

***Hansik* and *Hallyu*: An Analysis of the Filipino Appropriation of Korean Cuisine as a Function of Imagining Korean Culture**

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Abstract

Before the year 2000, Korean cooking, let alone Korean restaurants were practically unheard of in the Philippines. It took television, specifically the Korean drama *Jewel in the Palace* to introduce what Korean cuisine is all about. The gradual opening of Korean restaurants was originally intended to cater to Korean expatriates in the Philippines. However, as curiosity among Filipinos brought them to Korean restaurants, the general shock brought by spicy fermented vegetables or kimchi created the imagined concept that “Korean food is altogether spicy.” While it created an ‘othering’ exoticisation of Korean culture, it created at least two divergent attitudes among Filipino consumers: (1) dilution, or the search for toned down or Filipinised version of Korean cuisine, and (2) authenticity or the desire for “authentic” Korean cooking. From these attitudes can be derived the opening that Korean culture can be understood through by Filipinos through a sustained fascination towards this foreign culture. *Hansik* is a product of millennia of cultural ecology in which Koreans created thousands of recipes based on topographic-environmental, religious-philosophical, and socio-economic realities. This historical reality however lacks the necessary cultural interpretation and explanation. It is at this juncture that this paper explores the transmission and reception of *hallyu* through food production (cooking), presentation, and promotion in commercial restaurants, popular media, and government agencies such as the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines and the Korea Tourism Organization. This paper looks at the Filipino imagining of Korean culture through the consumption of Korean cuisine, diluted or authentic.

Keywords: *Hansik*, Korean cuisine, Korean Cuisine in the Philippines

Introduction

Hansik as a product of millennia-old Korean cultural ecology, inclusive of historical and anthropological developments, nuances, etc. It also embodies the corpus of Korean cultural identity. As such, it is not surprising that *Hansik* is an integral vehicle in the development and delivery of *hallyu* in the world. The very development of the *hansik-hallyu* partnership comes as no surprise, especially its popularity in the Philippines. However, within the context that Korean food culture has arrived in the Philippines only within the recent decade/s includes a significant number of questions, meaning curiosity on the part of Filipinos. Historiographically, it is doubtful if there is any indication of Korean cuisine having been even brought to the Philippines before the turn of the twenty-first century.

As such, this paper looks at *hansik* as a vehicle, albeit state-sponsored, of the production and development of *hallyu*. The second part looks at two trends in the reception of *hansik* among Filipinos: (a) search for the authentic, and (b) dilution, localisation, or ‘Filipinisation.’ In understanding the anthropological context of *hansik*, its historiography must be understood. Without necessarily identifying the periodic developments or individual histories of each Korean cuisine, the study looks at the general historical context and significance. At the same time, this context is superimposed into a state-sponsored-and-mediated promotion of globalised Korean culture. In this, three important premises must be taken into consideration: (a) that Korean cuisine is a product of local and national Korean social historical developments, (b) that Korean cuisine is dependent on the cultural ecology of its natal geography, and (c) that Korean cuisine is subject to foreign palate judgment as gatekeepers of inter-culturally subjective acceptance

The second part of the paper looks at how *hansik* has successfully served its function as vehicle for Filipino

imagination of Korean culture. For this, two specific qualitative methodologies were used: (a) random sampling, which reached a total of 32 respondents, and (b) direct participant observation in both the consumption and production of *hansik*. From both data gathering phases, two results were observed: (a) a significant sector of Filipinos seek to ‘taste’ Korean cuisine in its authentic form without necessarily travelling to Korea, and (b) an equally significant sector are willing to ‘taste’ Korean culture, but consumption is dependent on its ability to “tone down” or “blend” into the local ‘taste.’

The significance of this study is that it seeks to take a primary survey into the anthropological and social historical context of *hallyu*, specifically as a vehicle of *hansik* in the Philippine setting. Unfortunately, locating a significant body of literature on either *hansik* or its reception in the Philippines is at the moment limited or non-existent. Nonetheless, the study intends to expand the academic awareness of the significance of food within a culture. Although the question of the so-called “Filipino taste” is subject to numerous interpretations and debates, Filipino reception of foreign culinary culture becomes an unlikely self-reflection. In analysing Filipino reception of Korean cuisine, it becomes a potential method by itself for understanding Filipino cultural biases.

