



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures  
Polish Academy of Sciences



ACTA ASIATICA  
VARSOVIENSIA

No. 30

Issue 2

Warszawa 2017

*Editor-in-Chief*

KRZYSZTOF TRZCIŃSKI

*Editorial Assistant*

RAFAŁ KŁECZEK

*Subject Editor*

NICOLAS LEVI

*English Text Consultant*

JO HARPER

*Board of Advisory Editors*

ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI

MING-HUEI LEE

THUAN NGUYEN QUANG

KENNETH OLENIK

JOLANTA SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO

BOGDAN SKŁADANEK

HAIPENG ZHANG

*Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia no. 31 was granted a financial support of the  
Ministry of Science and Higher Education, grant no. 772/P-DUN/2017.*

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,  
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2017  
PL ISSN 0860-6102  
eISSN 2449-8653  
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in  
*The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,*  
*Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database*

# Contents

## ARTICLES:

- MONIKA ARNOŠTOVÁ, Chinese overtime culture among white-collar workers in the first-tier cities ..... 7
- LECH BUCZEK, Political and Strategic Dimensions of the Relations between the EU and South Korea ..... 29
- DOUGLAS GABRIEL, Pioneers of the Times: North Korea's Claim to Contemporaneity circa 1989 ..... 44
- ROMAN HUSARSKI, Buddhist Nationalism and Islam in Modern Myanmar ..... 56
- NATALIA KIM, Feminism and nationalism in South Korea: empowering Korean women during the nation-building process ..... 74
- EMESE KOVACS, Mea culpa phenomenon: Comparative study of apologies in the Japanese, American and Hungarian Media ..... 92
- EKATERINA LEVCHENKO, Rhetorical Devices in Old Japanese Verse: Structural Analysis and Semantics. Part II: From Semantics to Hermeneutics ..... 109
- MICHAŁ LUBINA, In Search of Prestige and a Lost Position: Russia's Policy in the Korean Policy ..... 128
- DOMINIK WRÓBLEWSKI, Korean Shamanism – the Religion of Harmony in Contemporary Korea ..... 147

**BOOK REVIEW:**

Lee Ahlam. North Korean Defectors in a New and Competitive Society, London: Rowman&Littlefield, 2016, 159 pages. ISBN: 978-0739192665 – rev. Nicolas Levi ..... 164

Kim Yong. With Kim Suk-Young. Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor, New York City: Columbia University Press, 2009, 168 pages. ISBN: 978-0-231-147447 – rev. Nicolas Levi..... 167

Editorial principles..... 170



## Chinese overtime culture among white-collar workers in the first-tier cities

### Abstract

The Chinese economic reform did not launch only astonishing economic development but also gave birth to a phenomenon of overtime work. For many white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities long working hours became an inseparable part of their working life, an unwritten rule, that mostly is in contradiction with their written work contracts. Since 2006, the spread of overtime work started to be referred to as “overtime culture” (加班文化 *jiābān wénhuà*) and formed part of the corporate cultures of Chinese companies. The aim of this paper is to provide a complex analysis of the overtime culture as well as an answer to the research question of why the overtime culture is so widely accepted. Reasons and motivations of white-collar workers to accept the extensively long working hours include specific aspects of the Chinese culture, career development, conditions on the job market, low work effectivity, survival pressure in the Chinese megacities and the new function of the workplace as a social interaction site for young professionals.

### Introduction

Since the time of the Chinese economic reform, the so-called Reform and Opening-up (改革开放 *gǎigé-kāifàng*) in 1978, the Chinese working environment has undergone immense changes. Transition of the Chinese planned economy into the capitalism-based economy termed «socialism with Chinese characteristics» has been a successful project that keeps on ensuring continuous economic growth. One of the unseen reasons for this unprecedented economic growth, being called the “Chinese miracle”, is intensive overtime work. As a by-product of the unceasing development of the Chinese economy, the phenomenon of overtime started to spread widely among white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, known as the “first-tier cities” (一线城市 *yīxiàn chéngshì*). This phenomenon is often referred to as

---

\* Renmin University of China.

“overtime culture” (加班文化 *jiābān wénhuà*). Although there is a growing body of research on the overtime phenomenon not only in China but also abroad, the research that has been done so far neglects the aspect of a positive impact of overtime culture on the lives of white-collar workers in the first-tier cities. Given the great lifestyle differences between the first-tier, second-tier, third-tier cities and the rural areas of China, only the first-tier cities are taken into consideration. In the first-tier cities overtime work is most common, as these are the most developed areas of China where the pace of life is the fastest and progressive but demanding job opportunities are plentiful.

The aim of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of overtime culture in China. We try to answer the following questions: What are the reasons and motivations for white-collar workers in China’s megacities to accept the overtime culture? Is the overall impact on their working time and work-life balance exclusively negative or does it have positive aspects as well?

Since the time of the Chinese economic reform, the so-called Reform and Opening-up (改革开放 *gǎigé-kāifàng*) in 1978, the Chinese working environment has undergone immense changes. Transition of the Chinese planned economy into the capitalism-based economy termed «socialism with Chinese characteristics» has been a successful project that keeps on ensuring continuous economic growth. One of the unseen reasons for this unprecedented economic growth, being called the “Chinese miracle”, is intensive overtime work<sup>1</sup>. As a by-product of the unceasing development of the Chinese economy, the phenomenon of overtime started to spread widely among white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, known as the “first-tier cities” (一线城市 *yīxiàn chéngshì*). This phenomenon is often referred to as “overtime culture” (加班文化 *jiābān wénhuà*). Although there is a growing body of research on the overtime phenomenon not only in China but also abroad, the research that has been done so far neglects the aspect of a positive impact of overtime culture on the lives of white-collar workers in the first-tier cities. Given the great lifestyle differences between the first-tier, second-tier, third-tier cities and the rural areas of

---

<sup>1</sup> Lai Desheng, Meng Dahu and Wang Qi, ‘Woguo laodongzhe gongzuo shijian tezheng yu zhengce xuanze’ [Specifics of Labourers’ Working Time and Policy Choice in China], *Zhongguo laodong* 2015, Vol. 2, p. 36.



China, only the first-tier cities are taken into consideration. In the first-tier cities overtime work is most common, as these are the most developed areas of China where the pace of life is the fastest and progressive but demanding job opportunities are plentiful.

The aim of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of overtime culture in China. We try to answer the following questions: What are the reasons and motivations for white-collar workers in China's megacities to accept the overtime culture? Is the overall impact on their working time and work-life balance exclusively negative or does it have positive aspects as well?

### **Existing studies on overtime and overtime culture**

As for the research done by Chinese scholars, overtime, as well as death from overwork (过劳死 *guòláosǐ*, also termed *karōshi*<sup>2</sup>), remained fairly unnoticed in China until 2006, when the death of a 25-year old developer, who was working for the telecommunication company Huawei, triggered an extensive debate on overtime and *karōshi* both in academia and among the public. Since then, Chinese researchers started to reflect on the overtime work from all kinds of perspectives. The main concern of the first number of research studies was the mattress culture and the emerging overtime culture. Researchers based their works mainly on statistical data, while some of them used qualitative data from interviews with white-collar workers. These research works are concerned with the issues such as how overtime culture is being put into practice<sup>3</sup>, the causes and countermeasures of overtime culture<sup>4</sup>, analysis of the mattress culture, as well as the unwritten rules character of the

---

<sup>2</sup> In 2002, the Japanese word *karōshi* made it into the Oxford English Dictionary, adding to the few Japanese words used in English compared to the extremely long list of katakana written English words in Japanese. *Karōshi* (過勞死), being defined as “death brought by overwork” or “job-related exhaustion”, made it also into Chinese as a direct translation from Japanese, namely *guòláosǐ* (过劳死).

<sup>3</sup> Li Dongjie, ‘Jiaban wenhua cheng zhichang qianguize’ [Overtime Culture is Becoming an Unwritten Rule at Workplace], *Renmin luntan* 2006, Vol. 13, p. 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> Liang Ping and Li Yan, ‘Jiexi xianzai qiye jiaban wenhua de chengyin he duice’ [Analysis on the Causes and Countermeasures of Overtime Culture in Modern Chinese Enterprises], *Jingji luntan*, 2007, Vol. 7, p. 73-76.

overtime culture.<sup>56</sup> The research of Wei Huawei analyzes the overtime culture from the perspective of overtime being a good tool to win the company's respect of their workers and on how the overtime could be integrated into the corporate culture.<sup>7</sup> A few years later, the research "Study on Overtime Phenomenon and Overtime Regulations" was published, which analyzes the implementation of Chinese labour law and its impact on overtime work as well as overtime pay.<sup>8</sup>

Karōshi and overtime work in general attracted the attention of a number of researchers.<sup>9 10 11 12 13</sup> As the overtime culture developed and underwent changes, there were developments in the field of the overtime research as well. Later studies provide a cultural perspective on overtime work<sup>14</sup>, examine the overtime phenomenon from both the employer's and employee's point of view<sup>15</sup>, criticise the inevitability of overtime<sup>16</sup>, examine the relation between different ranks within a company and the

<sup>5</sup> Gao Lu, 'Shei lai zhiyue kepa de 'jiaban wenhua'' [Who Will Restrain the Terrible "Overtime Culture"?], *Zhongguo shehui qikan*, 2006, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> Ou Shi, 'Fansi jiaban wenhua' [Reflecting on the Overtime Culture], *Qiye wenhua*, 2007, Vol. 5, p. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Wei Huawei, 'Ruhe rang 'jiabanwenhua' shangsheng wei qiye jingshen' [How to Upgrade "Overtime Culture" to the Corporate Spirit], *Jingyingzhe : Shangye Guanliban*, 2006, Vol. 14, p. 92-93.

<sup>8</sup> Lou Na, 'Jiaban xianxiang ji jiaban guiding yanjiu' [Study on Overtime Phenomenon and Overtime Regulations], *Zhongguo renli ziyuan kaifa*, 2009, Vol. 4, p. 72-74.

<sup>9</sup> Bi Ruilin, 'Zhongguo de 'guolaosi' xianzhuang' [Chinese Death from Overwork Phenomenon], *Renli ziyuan*, 2006, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Ren Fangfang, 'Zhongguo de 'guolaosi' xianzhuang ji yuanyin fenxi' [Current Situation and Analysis of Reasons Leading to 'Karoshi' in China], *Dongfang qiye wenhua*, 2011, Vol. 10, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> J. Li, Z. Yang, A. Loerbroks and P. Angerer, 'Compensation for disease-caused sudden death at work in China 2006–2012', *Occupational and environmental medicine*, 2014, Vol. 71, No. 9, p. 661.

<sup>12</sup> Wang Duyu, 'Lunlun 'guolaosi' xianxiang zhong de ziyuan jiaban nanti' [Problematics of Voluntary Overtime Work and the Phenomenon of 'karoshi'], *Fazhi yu shehui*, 2017, Vol. 3, p. 297-298.

<sup>13</sup> Ren Fangfang, 'Zhongguo de 'guolaosi' xianzhuang ji yuanyin fenxi' [Current Situation and Analysis of Reasons Leading to 'Karoshi' in China], *Dongfang qiye wenhua*, 2011, Vol. 10, p. 146.

<sup>14</sup> Yu Weiyu, 'Wenhua shijiao xikan jiaban' [Overtime as Seen from the Cultural Perspective], *Shichang luntan*, 2011, Vol. 5, p. 38-39.

<sup>15</sup> Gao Jie, 'Qiye chaoshi jiaban wenti de shensi' [Reflection on the Problematics of Overtime in Companies], *Qiye guan cha*, 2011, Vol. 1, p. 96-97.

<sup>16</sup> Yi Ming, 'Jiaban zu de ku yu le' [The Joys and Sorrows of Overtimers], *Mishu zhi you*, 2012, Vol. 9, p. 43-45.

amount of overtime work<sup>17</sup> and impact of overtime on one's health.<sup>18</sup> There is also a comparison research on overtime pay in China, Japan, Great Britain, France and the United States.<sup>19</sup> A number of studies focus also on the latest developments and trends within the overtime culture<sup>20212223</sup>.

Research done by the English-speaking academic world takes a slightly different perspective on the overtime phenomenon. A number of researchers focus on various aspects of overtime remuneration, attracting the realm of corporate social responsibility<sup>24</sup>, working time, standardization and flexibilisation of work<sup>2526</sup>, approaches of

---

<sup>17</sup> Qi Shi, 'Lingdao jibie yue gao, jiaban shijian jiu yue chang?' [The Higher the Position, the Longer the Overtime?], *Lingdao wencui*, 2016, Vol. 15, p. 75-77.

<sup>18</sup> Xia Yi, "'Jiaban' yu 'jiankang' nei ge shi genben' ["Overtime" and "Health" - Which One is Essential], *Jiuye yu baozhang*, 2016, Vol. 11, p. 37-39.

<sup>19</sup> Yi Shan, 'Woguo yu guowai jiaban buchang zhidu mianmian guan' [Face to Face with the Compensation System for Overtime in China and Abroad], *Zhongguo gonghui caihui*, 2016, Vol. 3, p. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup> Huang Shuomin, 'Women weihe jiaban' [Why We Work Overtime], *Jiuye yu baozhang*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 8-10.

<sup>21</sup> Lin Pingshan, 'Jiaban: yuan huo bu yuan, ta dou zai na li' [Overtime: It Is Still There Whether You Want or Not], *Jiuye yu baozhang*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 11-14.

<sup>22</sup> Liu Dongxia, 'Jianyi zhongguo qiye quangong jiaban wenti' [Discussion on Overtime Work of Chinese Companies' Workers], *Jueceyuxinxi*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 171.

<sup>23</sup> Shi Ji, "'996' gongzuozhi ni shoudeliao ma?' [Can You Stand the "996" Work System?], *Jianghuai fazhi*, 2016, Vol. 20, p. 42-43.

<sup>24</sup> Hilary Murdoch and Daniella Gould, 'Corporate social responsibility in China: Mapping the environment', *A study commission by the Global Alliance for Communities and Workers*, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Xiangquan Zeng, Lu Liang and Umar Idris Sa'ad, '*Working time in transition: the dual task of standardization and flexibilization in China*', International Labor Office, 2005, p. 7-27.

<sup>26</sup> V. Mishra and R. Smyth, 'Work Hours in Chinese Enterprises: Evidence from Matched Employer-employee Data', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 2012, Vol. 44, No. 1, p. 57-77.

organizations and individuals towards overtime<sup>2728</sup>, compensation management for overtime work<sup>29</sup> and illegal overtime.<sup>30</sup>

Another kind of overtime related research compares working time and overtime around the world, these include comparison of working hours across 22 different countries<sup>31</sup>, comparison of working time and related policies around the world<sup>32</sup>, convergence of working overtime in East Asia<sup>33</sup>, comparison of the involvement of collective bargaining in setting working time in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden and its implication on China<sup>34</sup>, comparison of working hours and its relation to happiness in East Asia<sup>35</sup> and a research on Confucian motives to work overtime in Asian organizations.<sup>36 37 38 39</sup>

Many English-writing scholars also reflect the *karōshi* and issues related to it such as its compensation, work stress and the high occurrence

<sup>27</sup> R. J. Burke, 'Working to Live or Living to Work: Should Individuals and Organizations Care?', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2009, Vol. 84, No. 2, p. 167-172.

