

The Transformation of the Traditional Value in the Contemporary History of Korea*

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I

A cultural tradition is a set of ideas, which is transmitted with varying degree of accuracy and completeness to each of the members of a cultural system. Although a traditional value may be viewed as a set of instructions, it can hold the allegiance of the membership of a cultural system only if it contains convincing explanations of the correctness of the instructions. Therefore, people must know not only what is right, but why it is right to do the right thing. However, value systems are never static. They are influenced by external conditions and environmental forces. Their internal structure is in a constant state of flux, due to changes in the status of individuals and repetitive changes in the status of the community.¹⁾ In many respects, Korea may be a typical example of the nations, which have experienced a radical change of value system in contemporary history.

As had happened only too often in her past history, Korea was the spot of contending great powers, and her own people by their divisions and rivalry became the instruments of this contention. In partic-

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1) Alan R. Beals, *Culture in Progress* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1965, pp.106~107.

ular, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they have suffered deeply in the discovery that a nation cannot sustain its independence if it will not share in the general development of civilization. Shocked by violent Japanese, Russian, and American occupations, the Koreans now struggle for the restoration of liberty and national dignity as well as the traditional values.

What is meant by 'traditional value' in Korea? This question may also be answered only by referring to the Korea's historical setting. History has shown that the Korean people are a nation with a strong sense of unity and national identity, which produced a united kingdom more than fifteen hundred years ago, and which remained united under changing regimes down to the year 1945. Furthermore, for hundreds of years the Koreans sought safety in complete isolation, devoting themselves to unique customs and distinctive ways of life. In that long time the most stable system was the distant and lightly borne suzerainty of China, under which Korea governed herself—well or badly. Traditional value in Korea therefore should be norms or values in terms of which they thought and lived during this long period.

Like China and Japan, Korean culture was also strongly influenced by the antimaterialistic philosophy of Taoism and Buddhism, which lead the Korean people to suppress their acquisitive instincts and hedonistic desires by seeking refuge in the mystical doctrine of Buddhism and fatalistic quietism of Taoism. However, it was Confucianism, more specifically Neo-Confucianism, that was dominant in the Korean value system since Yi dynasty which lasted until Japanese annexation. And it was Confucian value and its way of living that was to be modified by Japanese conquest, and both Russian and American occupation of Korea. The Japanese conquest was brief, but it was severe enough to make Korean traditional value almost vacuous and of no use. Under these circumstances, Korea was divided into two parts: the southern part has been colored with such values as individualism, pragmatism, and American ideology of democracy, whereas the northern part of

the country has been heavily equipped with totalitarianism, utopianism, and Russian ideology of communism. The division of Korea means something more than territorial division or separation of Korean people; it may also mean the division of Korean value system itself, which will certainly make the Korean political situation even worse.

In this paper, I am concerned with how the traditional values have been transformed in South Korea since the Japanese annexation of Korea. My approach will be based on the turmoil situation of Korean contemporary history, since Koreans of all classes are a politically alert people as far as I know. I shall particularly point out that Korean value systems have never been static in contemporary history mainly because of the unstable external conditions and violent environmental forces.

II

On February, 1876, Shin Hun was dispatched as a Korean representative to Japan in order to arrange the Kanghwa-treaty. According to Myamoto Koichiro, a Japanese delegate, however, Shin did not want to discuss about such practical matters as Korean monetary system or economic situations, because a real gentleman from a Confucian point of view was not supposed to be interested in a businessman's trivial matter. After signing the treaty, the first Korean mission to Japan, headed by Kim Ki-su, arrived in Tokyo. When the Korean delegate visited Kuki Ryuichi, the Japanese minister of Education, Kim was asked what the Korean educational situation is like. "In our country," answered Kim, "Chu Hsi is the only subject matter. Those who criticize the subject are punished as rebels; no one is allowed to mention anything about Buddhism or Taoism in the higher public service examination. The State law is so strict that everyone, whether he be a noble man or a common one, is forced to learn Confucianism."²⁾ To be sure, during Yi dynasty, the scholars and literati were

either men who, having become officials, practiced Confucianism, or men who studied Confucianism in order to enter the bureaucracy. Thus this Neo-Confucian philosophy was taught in government schools in the capital and in every country district, and also in the private institutions which existed throughout the land.