Frameworks from Medical Anthropology and Cultural Ecology

In order to understand and analyse the integral role of *hansik* as a vehicle of Korean culture, as well as Filipino perceptions of Korean culinary culture, this study borrows frameworks from medical anthropology. Cultural ecology refers to the development of material culture based on the ecological or environmental realities present within a specific location. Oftentimes, cultural ecology is used to explain linguistic nuances such as the presence of certain terminologies, which refer to unique patterns or usages within a particular locality or community. For this research however, cultural ecology is used to understand the presence of certain ingredients that are

indigenous to the Korean peninsula. At the same time, cultural ecology also explains climatic realities which affected the development of specific cuisines. While there are ingredients and climatic patterns which are similar to the Philippines, Korean cultural ecology presents a unique culinary culture that is a product of its ecology and geography.

One example of this application is the fact that kimchi production and consumption is historically related to the need for vegetables preservation in the absence then of modern technology to do so. Though chili and its derivatives may not be indigenous to Korea, it is however, a product of historical economic and political developments that has attached itself towards the need for food preservation. The tolerance, or rather the affinity for spicy foods may be said to be a consequence of this development. However, frequent usage of certain ingredients, such as ginseng root, jujube, and sesame seeds may be directly connected to ecologic causality.

Phenomenology

The other anthropological framework used is phenomenology or interpretivism. As it is, Korean cuisine is viewed in one prism by Koreans themselves. Although it may be argued that there are local or regional cuisines – for which Koreans from different areas of the peninsula may have a different outlook or opinion towards it, there is nonetheless a binding cultural perspective among Koreans. However, there is an entirely differential cultural phenomenology when it comes to a totally foreign people perceiving an equally foreign culture. In this case, Filipinos who possess millennia of culinary culture from indigenous to colonial influences still belong to one perfectly alien group vis-à-vis *hansik*. As such, this study picks up on the various nuances that arise from how Filipinos receive, let alone perceive, Korean cuisine. In addition to this, the ancillary role of direct visual accompaniment to *hansik* is also factored in.

Together, this paper evaluates the development of *hansik* as a vehicle of Korean culture, specifically on its integral role in the

global promotion of *hallyu*. Indeed, it is difficult and sometimes doubtful to actually qualify the evaluation of taste, Filipino or Korean, yet this paper seeks to scratch the surface of this, which will certainly require future studies and better scholarship.

Phases of *Hansik* in the Philippines

First Wave: Hansik for Koreans

There is no definitive date as to when *hansik* arrived in the Philippines. It is certain that the massive arrival of Korean nationals in the Philippines which coincided with global *hallyu* also brought in *hansik* into the Philippines. Nonetheless, it is surmised that there have been Korean nationals already in the Philippines before the turn of the twenty-first century. It is also surmisable that not all of them were able to adapt to Filipino food customs for their diet. As such, this becomes the first phase of *hansik* in the Philippines – the informal bringing in of Korean cuisine directly from Korea, particularly kimchi, and the search for replication of Korean cuisine specifically catered to expatriates working in the Philippines. The initial opening of Korean restaurants was meant to serve Koreans working and living in the Philippines.

Second Wave: Hansik for Filipinos

The second phase came through within the *hallyu* explosion as Korean restaurants multiplied within Metro Manila and other major cities in the Philippines. From initially catering to Koreans – by then a mixture of professionals, businessmen and women, students, and tourists, *hansik* was offered to curious Filipinos. For this however, one can only imagine the first impressions that the first Filipino tasters of Korean cuisine had, specifically ‘authentic’ kimchi. One may argue that there are regions in the Philippines that appreciate spicy food on a regular basis, but Korean spiciness is rather unique and difficult to characterise. For this phase, the study looks into (a) attempts by some sector to ‘negotiate’ the taste by toning down certain taste qualities, and (b) the conservative yet daring sector which has

sought to taste authentic Korean cuisine in its indigenous form. Nonetheless, however the turnout is becoming, the popularity of Korean restaurants in the Philippines has set itself on an irreversible track.