<sup>28</sup> E. Friedman and C. K. Lee, 'Remaking the world of Chinese labour: A 30-year retrospective', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 2010, Vol. 48, No. 3, p. 507-533.

<sup>29</sup> H. Tang and J. I. N. Zhengwei, 'Research of Overwork Problem on Simple Laborers From the Visual of Compensation Management', *Canadian Social Science*, 2016, Vol. 12, No. 8, p. 91-95.

<sup>30</sup> S. Kim and S. Chung, 'Explaining organizational responsiveness to emerging regulatory pressure: the case of illegal overtime in China', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2016, Vol. 27, No. 18, p. 2097-2118.

<sup>31</sup> H. Stier and N. Lewin-Epstein, 'Time to work: A comparative analysis of preferences for working hours', *Work and Occupations*, 2003, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 302-326.

<sup>32</sup> Jon C. Messenger, Sangheon Lee and Deirdre McCann, *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws, and policies in a global comparative perspective*, Routledge, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> M. C. Tsai, M. Nitta, S. W. Kim et al., 'Working overtime in East Asia: convergence or divergence?', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 2016, Vol. 4, p. 1-23.

<sup>34</sup> X. Li, 'A Comparative Research on the Involvement of Collective Bargaining in Setting Working Time across Four EU Countries and Its Implication on China', *US-China L. Rev.*, 2016, Vol. 13, p. 796-808.

<sup>35</sup> T. Yamashita, A. R. Bardo, D. Liu, 'Are East Asians happy to work more or less? Associations between working hours, relative income and happiness in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 2016, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 264-274.

<sup>36</sup> Huang Shuomin, 'Women weihe jiban' [Why We Work Overtime], *Jiuye yu baozhang*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 8-10.

<sup>37</sup> Lin Pingshan, 'Jiban: yuan huo bu yuan, ta dou zai na li' [Overtime: It Is Still There Whether You Want or Not], *Jiuye yu baozhang*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 11-14.

<sup>38</sup> Liu Dongxia, 'Jianyi zhongguo qiye quangong jiban wenti' [Discussion on Overtime Work of Chinese Companies' Workers], *Jueceyuxinxi*, 2016, Vol. 9, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup> Shi Ji, '996' gongzuozhi ni shoudebiao ma?' [Can You Stand the "996" Work System?], *Jianghuai fazhi*, 2016, Vol. 20, p. 42-43.

of karōshi among doctors. A high number of studies focuses on the work-life balance such as the Work-Life in China study which analyzes the cultural reasons leading to the conflict between work and life, overtime and psychological well-being among Chinese office workers<sup>40</sup>, social policies and employer strategies linked to the work-life balance in China<sup>41</sup> and in the 2017 the book *The Routledge Companion to Wellbeing at Work* was published. This publication contains a chapter named Long working hours and presenteeism in Asia which provides an extensive overview of the definition of overtime in different countries and concerns the long working hours in Confucian Asia, Chinese self-efficacy and Chinese self-consciousness as the factors influencing the overtime behavior.

However research that analyzes not only the negative impacts of the overtime culture in first-tier cities but also its possible positive aspects on the lives of white-collar workers are scarce. This article aims to provide a better and more complex understanding of the overtime phenomenon in China and fill in the void in the existing research, which does not examine the overtime phenomenon from the perspective of being of a benefit to white-collar workers.

Karōshi and overtime work in general attracted the attention of a number of researchers. As the overtime culture developed and underwent changes, there were developments in the field of the overtime research as well. Later studies provide a cultural perspective on overtime work, examine the overtime phenomenon from both the employer's and employee's point of view, criticise the inevitability of overtime, examine the relation between different ranks within a company and the amount of overtime work and impact of overtime on one's health. There is also a comparison research on overtime pay in China, Japan, Great Britain, France and the United States. A number of studies focus also on the latest developments and trends within the overtime culture.

Research done by the English-speaking academic world takes a slightly different perspective on the overtime phenomenon. A number of researchers focus on various aspects of overtime remuneration, attracting the realm of corporate social responsibility, working time, standardization

---

<sup>40</sup> J. Houdmont, Jieming Zhou and J. Hassard, 'Overtime and psychological well-being among Chinese office workers', *Occupational medicine*, 2011, Vol. 61, No.4, p. 270-273.

<sup>41</sup> Y. Xiao and F. L. Cooke, 'Work-life balance in China? Social policy, employer strategy and individual coping mechanisms', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 2012, Vol. 50, No. 1, p. 6-22.

and flexibilisation of work, approaches of organizations and individuals towards overtime, compensation management for overtime work and illegal overtime.

Another kind of overtime related research compares working time and overtime around the world, these include comparison of working hours across 22 different countries , comparison of working time and related policies around the world , convergence of working overtime in East Asia , comparison of the involvement of collective bargaining in setting working time in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden and its implication on China , comparison of working hours and its relation to happiness in East Asia and a research on Confucian motives to work overtime in Asian organizations.

Many English-writing scholars also reflect the *karōshi* and issues related to it such as its compensation , work stress and the high occurrence of *karōshi* among doctors. A high number of studies focuses on the work-life balance such as the Work-Life in China study which analyzes the cultural reasons leading to the conflict between work and life<sup>42</sup>, overtime and psychological well-being among Chinese office workers , social policies and employer strategies linked to the work-life balance in China and in the 2017 the book *The Routledge Companion to Wellbeing at Work* was published. This publication contains a chapter named Long working hours and presenteeism in Asia<sup>43</sup> which provides an extensive overview of the definition of overtime in different countries and concerns the long working hours in Confucian Asia, Chinese self-efficacy and Chinese self-consciousness as the factors influencing the overtime behavior.

However research that analyzes not only the negative impacts of the overtime culture in first-tier cities but also its possible positive aspects on the lives of white-collar workers are scarce. This article aims to provide a better and more complex understanding of the overtime phenomenon in China and fill in the void in the existing research, which does not examine the overtime phenomenon from the perspective of being of a benefit to white-collar workers.

---

<sup>42</sup> G. Russell and M. Ross, *Work-Life in China*, *Boston College Center for Work & Family Global Workforce Roundtable USA*, 2008, p. 1-52.

<sup>43</sup> Luo Lu and Chun-Yi Chou, 'Long working hours and presenteeism in Asia' in *The Routledge Companion to Wellbeing at Work*, C. L. Cooper and M. P. Leiter (eds.), Taylor & Francis, 2017, p. 135-142.

## Research methodology

This research paper makes use of literature review and secondary analysis of data from a reliable variety of sources. As the official data are oftentimes not available in China, this research is supported by data originating from sources such as the Chinese job sites Zhaopin and China HRD, financial services company Ernst & Young, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, financial analytics provider Trading Economics and the American National Bureau of Economic Research. The review of statistical data from different sources shall ensure reliable and credible bases for the research statements and conclusions.

## Backgrounds and trends of the overtime culture

Overtime work serves companies well in terms of being provided more human capital for the same costs and therefore staying competitive on the rapidly developing and turbulently changing Chinese market.<sup>44</sup> It has been especially so during the last ten years when extensive work hours became a norm, an unwritten rule (潜规则 *qiánguīzé*) that expects workers to leave their working places hours later than as written, despite what the employment contract states.<sup>45,46</sup> In contrast to workers in other professional sectors such as blue-collars or pink-collars, white-collar workers are usually not paid per hour of work. Therefore, it became an increasingly popular practice of employers to demand extra unpaid hours of work from their white-collar employees.<sup>47</sup> Due to the spread of mandatory social and medical insurance, employers are facing increasingly higher human capital costs<sup>48</sup>, which effect the number of jobs available on the job market as well as the volume of work that every employee needs to complete. As a result, fierce competition between both companies and individuals<sup>49</sup> only fuels these extensively long working hours. According to the Chinese law, overtime work refers to all work that exceeds the daily working time of eight hours and overtime work should not be longer than three hours a day or more than 36 hours a

---

<sup>44</sup> Ren Fangfang, *Current Situation and Analysis*..., p. 146.

<sup>45</sup> Li Dongjie, *Overtime Culture is Becoming*..., p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Xia Yi, "Overtime" and "Health" ..., p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Lou Na, *Study on Overtime*..., p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> Wang Rengui, 'Quanmian kandai laodongli chengben shangsheng' [Comprehensive View on Raising Labour Costs], *Liaowang*, 2016, Vol. 50, p. 50.

<sup>49</sup> Gao Jie, *Reflection on the Problematics*..., p. 96.

month.<sup>50</sup> However, similar to the working time stated in employment contracts, this government regulation does not correspond to the practice.<sup>51</sup>

The cause of this situation is very low fines to employers who would violate this regulation. Firstly, for extension of workers' working hours, a company only gets a warning from the Labour and Social Security Administration and is required to rectify the working hours and to pay a fine of 100 to 500 RMB per worker (between 12 and 60 €). In comparison with the profits the company gains through overtime work, a few hundred yuan fine is but a drop in the ocean. This policy is therefore not proving itself effective, as it does not change anything about the employers' demands for long working hours.<sup>52</sup>

It is since approximately 2006 when the Chinese public and academia started to refer to long working hours as an overtime culture. The rise of the overtime culture is to be explained by the increased need of employers to justify the extortionate working hours. The term has emerged at the same time as the term "mattress culture" (床垫文化 *chuángdiàn wénhuà*), which is unique to the corporate culture of the networking and telecommunications company Huawei. Use of mattresses by developers in Huawei, however, already dated back to the year 1988 when the company was established. Huawei explains that "mattress culture" is a symbol of Huawei's spirit, implying that their employees strive to provide the maximum of their skills and intelligence.<sup>53</sup> However, it was only after the tragic death of a merely 25-year-old software developer from Huawei's Shenzhen's branch that the practice of providing a mattress to all developers in order to maximise their time at work-desks got infamously known to the wider audience.<sup>54</sup> No other Chinese enterprises got known for applying the very same model of mattress culture, however cases of not only IT developers but also workers from other industries spending their nights sleeping on their office desks, camp beds or couches are a commonplace practice in the Chinese megacities.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Yu Weiyu, *Overtime as Seen from...*, p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> Lou Na, *Study on Overtime...*, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> Zhang Fengyi, 'Ezhi "jiabanwenhua" waiyi xia de liyi chongdong' [Containing the 'Overtime Culture' under the Cover of Seeking Profit], *Dangdai guangxi*, 2014, Vol. 9, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Gao Lu, *Who Will Restrain...*, p. 25.

<sup>54</sup> Ou Shi, *Reflecting on the Overtime...*, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Qi Shi, *The Higher the Position...*, p. 76.



Overtime culture was initially applied by the start-up companies (创业公司 *chuàngyè gōngsī*) in the internet industry, which is characterised by both splendid business opportunities and, since the last 20 years, rapidly growing and escalating competition.<sup>56</sup> Innovative ideas provided by great talents who put in extra-long working hours are the prevailing formula for success. It is fore mostly the young and motivated workforce that believes in profitability and the meaningfulness of long working hours, as they can ensure the growth of the company's business and, as a result, also their own salaries and provide interesting opportunities for career development.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the overtime culture got incorporated into the company cultures of not only start-ups but also already established enterprises. For instance, employees of the Chinese web services company Baidu are working very hard because their performance assessment is based on finished workload, which also forms a basis prerequisite for promotion.<sup>58</sup>

Overtime work being part of the company culture is oftentimes presented as a necessary tool for both the employee and his or her company to achieve the desired market share and personal growth. A favourable social atmosphere for long working hours originating in both families and public opinion, shaped the overtime culture into an unwritten rule that could be very difficult to reverse.<sup>59</sup> Following the example of successful Chinese start-up companies such as smartphones producer Xiaomi or taxi services company Didi Chuxing, social acceptance of overtime culture has risen dramatically.

Furthermore, IT and internet industry are being known for having the most demanding working hours and making widespread use of the so called "996 working system" (996 工作制 *996 gōngzuòzhì*) which means working usually at least from 9am to 9pm, six days a week and without any overtime pay nor subsidy for either food or transport. For instance, employees of Huawei often work till 8 or 9pm, in busy periods till 12 o'clock and to finish work at 1am is also nothing exceptional. Companies like the technology start-up Xiaomi or the Beijing based e-

---

<sup>56</sup> Liu Dongxia, Discussion on Overtime..., p. 171.

<sup>57</sup> Huang Shuomin, Why We Work Overtime..., p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Liu Dongxia, Discussion on Overtime..., p. 171.

<sup>59</sup> Gao Jie, Reflection on the Problematics..., p. 96.

commerce corporation Jingdong are also among those employing the 996 working system.<sup>60</sup>

In 2015 China's biggest job site Zhaopin conducted research on the "Quality of the 8 hours of white-collar workers' lives". Along with the development of urbanisation, white-collar workers have become a considerable part of the population in Chinese cities and the aim of Zhaopin's research was to understand the quality of life of their life. The research areas included but were not limited to job satisfaction, work environment, office equipment, health at work and also overtime work. The survey is based on 13 400 valid questionnaires filled in by white-collar users of this job search website. Zhaopin's research appears to validate the view that overtime is an inevitable part of the white-collar workers' work. Only 28,6% of workers do not need to work overtime, 24,3% of respondents do 1-3 hours of overtime every week. For an average of 3-5 hours of weekly overtime, the result was 12,2% and for 5-10 hours, 12,8% of the white-collar workers. As much as 11% of respondents state that their average weekly overtime exceeds 20 hours. This last group of white-collar workers appears to be adopting the 996 working system. Based on the research findings, there are prominent differences across the industries. Workers active in IT, communications, electronics and internet industry work on average 9,3 hours of overtime every week, followed by real estate and construction industry with 7,1 hours of overtime and traffic, transport, logistics and warehousing with 6,8 hours of extra working hours per week. Next in terms of longest overwork hours performed by white-collar workers is held by the automotive, production, processing and manufacturing industries. Furthermore, the research findings show that there are also prominent differences depending on the position held in the company. White-collar workers in positions related to the product work are doing the longest overtime hours of all, namely 8,6 hours a week on average, followed by technology and research and development positions with overtime reaching 7,6 and 7,4 hours per week respectively. Jobs in design require average of 6,9 hours of overtime weekly.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Liu Dongxia, Discussion on Overtime..., p. 171.

<sup>61</sup> Zhaopin, 'Baling 8 xiaoshi nei shengcun yali da, sancheng mei zhou jiaban chao 5 xiaoshi - 'zhilian zhaopin 2015 nian bailing 8 xiaoshi shengcun zhiliang diaoyan baogao' [8 Hours of White-collar Workers' Living Pressure, 30% of Them Work Overtime Every Week For Over 5 Hours - Zhaopin's 2015 Survey Report on the Quality of 8 Hours of White-collar

Based on Zhaopin's findings, as much as 71,4% of white-collar workers do work overtime, with intensity varying between 1 to over 20 hours of overtime weekly. These results provide confirmatory evidence that overtime culture has been indeed adopted across various industries and company positions and also shows that the number of workers following the extreme 996 working system is reaching 11%. All these results seem to be suggesting a simple question. Why is overtime culture so widely accepted?