From the above considerations, we may safely come to the conclusion that the traditional value in Korea's pre-modern society was Confucianism, particularly Neo-Confucianism, to which Chu Hsi gave its final complexion, synthesizing all the major doctrines into a harmonious whole. According to him, the Great Ultimate involves both principle and material force. Principle is necessary to explain the reality and universality of things whereas material force is necessary to explain physical form, individuality, and the transformation of things. However, only seemingly dualistic, principle and material force are never separate. They always work together because they are directed by the mind of the universe. In man this mind is mixed with physical nature and human desires, and it needs to be transformed through the investigation of things and an understanding of their principles. Chu Hsi says:

It is said: "The mind of the body is unstable; the mind of the spirit is but small. Be discriminating, be undivided, that you may sincerely hold fast to the mean.".....One should, therefore, aim to discriminate minutely, and not permit the mind of the body to mingle with the mind of the spirit. One should aim at preserving the latter in its oneness, and not permit heavenly principle to be dissipated into human desire. Then in all one does one will never fail to hit the mean, and throughout the world and country one will ever be correct.²⁾

2) Kang Jae-un, "The Closed Thoughts in Modern Korea," *Choong-ang Ilbo*, April 18, 1984. p.7.

3) Quoted from Fung Yu-lan's *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. II, trans. by Derk Bodde (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953. p. 565.

The twin pillar of Korean Neo-Confucianism, Yi Hwang and Yi I, despite their famous disagreement of the relationship between principle and material force, agreed that they alone were sufficient to account for the existence of the cosmos and the order it displays. For them, too, harmony was always important, harmony that comes from stagnation or compromise, not one that comes after the challenge is met. Besides, their major theme was the Confucian concept of the mean, i.e., acting perfectly by choosing the middle in every moment of time. Above all, the so-called "Five Relationships," the cornerstone of the dignity of man in Confucian thought, were habitually emphasized; that is, affection between father and son; righteousness between ruler and minister; proper distinction between husband and wife; proper order between elder and younger; and trustworthiness between friends. The point is not that man is unique in simply possessing these relationship with others which is distinctly human, and that any other way of relating, eg. selfishly seeking one's own profit through using others, is less than human.⁴⁾

It should be noted, however, that a characteristic of this thought as practiced in Korean society was to look upon human relations not as those between men of equal rights and duties but as those between superiors and subordinates. As Yoo Jong-hae and L.L. Wade point out, "among the five major human relationship in Confucianism, only that of 'friends' has been considered as a horizontal relationship." They go on to say:

Here, Korean cultural values are predominately particularistic which is a value orientation toward institutionalized obligation of friendship. As a result of Confucian upbringing, the Korean people on the one hand developed an authoritarian attitude and, on the other failed to develop into self-reliant individuals, that is, Confucianism was responsible for

4) Yun Sung-bum, *Ethics: East and West*, trans. by M.C. Kalton (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1977), cf. p.25.

preventing the people from becoming independent and progressive.⁵⁾

And it was family relationship that produced familism as a criterion of value judgement among common people based not on the concept of equality but on the hierarchical concept.

However, when Neo-Confucianism was practiced as a political ideology, being something more than a metaphysical theory or ethical doctrine, it inevitably created struggles between party factions, based on their interpretations of the vague and abstract doctrine, often resulting in political changes at the capital. Takashi Hatada describes the political situations during the late Yi period as follows:

When one party gained power, it carried out cruel measures against the opposition parties, condemning to death scores of people and meeting out lesser punishment to hundreds. The core of the opposition, however, could never be eliminated; after a short time the members of parties who had been in hiding would rise seeking revenge, and the whole process would be repeated. Furthermore, parties which had seized power would suddenly split. No party stayed united and in power for long.⁶⁾

"This deep-rooted struggling and splintering into party factions," adds he, "were characteristics of Yi Dynasty political history, entirely different from anything that had occurred before."⁷⁾

In the whirlpool of this political turmoil, on the other hand, Korean intellectuals in that period were also stimulated by two important influences: One was the flow of Western ideas emanating from the Jesuits in the Chinese capital, as a result of which these ideas were associated from the very beginning with Catholicism. The second was

5) Yoo Jong-hae and L.L. Wade, "Korean Political Culture: An Interpretative Essay," *East and West Studies*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Oct. 1979, pp. 50~51.

6) Takashi Hatada, *A History of Korea*, trans. by W.W. Smith, Jr. and B.H. Hazard (California, Santa Barbara, 1969), p.72

7) *Ibid.* p.73.