Third Wave: Jewel in the Palace Effect

The third phase comes in aid of the second phase. That is, state-and-media-mediated *hallyu*-isation of *hansik* in the world was necessary to manufacture 'the exotic' imagination of Korean cuisine in order to ensure its marketability. The hit television drama *대장금* or *Jewel in the Palace* comes as no surprise. Popular media was used in order to promote the popularity of Korean food everywhere. At the same time, it must be understood that Korean cooking was by this time necessarily standardised as a package for the successful promotion and marketing of Korean cuisine. There even is an on-going attempt to supplant the popularity of Japanese cuisine in the process.

Fourth Wave: Professionalisation

The fourth phase comes into the fore as the need to train or educate Filipinos to cook Korean cuisine becomes necessary. This phase is about Filipinos themselves replicating Korean cuisine according to the Korean framework. For one, Korean restaurant, business, or household owners eventually saw the need to employ local labour in the form of Filipinos willing to work as cooks or chefs for them. Another is the evolution itself of Korean cuisine in the Philippines in the form of localised or 'fast food' version do require local labour and local knowledge. Third is the fact that Filipino entrepreneurs themselves have begun to recognise the business potential of opening Korean food outlets. Fourth is the practical urgency on the part of would-be Overseas Filipino Workers or even immigrants who foresee locating themselves in Korea in their future.

Hansik as Korean Historical and Cultural Expression

It is indeed quite easy to imagine that Korean cuisine has been static for ages – meaning that it has been like that since the beginning of time. The popularity of *Jewel in the Palace* adds to this myth-making machinery in creating an imagined exotic characterisation of *hansik*. If one does subscribe to this historicised imagination, thus the state-sponsored *hallyu* production scheme is indeed a resounding success. Nonetheless, there are historical and cultural authentic-ness to current-day Korean cooking. However, cultural ecology and history must come into play in order to further analyse its trends and developments.

Culture, Geography, and History

First of all, as already mentioned, there are ingredients which are indigenous to the Korean peninsula, or perhaps to the East Asian region which developed into certain unique qualities of Korean culinary culture. At the same time, it was also mentioned that climatic conditions equally bear upon the development of certain types of cuisines, not to mention for seasonal changes within East Asia.

Second, the notion that present-day Korean cooking seems to be a staple for each and every Korean in the past should invoke obvious and curious doubt. What is certain is the fact that Korean food offered in most Korean restaurants were considered “royal food” or at least food for the 양반 or aristocratic class. There were certainly differences between what was considered ordinary culinary set up for the lower class citizens in pre-modern Korea as compared to that of the upper classes. For this, it must be understood that strict yet utilitarian interpretations Confucianism has produced historical Korean periods in which society was rigidly economically stratified. This most certainly affected the development of variations in Korean cooking.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Korea has in fact suffered from severe and multiple periods of famine – a

phenomenon that stretched well into the early twentieth century. While this may be the subject of an entirely different study, the value of this for this study is in regards to the historical fact that Koreans could not have consistently produced the 'royal presentation' that seems to be staple in Korean restaurant food presentation.

As such, the modern-day Korean cuisine presented in all Korean restaurants as well as in the popular forms of media have undergone re-packaging and reformulation under state-mediated auspices. The development of the *hallyu* explosion of the late 1990s and early 2000s required a re-packaging of Korean material culture in order to market them to a world increasingly obsessed with everything Korean. The globally-presentable and market-competitive *hansik* was necessitated in aid of *hallyu* production and distribution.



A typical food presentation set up in any Korean restaurant

Third, it must be understood that present economic and cultural prosperity in the Republic of Korea has only quite recently been enjoyed by the Korean people since the beginning of their natural history. As such, the argument that repackaged *hansik* aided by mediated imagination requires further analysis. For one, modern and foreign elements must be taken into consideration in the cultural imagining of *hansik*. Another is the

need to understand how Korean cooking has become an indelible part and parcel of Korean cultural expression.

