

Uri nara, our nation: Unification, identity and the emergence of a new nationalism amongst South Korean young people.

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DECLARATION

Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis is my own work.

Emma Campbell

Preface

I first encountered Korea in 1996 when I was studying Chinese at a university in Beijing. Aside from a large group of British students from the University of Leeds, of which I was one, most other students learning Chinese were from South Korea. By the late 1990s, South Korean students already constituted the majority of foreign students in China. My room-mate was Korean as were most of my friends and as we spoke to each other in our common language Chinese I first came to discover Korea.

My Korean friends introduced me to Korean food in restaurants run by *Chaoxianzu* or *Joseonjok* (Korean-Chinese) in the small Korea-town that had emerged to service the growing South Korean community in Beijing. During that stay in Beijing I also travelled to North Korea for the first time and then in the following year, 1998, to Seoul.

It was during the 1990s that attitudes to North Korea amongst young South Koreans appear to have started their evolution. These changes coincided with the growth of travel by young South Koreans for study and leisure. Koreans travelling overseas were encountering foreigners of a similar age from countries such as the UK and discovering that they had more in common with them than the *Joseonjok* in the Korean restaurants of Beijing or North Koreans who, as South Koreans would soon learn, were facing starvation and escaping in ever growing numbers into China.

South Korea also had its own problems in that period. In the late 1990s, the South Korean economy faced near collapse following the 1997 Economic Crisis. For the first time, South Korea faced redundancies and the collapse of huge *chaebol* including the Daewoo and Hanbo conglomerates. In December of the same year, the veteran opposition leader Kim Dae Jung was elected to power becoming the 8th President of South Korea after his inauguration in February 1998. By 1999, the economy had experienced a dramatic recovery and Kim embarked on his Sunshine Policy toward North Korea. This culminated in 2000 with the historic summit in Pyongyang between Kim Dae Jung and Kim Il Sung, leader of North Korea. This did nothing to slow the increasing numbers of North Koreans arriving in the South but it did make South Koreans more conscious of the North and its problems. Just at the time when many in South Korea began to understand the vulnerability of the South Korean economy and society to global economic and financial events, they also started to

comprehend the dire situation of North Korea and the reality of the challenges that unification might bring.

Although my first visit to the Korean Peninsula was the trip I made to North Korea in 1997, it was the modern, fun, fashionable South Korea that attracted me to Korean culture. All the British students studying with me in Beijing were impressed by the South Korea students' array of electronic equipment in their dormitory rooms. We watched Korean dramas with them which they translated into Chinese for us. We drank coffee together in the smart Korean-style coffee shops that had sprung up in Beijing and ate *patbingsu*, a delicious dessert made of shaved ice and sweetened red bean paste topped with condensed milk. I copied the style of my female Korean friends, with their immaculate make-up and attention to style. I read, for the first time, the story of South Korea's economic and political rise.

Looking back to this period in my life, the beginnings of this thesis were already in play. The pace of globalisation was picking up and new networks were beginning to develop. Typical young South Koreans were having more contact with *Joseonjok* either at home or abroad and they were also learning more about North Koreans. The manifestations of South Korean global-cultural nationalism: modernity, cosmopolitan-enlightenment and status were just beginning to be formed. Hints at the possibility of foreigners being accepted into Korean society were starting to show – foreigners and Koreans mingled as friends easily and the first Korean-speaking foreigner became a television star in South Korea¹. However on my first trip to Seoul in 1998 I was conscious that, as a tall, blonde, foreign female, I was still seen as something unusual. When I travelled around Korea with my Korean friends I sensed that I attracted a lot of attention.

The shaping of the South Korean globalised-cultural nationalism was beginning to be seen when I returned to Seoul in 2007 to carry out my research for this thesis. In Seoul, at least, people seemed unperturbed dealing with foreign customers. In shops or cafes the young people behind the counter were happy to converse in either English or Korean. Often I was served in restaurants by *Joseonjok* who quietly conversed in Chinese with me out of earshot of the Korean customers. It was relatively easy to meet North Koreans – students at my university, through church or community groups or volunteer English language classes. I

¹ The first mainstream non-ethnic Korean TV personality was *Ida Daussy*. *Daussy* is a French-born naturalised citizen of Korea who married a Korean man in 1991 and gained widespread popularity on television as a presenter and guest on a variety of Korean television shows <http://ida-daussy.com/index.php> (viewed 14/08/2011).

joined the alien registration queue at immigration with Iraqis, Somalis, Swedes, Kazakhs, Belarusians, Nigerians, and Chinese. And for the first time, when I am in a nail salon of all places, and in front of other colleagues and customers, the young manicurist says openly and passionately ‘I hate the idea of unification’.

