

## Korean cultural identity and its globalization strategy

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**Abstract.** The 21th century is called the century of culture. People argue that the rise and fall of a country can depend on the cultural industries. There is a maxim that what is the most national, is the most global. If this maxim is slightly transformed, we can obtain another maxim that what is the most Korean, is the most global. In order to globalize Korean culture, we must, first of all, find out what belongs to the identity of Korean culture. This paper intends to reflect what is the identity of Korean culture and to offer some suggestions for the globalization strategies of Korean Culture.

**Keywords:** cultureal identity, globalization strategy, Korean culture.

### 1 Introduction

The 21th-century can be defined as the century of culture. If so, I will consider what implications contain in such culture. Although I can interpret the concept of culture in general from several different perspectives, I will quote in the following definition of cultural anthropologist (Tylor) on the "primitive Cultures, 1971". His definition is as follows. "The totality of skills, or habits just like Knowledge, faith, art, morals, laws, customs which they acquired as the members of human society." On the other hand, social scientists assimilate society to bowl, in which the contents of culture can be contained. In addition, German cultural philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) in his book, "The decline of the West (Der Untergang des Abendlandes)" he pointed out that a huge Europe can be defined not as the step of culture for prosperity, but as the step for the development of European civilization. According to him culture can be defined as a unique Spirit (Seele) and the Creative Power) (Schaffungskraft) of the nation. It means that race losing culture can lose the creative power of race and ultimately the race without culture cannot hold the subjectivity and the cultural identity, "Furthermore the importance of culture can be pointed out in their book" Culture matters "published jointly by Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington. In the preface of the book, the importance of the culture can be explained as follow." "We compared the economic data of Early 1960s in case of South Korea and Ghana, As such result we could find out the same level in GNP of two countries, reviewing the economic indicators of over mentioned two countries after 30 years, we were surprised that the economic growth of South Korea in the fact has developed into the world's 14th largest exporting country. Huntington pointed out that the current

economic level of Ghana GNP in comparison with South Korea indicates 1/15. He continued to explain that the definitive cause of such differences in economic growth is originated from culture. He pointed out that the main cause of such phenomena is derived from "Korean thrift, investment, hard work, education, organization, discipline, spirit of Discipline, mental self-control as the original motivation for economic development of the county." In my paper his view is very suggestive. Peter Drucker, who is called not only as the father of modern business administration, but also as global futurist affirmed as following, "the 21st century is the cultural industries, therefore the national winner will be determined immediately by culture industry." After all it will be an era, in which the economic development can be determined by the cultural values. At this point entering into the 21st century, it is very important for us that the substance of various cultural identity which the wise ancestors left behind should be clarified. After that it is an urgent task for us to reveal the cultural identity of Korea to world.

## 2 Did Korean Artists, who globalized Korean Culture, exist?

If we mention successful Korean writers in making globalization of Korean Cultural identity in Europe, first of all we can associate it with Isang Yun, Nam June Paik and Mirok Lee. Isang Yun remade Korea classic novel Sim Cheong Jeon to opera for the first time in Germany, he instilled an innocent and sublime image of Shim Cheong with filial piety in the heart of German people through

devoting herself for her blind father as a scapegoat to Seafare in order to make his father's eyes open. The reason why Video artist Nam June Paik was able to stand on the world stage is that he could overcome the limitations of Western art through adopting drastically not only a very stylish and elegant aesthetics of Korean Culture, but also Korean traditional shamanism, the profound Buddhist and Taoism which exist as the foundation of Korean culture.<sup>1</sup> I recognize an academic need to research what kind of the Korean cultural elements which exist in Paik's video art and music of Isang Yun cause a sympathy to other people in the world. Let's consider if the composer Isang Yun and the Vidio Artist Paik did not adopt the identity of Korean traditional culture in their article world, I recognize a need to investigate the main elements of Korean identity which Isang Yun Nam June Paik could be recognized as best Artist in Europe. As result we can get the decisive clues for globalizing Korean identity. Both Artists created a new art through grafting eastern spirits and thoughts to their field of Western Art. If so, it is necessary to make an academic research systematically how the elements of Korean cultural identity functions in making a new Art. Paik shows us the performing arts just like Korean shaman play through putting the pigs head on a table wearing a freshly, He seems to represent us the face of Dadaists to evoke the spirit of Korean shaman which exists potentially in deep

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1 Gunether Berger, The More, The Better- Gespraech mit Man-June Paik, In; Sang-Kong Lee(Hg.) Oesterreich -Korea. Festschrift zum 100 jaehrigen Jubilaem. WUV Universitaetsverlag 1994. S.160 [Manchmal drigenden fernoestliche Gedanken ein, die ich nicht negierge, ohne deswegen nationalstisch zu sein. (I don't negate that sometimes thoughts from Far East Asia come into my head. Thus, I cannot be a nationalist.)