Ch'ing school of empirical studies, pioneered by the Chinese scholar Ku Yen-wu. These two intellectual currents contributed to the development of Silhak, or the Pragmatic school of thought. The school might be viewed as a reaction against the metaphysical bend of the philosophers of the Chu Hsi tradition. Thus the Silhak scholars, claiming "to clarify the truth, seek evidence," strongly proposed to reform state institutions, including agriculture, history, astronomy, and medicine. Chong Yakyong, for example, being drawn to Western ideas and Catholicism, produced several reform proposals for the renovation of central and regional governmental structures and legal system; he also introduced Western glass manufacturing and smallpox vaccination techniques. Pak Chega, on the other hand, saw relationship between the demands for products and resources in skilled workers, tools, and so forth, necessary for their production. Production, he believed, was the basis of national wealth without regard to whether or not it was agricultural production. And Pak Chiwon, the Witty satyrist, also ridiculed the *yangban*, or noble man, and praised the virtues of commercial activities. However, their reformation movement was by no means effective enough to change the traditional value. Willam E. Henthorn thus explains:

Closely associated with the Silhak school were members of the Southerner faction, who had been out of power from many years. The mere fact of being removed from political office may have been an incentive for such men to depart from the orthodox Chu Hsi tradition espoused by the state.⁸⁾

At the end of 18th century, when the Silhak scholars were quite active, it may be important to note that the Christian church was also originated in Korea. Lee Sung-hoon was baptizied in 1784 while on a diplomatic mission to Peking, and came home to form a cell of

8) William E. Henthorn, *A History of Korea* (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1971), p. 209.

converts among young Confucian intellectuals. When the converts learned to their dismay that Rome had forbidden Confucian rites of giving honor to ancestors, they obediently burned their family tablets. For that act, the outraged Korean officialdom executed three of them, whom Pope John Paul II has recently canonized in Seoul. Over succeeding decades the small Catholic community suffered four more waves of persecution, in which approximately 10,000 Catholics were tortured and beheaded; today monuments marking the sites of martyrdom dot the countryside.

Obviously, although Christian values did not yet have any major role in the Korean's mind and action, they infiltrated into Korean leading intellectuals' thoughts. Chong Yakyong, for example, denied Neo-Confucian premise that the ultimate aim of moral action was integration into the all-pervasive cosmic network formed by principle, or *i*. Above all, he denied morality instead as the first Confucians had envisioned it, as selfless interaction with the human community. He therefore, as Donald L. Baker points out, "could appreciate what more orthodox Neo-Confucian denied the moral efficacy of belief in the actual existence of God above personally watching and judging the thoughts and behavior of men below."⁹⁾ He adds:

At the root of Tasan's attraction to theism was a recognition, possibly reinforced by reading Ricci of moral frailty as an inescapable part of the human condition. Tasan argued that living virtuously required more effort than that Chu Hsi and those Korean Neo-Confucians who followed Chu and his theory of inherent virtue had realized.¹⁰⁾

9) Donald L. Baker, "Ricci's Arguments for the Existence of God," *East Asian Studies*, No. 3, Dec. 1983, Sogang University, p.170

10) *Ibid.*

11) Lee Kwang-rin, "The Introduction of *Wan-kuo Kung-fa* to Korea," *East Asian Studies*, No. 2, June 1983, Sogang University, pp.144~145. Here Lee gives a detailed discussion on the influence of W.A.P. Martin's *Elements of International Law* to the relationship between Korea and China.

However, the intellectual presentation of God as the Creator of the universe and the final authority of moral principle moved few Korean scholarly minds, whereas it was interpreted as a revolutionary political ideology by the government officials threatening the traditional political system and value structure.

During the period of internal strife in Korea, of endless struggles between factions and hopeless economic situations for the peasants, great changes were taking place in the outside world. By way of China, Western natural science and Christianity had already entered Korea. However, Korea, knowing how China had suffered from the incursion of foreigners, hesitated to open up her country. She feared that to give up her policy of isolation would undermine the authority of the ruling official class and traditional value by permitting a further spread of Christianity; this faith, however, had continued to gain adherents even though prohibited by the government. Hence, Korea refused to open her doors to foreigners, strengthened her border defenses, and redoubled her efforts in the persecutions of Christians. Accordingly, in 1866, owing to the execution of 30,000 believers, various Western forces gradually paid attention to Korea. At that time, however, the Western powers had more important problems on their hands. It was during this time that a new and vigorous Japan appeared again on the scene of Korean contemporary history.

III

When Japan was about to annex Korea, China was not able to pursue her own claim to suzerainty over Korea any longer mainly due to the turmoil caused by the great power's attempts to Korean sovereignty. Korea, however, merely hoped that the foreign powers would achieve an equilibrium; her aim was to maintain sovereignty by making use of the balance of power among the foreigners, yet it turned out to be futile. It rather led to a decline in her prestige in

international politics.¹²⁾ In this chaotic situation, as we may easily understand, Neo-Confucianism as a dominant Korean value system was not able to enjoy its privileged status, just as the international relationship between Korea and China was unable to be kept at the time. Korean's value systems were full of contradiction and confusion.