Alongside the inspiration gained from my ongoing love of Korea, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. I would first like to thank the Chair of my supervisory panel Professor Paul Hutchcroft for his guidance, encouragement and enthusiasm for my work. He is wise and thoughtful and yet welcomes challenge and debate from his students. And although extremely busy as Director of ANU’s School of International, Political and Strategic Studies is absolutely committed to his students and can always find time for an uplifting anecdote to lighten any thesis meeting!

Next, I am grateful to my supervisor Professor Hyung-a Kim. Professor Kim recognised the importance of my research right from the beginning and has supported me throughout my PhD. She has been extremely generous in sharing both her knowledge and contacts enabling both my fieldwork and writing. Professor Kim has often welcomed me to her home where I discovered that she is not only a great academic but also a great cook of Korean food!

Third, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Ed Aspinall, who although joined my panel at the later stages of my thesis writing, always found time to support and guide my work throughout my period at ANU. My understanding of nationalist theory, in particular, developed as a result of his knowledge and guidance. He is also a great head of department who has encouraged a warm, friendly and fun atmosphere in the Department of Political and Social Change.

The Korean Studies department at ANU reach out to all students of Korea, whatever their discipline: Professor Ken Wells sponsored my application to ANU; Professor Hyae-weol Choi provides wonderful leadership to the Korean community at ANU and gave me advice on a number of chapter drafts; and Dr. Ruth Barraclough has been a great support to both my thesis writing and Korean language learning. I would like to thank International Relations Professor Bill Tow who provided me with the opportunity to publish my first journal article. The Korea Institute Post-doctoral Fellow, Dr. Park Sang-young was a great mentor and *sonbae* as I completed my thesis. I also wish to thank all of the academics, staff and students in my department who have supported me throughout the PhD process.

I would especially like to thank Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki who has been a mentor and friend to me. She provided me with many wonderful opportunities to develop my academic skills and career and showed me the power of academia to effect real change. She is a truly wonderful academic, activist and person.

I was supported for three years by a Korean Studies of Australasia-Korea Foundation Postgraduate Fellowship. The Korea Foundation is a fantastic supporter of students of Korean studies. I am also grateful for the generous fieldwork funding received from the Cheung Kong Endeavour Research Fellowship, the Australia-Korea Foundation and the ANU.

My research assistant Sohn Yelin has been central to the success of this project. Yelin is brilliant, bright and committed to many activist causes and it was fun and inspiring to work with her. I want to thank my ‘Korean family’ at the *hasukjip* who take care of me like a daughter and sister whenever I am in Korea and my friends Chang Eun-shil and Park Hyun-a. Professor Park Myung-gu and all the team at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies were kind and generous hosts to my research in Korea. I am also grateful to my wonderful friends Lee Eun-koo and Lee Ja-un who inspired me to become interested in North Korea with their amazing work.

Thanks go to my friends Scott and Katrina who have been so kind to me, in particular taking care of my cat during my fieldwork and to Masha and Timo who welcomed me to Canberra when I first arrived. Yonjae, Jeongyoon and little Gitae are wonderful friends in Canberra who always had time to help me with Korean language, to share interesting articles and discuss the issues on Korea raised by this thesis. I also want to thank my best friends Ruth and Keri in the UK who always make me smile.

As a dual Australian and British national, I chose to do my PhD in Australia in part to get to know the country and my family here. I have loved every minute of living in Australia. I want to thank Fran, Bruce, Marianna and Tom for encouraging me to do my PhD in the first place and looking after me so well. I also want to thank Sally and Ross for providing me with a home away from home and Mary, Cousin Bill and Bruce for providing me with a bit of luxury from time to time! I want to thank all of my Australian family who have welcomed me so warmly especially my lovely cousin Meg.

