eun, age 29, office worker)

Jae-Eun's statement illustrates the situation that migrant women face: they realise the importance of nationality as their background, an indispensable resource and a primary factor determining their impression on others, but still do not want to be confined within their national identity. Similarly, while Bo-Ram felt "I am a Korean" when watching Korean footballers in England's premier league, she also said,

My husband said that a player like Park Ji-Sung in such a famous football club can make more people learn about and get a positive image of Korea. But I said "There are a lot of black players in basketball teams in Korea. But, do we know about their countries?" Of course not. It's probably the same here. I don't think that Korea and the Korean image are getting better because of them [sports players]. (Bo-Ram)

While these women embrace their identity as Korean and want to contribute to Korea, they criticise having too much pride in Korea or overstatements made by people or the media, cautioning against a narrow nationalist mindset.

Meanwhile, some women demonstrated a determination to preserve their own Korean cultural values, in particular within an inter-ethnic marriage. Yoon-Ja (Mid 40s, hair dresser's friend) indicated her ambition to introduce and maintain Korean lifestyle and values. When some single women of the Korean church held an informal meeting in Yoon-Ja's home, Yoon-Ja shared her friend, Kyong-Ae's story. Kyong-Ae had come to the UK to study and married an English man that she met at university. According to Yoon-Ja, Kyong-Ae tried to study and work hard in order not to fall behind her husband. It became a competition. Her hard work resulted in great success, leading her British parents-in-law to be surprised and exclaim, "How can an Asian woman earn such a large amount of money!" Her position as a brilliant student and successful professional brought her power within her new family. Her success and the reaction of her parent-in-laws were understood as successful resistance to the stereotype of Asian women as being powerless. Yoon-Ja continued her friend's story, stating that she was impressed by how Kyong-Ae's encouragement allowed her English husband to observe Korean etiquette. For example, when Yoon-Ja was leaving after visiting her friend's home, Kyong-Ae urged her husband to go to the front door to see Yoon-Ja off. She said, "Why are you sitting in the living room now? That's not Korean etiquette. To see off a guest in Korea, we go out the gate with the guest when they go back home. Get up!" Yoon-Ja's story, in which she emphasises her friend's efforts to assert power in her family even as she preserves Korean values, illustrates how much these women desire to match their personal success with their ability to maintain Korean values away from home.

What this case demonstrates is not only a Korean woman's effort to preserve Korean values in her new family, it also shows that even family becomes a site in which migrant women's national identity and power relations intermingle. For a woman living outside her country of origin, the role of preserving her own culture reflects power relations in the new setting which require concerted effort to manage.

Jae-Eun: Anyway, I will teach my child Korean when I give birth.

The researcher: Even if you marry a non-Korean?

Jae-Eun: Sure. Because my parents have to see their grandchildren . . . If I marry a non-Korean, well . . . I would go and live in Korea for at least one or two years. I know that will not be easy, but anyway . . . Also, I will teach my husband Korean. Yes. That's what I wish. I actually have seen a person who did that. . . . In the past, Korean women who intermarried [tended not to be involved in Korea much], and people would say *ChulGaWeoIn* [a Confucian phrase meaning that a married daughter is no longer a member of the family]. But I will definitely teach them Korean. My child has to speak Korean and live in Korea because my parents want to think of the child as their grandchild and they should be able to communicate with each other. Even if I argue with my husband because of this, I will never give up. Because . . . if I give up on that, I would be the only member of my family who cannot speak English well and I would be driven into the corner at some point in the future, say in my 50s. [laugh]

Jae-Eun's strong intention to teach her new family Korean is not merely a matter of obligation as a Korean, nor her attachment to her parents in Korea. It reflects her anxiety about remaining in a position as a foreigner in Britain. That is, her strong willingness to keep Korean culture (especially language) is influenced by her experiences in Britain including difficulties in English use and coping with the feeling of isolation as a migrant.

Beyond Domesticity

In the nation-women relationship, as discussed earlier, a key factor defining the positions of women can be found in the concept of *domesticity*. As Radcliffe and Westwood put it, despite the symbolic importance of nation, women's position is considered to belong in the realm of home: "female subjects remain associated with maternal attachments and private spaces" instead of the public realm (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996, pp. 158-159). As an ideology, the division between private and public spheres, which assumes that only the public sphere is

political, further contributes to the division between men and women by supporting that the political aspect is considered masculine. The assumption that the public sphere is masculine, respectable, and rational leads to the exclusion of women from full citizenship (Canning & Rose, 2001; Webner & Yuval-Davis, 1999).⁵ The relationship between nation and gender parallels this public/private division of gender within the nation, given that domesticity is a key descriptor in relation to the position of women. Women are considered the bearers of national collectivity but not representative of the nation, itself; this runs parallel to the conventional idea that a woman is the reproducer of the family but not the head of it. In addition, women's role as biological reproducer and cultural reproducer of the nation is generally defined through their role in the family, and is evidenced in such activities for the transmittance of cultural traditions as passing down recipes or nurturing the next generation of citizens (Webner & Yuval-Davis, 1999). As such, the restricted position of women inside the family is repeated in the national discourse — that is, the public/private division of gender remains, emphasising women's domesticity in the nation.