During the first two decades, into the mid 1880s, Japan was in the similar situations. As Edward Norbeck says, Japan was also "a nation composed principally of peasants whose way of life confirmed in general outlines with that of folk societies elsewhere in the world."¹²⁾ However, unlike Koreans, Japanese was receptive and flexible; in fact, as Alan R. Beals pinpoints, they have been "ingesting innovations from other culture for many centuries."¹³⁾ Accordingly, although the concern with the West was constant and overwhelming, "the Japanese government," says M.B. Jansen, "experimentated with suppression of Buddhism and elevation of Restoration Shinto, and then sought to blend elements of both into a synthetic creed that was to serve the national purposes; and finally fell back upon an official ideology that was a mixed bag of Shinto and Confucian values."¹⁴⁾ Involved here is the Japanese brand of patriotism, including loyalty to the sovereign, with the devotion of religion. Of course, nationalism or patriotism itself is a complex phenomenon, and cannot be understood simply in terms of Shinto. However, as H. Byron Earhart points out, "Shinto tended to dominate other religious traditions in the period from 1868

12) Edward Norbeck, *Changing Japan* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p.9.

13) A.R. Beals, *Culture in Progress* (op. cit.), p.338

14) The cultural religion, often called the State Shinto, was the national faith of Japanese people generally. It was manifested specially in the Shrine Shinto, taught in schools as national ethics. In some respects this Shinto has developed as the national faith, with a form of morality enkindled by the fire of religion. See M.B. Jansen's "Changing Japanese Attitude Toward Modernization," in his book, *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 63.

to 1945, a period in which nationalism, and then ultranationalism combined with militarism, was the keynote of Japanese life."¹⁵⁾

After Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, it was often claimed that both countries had the same origins and the same ancestors, it being also claimed that Korea had often been under Japanese domination in ancient times, so that unity was natural.¹⁶⁾ Concerning the transformation of Korean traditional value, it may be important to point out the fact that the conquerors tried to enforce the Shinto-faith not merely as a religion but also as a political ideology, and Japanese traditional value system was quite unnecessarily vexatious and offensive to Korean pride. Imposing monuments glorifying the Japanese Emperor were erected in places which were best calculated to offend Korean susceptibilities, Koreans being forced to make a bow toward Tokyo everyday at noon. The cities and towns were known only by the Japanese form of their names. The official languages was Japanese; Korean language was neglected. Accordingly, the Korean people were sullenly resentful, but virtually powerless. Under these circumstances, the transformation of Korean traditional value was inevitable, although it was not substantial.

Of course, it would be a serious distortion of the fact to portray Japanese rule as wholly oppressive and merely Shintoistic. Under their forceful authority the country rapidly developed and modernized. Japan's investment in Korea was large and profitable; it was not foreseen that one day it would become inheritance of the Koreans them-

15) H. Byron Earhart, *The Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity* (Belmont: Dickenson Pub. Co., Ind., 1969), p. 81.

16) Many Japanese scholars and historians paid lip service to this theory, including such authorities as K. Katsumi, S. Tadashi, K. Shozaburo, S. Tsira, T. Zennosuke and T. Togo. As Smith and Hazard rightly points out, however, "Of more far-reaching effect in the study of Korean history was that this theory negated any uniqueness or individuality to Korea's historical development." Hatada's *A History of Korea* (op. cit.), viii.

elves. However, as C.P. FitzGerald points out, "all this development was geared closely to needs and profits of Japan: it was only to a secondary degree directly beneficial to the Koreans." To be sure, the Japanese government made no pretence of sharing power with the Koreans.¹⁷⁾ Accordingly, the modernization of Korea during Japanese occupation couldn't successfully contribute to the Korean people in forming a modern value system. In particular, the early success of the Japanese in the Second World War seemed to offer the Koreans no hope of freedom. Japanese rule was spreading, not diminishing. Large forces continued to garrison the country, but the strains of the war bore heavily on Korea, the resources of the country being exploited to the limit to sustain the Japanese war economy. Much of the progress and development were distorted or run down under these stresses.