Hansik as a Product of Cultural Exchanges

Korea may have been once referred to as the “hermit kingdom,” but certainly was far from being one contrary to the judgmental biases of nineteenth century western European imperialists. For many centuries, Korea has been borrowing droves of cultural aspects from China. Chinese influences in Korea have been the subject of thousands of academic studies and needs no further elaboration. However, most scholars tend to ignore the fact that cultural elements in East Asia was not always on the “from-China” framework. Instead, China has also borrowed numerous cultural elements from almost all parts of the world, even from far away Europe, thanks to the Silk Road.

Historical Korea has also done the same for many centuries. There are material cultural borrowings also from Japan, Southeast Asia, and Russia. It was indeed anthropologically plausible that for Korean civilisation to thrive, it was necessary to stay in economic or political contact with its neighbours – for better or for worse. This most certainly drove the cycle of cultural movements that made it systemically fluid and evolving.

One specific example of this is chili. It is not indigenous to Korea not even from any part of East Asia. One accepted hypothesis is that during the Hideyoshi invasions in the sixteenth century, the Japanese brought chili to Korea. However, there are also claims that it was the other way around. While it might not be easy to definitively trace the origins of chili in Korea, it must be understood that chili is more indigenous to Latin America than anywhere else. How Korea fit in the Columbian exchange will certainly require elaborate explanations. Nonetheless, the clues are in the facts that sixteenth century China and Japan were indirectly involved in the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade.

Regardless of its definitive origins, chili has become an integral part of Korean cuisine. Yet, chili powder's usage for the creation of kimchi has become necessitated for people to be able to eat vegetables during winter time. The fact of the notion of making hundred heads of cabbage for kimchi should lead to the idea that kimchi is consumed well beyond the winter season. Kimchi is after all a side dish, a staple food, yet still not the main dish on the Korean table. To say that kimchi is emblematic of Korean cuisine is a fallacious notion created by the multitude of kimchi served in the "royal setting" presented in all Korean restaurants.

Koreans' Actual Main Dish

True enough, for Koreans the main dish is white rice, almost ignored because of the grandiose presentation of protein dishes and soups. Unlike Filipino culinary set up, the main dish in a Korean table is not the chicken, beef, or fish dishes – no matter how elaborate, massive, or quantitative they are. However, marketability comes into play. How can one sell Korean food if the claim is that the plain steamed white rice is actually the main dish? For Filipinos, the phenomenological gateway comes into play. As such, the focus is re-directed or re-oriented towards the expensive-looking protein dishes.

The Food-Medicine Framework

Another seeming uniqueness in Korean cooking is ginseng – a medicinal root quite indigenous to peninsular Korea and north-eastern China. The perception cannot be denied to have originated from, again, *Jewel in the Palace* as it seems like the rest of the world was introduced to Korean ginseng only through that television series. Yet, there are very limited dishes that actually use ginseng, like ginseng chicken soup or 삼계탕. In fact, ginseng is marketed in Korea in the form of medicinal teas and beverages than anything else. To complicate the problem, even modern western-trained physicians are in fact in doubt as regards the medicinal or even the vitamin value of ginseng. Of

course such a phenomenon is explainable by the very competition in the medical traditions.

Lastly is the fact that it seems that Korean consumption of certain foods is directly connected to medical purposes. In simple terms, the television drama *대장금* presented the idea that there are certain foods that may not be taken during a particular syndrome or that certain foods can be medicinal for certain specific illnesses. Fact of the matter is that though this seems like part and parcel of Korean Oriental Medicine or the indigenous medical tradition in Korea, it is not the totality of it, but merely a part of it. Rather, a relatively twentieth century medical tradition that derived from KOM is Sasang Constitutional Medicine that was developed only in the first decades of the 1900s. Simply put, SCM focuses on the food-medicine framework – something that was not really the focus of KOM. Again, the *hallyu* marketability of *hansik* required this imagining of the medicinal value of each and every Korean food. Although there is nutritional value attached to Korean food ingredients which may be validated by western medical science, such cannot be projected back to pre-modern Korean imagining of their food.