Some interviewees of this study, however, demonstrated that their ambition goes beyond the conventional notion of women as symbols of national domesticity. This can be seen in the fact that they intend to contribute to Korea primarily via their professional lives. In their narratives, these women pursue a successful career and contribute to Korea at the same time. Hae-Rim (age 26, trainee lawyer) described how she will use her abilities to help Korea — one of her ultimate goals of study abroad.

I hoped to contribute to the relationship between Korea and Europe. I cannot say whether I have achieved the goal yet. It's too early to say that. However, I think I am on the road to reaching it. I am doing some work related to Korean

⁵ Surely, the public/private dichotomy has been challenged by feminist scholars. The main points of criticism are, firstly, most social relationships and practices do not exclusively belong to one sphere; secondly, the boundary between public and private is not stable (Gal, 2002).

companies. If I continue to work in this way, I could get the chance to do more work for Korea. Then, I may achieve what I dreamt of when I first came here. The dream was to broaden my view, to improve my English, to study in a more advanced educational system, and eventually to do something useful for Korea.

Su-Min also indicated her intention to contribute to Korea. She explains how she intends to adopt aspects of an innovative art project in Europe for her artwork in Korea.

{The art project} is wonderful. I recommend it to you. I thought, this kind of project could be possible in Korea as well. One acquaintance of mine is very open-minded. She/he wants to support young artists and improve culture, though she/he is not an artist him/herself. So, if I complete my study well and improve my ability . . . I would like to participate in such a project.

Their feelings of being Korean and intentions to contribute to Korea go against the traditionally considered location of women. In Korea, the Confucian version of the public/private division of gender persists. Notably, *Nae Œ Bŏb* (Women's place is the domestic sphere but men's place is the public sphere) reinforces the divided gender roles emphasising a woman duty to family and the home (Kim, 2005). Korean migrant women's desire for career development is a reaction to this division and a reflection of the challenges facing a younger generation of Korean women; no longer identifying themselves as only mothers and wives, they want to be independent and self-sufficient women, unlike their mothers' and grandmothers' generations (Cho, 2002). In other words, migrant women's desire to contribute to Korea can be seen as a way of entering the public sphere and becoming an active citizen. Such a contribution will be achieved mainly through professional success.

By focusing on getting a job and pursuing higher education, the women try to extricate themselves from their expected domestic position in the family. At the same time, becoming a contributor to Korea/Asia

allows them to resist their traditional national domestic role. These women want an unlimited position beyond Korea and desire to become truly representative of Korea. Korean women's contributions to Korea, therefore, serve to challenge the public/private division and the conventional representations of domesticity in both family and nation.

Some women demonstrated their hope of becoming an active citizen through their role as a representative of Korea. Their desire is to be more than a member of Korea. They explain the pleasure they feel when communicating with non-Koreans and take pride in introducing Korea on the global stage. Jee-Soo is about to marry a British man and is currently preparing job applications. Although she is going to remain in the UK, she wants a job that will link her to Korea, which directly relates to her hope of being a representative of Korea.

I am interested in a job in an airline company. This is because it would be easy to meet people from other countries. And an airline is a representative company of the country, isn't it? Like Korean Air . . . there are only one or two big airlines in a country. So . . . well . . . there is maybe something I can do . . . If I have a job related to tourism, it could be helpful [for Korea]. Though I haven't got a detailed plan for the job, I am thinking about going to an airline. . . . I don't know. But, I suppose, if someone works at an airline, he/she would be working as a representative of the country. Also, the person probably can meet many foreigners and can think from foreigners' point of view. (Jee-Soo)

The desire to become a representative of Korea is carried out in events of everyday life, as well. Seo-Yeon (age 33, office worker) takes pride in introducing Korea to other people.

When I introduce Korea, they [classmates in the language school] say "Oh! I didn't know that." I was keen to express how nice my country is, even in my poor English. I thought that though Korea is small and unknown, perhaps other Koreans go abroad and talk about Korea in many places around

the world, just like me. I felt proud of my efforts. (Seo-Yeon)

As mentioned earlier, the women's hope to contribute to Korea through successful studies and careers abroad is also related to the collective desire for the global success of contemporary Korea. In accordance with this phenomenon, working at international institutions is preferred and desired by graduates looking for jobs. Eun-Sook's future plan is to work at the UN. She says that this kind of job is attractive to young Koreans and she is one of those preparing to work at an international institution.

Eun-Sook: I particularly want to work at the UNDP [United Nations Development Programme] among others. I would like to work on issues related to women and development, the relationships between women's human resources and the economy, those kinds of things.

The researcher: Ah... there seem to be a lot of people to want to work at the UNDP.

Eun-Sook: A lot! That's a boom in Korea now. Seriously, among young people, it seems to be cool. I mean, [it is preferable] over other jobs which guarantee high pay.

The researcher: Is there any special reason that that kind of job is popular among young people?