Although the traditional way of living and thinking was suspected and degraded, "modern" value, being identified with Japanese's, hardly took place in Korean's mind. Rather, Christianity gradually appeared on the stage as a new value which might replace Shintoistic life style: in fact, Christians commonly aligned with the underground independence movement. Thus, while Christianity was identified with Western colonial and economic exploitation elsewhere in Asia, in Korea it stood for national freedom. This may also explain why Christianity is so popular in Korea today.

In short, the Korean people were thus quite unprepared for the sudden end of the war, both politically and culturally, after the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, no one expected that a hasty negotiation between the major allies had decided that Russian forces should advance as far as the 38th parallel of latitude, while American forces would occupy Korea south of that line. Yet this arbitrary division of a united country and people, as

17) C.P. FitzGerald, *A Concise History of East Asia* (N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1966), pp.212~213.

well as their view of value, was to breed a fatal division, a destructive war, and an apparently lasting partition. On the significance of the Korean War, Takashi Hatada says:

It indicated the extraordinary difficulties involed in unification and made clear the world-wide character of the Korean problem....The solution of the Korean problem was no longer subject solely to the wishes of the Korean people, but seemed to be manipulated by outside world powers..... Although the American and Russian occupation of Korean freed the Korean people from a condition of slavery and should have brought them independence and freedom it only shattered their dreams and laid waste their country.¹⁸⁾

However, it is true that with the defeat of Japan in 1945, it became possible for Korea to attain her long cherished independence, although it only meant the division of a nation and its value system. As Hatada points out, the words 'Korean', whether it may refer to the South or the North, now evoked a sense of pride as they had never done during the Japanese era.¹⁹⁾ Let us now examine the situation in South Korea, with which I am quite familiar.

IV

The United States and the Soviet Union not only made Korea the stage for their own rivalry, but they also brought about a deep internal conflict within Korea. The country became divided not simply along geographical lines, it also was split into two Koreas that adopted completely divergent political, economic, and cultural aims. It goes without saying that this development of two opposing and conflicting tendencies among the Korean people greatly complicated the unification of the country. We might even say that her unification is beco-

18) T. Hatada, *A History of Korea* (op. cit), pp.141~142.

19) Ibid. p.143

ming more difficult than that of the United States and the Soviet Union, because North and South Koreans are more hostile to each other than Americans and Russians are to one another. Such is the Korean political situation at the present time.

Having been oriented by the Americans, most people in South Korea expected to have a 'democratic' country after the end of the Japanese regime. But their concepts of 'democracy' are neither clear nor uniform. It seems that many trials and errors are necessary for the Korean people before they can reach clear and uniform concept of democracy. On the other hand, South Koreans are quite convinced that democracy, among other things, should mean anti-communism, which in turn practically means hostility against North Korean communists. Within this framework we may come to understand what the South Koreans' value system is like.

As mentioned earlier, Koreans who had in one way or another been able to follow the real course of the war, had expected massive American landings in eastern China as a preliminary to a later invasion of Japan. However, no one expected an invasion of Korea itself, which eventually turned out to be a historical fact. Immediately after the 'liberation', South Koreans really did not know what to do. C. Osgood describes then political situation something like this:

With the ideals of liberty sweeping the country and no native government officially sponsored in the southern zone, it was inevitable that political coteries bossomed in profusion and of every color and fragrance. It was a common joke among that people that whenever five persons came together to discuss the future government of Korea they formed a political party. At least fifty-four of these factions were in existence shortly after the liberation. With the requirement of registration as a party for political recognition, the member increased to one hundred and thirty-four by March, 1946.²⁰⁾

20) Cornelius Osgood, *The Koreans and Their Culture* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1961), p.303.

"Any summary presentation of the Korean parties," adds he, "is especially subject to confusion because most of the groups suddenly appear, divide, amalgamate, disappear, or at least change their names, while their leaders create them, are elected or appointed, retire or resign, reinstate themselves, and in some cases are assassinate."²¹⁾ Since then, South Koreans have experienced the communist's massive invasion, dictatorship, student revolution, and a military coup, all of which were accomplished under the cloak of democracy, although no one ever had clear concept of it.

One of the major reasons for the chaotic situation of South Korean society since the liberation may be the fact that we acted without being based on the objective criteria for value judgements, which was in turn due to the lack of concrete value system. However, as Yoo and Wade point out, "Korea has made clear that continuing underdevelopment is not always imposed by the gods or an unjust international order, but is a matter of intelligent choices, individual or social sacrifices, and commitments by all strata of society to forge a new order."²²⁾ Of course, in any case, a static interpretation of Korean contemporary value system would be apt to be soon outdated. Nevertheless, we may safely say that industrialization, urbanization, Christianity, economic growth, a ruinous war, dictatorship, anti-communism, capitalism, and, now, commercial relations make up probably the cultural as much as the physical landscape. Yoo and Wade say:

Future-shock is the order of the day. The continuing Korean revolution makes the task of measuring and assessing its political culture difficult indeed. But, one hastens to add, it would appear that societies have transmitted and maintained some basic valuations even which experiencing the most wrenching and far-reaching social and economic change.²³⁾

21) Ibid.