Samgyetang or Chicken Ginseng Soup

Hansik and Hallyu

Given the cultural, geographic, and historical background of Korean cooking, it must be understood that *hansik* is and has become an integral part of the *hallyu* explosion. As such, Korean cooking had to be repackaged in order to fit the marketable level required for it to be consumed by a prospective global community. After all, Korean culinary culture and its marketing development merely followed the examples of its neighbours the Chinese and the Japanese. The ability of Chinese food to enable anyone to imagine Chinese culture or how sushi can indelibly direct one to imagining Japanese civilisation – these are key examples that the Koreans needed to re-create. In order to successfully enable the Korean culture imagination, there must be a direct connection between Korean cuisine and Korean culture.

This is where this study criticises the overemphasis of the so-called popular Korean cuisines. For one, though these Korean cuisines are popular as Korean staples in the rest of the world, they are not by themselves necessarily staple within Korea itself. There are in fact selected popular Korean dishes that are readily or popularly marketed in Korean restaurants. These select few are notably different or at least identifiably different from cuisines from other cultures. Yet, it must be known that there are many Korean dishes that share similar ingredients or even presentation, coincidental or not, with other dishes in the world.



Examples of Korean dishes that may not at all be recognised as “Korean”

De-Mystifying Dae Jang Geum

As a side note, yet important one, on the television drama *Jewel in the Palace*, the following must be noted on the historical 대장금. First of all, the historiographical basis for the historical knowledge of the great woman physician is contained within half a page in the methodically written historical Joseon court records. The Great Jang Geum was never a chef or a cook contrary to what the popular television series portrays. There is no historiographic evidence to point to this.

The real historical Jang Geum was phenomenal as having broken the Confucian taboo in the royal court. Women physicians were allowed to treat women members of the royal court, while male physicians to their male patients in the court – from the king to the ministers. Given Confucian cultural and social norms in the Joseon dynasty, women physicians, as all women anyway, were considered second in rank to their male counterparts. As such, it was indeed phenomenal, yet not elaborated on by the historiographic record, as to how this woman physician managed to become appointed as *the* royal physician, a post supposedly inviolably held by a male court physician. Dae Jang Geum's prowess in handling epidemic diseases though is noted, apart from exceptional medical skills.

So, where does the concept of Jang Geum being a master royal chef come from? That indeed is a good question that will be an admission of limitation for this paper's lack of access to the creators, i.e. scriptwriters and director of the hit television series. Yet, one can readily extend the hypothesis that riding on the *hallyu* phenomenon, it was equally necessary to launch the popularity of Korean culinary culture. Indeed, the best way to popularise Korean cuisine is through visual television. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, there indeed is a correlation between food and medicine in old Korean medical traditions, particularly that of Sasang Constitutional Medicine. It is also true though that traditional Korean Oriental Medicine also looks into the effects of food on one's health or prognosis. As such, the very portrayal of a Jang Geum as an embodiment of the food-

medicine framework is indeed an ingenious method used by the tv drama's producers in introducing *hansik* – by riding through visual *hallyu*.

Filipino Reception of *Hansik*

For this particular part of the study, the intention is to assess Filipino's perceptions of Korean culture. It is admitted of course that further more extensive and elaborate study is required to fully assess this, rather than the simple survey conducted. For this part of the research too, the author will be discussing also state-mediated *hansik* replication as part and parcel of *hallyu* production and distribution.

Common Perceptions about Korean Cuisine

Of the 32 respondents directly interviewed, surveyed, or otherwise contacted online, there are many interesting responses elicited to questions pertaining to how they perceived Korean cooking. The prevalent perception which seems to embody most Filipinos' perception of Korean cuisine is that it is “maanghang” or spicy/hot. Apart from this which obviously refers to all types of kimchi in Korean cooking, the second most popular Korean dishes mentioned in the interview/survey were bulgogi and bibimbap.

The following summarises the reasons why these dishes were easily recalled by the Filipino respondents:

- I. Kimchi – because it is [in fact] the #1 side dish
- II. Bulgogi – because [everybody knows] barbecue/grilled meat
- III. Bibimbap – because it's [just another] tasty rice bowl
- IV. Japchae – because [it looks like the] Korean “version” of bihon or sotanghon
- V. Kimbab – because it looks like sushi

From the responses elicited above, it is quite conclusive that there is the element of locating for familiarity in common or local dishes. Kimchi is indeed unique to Koreans and it is also

the most notable among all Korean dishes. Yet, the rest of the dishes were recalled because they seem to resemble previously familiar dishes. It must also be noted that in dishes from number 2 to number 5, none of them are spicy or hot. Only dish number 1, kimchi, is the only spicy dish to be ever recalled by the respondents.