consciousness of Korean. At the beginning of the 1980s Isang Yun, the opera *Sim Cheon Jjeon* came to be performed on stage in Germany.<sup>2</sup> In this work through her body's throwing back into the sea in order to make her blind father open and she was changed into the lotus, Shim came to meet her father in the other world. He intends to show Westerner not only her deep filial towards her father, but also to make them feel the mystique atmosphere .through process from the sacrificial death until making rebirth in the lotus. Isang Yun himself confessed that eastern yin 陰 and yang 陽 thought<sup>3</sup> and Confucian virtues filial 孝 affected his works. If Isang Yun did not show European audiences Korean Confucian virtues of filial culture and the culture of Buddhist reincarnation, could he become worldly composer? In addition, was it possible that Isang Yun differentiated artistically from other European composer? Korean Literature professor Hongilsik pointed out the filial piety of Isang Yun in his book "What does exist in the Koreans?" as follows. When Isang Yun's opera <Shim> was performed in "Cultural event of the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 for first time, there was the part which gave the Western people. Shim's profound piety towards her blind father, her father could open her father's blind eyes with her filial piety, Korean typical mind at the end, it's not just her father, further, all blind men could open their blind eyes at the same time. Such Korean emotion which is contained in his music is the main cause why Isang Yun's music could be respected highly. So is it to say that only Korean typical culture can be worthy?"<sup>4</sup> Isang Yun confessed that his music's birth would not be possible if ancestors did not inherited the traditional culture as follows "My music is not my personal possession. Great power of my universe, it could be established by the invisible big power. The music flows in the universe. Flowing music of the universe, can be composed only through my sensitive ears. (...) Although I can be an internationally renowned composers today, but this is due to talent received from my nation's great artistic tradition. Indeed, our nation has truly good artistic elements. We people preserves superior Taoism than any nation in the East most specifically. Our music has such tradition. Because I was born and grew up in a very traditional Korean Culture, my today's music exists. If my music exists outside categories of Korean traditional culture, how my music could be produced. . Because I am due to a great ancestors and glorious tradition, my own music is not mine."<sup>5</sup>

Lee expressed Korean image of everyday life and Korean way of thinking through his work 『The Yalu flows』 the autobiographical form, His novel 『The Yalu flows』 was published in 1946 with the first edition after second war in Germany the first edition sold out immediately and the second edition of Lee's novel was published in 1950, it was sold out too. So Lee came to be a popular writer in Germany. In Lee's novel his stories of personal experiences just like boy's days, the life in school which he spent, old- new fashioned teaching methods, escaping from the political oppression

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2 Luise Rinser, ISang Yun, trans. by Shin GYO Chun , Life and the world of Music , Young Hak Publishing Co. Seoul 1984. pp.155-182

3 Das kulturelle Erbe Koreas, Uebertragung von Dr. Young-Ja Beckers-Kim, Dr.Rudolf F. Dietze Hrsg.von Koreanischen Informationsdienst. Jungmoonsa Printing Co., Ltd. 1999 P.160

4 Hong, Il-Shik, what does exist in Korean?: a self-check of Koreans for playing a leading role of the 21st century human civilization, Jeong Shin Se Ge Sa, 2004, P.182

5 Op. cit, the music world of Yun I-Sang, Han Gil Sa, 1991.

in the period of Japanese occupation crossing the Yalu River via Shanghai, China and starting a new life in Germany are expressed in the autobiographical novel.

In Lee's novel 『The Yalu flows』 thought of traditional Confucianism, Buddhism, Shamanism and the world of life customs are described simply, naively and honestly. In Lee's novel written in German 『The Yalu flows』 Korean life style and view of life are described well.

For example, Lee informs us a strong interest in education of Chinese character, Confucian consciousness between different genders and the intellectual's agony and his consciousness of resistance in the period of Japanese occupation. In this novel he reflected Korean's quiet inner consciousness and Confucian patriarchal authority of fathers and lineage Confucian tradition well.

He developed his story with restrained language. Lee's language style is out of ordinary style. Lee inserted episode of his personal childhood which he experienced in the space of reminiscence playing together which can associate us with childhood existing between Hero and his friend. Lee's novel can remind western reader of memory of childhood just like grandmother told a fairy tale to his grandsons with a quiet voice calmly. It is sufficient to evolve Korean emotion to western reader. In this point Lee's noble can be appreciated highly.

### 3 Does Korean cultural identity for the globalization still?

Korea Cultural Heritage (Koreas Kulturerbe) written by Dr. Rudolf F. Dietze showed us the cultural heritage of Korea to the Germans. divided into the following 25 items in detail. Hanbok, Kim chi and Bulgogi, Hangul, the subtlety ritual music, masks and Bongsantalchum, Taekwondo, Korea Ginseng, Bulguksa Temple, Grotto, Mount Sorak, Korea artists, traditional typography, traditional musical instruments, pottery recipe, Mono, decorative patterns, jewelry, order, and paper manufacturing alcohol, wrapping paper, folklore, customs, shamanism.<sup>6</sup>

I can point out that this book introduces about food Kimchi, Bulgogi, ginseng and other Bongsan Mask dance that express a Korean delicate artistic sense, typography, traditional musical instruments, ceramics, Dan-Cheong, decorative patterns, ornaments, embroidery, Han-Ji Production technique, Packaging technique, and folk painting. It is very impressive that in over mentioned book the artistic creativity as the cultural identity of a people was appreciated highly.