22) Yoo Jong-hae and L.L. Wade, "Korean Political Culture," *East and West Studies* (op. cit.), p.5.

23) Ibid. p.8.

For the reasons sketched above, we are now in a position to examine the issue and it is likely that we will discover Korean value system to be a complex admixture of old and new values and cognitions, its proportions varying by individuals and social groupings. In short, we may put it as a mixture of Confucianism and democracy in its broadest term, although any static interpretation of Korean contemporary value system would be almost impossible.

Whether the Koreans have a clear conception of it or not, and whether they like it or not, it would be an undeniable fact that democracy is accepted by the Koreans, not only as a political or economic ideology, but also as a way of thinking and living, or "a form of life" as John Dewey puts it.²⁴⁾ What do we mean by democracy as introduced by Americans to the South Koreans? We may interpret it in two ways; one is that the bourgeois concept of freedom is essential to democracy, and the other is that a strong leadership is required in order to preserve this kind of freedom, which means at the same time anti-communism against North Korea. As to the bourgeois concept of freedom, the democratic value system should guarantee, as H. Aptheker points out, the following things:

(1) capitalism as a natural system of political economy; (2) the absence of government restraint; (3) the presense of restraint upon government; (4) power as essentially evil and requiring control if freedom is to exist; (5) freedom has relevance only to the political, not to economic; (6) the existence of economic inequality as a hallmark of and a necessary consequence of freedom.²⁵⁾

Aptheker also points out that there are three more important comp-

24) John Dewey, *The Problems of Men* (N.Y.: The Philopical Library, 1946), p.47. According to him, "Democracy as a form of life cannot stand still."

25) Herbert Aptheker, *The Nature of Democracy, Freedom and Revolution* (N.Y.: International Pub. Co. Inc., 1969), p.53.

ponents of this kind of freedom that require development. These are the idea of spontaneity as being an essential element of freedom, individualism as vital to freedom, and elitism that runs through this presentation of freedom. In particular, on individualism which is something very new in Korea, he explains thus:

The emphasis upon individualism also follows very logically from all the postulates of the bourgeois theory of freedom. If capitalism is a natural order, laissez-faire is proper; if laissez-faire is proper, then it is "every man for himself," in a system that is self-adjusting and runs itself, like any other natural thing, and one must expect to "sink or swim." you must "stand on your own pile." You may even have to be ruthless; certainly you will have to be and want to be "rugged."²⁶⁾

If I am right, this kind of attitude is quite common and taken to be even natural in South Korea, especially among young people who are born after the liberation from Japanese imperialism. For them, everything is individually centered; the widest possible extension meriting approval is responsibility for one's family.

By family, however, I do not mean Confucian conception of family, in which "profer" relations between father and son, or husband and wife, or elder and younger brothers, are preserved. Family relationship is based on the concept of equality rather than on the hierarchical concept. Nevertheless, it may be important to note that in South Korea, although probably it may not be the case in North Korea, family is the basic unit, from which all the values spring out and rest on. And it is in the family, I believe, that traditional value of Confucianism and new value of democracy emerge in South Korea, partly because the basic teachings of Confucianism is not necessarily inconsistent with a democratic interpretation of familism. To be sure, the Confucian system in its proper sense, as shown in the idea of "the rectification of name," was one of reciprocal obligations, not a ratio-

26) Ibid. p. 54

nale for despotism, although it often became that in Korea as Yoo and Wade points out. They add:

An emphasis on the common element in Korean values and practices to the neglect of those of reciprocity and mutual respect has led to distorted portrayals of both Korean family and society. It may be true (although systematic data are lacking) that authority structures, child rearing patterns and social norms are in a comparative sense, unusually constant across Korean families.²⁷⁾

In fact, homogeneous society too was originally rooted in an developed form from familism, and accordingly the South Koreans' longing for the reunification of Korea, which automatically means the family reunion, should be understood in terms of traditional conception of family. Therefore, it may be prudent to regard the Korean family as a durable insitution, influenced often by the ethical standards of traditional value, adjusting pragmatically to the demands of real life and the exigencies of social change, tendencies found among families both in the pressure-cooker of Seoul and off-the-beaten-path villages.²⁸⁾ It may be even clearer when we witness that even radical student demonstrators are often persuaded to give up by their parents.