### **Career development**

The dynamics of Chinese business environment enables workers to experience fast career growth, which does not strictly rely on seniority. In contrast to China's neighbour Japan, workers do not need to reach certain age or number of years worked to climb up on the career ladder.<sup>62</sup> One of the possible paths to a better position as well as higher remuneration is overtime work.<sup>63</sup> Staying late at work in order to finish a higher number of assigned tasks or to proactively do extra work is a conduct that is highly valued by Chinese managers. White-collar workers who leave the office among the last get respect not only from the leadership but also from the co-workers.<sup>64</sup> In 2006 the previously mentioned job site Zhaopin conducted a survey among their site users asking the reasons why employees choose to endure overtime and their responses became known as "three fears" (三怕 sān pà). The first fear is a fear of losing one's job, the second fear is being at a disadvantage in competition with colleagues, the third fear is a negative effect on their career.<sup>6566</sup>

As such, overtime ensures workers a more stable position within the team by having a deeper understanding of and involvement in the work problematics. This concurrently creates a desirable picture in the eyes of their superordinates. There are exceptions of superiors who think that a good worker can finish work within the assigned time and his or hers extensive working hours imply low work efficiency or lack of skills. This opinion however is shared by the minority of Chinese bosses and the

---

Workers' Life], *Zhaopin*, 2015: <http://article.zhaopin.com/pub/view/217834-26071.html> (accessed 10.09.2017).

<sup>62</sup> Wei Huawei, *How to Upgrade...*, p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Ou Shi, *Reflecting on the Overtime...*, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Luo Lu and Chun-Yi Chou, *Long working hours...*, p. 142.

<sup>65</sup> Gao Lu, *Who Will Restrain...*, p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> Liang Ping and Li Yan, *Analysis on the Causes...*, p. 74.

general opinion about voluntary overtime meaning loyalty to the company and diligence is prevailing.<sup>67</sup> To workers who would like to achieve a successful career, overtime therefore represents a worthy undertaking as it is mostly understood as a willingness to take an active part in both the company's and worker's own career growth.

### **Specifics of the Chinese culture**

Undoubtedly, there are concepts and impacts originating in the Chinese culture, which have a strong effect on attitudes towards work and facilitate the spread of overtime culture.

Firstly, the well-known face concept (面子 miànzǐ) that gives tone to all social interactions in China, not excluding those at a workplace. Workers are worried of losing face and being labeled as lazy or disloyal to their companies, which leads to casual acceptance of the overtime culture.<sup>68</sup> By leaving the workplace around the time when their shift should officially finish, white-collar workers would be at risk of losing their face in front of not only their superiors but also their colleagues.<sup>69</sup> Leaving the rest of the team in the lurch with unfinished work is a conduct that could cause severe harm to one's sense of face. As the research of Wang Duyu summarises, the motivations of workers to accept overtime culture as follows: "For the sake of own's face, fame, promotion and in order to pursue more wealth, Chinese workers are accepting extreme work conditions, which in some cases are leading to serious damage to their health."<sup>70</sup>

The face concept is linked to yet another face related concept, namely face time. Some Chinese workers do not put in extra hours to deal with work that needs to be finished on that day but because of the importance of proving themselves hardworking to the superiors. As a result, overtime culture to many white-collar workers means incorporating overtime as a working habit.<sup>71</sup> It's important to be seen at work, to show the face and spend face time in the company independent of whether there is work to do or not. Motivations to do so include showing diligence and a hardworking attitude to the superiors but also competition among

---

<sup>67</sup> Gao Jie, Reflection on the Problematics..., p. 96.

<sup>68</sup> Zhang Fengyi, Containing the 'Overtime Culture' ..., p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Luo Lu and Chun-Yi Chou, Long working hours..., p. 142.

<sup>70</sup> Wang Duyu, Problematics of Voluntary Overtime..., p. 297.

<sup>71</sup> Huang Shuomin, Why We Work Overtime..., p. 9.

colleagues within the department.<sup>72</sup> Workers who stay longer could ensure better connections to the superordinates and therefore are at an advantage in comparison with the workers who leave the workplace before them.

Another important factor that makes workers stay long hours at work is the official rank standard (官本位 *guānběnwèi*).<sup>73</sup> The official rank standard implies that officials or superiors should always be respected and held in high esteem. Not abiding by their wishes would lead to a weak position in the team, low feedback resulting in lower income and disharmonic relations at workplace. And harmony as a concept deeply rooted in Confucianism extends its reach across the whole of social relations, including those at workplace.<sup>74</sup> On these grounds, refusal of overtime work could strongly violate both of the above explained concepts. Out of respect for the superiors it is undesired to leave the workplace before the boss does, which further fuels the incidence of overtime culture.<sup>75</sup> Even if assigned work is finished but the superiors are still busy, white-collar workers are staying at their work desks to either work longer or find a way how spend time until the boss is ready to leave.

Another important element of the Chinese culture that is making workers voluntarily accept long working hours is the ethic of hard work (勤劳美德 *qín láo měi dé*), which sets the tone for a diligent attitude towards achievements at work and emphasises that “one needs to suffer a little in order to be successful” (吃得苦中苦，方为人上人 *chī de kǔ zhōng kǔ, fāng wéi rén shàng rén*). “Working late till night is part of the fast pace of life in Shenzhen and it easily becomes one of the essential memories of young people who come to work there.”<sup>76</sup>

One more cultural reason contributing to the prevalence of overtime culture is the fact that in China there is no tradition of a day of rest when people refrain from work activities and engage in leisure and restful activities. There is no equivalent to the Christians Sunday or the Jewish Saturday being a day of rest. The five-day working week has been implemented firstly in 1996 in pursuit of boosting domestic consumption and to help the Chinese economy by transferring money from the

---

<sup>72</sup> Yu Weiyu, *Overtime as Seen from...*, p. 38.

<sup>73</sup> Wang Duyu, *Problematics of Voluntary Overtime...*, p. 297.

<sup>74</sup> Russell and Ross, *Work-Life in China...*, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Huang Shuomin, *Why We Work Overtime...*, p. 9.

<sup>76</sup> Wang Duyu, *Problematics of Voluntary Overtime...*, p. 297.

household savings into circulation.<sup>77</sup> White-collar workers work usually five days a week but regular overtime work on Saturdays or short notice overtime scheduled for the whole weekend are not exceptional. Some companies even do not hesitate to use the following motto: “We can ensure no rest on Saturday, Sunday’s rest we cannot ensure” (周六保证不休息, 周日休息不保证 zhōuliù bǎozhèng bù xiūxi, zhōuri xiūxi bù bǎozhèng).<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding the implementation of the five-day working week, work on the weekends is an inseparable part of the 996 working system and in busy periods full working weekends are adopted by other companies as well.

### Job market conditions

One of the “three fears” leading to the acceptance of overtime culture is the fear of losing one’s job. The Chinese job market offers splendid job opportunities but there is certainly not work for everyone. The official unemployment rates in China fluctuated between 3,9 and 4,3% in the period between 2002 and 2017.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, in August 2017, official statement of the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics reported unemployment rate of less than 5%<sup>80</sup> but for years there has been widespread doubts about the authenticity of this data. As the official numbers do not reflect any economic ups and downs and have remained incredibly stable for many years, various alternative studies started to emerge and offer different estimates. An alternative to the official data represents a working paper of the American National Bureau of Economic Research that claims that the real unemployment rate averaged 10,9% between 2002 and 2009. Researchers Feng Shuaizhang of the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and Robert Moffitt and Hu Yingyao of Johns Hopkins University used data from an official urban household

<sup>77</sup> Elisabeth Croll, *China's new consumers : social development and domestic demand*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 67.

<sup>78</sup> Yi Ming, *The Joys and Sorrows...*, p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> Trading Economics, ‘China Underemployment Rate’, *Trading Economics*, 2017: <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/unemployment-rate> (accessed 17.09.2017).

<sup>80</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China ‘Guojia tongjiju xinwen fayaren jiu 2017 nian 8 yuefen guomin jingji yunxing qingkuang da jizhe wen’ [A Spokesman of the National Bureau of Statistics Speaking To Reporters in 2017 August about the Operations of the National Economy], *National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China*, 14.09.2017: [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/sjjd/201709/t20170914\\_1534101.html](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/sjjd/201709/t20170914_1534101.html) (accessed 18.09.2017).

survey to construct an alternative index. Their research findings are twice as high as the never-changing official unemployment rate.<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, recent data about unemployment from a reliable source are not available but there is an undoubtable fear of white-collar workers for losing their jobs, which is documented by the research of independent entities such as the previously mentioned research of the job site Zhaopin identifying the three fears. Another factor that adds to job insecurity is the fact that the labour contracts could be terminated at any time.<sup>82</sup> It is therefore a very legitimate fear that employees who do not obey company's overtime requirements could be immediately dismissed and become one of the indefinite number of jobseekers.

As a matter of fact, it is overtime culture itself that endangers the amount of positions available on the job market. Researchers Lai Desheng, Meng Dahu and Wang Qi from the School of Economics and Business Administration of the Beijing Normal University argue that there are national empirical studies showing that overwork in China has caused the reduction of many job opportunities, resulting in unemployment of people with enough abilities to work.<sup>83</sup> In light of all these facts, shrinking work opportunities and extensive working hours are putting white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities under enormous pressure and do not provide them much choice whether or not to accept the overtime culture.

### **Low work effectivity**

China is known not only for its astonishing economic growth but also for a low labour effectivity, which is confirmed by several independent studies. Based on the analysis of Ernst & Young, China's labour productivity is still far behind the productivity performance of developed economies. After more than three decades of economic reforms, China's labour productivity is still behind countries such as Thailand, Colombia, and Morocco.<sup>84</sup> And as time spent at the workplace is concerned, based

---

<sup>81</sup> Belsie Laurent, 'Official Statistics Understate Chinese Unemployment Rate', *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2015: <http://www.nber.org/digest/oct15/w21460.html> (accessed 17.09.2017).

<sup>82</sup> Gao Jie, *Reflection on the Problematics...*, p. 96.

<sup>83</sup> Lai, Meng and Wang, *Specifics of Labourers...*, p. 37.

<sup>84</sup> Ernst & Young, 'China's productivity imperative', *Ernst & Young*, 2012: [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/China\\_productivity\\_imperative\\_en/\\$FILE/China-Productivity-Imperative\\_en.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/China_productivity_imperative_en/$FILE/China-Productivity-Imperative_en.pdf) (accessed 18.09.2017).

on the OECD data from 2011, the Chinese ranked fourth in the world in terms of the longest time spent at work, after Mexico, Japan and South Korea.<sup>85</sup> Reasons for low work effectivity are manifold. Too little time for rest, too much time spent in meetings and not much separation between personal and professional life belong to the most prominent ones.

Without a doubt, the large volume of work and very little or scarcely any time for rest, in the long run translates into low work effectivity. Adopting all kinds of overtime culture including the demanding 996 working system results in extreme pressure being put on many Chinese workers who are practically required to be highly efficient for extensively long working hours and do not get enough time to rest. Workers who adopt the overtime culture in the form of 996 working system can only rest one day a week, do not enjoy any annual holiday leaves and must be available on call also during the important holidays such as Chinese New Year, National holiday in October, often being referred to as Golden Week and other nationwide holidays.<sup>86</sup> These holidays are predominantly used by white-collar workers to visit their families in home provinces outside of the first-tier cities, to travel within China, or - as is becoming increasingly popular - to travel to international destinations. Overall, the overtime culture endangers workers' both everyday and annual time to rest, which results in low work effectivity.

An important aspect of the working environment in China is indeed the meetings that form part of the everyday work schedule. As such, these plentiful meetings and time spent in them has severe effect on work productivity and therefore prolongs the time spent at workplace. Based on the previously mentioned survey on the "Quality of the 8 hours of white-collar workers' lives" conducted in 2015 by the Chinese job site Zhaopin, 70% of respondents spend under one hour in meetings daily, however 18,1% of white-collar workers spend between 1 and 3 hours per day and 4,9% of workers spend 3 to 5 hours per day in meetings. And there is an incredible number of 5,2% of white-collar workers who in fact spend almost all working days in meetings.<sup>87</sup>

This survey only accentuates the realisation of the problematics of long meetings and their effect on, firstly, lower productivity and, consequently, the spread of overtime work. The fact that 70% of workers

---

<sup>85</sup> Mishra and Smyth, *Work Hours in Chinese...*, p. 58.

<sup>86</sup> Shi Ji, *Can You Stand the...*, p. 42.

<sup>87</sup> Zhaopin, *8 Hours of White-collar...*, (accessed 10.09.2017).



are spending under one hour and the remaining 30% of white-collar workers are spending between 1 and an undefined number of hours, in some cases even reaching a full working day, time in meetings does certainly have a negative effect on the delivery of everyday tasks. As a result, white-collar workers do not have much choice but to put in some extra hours. Therefore, acceptance of overtime culture becomes an inevitable solution for finishing assigned work.

Another threat to work effectivity is the social media platform WeChat, which is widely used in both private and professional spheres of life. There are indisputable benefits of WeChat connecting employees of a company together and providing them a convenient platform to discuss work-related topics in either company WeChat groups or individually. Given this precondition of the new era of workplace connectivity through portable wireless technologies<sup>88</sup>, white-collar workers are available to discuss work-related as well as personal issues at any time of the day. As well as benefits, this connectivity has problems. The discussion of work-related matters threatens the free time of workers who are expected to be constantly available on WeChat, including in the evenings, on weekends or even on vacations.<sup>89</sup> The discussion of personal matters during work time has a negative impact on work efficiency. As much as work-related issues penetrate into private life and lead to a work-life conflict<sup>90</sup>, personal matters are entering the professional sphere of life. The fact that WeChat is used as a company communication channel makes the same platform very much available at all times in addition to being a personal instant messaging platform. Given the extensively long working hours of white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities, spending time on WeChat not only on work-related matters, is a common occurrence. Using the same social media platform of WeChat not only to communicate with colleagues and customers but also to chat with family and friends does have an affect on work effectivity. As a result, work tasks that could be done in an eight hours shift need to be handled in overtime hours.

---

<sup>88</sup> F. K. Schlosser, 'So, how do people really use their handheld devices? An interactive study of wireless technology use', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 2002, Vol. 23, No. 4, p. 401.

<sup>89</sup> Liu Shengming, Zhang Ye, Chen Lifan, Guo Li and Yu Donglu, 'Enterprise WeChat Groups: Their Effect on Work-Life Conflict and Life-Work Enhancement', *Frontiers of Business Research in China*, 2015, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 517.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p. 527.

### **Pressure in the first-tier and workplace as an ideal environment for social interactions**

For young white-collar workers, the Chinese megacities offer not only exciting work opportunities but also challenges in terms of survival pressure and limited social interactions. The first-tier cities Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen are fast developing business centres that draw talent from all other Chinese provinces. Continuous media reports about successful stories of people who made their career in the megacities help to keep this trend alive.<sup>91</sup> However, first-tier cities are not only known for good career development but in the same way also for survival pressure. The rising material standard of living and consumption in the big cities stimulates the increasingly higher material needs that workers choose to satisfy with overtime work in order to get higher remuneration.<sup>92</sup> This desire of workers to work overtime in order to earn better incomes is in some cases linked to getting an overtime pay. However, more frequently overtime is used as a tool for faster promotion and therefore higher pay. According to the Chinese law, overtime work should be rewarded with 150% of the regular wage on work days, with 200% on weekends and with 300% of regular wage if worked during public holidays.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, this regulation is oftentimes not being obeyed.<sup>94</sup> Based on an online survey conducted by the job site China HRD in 2006, 80% of workers work overtime but only 45% of them are getting any kind of subsidy.<sup>95</sup> This subsidy could be pecuniary, sometimes it could be a work benefit in the form of “overtime dinner” (加班菜 jiābāncài) or a subsidy for transport expenses in times when overtime finishes so late that the public transport does not operate anymore.