Finally, thank you to my parents who are wonderful, kind and caring people and my inspiration for all I do in life. They have supported me absolutely throughout this thesis including the arduous task of proof-reading carried out with complete dedication and love by my Father. This thesis is dedicated to my Father Quentin Campbell and his mother, my Grandmother, Norma Campbell, also known as the artist Norma Norton, in recognition of the special place Australia and my Australian family will always have in my life.

Glossary of terms

<i>Bukhan</i>	North Korea (South Korean terminology)
MR: <i>Chaebol</i> RR: <i>Jaebeol</i>	Large Korean conglomerates such as Samsung
<i>Chaoxianzu</i>	Chinese term for Korean-Chinese
<i>Daehanminguk</i>	The Republic of Korea
<i>Danil minjok</i>	One ethnic nation
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
GNP	Grand National Party
<i>Han minjok</i>	One people
<i>Hanbok</i>	Korean traditional dress (South Korean terminology)
<i>Hanguk Saram</i>	A citizen of South Korea
IPUS	Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University
<i>Isipdae</i>	Twenty-somethings
<i>Jaeil gypo</i>	Korean term for Koreans living in Japan
<i>Joseon saram</i>	A citizen of North Korea
<i>Joseonjok</i>	Korean term for Korean-Chinese
KBS	Korea Broadcasting System
<i>Koryoin</i>	Ethnic-Koreans from the former USSR
<i>Namhan</i>	South Korea (South Korean terminology)
North Korea	The Democratic People's Republic of Korea
PCNB	Presidential Council on National Branding
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
<i>Sa-il-gu</i>	April 19 th Revolution, the student uprising against the Rhee Syngman government in 1960
SNU	Seoul National University
SERI	Samsung Economic Research Institute
South Korea	The Republic of Korea
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
<i>Uri</i>	Our, we, us
<i>Uri nara</i>	Our nation
<i>Zainichi</i>	Japanese term for Koreans living in Japan

Notes on terms and romanisation

The term 'Korea' is used both to refer to the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and pre-partitioned Korea. South Korea is used for emphasis where required. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is referred to throughout as North Korea.

All Korean words have been romanised according to the Revised Romanisation system. Exceptions are names of authors who have published in English using a different spelling and where well known names of people, places or publications use another form of romanisation, for example Park Chung Hee or newspaper titles such as the *Chosun Ilbo*. Korean names are written according to the standard usage in Korean with surnames preceding given names. I have included surname and given names for all references using Korean names.

This thesis is written using British English. Date order reflects British English usage (day, month, year). American English may be used in the bibliography according to the original book title, journal title and so on.

Abstract

Uri nara, our nation: Unification, identity and the emergence of a new nationalism amongst South Korean young people

This research project investigates the growing ambivalence and antagonism of South Korean young people toward unification with North Korea. Historically, ideas of nation and identity, and thus unification, have been based upon the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of all Korean people. More recently, there has emerged a new type of nationalism based on strikingly different notions of identity. This work addresses the central puzzle of how long-held views of Korean nation and national identity have been challenged so dramatically in recent years – in particular amongst the young.

Using data obtained from over 90 interviews, surveys and other documentary evidence collected in the field, I show how negativity toward unification with North Korea is increasing and argue that a new *South Korean nationalism* has arisen amongst South Korea's young people. This new nationalism is demonstrated both by the changing attitudes to unification and North Korea and by a growing sense of national pride and confidence in South Korea. The new nationalism can be described as a *globalised-cultural nationalism*, reflecting the central role played by globalisation in its construction and expression.

This work contests the assumption that unification 'is the hope of all Koreans' and the inevitable outcome for the Korean peninsula. It contributes to understanding short-term challenges as more North Koreans move to the South and provides insights into longer-term preparations for possible reunification. From a theoretical perspective, this thesis builds upon existing nationalist literature by exploring the development of nationalism in established nations, and describing the importance and role of globalisation in the evolution of modern nationalist sentiment.

***Uri nara, our nation: Unification, identity and the emergence of a new
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