However, concerning political and economic phenomena, there are two different groups of people in current Korean society, each with a different way of thinking. The first group is the people age of forty-five or over belonging to what we may call the Japanese stratum, and the second includes people under forty-five who are involved in the stratum with its educational background rooted in the imported American ideology of democracy. Of course, there may be some differences between generations in any society, but the differences and conflicts existing between these two strata of South Korean society

27) Yoo and Wade, "Korean Political Culture," *East and West Studies* (op. cit.), p.17.

28) Ibid. p.20.

have an intensity beyond the mere conflict of generations observable in other societies.²⁹⁾ Probably, the elder generations might have realized that the solution of the South Korean political and economic problems has a world-wide character and is no longer subject solely to the wishes of the Korean people; this makes them conservative, fatalistic, and pessimistic. On the other hand, the younger generations are reluctant to accept the reality as unimprovable; they are liberal, energetic and overwhelmingly optimistic about the future, and also very critical of the government which has to accomplish two paradoxical tasks, namely, the promotion of bourgeois concept of freedom and the exercise of the strong political power which is required to protect the democratic value from the North Korean communist's aggression. In this context, it may be also important to note, as Kim Tae-kil observes, that social values such as honor and power are not much sought after by the younger people. He says:

This fact might be connected with the following circumstances: first, Confucian teachings traditionally did not make much of honor and power, while they thought highly of merits and virtues; secondly, the changing climate of the politics of Korea in recent years suggests that power and honor are uncertain and transient.³⁰⁾

In general, it is fairly clear that the values of the South Koreans, whether they be old or young, are markedly different from traditional values owing to the rapid changes South Koreans are experiencing in many aspects of their social life, since the American ideology of democracy has been introduced and often reinforced. And since the behavioral pattern of man emanate from his culture, naturally there is also considerable disagreement between the above two groups formed

29) Paik Hyun-ki, "The Korean Social Structure and Its Implication for Education." *The Korean Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, p.12.

30) Kim Tae-kil, *Studies in the Korean's View of Value* (Seoul: Moon Eum Sa Pub. Co., 1982), p.158.

under different but dominant cultures. Besides, it is also true that Confucianism and other traditional values have incrementally weakened and changed, if not eliminated, through the process of the nation's modernization and urbanization. However, by this, it does not mean that individualism or democracy is the only dominant value, nor does it that Confucianism is completely ignored, because in South Korea man is not yet assumed to be both self-sufficient and capable of self-governing individual rights and liberties; interpersonal relations are not yet based on the concept of equality and freedom. In short, vestiges of traditional ideas and habits are still very much alive in Korean society and in the Korean mind.

V

In this paper, I have briefly presented the transformation of the traditional value in the contemporary history of Korea with regard to her major political changes and conflicts. There may be varieties of approach to this subject, but I have mainly put the emphasis on the Korean political situations assuming that Koreans of all classes are always a politically alert people. My second assumption was that Korean traditional value was typically Confucianistic partly because Yi dynasty had taken it not merely as an official religion or cultural norm, but also as a political ideology. The Confucian criteria of value was not much ignored even during the Japan's annexation, or modernization, of Korea, although Shintoistic orientation was forceful and harsh. I have pointed out, however, that the older generation of Korea, or the Japanese stratum, are so heavily influenced by their shocking environment that they become very much fatalistic and pessimistic about the future, well contrasting with the younger generations who are educated in the fashion of an American democratic outlook.

Based on these observations, I have come to the general conclusion that the South Korean's view of value is markedly due to the introd-

uction of the American notion of democracy, as well as the bourgeois-concept of freedom and individualism. Nevertheless, I have also pointed out, the traditional values are still very much alive in the South Korean's mind as shown in their familism, although it turns out to be an admixture of Confucian and individualistic conceptions.

At this moment, to be sure, any static interpretation of the South Korean's value would be soon outdated, if not impossible, its being in a constant state of flux just as their political and economic situations are never static. It is obvious that now Koreans are struggling to find their own values and souls—their own ideas, traditions, history and language, all of which once had been ignored and despised. Now, self-discovery, self-assertion and self-improvement became the principal concerns of the Korean people. Unfortunately, however, the historical task has been pursued during last forty years quite heterogeneously and separately both in the south and the north of the country. Here, we may raise a question: How will Korea's present tribulation affect their traditional value in the future? For an answer to this question, we must not only observe the world-wide situation as it relates to Korea, but we must also watch the actions of the Korean people themselves.