On one hand, there is the desire for a higher wage that makes workers accept the overtime culture, on the other, there is the requirement to meet the living conditions of a big city. Workers who are not citizens of the city where they work are facing a strong exposure to the above mentioned survival pressure. Many workers live far from the city centre either on their own but mostly in shared flats or even rooms. Provided that opportunity to work longer and make the time in the big city more worthwhile by overtime work, many workers, especially young white-

---

<sup>91</sup> Huang Shuomin, *Why We Work Overtime...*, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> Gao Jie, *Reflection on the Problematics...*, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> Yi Shan, *Face to Face with...*, p. 39.

<sup>94</sup> Zeng, Lu and Sa'ad, *Working time in transition...*, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> Lou Na, *Study on Overtime...*, p. 72.

collar workers, prefer to choose to put in some extra hours.<sup>96</sup> The overtime culture could therefore represent a welcomed fast track to a better career and hereby also to better life conditions.

Yet another factor leading to acceptance of the overtime culture, which is linked to the living conditions, is the fact that overtime culture provides young people a good social interaction platform. When working in a megacity that represents a foreign environment with very few if any social contacts, young people or early career professionals, especially those without family, welcome the opportunity to spend more time with their peers working on the development of their career. The workplace turns out to be an important place for social interactions where white-collar workers do not only work but also spend time on chats, dinners or even to play games with others. The progressive start-up companies are supporting this socializing trend at the workplace and therefore equip their offices with game consoles, sofa's and billiard tables. In doing so, companies create a favourable working environment where young people like to work and also play much longer than the usual eight hours.<sup>97</sup> The trend of the importance of providing a satisfactory office space appears to be confirmed also by the previously mentioned survey conducted by the job site Zhaopin. As many as 94,4% of workers born after 1990 expressed that when it comes to work decisions, work environment is either very important or important to them. The same applied to 64,1% of people born after 1980, 75,4% of white-collar workers born after 1970 and only to 53,3% of workers born after 1960.<sup>98</sup> The workers who take part in overtime culture are often being referred to as "overtimers" (加班族 *jiābānzú*) and only 30% of the young overtimers do feel a lack of happiness.<sup>99</sup> The overtime culture does therefore seem to play a certain role also as a factor in the well-being of fore mostly the young white-collar workers in the Chinese megacities.

## Conclusion

The reasons and motivations of white-collar workers to work overtime are manifold. Most of them could be considered as mainly negative impacts on working time and therefore also work-life balance of

---

<sup>96</sup> Huang Shuomin, *Why We Work Overtime...*, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>98</sup> Zhaopin, *8 Hours of White-collar...*, (accessed 10.09.2017).

<sup>99</sup> Lin Pingshan, *Overtime: It Is Still...*, p. 14.

the white-collar workers. These reasons include career development, aspects of the Chinese culture, job market conditions and the survival pressure in the megacities. Fast or at least satisfactory career development requires a larger input of time. The need to show respect to superiors and the concept of preserving one's face also inevitably cause overtime. Fierce competition in the rapidly developing Chinese market does not give either companies or individuals much of a choice to slow down. The same applies to the the life conditions in the first-tier cities. Prices of the goods and services as well as of the housing are on a stable increase and to afford a decent living in either Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou or Shenzhen is indeed very expensive. Low work efficiency could be however considered as an unnecessary reason to work overtime and could be dealt with by appropriate time management strategies on the side of the superiors and also by the employees themselves.

Nevertheless, there seems to be also a positive aspect of overtime work. The overtime culture plays an important role in the life of white-collar workers, especially young white-collar workers, as it provides them a place for social interactions in the Chinese megacities. There is an undeniable desire amongst employers to create a favourable environment for young talents in order to translate their input into higher company profits. This seems to be mutually beneficial as young professionals do enjoy such working conditions. In the early stages of their career when they are eager to gain more work experience, take part in projects that matter and share their ideas and time with likeminded people. And that is precisely what some, fore mostly start-up, companies are offering them. A dynamic workplace that is not only an office space but also an entertainment and social interactions space, where workers can find both career development and fun. Under these conditions, the overtime culture gets easily and willingly accepted and appears to be a win-win situation for companies, as well as for the white-collar workers.

In light of the analysis of reasons and motivations of workers to accept the long working hours, the overtime culture does appear to be a double-edged sword. Whilst the overtime culture undoubtedly threatens any semblance of work-life balance, for many young white-collar workers it also represents a welcomed way of spending their time in lonely megacities and can therefore be regarded positively as well.

## Political and Strategic Dimensions of the Relations between the EU and South Korea

### Abstract

The political and strategic dimensions of the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea fall within the category of a more complex interaction namely economic and cultural. In this perspective, economic relations seem to prevail. However, the political and strategic dimension is growing very quickly, paradoxically also due to the fast-advancing economic cooperation, especially since the 2010 Free Trade Agreement (FTA). From that point forward, both parties have considered each other strategic partners. In the current situation in the East Asia: the growing military power of China, the possible changes in political alliances and security issues on the Korean Peninsula and Japan's departure from a pacifist stance, the political and strategic dimension of the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea are likely to gain in significance. Although the interaction between Europe and Korea boasts a long history, strict EU-Korea relations have been varied. Bilateral relations between Korea and some EU member states are at a different level of advancement than overall EU-Korea interactions. Despite the cultural differences and often competing interests and threats, relations between the EU and Korea are still important for both sides.

**Key words:** Korea, European Union, political cooperation, bilateral agreements, political summits

### The origins of political relations

The early encounters between the Europeans and Koreans go back to the 19th century. The then state of Choson was known as “the hermit kingdom” due to its isolationist approach, which strongly curbed the influence of foreign powers<sup>1</sup>. The Korean people were very reluctant to establish political and cultural relations with the Western world, a telling example of which was the murder of the French missionary, Father Pierre-Henri Dorie in 1866. France retaliated by sending in its armada

---

\* Department of Political Science, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland (lbuczek@kul.pl)

<sup>1</sup> The exception was China, which had very strong influence to Korea.

commanded by Admiral Pierre-Gustave Roze<sup>2</sup>. Ultimately, the French forces withdrew after the lost battle on Ganghwado Island<sup>3</sup>. The isolationism of Choson lasted until 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan<sup>4</sup>.

At the Cairo Conference in 1943, in the heat of the Second World War, the world powers decided that some of the Asiatic nations (including Korea) would regain independence<sup>5</sup>. Koreans had long been waiting for this to materialise, yet no later than in 1945, during the Moscow Conference, further division of the Korean Peninsula was decreed<sup>6</sup>. It became evident that the Soviet Union and the United States were on the way to making the Korean Peninsula a theatre of conflict revolving around spheres of interests. Korea was artificially divided into two states. Since then the Republic of Korea (RoK) has established diplomatic relations with over 170 states, including 47 European states and the Holy See<sup>7</sup>. In contrast, North Korea (DPRK) has established diplomatic relations with only 38 European states; besides Europe, the diplomatic representatives of the DPRK reside in 25 other countries<sup>8</sup>.

It seems that the RoK is anything but the most important partner for the EU and vice-versa. The RoK looks much more towards the powers involved politically in the peninsula, i.e. China, the USA, Japan and Russia, the latter to an increasingly lesser extent. However, it should be

---

<sup>2</sup> *French Campaign against Korea, 1866*. (2013, November 16). New World Encyclopedia. Retrieved 11:06, November 23, 2016 from [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=French\\_Campaign\\_against\\_Korea\\_1866&oldid=976158](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=French_Campaign_against_Korea_1866&oldid=976158).

<sup>3</sup> 오홍국, 大院君의 國防力 強化政策 研究, 연세대학교 교육대학원 2003, p. 6-8, 49.

<sup>4</sup> See also. *Treaty of Annexation* (August 22, 1910), East Asian Studies Documents, USC-UCLA Joint East Asian Studies Center.

<sup>5</sup> *Cairo Declaration of December 1, 1943* (China, United Kingdom, United States) [in:] Leland M. Goodrich, *Korea. A study of U. S. policy in the United Nations*, New York 1956, p. 214.

<sup>6</sup> L. M. Goodrich, *Korea. A Study of U. S. Policy in the United Nations*. Council on Foreign Relations. 58 East 68th Street, New York 1956, p. 214.

<sup>7</sup> L. Buczek, *Polityczne, gospodarcze i kulturowe relacje Unii Europejskiej i Republiki Korei*, „Studia Polityczne” 45(2017), no 1, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> [http://everything2.com/index.pl?node\\_id=1767763](http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1767763); Open Source Center Report, North Korea 2010 Overseas Diplomatic Directory for Europe and Central Asia, UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO, 29 XII 2010.

stressed that the EU-RoK relations are specific and are developing slowly, yet steadily<sup>9</sup>.

The question to be addressed at this point is what kindled the EU's interest in the RoK. This case is far from unique (??). Initially, the small, war-torn and economically underdeveloped Korean state began to gain in importance on the international arena and, at some point, it earned the status of a so-called "Asian Tiger"<sup>10</sup> due to its economic advancement. As early as in the 1960s, Korea started to work its way up as a political, military and economic player. The economic progress of the country falls beyond the subject of this article, so it will not be covered extensively. The RoK set out to strengthen its political position through various initiatives, including regional integration projects. The third Korean president, Park Chung Hee (1963-1979), masterminded the Asia and Pacific Council (ASPAC), an organisation bringing together representatives of independent Asian states. The fifth president, Chun Doo-hwan (1981-1988), proposed the establishment of the Pacific Summit, which was seen as a political forum for the major political and economic players of the region, convening on a fixed and regular basis<sup>11</sup>. Also, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) initiative established in 1989 must not be overlooked. One of its major advocates was the RoK. The third APEC meeting was held in Seoul in 1991 during the term of President Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993). The most noteworthy achievement of the meeting was the adoption of the Seoul Declaration<sup>12</sup> on the economic cooperation framework binding the state parties. Moreover, the RoK declared its readiness to join the free trade zone within the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC) endorsed by the prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, in 1990<sup>13</sup>. In 1993 the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) was launched, a regional forum for

---

<sup>9</sup> Sung-Won Yoon, *Is FTA for 'Up Closer and Personal'? Reflections on Media and Public Views on the EU in Korea*, "Baltic Journal of European Studies" 3(2015), no 3, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Asian Tigers is the term referring to group of fast developing high-growth economies: first Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, cf.: P. Morris, *Asia's Four Little Tigers: a comparison of the role of education in their development*, „Comparative Education" 32(1) 1996, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> D. Hundt, J. Kim, *Competing Notions of Regionalism in South Korean Politics*, "Japanese Journal of Political Science" 12 (2011), no 2, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> *Third Apec Ministerial Meeting Seoul*, Korea 12-14 November 1991 Joint Statement, <http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Annual-Ministerial-Meetings.aspx?year=1991> [access 18-10-2016].

<sup>13</sup> D. Hundt, J. Kim, op. cit., p. 256.

dialogue on security matters<sup>14</sup>. The RoK joined this organisation as well as joining the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) – an NGO committed to enhancing security in the Asia-Pacific region through seeking dialogue and consensus among the members<sup>15</sup>.

The interaction between the RoK and Europe originally revolved around trade, which started to burgeon in the 1960s along with the first South Korean products arriving in the European Economic Community<sup>16</sup>. The RoK established its permanent representation to the EEC in 1969<sup>17</sup>. At that time, Korean goods were still considered low quality in Europe and the Korean state as impoverished and struggling with reconstruction after the Korean War. Along with the increase in the volume of sales, the first disputes arose. Between 1985 and 1990, the EEC and RoK were involved in 18 anti-dumping cases<sup>18</sup>. As a result, the economic exchange between the two partners and the number of Korean investment projects in Europe dwindled significantly<sup>19</sup>.

### **The legal grounds for mutual cooperation**

The legal framework for mutual relations on the political, economic, and cultural levels has rested on several major bilateral and multilateral agreements and a number of industry-specific agreements covering some specialised pools of subjects.

The first document on mutual cooperation was the EU-Korea Strategy Paper, drawn up, as Sung-Hoon Park underlined, in 1993<sup>20</sup>. This initiative made Korea stand out among other Asian countries that entered into similar arrangements with the European Community later<sup>21</sup>. Another

---

<sup>14</sup> W. Katia, J. Huang, *East Asian Security Revisited in Light of the European Experience*, “Issues & Studies” no 46(1) 2010, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> B. Bridges, *Western Europe and North Korea: New opening and old problems*, “East Asia”, 20 (2003), no 3, p. 87-88.

<sup>17</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, Sung-Won Yoon, *EU perceptions through the FTA lens: main results of interviews among the Korean “elites”*, “Asia Europe Journal” 8 (2010), no 2, p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> Ch.M. Dent, *New Interdependencies in Korea-EU Trade Relations*, “Journal of Contemporary Asia” 28 (1998) no 3, p. 372.

<sup>19</sup> Doo Jin Kim, *EU Trade Protectionism and Korean Overseas Investment: The Case of Asian Globalizing MNCs*, “The Korean Journal of International Relations” 43 (2003) no 5, p. 130.

<sup>20</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>21</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, Heungchong Kim, *Asia Strategy of the European Union and Asia-EU Economic Relations*:



important step was the signature of the Towards a New Asia Strategy in 1994. This emphasised the importance of and Europe's interest in Asia (including Korea<sup>22</sup>). The document recognised the fact that the region of Asia would be of strategic importance and identified four essential objectives: 1) to strengthen the Union's economic presence in Asia, 2) to contribute to stability in Asia by promoting international co-operation and understanding, 3) to promote the economic development of the less prosperous countries and regions in Asia and 4) to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Asia.

To achieve these goals, the EU set itself the following priorities in Asia: "To continue to strengthen the Union's bilateral relations with individual countries and regions in Asia; to raise the profile of Europe in Asia; to support efforts by Asian countries to cooperate at the regional and subregional levels such as the ASEAN Regional Forum with a view to enhancing peace and security in the region and generally to strengthen the Union's relations with regional groups such as ASEAN or SAARC; to associate Asian countries in the management of international affairs and in particular to encourage them to play a more active role in multilateral actions with a view to maintaining international peace and security; to strengthen links with Asian countries in multilateral fora and further encourage Asian participation in multilateral organisations; to pursue all actions necessary to ensure open markets and a non-discriminatory business environment conducive to an expansion of Euro-Asian trade and investments; to integrate into the open, market-based world trading system those Asian countries which are moving from state controls to market-oriented economies; to contribute to sustainable development and to poverty alleviation in the least prosperous countries of Asia<sup>23</sup>."

In this ground-breaking document, both Koreas are mentioned repeatedly. In the second part addressing the instruments of foreign policy and bilateral relations, it notes that the RoK requested formalising bilateral relations. The DPRK is already mentioned in the introduction as

---

Basic Concepts and New Developments, (scientific conference materials: "The EU-Asia Relations: Building Multilateralism?", Hong-Kong 2005), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> EU External Action Service,

[http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vietnam/eu\\_vietnam/tech\\_financial\\_cooperation/regional\\_cooperation/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vietnam/eu_vietnam/tech_financial_cooperation/regional_cooperation/index_en.htm).