Where did the concept of Korean spicy dish come from? Of course, apart from kimchi, the local branch of Nissin Corporation produced their own version of the originally-Chinese Korean noodle soup Jjampong – a development which unfortunately bolstered the spicy identity of Korean cuisine. Apart from this, some of the respondents contacted did mention having consumed spicy stews in Korean restaurants in the Philippines or in Korea. Unfortunately, not one of them could properly recall the name of the spicy stews they have partaken. To straighten out the facts, not all Korean dishes are obviously not spicy. Though chili powder and chili pepper paste are used in Korean dishes – but only in selected dishes. All other dishes do in fact resemble Chinese, Filipino, and even American dishes.

However, what needs to be taken into serious attention is the fact that the phenomenological perception of Korean cuisine as hot/spicy. Due to the fact that kimchi seems to have caught the attention of the *hallyu*-hungry world, the Korean-food-is-spicy context is manufactured and embedded into the unsuspecting global consciousness. The problem here is that in one stroke, the *hallyu* producers swiftly monopolised and interlaced with Korean cultural identity the concept of spiciness. All of a sudden, the spiciness attributed to Bicolano, Indonesian, or Mexican cuisines were all of a sudden conveniently overshadowed by the Korean brand of chili. Indeed, the author admits that more studies need to be done on this, but the 32 respondents do conclusively point to this phenomenological perception: the manufactured view of Korean cuisine in the global imagination, which later on, points to Korean cultural identity.

Search for the Authentic versus Localisation

The second part of the interview-survey concerned the desire of the respondents to continue the consumption of Korean cuisine in its pure “unadulterated form” or something else. That “something else” came in the form of a desire for some to lessen the supposed spiciness level of some of the dishes that they have partaken. As for other dishes, there were some who expressed desire for the ingredients used to be familiar to them. What it means is that they would be more comfortable if some, if not all of the ingredients used were familiar ones used in the Philippines.

For the first half of the respondents desiring a compromised version of Korean cooking, it is important to take note, especially from the list above that dishes numbered 2 to 5 was made possible because of familiarity recalled from certain Filipino or popular dishes. It is also not surprising that kimchi sold in most large grocery chains are displayed within the same shelf as other bottled preserved delis such as atchara. Well, the fact that Korean instant noodles being displayed with all other instant noodles need not be explained in this way though. However, familiarity is key to understanding the consumption patterns of some people, or at least the ability to be able to compare it favourably with certain local delicacies.

A trivial and ancillary matter for some of the respondents interviewed is the immediate lack of the familiar spoon-and-fork on the dining table. Although indeed many Filipinos use chopsticks, it is another thing to use metal chopsticks. In one of the restaurants visited, the attendants normally displayed the metal chopsticks, but they routinely asked the customers if they preferred wooden chopsticks or spoon-and-fork instead. These routine questions are indicators that many Filipinos have in fact visited their or other Korean restaurants but were quite unaware or unfamiliar with the use of metal chopsticks.

On the question of whether Korean cuisine is being led towards localisation or Filipinisation remains to be seen. The

concept of fusion dishes may be popular for some, but it has not really taken off for the vast majority of Filipino consumers. At this point, the type of fusion as regards the localisation of Korean cuisine is so far more in terms of the need to “tone down” what is perceived to be radically spicy dishes. Apart from this, substitution has been happening, though this is not necessarily an indicator of fusion or localisation. There are certain ingredients which may not be locally available, yet may be substituted by local equivalents. Examples of this are certain types of vegetables, and fishes – such as galunggong for pike mackerel.