Eun-Sook: It's quite a new trend. I think it's been just a few years [since it gained in popularity]. The media have dealt with this, for example, [through] the documentary of a native Korean's entering the UN or something like that. And *Newsweek* and others published special issues on this, which I've even got, like "how to become an international officer," and there were many relevant articles. Reading and watching these things, I could dream. And what's more... Women have an advantage [in getting these jobs]... To be honest, I think I'm a bit vain. It seems to be fancy, the title of international officer. That makes me prefer the job over working within Korea. Yes, I cannot say I am absolutely free of [vanity] and the desire to have a UN passport.

As seen so far, the cases described in this study involving Korean migrant women in the UK is distinguished from previous generations' participating in national projects by the fact that their contributions to Korea are neither financial nor sacrificial, as mentioned earlier. Instead of being self-sacrificial saviours in a national crisis, they have chosen to realise their personal desires and maintain their status as middle-class professionals. They have freed themselves from the "sacrifice" that has characterized the predominant image of Korean women's contributions to the nation.

However, because of this emphasis on personal desires and a more intangible contribution to the nation, their activities are often undervalued by the male-centric discourse. Moreover, they have to deal with the burden of obtaining success in the UK — that is, if they fail to have an outstanding career or other achievement in the UK then they must bear the shame of an unsuccessful migration.

I think women have limitations in our country. I think many women who come here wanted to get out of that environment or have another way of life. But we can hardly see women who got a good position and settled down well. Almost 99 percent of women just intermarry [with host country nationals]. That's all. Only really firm and constant people can achieve success. If not, there is no way but just passing time aimlessly, learning only English, and then marrying a local man and staying. That's all. If a woman is really clever and has the potential to succeed, she's already got on in life in Korea without coming here. (Mee-Hwa, age 27, part-time work)

Although Mee-Hwa's pessimistic opinion may stem from her very limited network of Korean contacts in the UK, her negative feelings towards Korean women who do not have visible achievements shows how difficult it is for a woman to gain approval. Success in the host country means becoming a proud Korean, but this in turn requires visible professional success. In other words, women are caught between being a proud Korean or nothing.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted how Korean women living in the UK recognise and reshape their relationship to their home nation. While they have critical attitudes towards Korean society, these women express complex feelings toward their country of origin and the approaches to being Korean women outside of Korea, including new recognition of their duties and rights, reconsideration of what it means to be an Asian, and willingness to preserve Korean culture and to contribute to Korea while avoiding reckless patriotism.

These women's efforts to preserve Korean values and culture basically stem from their desire to maintain their Korean identities. This should be an example of transnationalism to show the need to re-examine the static definition of national belonging and citizenship in a dynamic global society. Yet this does not necessarily mean that people will automatically gain affection for their home country once they venture beyond its borders. Nor does this implication acknowledge that everyone holds perceptions of their home country in the same way. Rather, the Korean migrant women clearly showed that their understanding of national belonging and identity is related to their concrete experiences under the specific condition. Their idea is newly conceived through their reflections on Korea and their interactions with Non-Korean people in Britain. Such efforts are the result of a reflection of their status as aliens and aim to strengthen their own position in terms of power relations, even within the family, rather than simply accepting their traditional nationally-valued role of preservation/reproduction. As Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001) argue, long-distance nationalism reflects, from the migrants' point of view, these people's recognition of their position and practices to improve their status in their home and host country.

Korean migrant women's attitudes toward the home nation reveal their desire to become active contributors to Korea, reaching beyond the customary, narrowly defined role in nationalist discourse wherein women play the role of self-sacrificing saviour to the nation in times of crisis. It also challenges the traditionally considered position that women belong solely in the domestic sphere (which has been implied in the existing

nation-women discourse). The women's recognition of their Korean identity and the solid establishment of their relationship to Korea have evolved into a more focused intentional contribution to Korea through their own career achievement. Based on recognition of the importance of national background combined with the benefits from higher education, the migrant women comprising this study intend to contribute to Korea using their knowledge and to globally connect Korea to other countries. In short, they openly challenge traditional Korean ideas about the domesticity of women, even as they consciously serve as ambassadorial representatives of Korea. Meanwhile, corresponding to the Korean tendency to value activities on the global stage, their pursuit extends their very sphere of activity outside Korea. An elegant illustration of how women's agency is being shaped in contemporary Korea is provided by these migrant women becoming agents for the Korean nation and promoting globalisation in their daily lives without sole reliance on participation in political activism.

In place of simple patriotism, these women are motivated by the desire to realise their individual goals. However, their personal success is not always separate from their contributions to Korea. Being a global citizen inherently necessitates becoming an exemplary Korean; consequently, migration is a way of simultaneously fulfilling individual desires to enjoy freedom and be "modern women", even while continuing to function as proper Korean citizens. Ironically, these women become proper members of Korean society by leaving Korea. However, given that their success is acknowledged only upon successful residence and acquirement of a respected position in the host country, their endeavours in many cases could remain disregarded. These women still pursuing the migrant's journey find themselves at the crossroad where being a desirable and an undesirable Korean intersect.

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