<sup>23</sup> *Towards a new Asia strategy*. (1994) Communication from the Commission to the Council. COM (94) 314 final, 13 July 1994. [EU Commission - COM Document], p. 4.

one of the fragile states, posing safety problems mainly through the possession and development of a nuclear capability. In the framework of multilateral contacts, the EU cooperates with Korea (like with Japan) within the framework of the OECD<sup>24</sup>.

The first bilateral agreement that regulated political cooperation in a comprehensive manner was the Framework Agreement of 1996 (which became effective on 1 April 2001), and was later amended by the revised Framework Agreement drawn up in 2009<sup>25</sup>. This document highlighted such cooperation aims as: the basis and scope of mutual cooperation, the strengthening of political dialogue, cooperation in regional and international organisations and the strengthening of cooperation in the area of sustainable development, which was particularly important for the EU<sup>26</sup>.

Political relations were even intensified and elevated to the rank of “strategic partnership<sup>27</sup>” after negotiating a new Framework Agreement signed on 10 May 2010 (which became effective on 1 June 2010<sup>28</sup>). Its Article 43 reads that the Agreement updates and replaces that of 28 October 1996. The main priorities of cooperation are set out in Article 2: to strengthen partnership and develop joint political projects; to conduct regular political dialogue; to promote people-to-people contacts and understanding. The priorities of the political dialogue are set out in Title II of the agreement. They are, among others: to strengthen democracy, arms control, peaceful solutions to conflicts, consultations on important international issues, cooperation through consultation at the top official level, sectoral negotiations, exchange of delegations between the European Parliament and the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. Other important areas addressed in the agreement are: countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Article 4), combating illicit transfer and circulation of arms and organised crime (Article 5), combating terrorism (Article 7), cooperation in regional and international organisations (Article 8), customs (Article 13), competition policy (Article 14), science and technology (Article 16), energy, (Article 17),

---

<sup>24</sup> Commission Of The European Communities, *Toward a New Asia Strategy*, com (94) 314, Brussels 1994, p. 3-6.

<sup>25</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> EU-South Korea Framework Agreement, Luxembourg, October 28, 1996 r. European External Action Service online.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m\\_30\\_60\\_70](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70).

<sup>28</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/south-korea/>.

transport (Articles 18 and 19), health (Article 21), environment and natural resources (Article 23)<sup>29</sup>.

No less important strategically was the EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement of 15 October 2009, the greatest achievement of the parties with regard to economic cooperation. Its strategic significance was reflected in the fact that the South Korean authorities had been seeking to strengthen the security and stability in the region and the Korean Peninsula for a number of years via a series of FTAs with various countries<sup>30</sup>. The entry into force of the EU-Korea FTA also facilitated the parties' cooperation on the key global policy issues, such as the environmental policy and protection of human rights<sup>31</sup>.

Another strategically pivotal instrument is the 2014 Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea establishing a framework for the participation of the Republic of Korea in European Union crisis management operations<sup>32</sup>. This agreement regulates the participation of the RoK in EU-led operations under the so-called Petersberg tasks. The document is composed of four sections: I – general provisions, including the decisions on the participation, legal framework and status of the personnel of Korean armed forces during foreign missions and classified information; II – civilian operations (Articles 5-8); III – military missions (Articles 9-12), IV – final provisions (dispute resolution, entry into force, term and termination of the agreement).

### **The political and strategic dimensions of EU-ROK relations**

July 1963 saw the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the European Community (EC) and the RoK<sup>33</sup>. As mentioned earlier, South Korea set up its permanent representation to the EEC in

---

<sup>29</sup> *Framework Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, on the one part, and the Republic of Korea, on the other part*, May 10, 2010 („Official Journal” L 020, 23/01/2013 P. 0002 - 0024).

<sup>30</sup> W. Moon, *Whither East Asian economic integration? Korea's regionalization cum globalization strategy*, „Asia Europe Journal” 9 (2011), no. 1, p. 38-39.

<sup>31</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>32</sup> *Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea establishing a framework for the participation of the Republic of Korea in European Union crisis management operations*, „Official Journal of the Europe-an Union”, L 166, vol 57, 5 June 2014.

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m\\_30\\_60\\_70](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70) and Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 177.

1969. The European partner did this no earlier than January 1989<sup>34</sup>. This shows that Korean resolve to do so was greater than that of the EC<sup>35</sup>.

In 1994, the ASEM organisation was created as a less formal forum of political dialogue between Europe and Asia. Over time, the ASEM has grown to become an organisation exerting more and more influence on the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the two regions by attracting politicians, economists and experts in various fields. Some are eager to perceive it as a present-day Silk Road linking Europe and Asia<sup>36</sup>. The EU works with Korea in this organisation through multilateral relations. The first of twelve<sup>37</sup> ASEM summit meetings held so far was organised in Bangkok in March 1996<sup>38</sup>. From the Korean perspective, the 2000 summit meeting in Seoul was the most high-ranking. Its catchphrase read, “Partnership for stability and prosperity in the new millennium”<sup>39</sup>.

The EU and Korea also work together within the G20 group<sup>40</sup> and often take common positions<sup>41</sup>. As the organiser of the G20 summit in Seoul in 2010, South Korea heavily contributed to the development of the global financial security network through reform of the International Monetary Fund<sup>42</sup>. The Seoul Development Consensus signed at the summit stimulated a common policy of economic development and replaced the existing Washington Consensus<sup>43</sup>.

---

<sup>34</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>35</sup> Later the European Union, since 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Que Anh Dang, ASEM – the modern Silk Road: travelling ideas for education reforms and partnerships between Asia and Europe, “Comparative Education” 49(2013), p. 107.

<sup>37</sup> 1-Bangkok, 2-London, 3-Seoul, 4-Copenhagen, 5-Hanoi, 6-Helsinki, 7-Beijing, 8-Brussels, 9-Vientiane, 10-Milan and 11-Ulaanbaatar, see more at: <http://www.aseminfoboard.org/>.

<sup>38</sup> Ch. M. Dent, op. cit., p. 371.

<sup>39</sup> Ho Thi Thu Hoai, Heda Hansenova, *Globalisation of Trade and Transportation Between the ASEAN+3 Countries and the European Union*, “Romanian Journal of European Affairs”(2006)6, no 2, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> The organisation was founded in 1999. The members are informally most developed countries of the world. A member of the G 20 is also the EU, although the 3 richest member states sending there their own separate delegations.

<sup>41</sup> SERI Quarterly, *EU Ambassador Tomasz Kozłowski on the Korea-EU FTA and the Economic Outlook*, Seoul 2012, p. 73

<sup>42</sup> W. Moon, *Whither East Asian economic integration? Korea’s regionalization cum globalization strategy*, “Asia Europe Journal” 9 (2011), no. 1, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, *EU–Korea relations in a changing world project: main results and recommendations*, “Asia Europe Journal” 12 (2014), no 3, p. 240.

Both the EU and the RoK face similar challenges in the field of energy security. It is pointless to compare the energy policy of a state and an international organisation, but if the EU is heavily dependent on Russian gas<sup>44</sup>, according to the statistics, South Korea imports up to 96.5% of energy fuels from abroad<sup>45</sup>, including gas and other raw materials from Russia<sup>46</sup>. The shortage of energy-generation resources also troubles the DPRK, since its nuclear reactors are used mainly for military purposes. To reverse this situation and, at the same time, freeze the North Korean nuclear programme and supply reactors and technology for non-military purposes, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO<sup>47</sup>) was established. The EU's accession to the organisation in 1997 was a very important message for the international community<sup>48</sup>. The EU is a member of the KEDO's Executive Board and its financial contribution totals EUR 115 million<sup>49</sup>. Despite the failure to meet the goals of the KEDO, the EU clearly communicated that the Korean Peninsula was important for Europe from a strategic point of view, as demonstrated in the European Security Strategy of 2003<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, the Common Foreign and Security Policy refers to North Korea as a state posing a threat to security<sup>51</sup>. Since 2004, i.e. the biggest EU enlargement so far, the EU's policy towards the DPRK has been focusing mainly on disarmament and regional stabilisation<sup>52</sup>.

With regard to security on the Korean peninsula, the EU has been endorsing individual South Korean policies towards its "northern neighbour." This was the case with "the sunshine policy" of Kim Dae

---

<sup>44</sup> M. Nowacki, *Prawne aspekty bezpieczeństwa energetycznego w UE*, Warszawa 2010, p. 178.

<sup>45</sup> J. Kim, *The Formulation of Korea's Resource Policy: Resource Diplomacy, Public-Private Consortium and International Agreements*, "Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy" 9 (2014), no 1, p. 290.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 290 and p. 312.

<sup>47</sup> KEDO - Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In the framework of the KEDO, North Korea - in exchange for giving up the development of its nuclear programme - would receive two modern LWR (light water reactors).

<sup>48</sup> M. Lee, *The EU's Korea relationship: enlargement effects*, "Asia Europe Journal" 5 (2007), no 3, p. 376.

<sup>49</sup> H. Kim, *Inter-Korean relations and the roles of the US and of the EU*, "Asia Europe Journal" 1 (2003), no 4, p. 508.

<sup>50</sup> The European External Action Service, *EU-Asia Security Factsheet*, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Jae-Seung Lee, *The Two Faces of EU-North Korea Relations*, "The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis", Vol. 17, No. 1, 2005, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> M. Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

Jung<sup>53</sup>, “the peace and prosperity” of Lee Myung-bak, “trust building process on the Korean Peninsula” advocated by President Park Geun-hye<sup>54</sup> and the current “Berlin speech” policy of President Moon Jae-in<sup>55</sup>. The EU has also framed its own policy towards the DPRK: on the one hand, it exerts diplomatic pressure on the government in connection with nuclear weapons, on the other, it promotes humanitarian aid to the civilian population<sup>56</sup>. A good example of such initiatives was the humanitarian aid of USD 450 million in 1995 when the North Korean people were suffering from flood and famine<sup>57</sup>. Also, various inter-Korean economic initiatives, such as the Kaesong Industrial Complex, are supported by the EU. According to experts (for example Christoph Bluth), this helps stabilise the Korean Peninsula and build mutual trust<sup>58</sup>.

It is also true that the EU’s position voiced on international fora regarding sanctions imposed on the DPRK is not as firm as that of the United States, although after the recent nuclear and missile tests, the EU has tightened its position visibly towards North Korea and joined the group of states calling for sanctions to remain<sup>59</sup>. Some analysts underline that diplomatic support is the only form of assistance that the EU can offer South Korea in the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula; the military presence of European countries in this part of Asia is a thing of the past. If this should be the case, South Korea will rely on its own armed force and the military alliance with the USA; for this reason, Seoul keeps increasing its annual military budget<sup>60</sup>.

It goes without saying that, strategically speaking, the RoK faces a number of national security issues that need to be dealt with. These are

<sup>53</sup> B. Bridges, Western Europe and North Korea: New openings and old problems, „East Asia” 2003, vol. 20, Issue 3, p. 91.

<sup>54</sup> See also Moosung Lee, *The EU, regional cooperation, and the North Korean nuclear crisis*, “Asia Europe Journal”, 2016, vol. 14, Issue 4, p. 411.

<sup>55</sup> <https://piie.com/blogs/north-korea-witness-transformation/moon-jae-ins-berlin-speech>. Although this policy in current political context is fading to black and term “Berlin Speech” is no longer used.

<sup>56</sup> Por. A. Berkofsky, *EU-North Korea Relations - Engagement Course on Hold*, „International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs”, issue: 02(2008), p. 63.

<sup>57</sup> M. Lee, op. cit., p. 374.

<sup>58</sup> A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>59</sup> D. Wituszyński, *Seul: Korea Południowa i Unia Europejska uzyskują konsensus w sprawie Korei Północnej*, <http://www.polska-azja.pl/2016/02/15/seul-korea-poludniowa-i-unia-europejska-uzyskuja-konsensus-w-sprawie-korei-polnocnej/> [access 23-02-2016].

<sup>60</sup> Jae Jung Suh, *Allied to Race? The U.S.-Korea Alliance and Arms Race*, “Asian Perspective” Vol. 33, No. 4, (2009), p. 101-104.

the military threat from North Korea, the growing presence of China in the region, Japan's departure from the doctrine of pacifism; from this perspective, the EU has no strategic goals in common with the RoK, considering its economic ties with China and Japan<sup>61</sup>.

A telling example illustrating the assessment of EU-Korean relations are sociological studies conducted among the business, political, and social elite of South Korea in 2010. As pointed out by Sung-Hoon Park, the majority of business groups, academics and the mass-media expressed the opinion that relations with the EU were and would be important, and that the EU was acknowledged as a global player and international political leader<sup>62</sup>. The enhanced perception of the EU was strongly influenced by the EU-South Korea FTA of 2010 and the new Framework Agreement. Interestingly, in 2004 the same studies found that only 3.5% of the respondents saw the EU as a key partner<sup>63</sup>.

### **The EU-Republic of Korea summit as the key instrument of political cooperation**

Summit meetings between the leaders of both partners play a role as an important instrument of political cooperation. They used to be held irregularly in different locations: first in Copenhagen in 2002, next in Hanoi in 2004, in Helsinki in 2006, in Seoul in 2009, 2012, 2015 and in Brussels in 2010 and 2013<sup>64</sup>. Some of these early meetings were held as ASEMs, but from the sixth meeting on, held in Seoul on 28 March 2012, the EU and Korea have decided to maintain closer contacts through regular political meetings<sup>65</sup>.

After each meeting, a report is drawn up and published by the EU administration. The first summit meeting between President Kim Dae Jung and European Commission President Romano Prodi of 24 August

---

<sup>61</sup> R.E. Kelly, *Korea–European Union relations: beyond the FTA?*, "International Relations of the Asia-Pacific" (2012) no. 12, p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> Sung-Hoon Park, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>63</sup> Sung-Won Yoon, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m\\_30\\_60\\_70](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/countries/regional/eu/index.jsp?menu=m_30_60_70) [28-02-2016].

<sup>65</sup> A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, *op. cit.*, p. 233; 240.

2002 addressed the need for the deepening of mutual relations based on the EU-RoK Framework Agreement of April 2001<sup>66</sup>.

The key conclusions of the second meeting of 9 October 2004 between President Roh Moo-hyun and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and others<sup>67</sup> concerned support for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula; encouraging dialogue on counterterrorism; fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and emphasising the important role of cooperation under the Kyoto Protocol on climate changes<sup>68</sup>.

Many different subjects were discussed at the third meeting convened on 9 August 2006 in Helsinki, Finland. The parties were represented by President Roh Moo-hyun, Matti Vanhanen, Prime Minister of Finland in the capacity of the President of the European Council, and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso. The leaders discussed recent social and economic initiatives, including government innovation and reforms in the Republic of Korea, and shared views on the relevant European experience, including the implementation of the EU's Lisbon Strategy. The leaders emphasised their wish to see the Six-Party-Talks process resume as soon as possible<sup>69</sup>.

During the fourth summit meeting in Seoul on 29 May 2009, with President Lee Myung-bak, Czech President Václav Klaus and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso participating, the leaders expressed their satisfaction with the advancing negotiations on the FTA and the new Framework Agreement which were intended to elevate the rank of mutual relations to the strategic level<sup>70</sup>.

The main conclusion of the fifth summit meeting was the recognition of the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement and the new Framework Agreement as a real breakthrough and a powerful call to the world economies for the liberalisation of trade as a way to weather the global

---

<sup>66</sup> First Republic of Korea EU Summit, Copenhagen, September 24. 2002, Joint Communique, 12334/02 (Presse 286), p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Bernard Bot.