〈國文 要約〉

韓國 現代史에 있어서의 傳統的 價値의 變遷

嚴廷植

지난 100여년에 걸친 한국의 현대사에 있어서 격변하는 정세에 따라 한국인의 가치관은 많은 변천을 거듭해 왔다. 우선 강화도 조약이 체결될 무렵 한국인의 의식구조를 지배한 가치관을 우리는 儒敎라고 말할 수 있을 것이다. 물론 불교나 도교 혹은 샤머니즘 같은 것이 있었으나 표면적으로 나타난 것은 아니었고 사고방식이나 행동양식에 간접적으로만 영향을 끼쳤을 뿐이다. 그러므로 우리는 유교 특히 朱子學的인 인생관과 세계관을 한국의 전통적 가치관이라고 규정할 수 있다.

이 전통적 가치관은 기독교의 전래와 實學의 대두로 인하여 변질되기 시작하였는데 특히 조상숭배사상과 家父長的 권위주의 등이 많이 퇴색되었다. 이 중에 실학은 사회개혁과 새로운 생활양식의 기틀을 마련하였고 기독교는 단순히 하나의 종교로서 뿐만 아니라 전통적 가치관과 정치적 질서에 정면으로 대립되는 정치적 理念으로서의 역할까지 담당하였다. 실학과 기독교가 야합된 형태로서의 천주교에 대한 탄압은 이러한 맥락에서 이해되어야 할 것이다.

한편 韓日合併은 한국인의 가치관이 극도로 혼란의 와중에 있을 때 한국인의 의식구조를 정신적으로 식민지화하였다는 점에서 중요한 의미를 지닌다. 여기서 일본 軍國主義의 공식적 이데올로기 역할을 한 神道는 비록 한국인의 전통적 가치관을 변질시키거나 한국인 신도를 많이 확보한 것은 아니었을지라도 한국적 가치관에 대한 한국인들 자신의 신뢰를 위협하였으며 분명히 의식있는 한국인들의 자존심을 상당히 저해하였다. 미국과 소련에 의한 남북한의 분단은 이처럼 가치관의 무정부 상태에서 이루어진

것이다. 따라서 해방 이후의 분단은 단순히 국토나 민족의 분단일 뿐만 아니라 민족적 가치관의 분단이며, 그것은 거의 백지상태에서의 분단이었으므로 가치관의 상호 異質化는 매우 심각한 상황으로 분석된다.

남한의 경우 미국적 민주주의와 브르조아적 자유개념 및 개인주의는 전통적 가치관을 변질시키는 새로운 요소로 등장하였다. 그러나 이러한 요소들은 국토와 민족의 분단이라는 한국의 특유한 상황 때문에 전통적 가치관과의 관계에서 매우 미묘한 형태로 작용한다. 아직 남한인에게 민주주의는 한낱 모호한 개념임에 틀림없으나 그것은 반드시 반공을 의미하는 것이어야 하고 반공은 동시에 북한의 공산주의자들에 대한 적개심을 지칭하는 것으로 이해된다. 한편 이들에게 브르조아적 자유개념은 가장 소중한 것으로 가르쳐져 왔으나 그 소중한 자유를 공산주의로부터 지키기 위해서는 아이러니컬하게도 강력한 통치력이 또한 필요불가결한 것으로 지적되었다. 이처럼 민주주의는 아직 실감나지 않는 상태에 있는 것이다. 이에 비해 개인주의적 요소는 한국인의 전통적 가치관에 깊숙히 침투되어 있어서 오늘날의 가족형태에 잘 나타나 있듯이 가부장적인 종적관계가 아니라 인격에 바탕을 둔 횡적관계의 가족제도로 변질된 모습을 보여준다.

끝으로, 남한에서의 전통적 가치관의 변질형태는 日帝의 世代와 分斷의 世代 사이에 큰 격차가 있다는 점에서 특유한 현상을 나타낸다. 그것은 단순히 기성세대와 젊은 세대 사이에서 볼 수 있는 가치관의 차이 이상의 의미를 지니는 것이다. 오늘날 政局의 불안이나 학생운동의 심각성은 이러한 맥락에서 이해될 수도 있을 것이다. 요컨대 한국인의 가치관 형성과 그 변질에는 격변하는 극동의 정세가 큰 변수로 작용해 왔다. 장차 그것이 어떠한 형태를 띠 것인가를 가늠하려면 그 변수 외에도 한국인 자신의 의지와 역량을 또한 주시해야 할 것이다.