Yet, a smaller yet significant percentage of the respondents did argue in favour of retaining the supposed authentic Korean original. Some of the respondents have in fact previously travelled to Korea and have seen and tasted for themselves Korean cuisine in its native homeland. Whether such an experience was mediated by the *hallyu* effect is beside the point. Nevertheless, although it is true that many Filipinos would like to experience Korean cuisine in a more “moderate” or Filipinised mode, there are some who would prefer to taste the “original” form as it is in Korea itself. As for the second type, there is a point to the cultural purity being argued. Yet, the usual counter-argument is predictably that of culture being a product of foreign influences.

The tug-of-war between localists and purists should not be oversimplified and trivialised though as both are valid indicators that indeed the *hallyu* value of *hansik* has successfully been delivered by their Korean originators and promoters. After all, though such a diverging debate has not really plagued Chinese or Japanese culinary culture in the Philippines, it has entered very similar paths as any other foreign culinary influences in the country.

State-Sponsored *Hansik* Education

The fourth wave of *hansik* as *hallyu* in the Philippines mentioned earlier refers to the professionalization of Korean

cooking in the Philippines. The Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines offers one of the very limited official Korean cooking classes in the Philippines that is officially sanctioned and promoted by the Korean government. Though it may be true that there are certainly other cooking schools throughout the Philippines that may offer Korean cooking, the desired effect is the same. In KCC in particular, the official policy is that no Koreans are allowed to be enrolled as students, though some foreigners, Japanese in particular, are able to avail of the offered cooking classes.



A typical cooking class session at the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines

On the part of the Filipinos studying in the cooking classes, some of the motivations strike a chord in the familiar Filipino socio-economic phenomenon – as preparation and training for a future employment in Korea. For some others, it is about Korean employers in the Philippines sending them to study in order to recreate authentic Korean dishes in existing or planned restaurants. Others are simply entrepreneurial enough to plan for opening a future Korean restaurant in their respective localities.

Regardless of the motivations, the fact that KCC, a branch of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines is regularly offering cooking classes attests to the persistent state-sponsored policy of Korean cooking to be promoted in line with Korean cultural wave. As of recently, the nation-wide contest

Global Taste of Korea with all of its promotion and tempting lucrative prizes, is yet another strategy to sustain Filipinos' interest around Korean culinary culture.

In another perspective, the very professional education in Korean culinary arts is an indication of *hansik* having reached another complex level – that of training or educating foreigners to cook Korean dishes. Unlike the form of localisation mentioned previously, this new level enters as a localisation of the authentic Korean cuisine. For indeed, it is crucial, regardless of the actual motivations, for Filipinos to be the ones cooking Korean cuisine. This by itself is also an indication of the unprecedented success of *hansik* as *hallyu*. If before, it was understandable that Koreans were the very bearers of Korean cooking, it is now a resounding and desired development that non-Koreans be the co-creators of *hansik*.

Imagining Korean Culture through *Hansik*

This study admits extensive limitations to actually start plausible conclusions. Rather, this paper seeks to discuss summaries and open conclusions as open invitations for future scholars to explore the topic as well and expound more profoundly on it.

First of all, the paper looked at Korean cooking as a vehicle and expression of Korean culture. However, though Korean cuisine visually looks unique, it is also a product of regional influences from China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. *Hansik* is a very tangible and powerful vehicle of Korean culture. In the same way that the Chinese and the Japanese used this strategy in order to promote or idealise their respective culture, so do the Koreans in the context of culture imagining. However, this cultural imagining through Korean cooking is manufactured and reconstituted rather than a historically uninterrupted series contrary to what popular media may invite people to believe.

Although localisation or Filipinisation is tolerated, as it still serves the function of preserving the “exotic” behind Korean

culture, it warps the “authenticity” of Korean cuisine. It is of course impossible to replicate Korean cuisine completely in the Philippines due to cultural ecological reality: some ingredients grown in Korea, cannot be found in the Philippines. Localisation balances the problem by providing close substitutes – but this is more of an exception in *Hansik*, rather than the rule. In this case, localisation enters two forms: that of allowing changes in the dishes themselves to suit the local palates, or deputising locals as professional replicators of Korean cooking. In both cases, the highest level of Korean culinary culture reaches its apex of success in the delivery and promotion of Korean cultural identity to the world.

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