<sup>68</sup> Republic of Korea EU Summit, Hanoi, October 9. 2004, Joint Press Statement, (Presse 11.10.04), p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> EU-Republic of Korea Summit, Helsinki, September 9. 2006, Joint Press Statement, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Seoul, May 23. 2009, Joint Press Statement, p. 1.



financial crisis. Besides the ceremonial signature of the Free Trade Agreement, the parties agreed that the agreement would enter into force on 1 July 2011<sup>71</sup>. The summit took place on 6 October 2010 in Brussels and the participating leaders were President Lee Myung-bak, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission<sup>72</sup>.

The sixth meeting was hosted by Seoul on 28 March 2012 and marked the beginning of regular political meetings. It was attended by the same representatives as at the 2010 meeting in Brussels. The decisions of the meeting were divided into several thematic groups: bilateral relations, regional issues and global issues. Among the major discussed issues, the leaders welcomed the expansion of bilateral trade after the provisional application of the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement of 1 July 2011. The leaders also agreed to work together to strengthen global accountability on aid and development effectiveness through the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. The Republic of Korea and the EU decided to reinforce existing cooperation within the framework of the Erasmus Mundus programme, bilateral education cooperation and joint initiatives under the EU and corresponding Korean research and innovation programmes, in particular in the areas of mobility of researchers, green energy, nanotechnology, basic technology, industrial technology, and ICT<sup>73</sup>.

Another meeting of the leaders was held in Brussels on 8 November 2013. The parties were represented by: Mrs. President Park Geun-hye and, on the part of the EU, by Her-man Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. The decisions of the meeting were divided into three groups: 1) bilateral relations: working together for the greater prosperity and well-being of our people, 2) global challenges: working together for global welfare, 3) regional issues: stepping up cooperation on foreign policy and security issues<sup>74</sup>.

---

<sup>71</sup> A Wróbel, *Polityka handlowa Unii Europejskiej wobec państw Azji Wschodniej i Południowo Wschodniej*, „International Relations”, issue 2 (46)2012, p. 217.

<sup>72</sup> EU-Republic of Korea Summit, Brussels October 6. 2010 Joint Press Statement, Council of the European Union, 14547/10 presse [266], p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Joint Press Statement, Council Of The European Union Seoul, March 28. 2012, 8255/12 presse 140, p. 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Council of the European Union, European Union -Republic of Korea summit, Joint Press Statement, Brussels, 8 November 2013, 15876/13 (OR. en) presse 463, p. 1-6.

The eighth meeting took place on 15 September 2015 in Seoul. All the decisions made at the meeting were divided into three groups: 1) taking the RoK-EU strategic partnership to the next level, 2) stepping up cooperation on foreign and security policy, 3) enhancing cooperation for global welfare and safer future. The leaders expressed their satisfaction with taking mutual relations to the next level, in particular owing to the agreements that entered into force, especially the FTA, and voiced their hope for the ratification of the new Agreement establishing a framework for the participation of Korea in the EU's crisis management operations. The participating leaders were President Park Geun-hye, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council and Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, representing the President of the European Commission<sup>75</sup>.

Such summit meetings lay a sound foundation for new political initiatives and, although not always constructive, afford a good opportunity to look back at past achievements and discuss any existing issues and challenges.

## Conclusions

The political and strategic aspects do not seem of key importance in mutual relations, yet their importance is anything but negligible and increases incrementally. Some experts point to several problems shared by the international community that the meeting parties intend to solve together. They are, but not only: to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, combating arms trafficking, combating terrorism, environmental policy, and climate change<sup>76</sup>. It is worth noting that in 2008 South Korea was among the few states that adopted the so-called “Green Growth Strategy” as one of its leading domestic policies<sup>77</sup>. The EU and Korea cooperate within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Although pursuing different political and technological agendas (EU has the ETS – the Emission Trading System, Korea has the TMS – the Target Management Scheme<sup>78</sup>), both parties seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

---

<sup>75</sup> European Council, The President, Joint Press Statement, 8th Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Press release, Seoul September 15. 2015, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>77</sup> E. Zelenovskaya, *Green Growth Policy in Korea: A case study*, International Center for Climate Governance, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> A. Marx, J. Wouters, W. Moon, Y. Rhee, S. Park, op. cit., p. 239.

Undoubtedly, even though the EU is not directly involved in the Korean Peninsula (it maintains no military bases and does not participate in the Six-Party Talks<sup>79</sup>), its political prominence is increasing steadily. Closer political cooperation benefits both parties. For the RoK, it is primarily enhanced international prestige and dissemination of Korean culture in Europe; on the other hand, the EU is increasingly perceived in Asia as an important and consistent international player. From a small and insignificant state, the RoK became a member of the G20, and the EU, through closer cooperation, helps promote its status and rank as distinct from the image of the DPRK<sup>80</sup>. South Korea sees the EU partner as a major actor on the international scene by emphasising the integrity of the community, of which the EU bureaucracy is highly appreciative. The EU hopes for the RoK to lead integration processes in Asia, yet being cognisant of Asian nationalisms and regionalism and Korean national pride and sense of separateness, South Korea will most probably not engage in any form of political integration that might cause the surrender of its sovereignty<sup>81</sup>. In the future, the parties will probably strive to make the political relations tighter, not only on the declaratory level, but also on the actual level, and in order to achieve that, they will look for new areas for fulfilling their common interests.

---

<sup>79</sup> See also Willem van der Geest., *Shaping factors of EU–East Asia relations*, “Asia Europe Journal”, 4 (2006), p. 143.

<sup>80</sup> R.J. Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120-121.

## Pioneers of the Times: North Korea’s Claim to Contemporaneity circa 1989

### Abstract

This article examines the discourse and visual culture surrounding the Thirteenth World Festival of Youth and Students, which took place in Pyongyang in July 1989. I show how the visual ephemera, performances, and architectural monuments connected to the event served as a call to acknowledge the prevailing effects of the Cold War era at a historical moment widely heralded as marking a definitive thaw in Cold War tensions and the emergence of the so-called global contemporary period.

**Key words:** Cold War; Council of European National Youth Committees (CENYC); Global contemporary; Lim Su-kyung; North Korea, World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY); World Festival of Youth and Students.

### Introduction

Undeniably, Japan and Korea are major contributors to music of European provenance, even if the special cultural brotherhood promoted by the “Enlightened Rule” occurred less than 150 years ago. For a large majority of Japanese and Korean people, European music naturally belongs to their own culture. Interest for Western art and culture had remained even in the post-Meiji epochs, when European values received no more official encouragement. “As far as taste in Classical art music is concerned, it already seems true to say that there is no great difference between Europe and Japan”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in Taishō and early Shōwa epochs, when the official policy became nationalist and reluctant to Western influences, the majority of the urban population “transferred the interest for the European values at the individual level of the cultural identity”.<sup>2</sup> During this time, the Japanese “had ready access to inexpensive works of

---

\* Northwestern University.

<sup>1</sup> Watanabe Mamoru, ‘Why do the Japanese like European Music?’, *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1982, pp. 657–665.

<sup>2</sup> Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 548.

virtually all the major works of European philosophy”,<sup>3</sup> hundreds of Japanese went to study in the West and the learning of Western music became part of the average education of children. “Japan, however, had an ingredient Europe lacked. In Japan, the conflict between modern and traditional was also a conflict between alien and Japanese [...]. Accordingly, conservatism was argued not only in terms of political antiquarianism, but also in those of “national essence” and cultural purity”.<sup>4</sup> We think that this assertion needs to be treated with caution at least for two reasons. Firstly, not the whole of Europe “lacked the ingredient” that equated modernity with foreignness. Eastern European lands dealt with a similar process during their explosive Westernization, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, the confrontation between alien (modern) and autochthonous (traditional) can be seen as a “conflict” only from a conservative perception. We must admit that a Fsignificant part of those societies in transformation, especially the youth, might had been attracted by the perspectives of renewal and insertion into the international life.

The quality and the perennality of this intercultural twinning definitely demands more investigation concerning the traditional social structure and cultural behaviour of the host locations, as well as the resumption of numerous issues related to the typology of cultural encounters. Slipping through the multitude of definitions, debates and comments concerning issue of cultural contamination(s), many being nothing but primitive anti-European stereotypes, we will try to point-out a few broad-based taxonomic groups: colonization, acculturation, interculturalization, enculturation, together with their subsequent mixed forms.

### **Cultural colonization**

It is the most categorical form coming from the outside, meant to impose a new culture and aiming at radically removing the vernacular one. Generally, this kind of cultural transfer follows a military conquest. The colonizers aim not just to obtain a thoroughly informed apprentice, but to forge a completely transformed “new man”. Probably the most successful example of cultural replacement could be illustrated by the Islamic invasion of Northern Africa in the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries. At that time,

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, p. 550.

<sup>4</sup> William Gerald Beasley (ed.), *Modern Japan: Aspects of History, Literature and Society*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975, p. 18.

the former cultural diversity of several millenary civilizations was thrown out and replaced by an exemplary uniformity of religion, language, clothing, crafts, inter-human relationships, leisure, art and the list goes on.

Human history offers countless attempts at colonization, like Christian missions in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries or, closer to our time, the dictatorships of all kinds in Europe, Asia and Latin America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Remarkably, none of these dictatorships succeeded to produce a fundamental or lasting cultural change. In spite of reprisals, the conquered society always kept their ancient traditions and beliefs alive underground. Moreover, the conquerors were sooner or later forced to make concessions; to adapt new rituals or ceremonies to local specifics and to allow a more or less controlled display of the vernacular ethnicities. Attempts to shatter a tradition by force did not produce a lasting effect, at least in Europe. The cultural history of Eastern Europe is rich in instances when a harsh interdiction led mostly to the opposite result: strengthening of the persecuted tradition, whilst rather milder forms of oppression encompassed a greater power of destruction. There are even cases, not numerous yet significant, when the colonized country was the one who imposed culture, religion, or life style on its conquerors, as was the case of Ancient Greece (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC after the Romans' victory) and of Medieval China (in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD after the Mongol conquest). We meet here one more astonishing similarity between these two remote cultural centres.

### **Acculturation<sup>5</sup>**

A brief definition of this term, identifies a learning process of a foreign culture, including the adoption of values as cultural behaviour. Acculturation requires dominance – if not exclusivity – of an environment. Besides the sheer appeal of certain cultural forms, persuasion and influence techniques may also be presumed to be part of this development.

### **Enculturation**

Is defined as a conditioning process whereby people, mostly children, but also adults, achieve competence in their own culture. The process is comprised of two sources of learning: a guided education and the informal

---

<sup>5</sup> We rephrased in a concise manner the average definitions that can be found in any dictionary.

contamination drawn from surrounding contexts. Values, appropriate behaviours, taboos, aspirations etc., are both consciously and unconsciously transmitted.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the issues of informal contamination are pointed out in every discussion on enculturation, but tend to be rather disregarded in the case of acculturation processes.

Two particular combined cases also deserve mention: the first, on the border between colonization and acculturation, refers to USSR politics following post Second World War sovietisation, which aimed to radically change the social and cultural behaviour of Eastern Europe's citizens. A second, less severe one, refers to the recent awkward attempts of the European Union to impose a new value system concerning religion, family, nation, culture etc., including specific guidance for everyday life. Both these endeavours, which try to modify the fundamental core of local cultural tradition, had and still have relatively poor success, plausibly because they lack any spiritual basis, which is replaced by a set of theoretical directives. At the same time, the moulding of the "new man", either *homo sovieticus* or new EU-ropean, implies – to a large extent – enculturation as well, because it was (is) consistently backed by local institutions: political authorities, schools and media. When an important segment of the respective society takes part in its own process of change, it is problematic to consider it as just colonization or just acculturation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Inter-culturation**

Refers to a form of reciprocal cultural influence unguided and naturally developed in time. A salient example is the musical interculturalism spread by landless fiddler-bands in Eastern Europe (Moldavia, Ukraine, Southern Poland and Northern Transylvania) between the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> until the first quarter of the last century. These landless fiddlers, Gypsies and Jews (*klezmorim*) played for any ethnic community and in any kind of festivity; taking in and spreading multiple influences.<sup>8</sup> Thus, they succeeded in permeating those cultural

---

<sup>6</sup> Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Mirror for Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, New York: McGraw-Hill Inc. 2010, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> We believe that even if it might be tempting to develop a further discussion on the power spheres, education or social evolution, free from any ideological restriction, such a topic goes far beyond the framework of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Gaspar Veronica, 'Musical Culture of Minorities in the Romanian Music: Dynamics, Evolution, Role and Interaction in the Surrounding Areas' in *Musical Romania and the Neighbouring Cultures, Eastern European Studies in Musicology*, Vol. 2, Maciej Gołąb (ed.), Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, pp. 175–176.

frontiers, which until then, had been confined to their own isolated structures. The Gypsy fiddlers and the *klezmorim* were the principal pathfinders of two important waves of acculturation that occurred in the Romanian Principalities and in the Northern side of the Balkans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first, of smaller size and duration, came from Turkey and Greece and the second was the great Western European acculturation, which took place at about the same time all over the world, including Far Eastern countries as well.

An Asian example of reciprocal intercultural exchange could be found in the Yayoi period when, according to archaeological artefacts, Japan and Korea shared the same cultural realm<sup>9</sup>. The musical culture in the first decades A.D. displays more evidence about this closeness. One, so far rather unchallenged argument, relies on the wide use of musical instruments of Chinese provenance. It is well known that Chinese culture plays a decisive role for both countries. Therefore, it is no wonder that a Chinese pattern influenced the manufacturing of several musical devices too. Yet the fact that both in Japan and Korea the same kind of instruments took root, and that these instruments played analogous roles in both countries, might be seen as a reasonable hint for a similar cultural demand. For instance, in spite of several differences between the Japanese *biwa* and the Korean *bipa*, both originated from an old Chinese instrument – *pipa*, both have similar timbre, both require similar playing techniques and both were used in similar circumstanced context, namely in spiritual music. In the same way, the Japanese *koto* corresponds to the Korean *gayageum*, both originating from the Chinese *zheng* and both being employed in Court ceremonials.

During the centuries to come, the Japanese-Korean cultural brotherhood faded and split into two distinct spiritual entities. The clear-cut cultural division between high and popular culture has been kept in both cultures until present times. In Korea, high culture, comprising rituals, religion and art of the Chinese tradition, was promoted and taught in institutions under aristocratic or intellectual authorities, while the popular tradition (beliefs, superstitions, rituals, habits, music etc.) continued to survive independently in Shamanism, in spite of official discouragements. In Japan, the popular traditions concerning art, craft and music developed freely, but the spiritual sphere (beliefs, rituals,

---

<sup>9</sup> Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 4.



superstition, representation of life and death etc.) known as *Shinto* was systematized and included in an organized entity, under the direct control of the authorities. Buddhism and Shintoism have shaped an unwonted form of twinning in Japanese spirituality. Anyone can observe that in Japan the majority of the Buddhist temples (*bussatsu*) have their own *Shinto* shrines (*jinja*), which undertake the role of protection of the sacred space. They are adjacent to each other, without contamination, symbolizing the traditional two fold facets of the Japanese spirituality.