In case of examining into Korea cultural identity, following various elements were shown. When we refer to the identity of our culture, the first thing we is used to refer to the characteristics of the Patience and persistence of Korean people. It can remind us with the Dangun myth, in which Korean cultural identity is well represented symbolically. In Dangun myth<sup>7</sup> as precondition of humanizing process of bear the spirit of patience is required. Besides the myth of Dangun represents us the image of

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<sup>6</sup> As Kulturerbe Koreas-Ein Fuehrer. Uebertragung aus dem Englischen ins Deutsche. Dr. Young-Ja Bech/kers-Kim, Dr. Rudolf F. Dietze. Jungmoonsa Printing Co., Ltd. 1999

<sup>7</sup> Iryeon, Samguk Yusa, Won-Jung, Kim (Trans.). Eulyoo Publishing Co. 2004. pp.36-37

human-being, in which can be widely known to give benefit lots of people. Dan-Gun Myth suggests us the robust ethnicity symbolically as followings, In order to become human-being bear must put up with eating bitter foods like garlic, wormwood, etc 100days long in a dark cave.

I can no help mentioning shamanism which dominates the base of the deepest consciousness of Korean people. I think that the tradition of shamanism is potential in the sense of Modern Korean, which ancient Koreans in fields of Siberia believed with the mind of awe and reverence and followed the shaman<sup>8</sup> who could treat human disease and suffering and communicate with the universe. This scene of shamanism is reflected in process of accommodating foreign Buddhist and Christian culture. In addition, Korean culture can be defined as culture with lots of humor even in times of hardship, movement in quiet and with lots of Han (resentment). Such Han culture can be eliminated through Pansori containing the sound of Han and Guts playing with deuteronomy like Ssit Gim Gut<sup>9</sup>.

We can understand that Korean people have potential power through overcoming lots of difficult situation wisely not with avenge, but with the spirits of win-win towards the persecution from outside forces when Dong-Hak revolution was broke out in Korea, All religions like Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity coexist in harmony not conflicting each other. Five colors expressed in Korea traditional food, Hanbok and Korean painting are in harmony and communicate with the universe. Korean culture can be defined as colorful culture with fashion and taste. Taekwondo shows us the spirits of powerful energy(氣). In Asian medial science the way of basic energy flowing in the human body can be found out. And Korean Yi Je Ma divided 4 types of human body according to the principle of Yin-Yang to heal human diseases. King Se-Jong created Korean language with the scientific and creativity.<sup>10</sup> We can feel pride of the over mentioned traditional Korean culture and globalize it to other people in the world.

Korean culture In short would be defined as ingenious people. Korean people have high capacity for foreign cultures and the ability to overcome the crisis with a unique sense of humor. In the former case, in case foreign cultures come to Korea, it can be accepted in Korean style and be harmonized in the aspect of synthesis and can be transformed into a new form. For example, in the case of Buddhism Won-Hyo in Silla period created a new Buddhist sect Jeong-To-Gyo with a comprehensive and practical feature. in the case of Confucianism great scholars like Lee Toy Ge (李退溪)und Uhl-Gok(栗谷) created the new synthetic theory of Li-GI(理氣) in order to overcome the limitations of Chinese Confucianism. Korean people produced a classical literature with lots of humor in which Yu- Bul- Seon(儒佛仙) coexist in harmony.

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8 Yol-Kyu, Kim, North-East Asian Shamanism and Mythology, Agape Publishing Co. 2003. p.369

9 Ho-Toun Kwon,(edit) Korean Cultural Roots. Religion and Social Thoughts. North Park College and Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, 1995 p. 45-69

10 Il-Pyeong, Moon, Korean Culture. Eulyoo Publishing Co. 1974. p.12.

## 4 Conclusion

### 4.1 Does Korea's strategy of globalization of culture exist?

- 1) An outstanding image with crisis management skills
- 2) The ability to synthesize creativity and excellent image
- 3) The cheerful image to create excitement
- 4) Friendly (多情) an image
- 5) The image which parents sacrificed everything for the child

### 4.2 Does Korea cultural identity strategy exist?

1) The way in which General Yi Sunshin's art of war must be accepted for spirit of cultural globalization strategy.

2) In order to globalize the Korea food Culture, there is a need to develop experience Tourism which is suitable for foreigners' taste, making traditional foods, On the other hand, while experiencing the therapy produced on Yin-Yang Principle which is inherent in Korean traditional food, we should give foreigners lots of chances to enjoy participating in the food festival.

3) It is necessary to develop a variety of media step-by-step so that more lots of foreigners can access quickly and easily to Korea's culture.

4) It is necessary for us to make globalization strategy for foreigners through the development of Korean language textbooks.

5) The globalization of Korean culture through lots of Foreign Language Translation on Korea Cultural Identities.

6) On the other hand, it is necessary for us to make a cooperative communication network system with a group of Koreans who live in several countries.

7) We must learn a way how to globalize from foreign countries which were already globalized countries just like European and Asian countries.

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