The Shamanistic rituals in Korea have preserved more than one of the *Shinto* beliefs. Additionally, one of the denominations of the Shamanic ritual is *shindo* (신도). But the “Way of Gods” influence goes even farther; one can find parts of the *shindo* rituals even in territories beyond the Urals, in several habitats. They are discernible in obscure forms of pagan spirituality in some Eastern European rural areas, as more or less concealed superstitions, particularly auxiliaries for funeral and healing rituals, not to mention a significant presence in myths and fairy tales. For instance, the Shamanistic rituals for death (*ssikkum-gut*), have similarities with some occult practices more or less tolerated by the Christian Church in Eastern Romania and Moldova. The ethno-musicologists discovered more than one similarity between Romanian melodies and the music of some *ssikkum-gut*.<sup>10</sup> The collection of *ssikkum-gut* songs is truly amazing for connoisseurs of Romanian old strata folk music, not only for their important similarities in the melodic profile, but especially for the numerous “small melodic figures, repeated exactly or sequentially”,<sup>11</sup> which play the same role in the musical structure of both cultures. The first study signaling remarkably similar tunes in astonishingly remote locations belongs to Béla Bartók (1910–1912), who built on the hypothesis of a “musical map”, different from the geographical one. “A same melodic type can be found in the Ukraine, Persia, Iraq and Romanian Principalities”.<sup>12</sup> Bartók also discovered quasi-identical tunes linking Hungarian old musical stratum to remote locations in Central Siberia. Nevertheless, such a spread pleads for a primordial cultural unity

---

<sup>10</sup> Veronica Gaspar, ‘Béla Bartók and the Romanian Musical Culture: Intercultural and Intra-Cultural Perspective’ in *Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue II*, Târgu-Mureș: “Petru Maior” University Press, 2014, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Park Mikyung, *Music and Shamanism in Korea: A Study of Selected ssikkum-gut Rituals for the Dead*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of California Press, 1985, p. 215.

<sup>12</sup> Béla Bartók, *Notes on the Folk Songs*, Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956, p. 37.

across the whole of Eurasia, rather than for a form of extended interculturalism.

We can easily admit that the cultural twinning of any kind is favoured by the pre-existence of common elements. One can often observe inexplicable correspondences in several art forms or customs, which are considerably distant from each other. These coincidences – while there is no clear reason to classify them otherwise – could be noted in various folk traditions, mostly related to basic human circumstances: death, birth, diseases etc. It should be stated that such similarities refer to the non-elaborated, orally transmitted art forms and folk traditions, assuming that the specific differences loom along with highly structured cultural forms that are stabilized by writing and transmitted through teaching and not through direct contamination.

The scholar Ury Eppstein wrote a thorough study about the acceptance/rejection of Japanese music by the Europeans. He identifies four categories of European visitors throughout the last half-millennium: 1) “those expressed by persons nothing whatsoever to do with Japanese music, 2) those who became scholars of diverse aspects of Japan but not of its music, 3) musicologists and 4) composers”.<sup>13</sup> The first two categories vehemently rejected the Japanese musical style, trying hard not to seem rude. The musicologists’ appreciation was somewhat more nuanced. The benevolent opinions came from the most recent visitors, namely the composers, who were favourable and even interested to study Japanese traditional music. European composers came in contact with Japanese music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when most important European musicians were already open to foreign cultural forms, even neglecting their own academic tradition.<sup>14</sup> We believe that interest or rejection might also be influenced by the commenters’ epoch, taking into account that cultural mentality plays a role at least as important as musical expertise does in forming such judgments.

At the same time, Ury Eppstein’s study strengthens the premises of a theory which asserts that folk music facilitates cultural compatibility;

---

<sup>13</sup> Ury Eppstein, ‘From Torture to Fascination: Changing Western Attitudes to Japanese Music’ in *Japan Forum* 19 (2), London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 191–192.

<sup>14</sup> Constantin Brăiloiu, *Widening of Musical Sensibility Facing Folk and Non-Western Music in Works II*, Emilia Comișel (ed.), Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1969, p. 236.

implying that the elaborated<sup>15</sup> cultural forms of any kind, but especially music – are less easy to be understood by foreigners, principally by those outside said musical domain. The majority of Western non-musician guests who attended official ceremonies qualified Japanese cultured music as “a strange, bizarre, fantastic, atrocious, barbaric noise”, “unqualified and wilful discord”, “something between the squeal of a pig and the wail of a lost soul” etc.<sup>16</sup> Contact with Japanese folk music however, gave rise to different testimonies: “In our culture, the music of the knights usually sounds more pleasant than that of the low people; that of the Japanese knights is unendurable for us, and that of their sailors is pleasant for us” wrote the Portuguese missionary Luis Frois at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Three centuries later, Lafcadio Hearn referred to Japanese folk music as having “a charm indisputable even for Western ears”.<sup>18</sup>

As for Japanese people’s reaction towards the Western-style of music, the appreciations are more diverse. A few European observations admitted that it is possible for there to be a corresponding displeasure for foreign music coming from the Japanese as well: “...our music [...] is regarded by them with repugnance”, “I don’t believe Japanese singing sounds to us as badly as ours does to them”.<sup>19</sup> But most of the comments refer to the inexplicable fascination of the Japanese with this new style, so distant from their own tradition. Portuguese Jesuit missionaries in late 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan noted, that they could not confirm their concern regarding a possible repulsion of the Japanese for European music. The favourable opening, a fascination with European style and musical instruments led to the conclusion that, paradoxically, it was not the new religion that triggered the acceptance of its implicit music, but the other way around. For these people, whose spirituality seemed to be dominated by music,<sup>20</sup> this art was the principal enticement that aroused their interest for other aspects of European culture.

The Japanese demonstrated more openness towards foreign music than the Europeans did towards theirs, although it is plausible to suppose

---

<sup>15</sup> We would like to avoid using the customary term for cultured music that is „classical music”, because – actually – it has a different signification for musicians, denoting a particular style, which occurred in a clearly framed period.

<sup>16</sup> Eppstein, ‘From torture...’, pp. 197, 200 and 201.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 193 and 197.

<sup>20</sup> Harich-Schneider, *A History...*, p. 548.

there were some reluctant reactions also. Thus it is possible, even if there is no written evidence about it, that the first Japanese audiences could find the European manner of combining sounds weird. Even though, their subsequent behaviour proved a significant affinity for Western music in both historical epochs, when they were confronted with it (16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century). It is no wonder that this music has come to dominate the audience's preferences. In recent statistics, "the concerts of traditional music are rare, accounting for about 7 % of all concerts organized in Japan; it is played on only a tiny proportion of radio programmes; and there is little demand for recordings".<sup>21</sup>

How could such an affinity ever be explained? To play the role of *advocatus diaboli*, we can identify more than one feature that could hamper the penetration of European music wherever the tradition had no harmonic superposition, rhythmic regularity and temperate tuning. Nevertheless, we identified some compatible pre-existent features between these apparently remote styles, which suggest that Western European music is more compatible with Japanese music than it is with Middle-Eastern or even South-Eastern European musical structures.<sup>22</sup> We must also take into account a major characteristic of the Japanese people, which was- and still is- to be educated and learn about western music. Another reason comes from the intrinsic structure of European music, based on the natural resonance of sound. This peculiarity might probably be the most plausible argument for the power of its penetration, not just in Far-Eastern countries, but in many other locations, no matter the structure of the vernacular culture.

Eta Harich-Schneider brings into discussion another interesting fact. It seems that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the positive impact of European music was higher than during the first stage of the Meiji Era 183 years later, at least when the first reaction is concerned.<sup>23</sup> Harich-Schneider's assertion (not yet contradicted by any document) thus raises the question, whether cultural timing might be relevant for a fruitful cultural meeting or not. Why was Western musical acculturation more accessible in the 16<sup>th</sup> century than in the 19<sup>th</sup>? The argument of three centuries of isolation under the Edo Era is not convincing, because there had been no European presence of any kind, before the arrival of the Jesuits. Of course, the

---

<sup>21</sup> Watanabe, 'Why do the Japanese like...', p. 659.

<sup>22</sup> Veronica Gaspar, 'History of a Cultural Conquest: The Piano in Japan', *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*, No. 27, 2014, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup> Harich-Schneider, *A History...*, p. 546.

difference due to three centuries standing between the two sociological inquiries, must not be neglected. Besides, the accuracy of information was superior in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though the documentation is insufficient and comes from an unilateral source, the presumption that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century cultural shock was not as major as expected, might be plausible, especially confirmed by the subsequent assimilation.

One of the possible causes might be the type of 16<sup>th</sup> century European music, notably different compared to the 19<sup>th</sup>'s. Early European music had a different timbre, a different kind of melodic and – above all – it used non-tempered tunings, which means that broadly, the instrumental sonority was – to some extent – similar to Japanese music's. On the Japanese side, the dominant type of musical culture in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was the popular one: orally transmitted, more flexible and more inclined toward variation. The cultured music, which was already fixed in solid and perennial structures, was confined then to a thin layer of experts, and it was publicly shared just in ceremonials and official events. When the Tokugawa Shōgunate started campaigning for the destruction of Western influence, they paid a keen attention to music; nullifying harmonic instruments such as organs and harpsichords<sup>24</sup> and zealously promoting the “music of Gods”,<sup>25</sup> namely the genuine tradition, as it was kept in monasteries and ceremony schools. Thus after three centuries, the Europeans met a musical environment which had already undergone a thorough process of enculturation.

The fact that European acculturation was easier in an older epoch, although at that time the government had not been involved (as it was the case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), led to the logical assertion that the premises of a favourable or unfavourable cultural meeting are related to the specific types of cultures involved in the encounter. There is a strong foundation to presume that a structured (cultured) form of art is less inclined to change and that the predominance of popular structure for at least one of the subjects is conducive to a successful inter-cultural connection. The arrival of European musicians in Japan at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century found a musical culture structured to a large extent; hence came the necessity of the involvement of the Meiji Era authorities and their subsequent educational policies during the acculturation process.

---

<sup>24</sup> Gaspar, ‘History of a Cultural Conquest...’, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Harich-Schneider, *A History...*, p. 490 and following.

If we look at the musical world map of the beginning of the A.D. era, we perceive a demarcation line between North and South. The Southern part is the realm of strong, structured musical cultures: India, China and Greece. The musical culture of each of these countries was characterized by writing, school education and, especially, by a fundamentally analytical approach to all musical and symbolic parameters. Even if any music of that time was related to a fastidious system of significations, the Greek (and also the Chinese) musical culture still had some degree of autonomy, which might be seen as an indicative of a professional approach. For instance, the Chinese musical culture offered the first example of a “classical” (cultured) music, entirely forged by specialists. Daniélou convincingly demonstrates that their musical system (even the pentatonic one) assumed a school and not an adaptation of popular forms.<sup>26</sup> “The Chinese, as well as the Greeks had the belief that music is the perceptual representation of those imperceptible ratios, which are unifying the elements of the manifest world”.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast, in the northern part of Eurasia the Scythians, Celts, Germanic or Siberian tribes as well as the Three Kingdoms Koreans and the Yayoi Japanese shared a similar musical culture-type, which was pre-eminently oral, synthetic, meant for direct communication and related to feasts and rituals. Among them, only the Celts and the Far-Eastern countries left more consistent information behind, especially because of the testimonies of Greek or Chinese sources.<sup>28</sup> Besides these testimonies, there remain just some few archaeological vestiges and some reminiscences in living songs, still persisting in isolated areas. The Far-Eastern part has retained much more of their ancient dowry, partly because of the Asiatic structure, more inclined towards preservation than change, unlike the Europeans. We could presume that the island-structure of Japanese territory as well as the abstract “island” of cultural isolation self-created in Korea under the Silla Royalty, also played a role in this regard. However – above all – the specific differences between ethnic spiritualities notwithstanding (the northern part of Eurasia) stems from a common structure of tradition based on direct, living musical

---

<sup>26</sup> Alain Daniélou, *Treaty of Comparative Musicology*, Paris: Hermann, 1959, pp. 69–70.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> Older or more recent works have tried to identify a comprehensive list of the first sources regarding the Celts (Markale 1993, Sawyers 2000) and the early historical periods in Japan (Harich-Schneider 1973, Henshall 1999).

communication, which in all likelihood is favourably inclined towards both acculturation and inter-culturation.

A contemporary striking example of penetrating power of the oral type of music is given by the spread of Folk, Rock etc. genres all over the world, even in those areas where “classical” (cultured) genres made just a few followers. The episode of a fruitful meeting between two structured cultures, as it happened in the Far East a century and a half ago, remains a blessed exception – yet insufficiently clarified. Nevertheless, neither the official contribution, nor those basic common peculiarities of both Western and Japanese music we already pointed out, are sufficient to explain the depth and durableness of assimilation in Japan and Korea, which is not comparable with any other acculturated locations. The traditional communication style, or the prevalence of the oral-folk music etc., are just preliminary arguments for a more consistent discussion about the most spectacular twining between musical cultures.

## Buddhist Nationalism and Islam in Modern Myanmar

### Abstract

Perception of Burmese Buddhism by the Western world since 1988 has been largely associated with pacifism and democracy through the leader of the opposition and the Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. However, the current Rohingya refugee crisis is changing that positive perception. The aim of the following presentation is to analyze the contemporary conflict between Muslims and Buddhist nationalists in Burma. To get a deeper understanding of the problem, it is essential to connect it with Burma's pre-colonial and colonial past as well as the country's ethnic diversity. Radicalization of the attitudes of Theravada Buddhists and the rise of xenophobic sentiments in Burma are connected with Burmese national identity, which is largely based on ethnicity and tends to exclude the rest, including Muslims. However, due to historical, cultural and cosmological differences, Islam especially is a target. The aim of the paper is to explain why Myanmar's Islamophobia has its roots in Buddhist nationalism and why opposition to Islam is a part of it.

**Keywords:** Buddhism nationalism, Buddhism and violence, Islam in Myanmar, minorities in Myanmar, Political science of religion

### Introduction

The international discovery of Buddhist monks' involvement in anti-Muslim riots in Rakhine State in Burma<sup>1</sup> came as a surprise. Buddhism in this country had until then been largely associated with the peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations of 2007 (the Saffron Revolution) and the famous dissident, Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi<sup>2</sup>.

---

\* Institute of Religious Studies, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland (roman.husarski@uj.edu.pl)

<sup>1</sup> I use alternately: Burma and Myanmar.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the journalists connected her Buddhism with advocating for democracy. Some compared her also with Dalai Lama or Thich Nhat Hanh; A. Clements, Aung San Suu Kyi, *Aung San Suu Kyi, Voice of Hope: Conversations with Alan Clements*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008; Madeleine Bunting, *Aung San Suu Kyi's idea of freedom offers a radical message for the west*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/jun/26/aungsansuukyispiritual-struggle-lesson>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).



However, critics and journalists generally described the problem of the violence in Buddhism as a new phenomenon. Although she was considered as a moral voice until recently, Aung San Suu Kyi's lack of unambiguous commitment was disappointing<sup>3</sup>. Despite the development of many peaceful teachings, Buddhism is more linked with politics than most Westerners would think<sup>4</sup>. One could not understand the problem without a short historical review of this relationship. In this paper I will briefly describe the relationship between Islam and Buddhism in the Burmese kingdom during the colonial time and also in current times. In the context of modernity, I will focus particularly on the anti-Islamic activities of the Buddhist nationalists and groups associated with them, such as the 969 movement and *MaBaTha* (Patriotic Association of Myanmar) - which has its roots in 969.

### **Kings and Buddhism**

It was king Anawratha (1044-1099) who first officially adopted Theravada Buddhism in the 11th century as the state religion of the pagan kingdom and dismissed Ari Buddhism - a mixture of shamanism, alchemy, Hindu astrology and some Buddhist practices which one can categorise as tantric<sup>5</sup>. Anawrahta established a model of cosmology, which would have its consequences in the following centuries. Three important concepts were confirmed at the time: *bawashin*, *dhammaraja*, and *cakkavattin*.

*Bawashin* (the lord of life) meant that the king was morally superior to other people, he was the master of their lives. He held authority because of *kamma* (karma) he had accumulated in previous incarnations, which had enabled him to become king. His unlimited power was logical and was a consequence of *kamma*. If the king was inequitable, the Burmese had explained it as a punishment for their evil and the lack of morality in society<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> West misunderstanding of ASSK is a topic of many Michał Lubina articles e.g. M. Lubina, 'It's complicated : United States, Aung San Suu Kyi and U.S.-Burma relations', *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*, No. 29, 2016, pp. 131–146.

<sup>4</sup> The issue was broadly explored in M. Jerryson (ed), *Buddhist Warfare*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Maung Htin Aung, *Folk-Elements in Burmese Buddhism*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1958/02/folk-elements-in-burmese-buddhism/306833/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>6</sup> M. Lubina, *Pani Birmy Aung San Suu Kyi. Biografia polityczna* [Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. A Political Biography], Warszawa: PWN, 2015, pp. 17-20.

*Dhammaraja*<sup>7</sup> (king of law) meant the ruler would command the country in accordance with the principles of Buddhism. He was obligated to protect religion and maintain morality. The king had to ensure the development of Buddhism and protect the Buddhist clergy<sup>8</sup>. Most often he did this by building pagodas – which is the reason why Burma is called to this day “the land of a thousand pagodas”. That status also legitimised the ruler’s conquests - he made them in order to spread Buddha’s teachings.

As *dhammaraja*, he should also be a *cakkavattin* (the wheel-turner) - a universal king. This attitude equates the ruler to the Buddha himself, as one who turned the wheel of laws, *dhamma*. This similarity was also confirmed by ancient texts. In *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* there is information that Buddha in his past lives was *cakkavattin* seven times. The Pali tradition says that perfection achieved as a king allowed him rebirth as the Buddha<sup>9</sup>. The role of the ruler was totalistic in the social and cosmic dimension. As an earthly counterpart of the Buddha, he was a moral foundation for the population<sup>10</sup>. His power had a self-sustaining internal logic. If people did not understand the decisions made by rulers, they could explain to themselves that as *cakkavattin*, they, simply, could see more.

What is important is that the Burmese king and the monks had a symbiotic relationship. On the one hand, the monks were allowed to admonish the ruler if he moved away from the *dhamma*, and on the other hand there is no doubt that the king had full authority over the *sangha*. In the case of disobedience or violation of the rules of Theravada Buddhism, he could purify the Buddhist clergy<sup>11</sup>. In fact, monks were a pillar of the Burmese monarchy.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Dhammaraja* as well as *cakkavattin* were notions adopted from Hindu concepts of kingship.

<sup>8</sup> M.J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, Washington: University of Washington, 2012, pp. 117-118.

<sup>9</sup> F.E. Reynolds, ‘The Two Wheels of the Dhamma’, in *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon*, G. Obeyesekere, F. Reynolds, B.L. Smith (eds), Chambersburg: American Academy of Religious Studies 1972, pp. 13-15.

<sup>10</sup> I. Harris, *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, New York: Routledge 2007, pp. 76-78.

<sup>11</sup> A. Naono, *The Buddhist Kings of Chingmai and Pegu, The Purification of The Sangha, and The Mahabodhi Replicas in The Late Fifteenth Century*, Michigan: University of Michigan 1996, pp. 5-8.

Theravada cosmology legitimised the absolute authority of the king. He was on the top of the hierarchy and was considered as more than an average human being<sup>12</sup>. The king and the kingdom were a unity. Atsuko Naono writes: “One of the most important responsibilities was also for the *dhammaraja* to provide order, political and religious, out of chaos and to preserve that order once accomplished”<sup>13</sup>. The Buddhist clergy and society as a whole were strictly hierarchical. Ordinary Burmese people by and large accepted their class status and believed in a better rebirth in the next life. The ideal way of living was realised by monks, who theoretically should never reincarnate again. As W. J. Koenig emphasises: “The institution of the Kingdom has never been questioned in theory or practice but was simply accepted as a necessary part of life”<sup>14</sup>. Many scholars agree that Burmese Theravada cosmology was a rather static one<sup>15</sup>. Kings tried to maintain the status quo and protect the *dhamma* from its enemies.

### Muslims in Burma

This part of the paper will discuss examples of the clashes between the Islamic and Burmese civilisations. Pre-Burmese states (Mon, Pyu) are not accounted in the work. Contact with Muslims in these states often looked different. What is important is that Islam was rather incompatible with many elements of Theravada's cosmology kingdom.

According to legend, Islam was brought to Arakan by the son of Imam Ali in the seventh century. Burmese Muslims believe that his tomb is near Maungdaw city<sup>16</sup>. Most likely, Arab and Persian merchants had visited the area before, but for the first time Muslims appear in the annals of Pegu in the eleventh century, during the reign of King

---

<sup>12</sup> Some kings went even further announcing that they are a realized bodhisattva or even reincarnation of Buddha Maitreya.

<sup>13</sup> A. Naono, *The Buddhist Kings...*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> W.J. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity, 1752-1819: A Study of Kon Baung Politics, Administration, and Social Organization*, Ann Arbor: Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Par contra some scholars adjust that model, which can be considered as dynamic because some changes were easily assimilated by a society that was convinced of its dependent origination. However, the cosmological core remained the same, M.J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, Washington: University of Washington, 2012, pp. 8-10.

<sup>16</sup> Marlar Than, *The origin of Islamic Religion in Myanmar*, [http://www.academia.edu/4657059/THE\\_ORIGIN\\_OF\\_ISLAMIC\\_RELIGION\\_IN\\_MYANMAR](http://www.academia.edu/4657059/THE_ORIGIN_OF_ISLAMIC_RELIGION_IN_MYANMAR), (accessed: 26.10.2017).

Anawrahta. The ruler tried to maintain full control over religion in his country. By adopting Theravada, he persecuted other beliefs and Buddhist sects<sup>17</sup>. We find a story of two disobedient Muslims in the chronicles of Pegu in which two Arabs were sentenced to death after they refused to assist in the construction of a pagoda – a Buddhist sacred place<sup>18</sup>.

However, another mention in the annals of the kingdom of Pegu is milder. Muslims had the knowledge, equipment and technologies that impressed the rulers living in the areas along the Irrawaddy River. They also gladly accepted merchants from all over the world including Muslims. For this reasons, they were allowed to settle within the kingdoms and sometimes were even employed by the royal courts<sup>19</sup>. For example, King Sawlu (1077-1088) in his youth was educated by a Muslim Arab<sup>20</sup>. For these reasons it can be concluded that the kings' approach of the first Burmese Empire to Muslims was a very pragmatic one. They did not hesitate to use the achievements of other civilisations, yet severely punished any act of disobedience to the prevailing rules in the kingdom.

The first king who openly discriminated against Muslims was Bayinnaung (1550-1581), founder of the Second Burmese Empire, a very talented leader, who, among other things, conquered Siam<sup>21</sup>. In 1559 the ruler saw the ritual slaughter of goats on the streets of Pegu, which greatly upset him. Buddhism recommends refraining from killing all creatures. In the circle of Theravada Buddhism, butchers had belonged to the excluded castes and usually lived on the outskirts of the cities. King Bayinnaung not only banned the practice of ritual slaughter, *halal*, but also forced the Muslim community to listen to lectures on Buddhist morality and compassion. Later rulers also maintained the ban of ritual slaughter<sup>22</sup>.

During the reign of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819), who conquered Arakan and was renowned for his cruelty, another incident happened.

---

<sup>17</sup> M.J. Walton, *Politics in...*, p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims of Burma. A Study of a Minority Group*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1972, pp. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Marlar Than, *The origin of Islamic Religion in Myanmar*, [http://www.academia.edu/4657059/THE\\_ORIGIN\\_OF\\_ISLAMIC\\_RELIGION\\_IN\\_MYANMAR](http://www.academia.edu/4657059/THE_ORIGIN_OF_ISLAMIC_RELIGION_IN_MYANMAR), (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>20</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma [Burma]*, Warszawa: Trio, 2014, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, p. 10.

The ruler heard that Muslims would sooner die than corrupt themselves by eating pork, so he decided to give Islam a test. He summoned the most important Muslim dignitaries from the capital (then it was Awa), and set before them a bowl of pork and ordered it consumed under threat of death. To the present time two accounts of the event survived. The first comes from a British man who spent two years in a Burmese prison and heard a discussion about the story. This version states that the Muslims quietly enjoyed the meal and thus avoided death<sup>23</sup>. The second version, much less known, is promoted by Burmese Muslims. After disobeying the king, they were summoned and sentenced to death. Soon a terrible storm hit the city, after which the ruler regretted his decision. Burmese Muslims still cherish the story of the group of mujahedeen (martyrs) killed by the cruel king. Their alleged graves are located in Amarapura<sup>24</sup>. Considering the nature of the king and the situation of the Muslim community, it is not hard to guess which version is more likely. Also Bodawphaya claimed that he had conquered the kingdom of Mrauk U in order to protect *sasana* (Buddhist religion). Mrauk U, geographically close to Bengal, adopted many elements of Islam and Bodawphaya justified his actions in order to purify the land<sup>25</sup>.

In conclusion, it should be noted that in pre-colonial Burma, especially before the conquest of Arakan, there were few Muslims. They were valued for their skills. Kings used them as interpreters (mainly from Persia) and they often also served in the army and in the royal courts. King Mindon (1853-1878) even helped Muslims to build mosques, and also financed the construction of the marina for Burmese Muslims in Mecca. Generally, Burmese kings allowed foreigners to settle and practise their own religion, but they also intervened if they noted a violation of Buddhist law. For this reason, ritual slaughter was not acceptable and missionary activity was not possible in Burma<sup>26</sup>. However, contemporary Burmese nationalists use particular examples

---

<sup>23</sup> H. Gounger, *A Personal Narrative of Two Years' Imprisonment in Burmah*, London: John Murray, 1860, pp. 96-98.

<sup>24</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>25</sup> J.P. Leider. 'Forging Buddhist Credentials as a Toll of Legitimacy and Ethnic Identity: A Study of Arakan's Subjection in Nineteenth-Century Burma', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, No. 51, 2008, pp. 409-450.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11, 26-28.

from history to hold their anti-Islam position<sup>27</sup>. Some historians argue that we can trace the beginning of Burmese national identity based on ethnicity and Buddhism to the Konbaung dynasty (1752–1885)<sup>28</sup>. The kingdom and the consequences of its absence are one of the main points of reference for the current Buddhist nationalist identity.

### Colonial period

After winning three wars (1826, 1853, 1886), the British occupied all of Burma (and also designated its borders, which last to the present). By removing the king, the British destroyed the cosmological model of the country and overturned the social order. Still, many of them were surprised why local people did not treat them as liberators<sup>29</sup>. The question of who could protect Buddhism without *Dhammaraja* was raised. Buddhist monks lost their authority: the growth of a European style state educational system took the Burmese masses away from their control and they also lost all support from the state. Paradoxically, their role started to grow back relatively quickly, but in a different context<sup>30</sup>.

The first nationalist movement in Burma was led by monks. During speeches they called for a boycott and defence against British imperialism. Firier sermons circulated throughout all of Burma. “When Lord Buddha was alive, man had a predilection for Nirvana. There is nothing left now. The reason why it is so is because the government is English”<sup>31</sup> said U Ottama (1879-1939) one of the most prominent figures of the first wave of Burmese nationalism. Another famous monk, U Wisara (1895-1929), died from a hunger strike in a British prison. Saya San (1876-1931) went even further by dropping monk robes and leading a rebellion against the British regime between 1930-31<sup>32</sup>. It

---

<sup>27</sup> M.J. Walton, S. Hayward, ‘Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar’, *Policy Studies*, No. 71, 2014, pp. 20-23.

<sup>28</sup> Thant Myint-U, *The making of modern Burma*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 79-100.

<sup>29</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum kontra peryferie. Kwestia etniczna we współczesnej Birmie (1948-2013)* [Burma: Center versus Peripheries. The 'Ethnic Question' in Contemporary Burma 1948-2013], Kraków: KON-Tekst, 2014, pp. 59-70.

<sup>30</sup> W.M. Charney, *A History o Modern Burma*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 5-10.

<sup>31</sup> M.J. Walton, *Politics in...*, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15-16.

should be noted that the largest nationalist movements were also related to Buddhism. The most important were the tantric movements of *weiksa* (wizards), and the *vipassana* lay meditation movement. Both movements emphasised the end of the World Age - especially *weiksa*, which expected the imminent arrival of the future Buddha, *Maitreya*. In both there were voices for the restoration of the monarchy and the old moral cosmology. Even the *vipassana* as a lay movement was conducted by monks. Some of the Buddhist clergy were important also for the Thakins (the We Burmans Association), who later brought independence for Burma - although Marxist influences alongside secularist ideas were also visible<sup>33</sup>.

During the colonial time, hatred against Islam grew rapidly. First of all, the British ruled Burma through Indians and other ethnic minorities. From the beginning of their presence, the colonists imported Indians en masse to work in the military and government. From the large number of incoming workers from India (mostly from Bengal), at least half were Muslims<sup>34</sup>. The Burmese suddenly became the least privileged group in their own country – they were excluded economically and linguistically. Another dishonour for them was the fact that Burma had been connected under the administration to India as its province<sup>35</sup>.

The causes of the conflict were not only economic. In 1930 and 1938 there were two bloody riots targeting immigrants. The second incident was directed not so much at the Indians, but specifically at Muslims. The pretext for initiating the riots was the publication of a pamphlet ridiculing Buddha by an Islamic publicist<sup>36</sup>, although there were also other reasons for the growing hatred for Muslims.

The case of mixed marriages was very controversial. Muslims coming to Burma often took local women as wives. Most of them were not considered as full-fledged marriages until the woman converted to Islam. In the event of the death of her husband, a widow, if she was not a Muslim, faced problems in obtaining the inheritance, and if she was

---

<sup>33</sup> I. Jordt, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement. Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007, pp. 21-26, Club du Millénaire, *Bouddhisme et Politique en Birmanie, entre lutte et domination*, [http://www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm\\_docs/docs/observatoire-religieux/iris-obs-rel---bouddhisme.pdf](http://www.iris-france.org/docs/kfm_docs/docs/observatoire-religieux/iris-obs-rel---bouddhisme.pdf), (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>34</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> M. Smith., *The Muslim Rohingyas of Burma*, Amsterdam: Burma Centrum Nederland, 1995, p. 23, M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, pp. 60-68.

<sup>36</sup> W.M. Charney, *A History...*, p. 48.

his rightful wife (rarer cases) she still received much less than according to Buddhist tradition. Many Muslims after several years of working in Burma returned to India, leaving their partners, whom they did not treat as full-fledged wives because they practiced another religion. Both intermarriage and the inferior treatment of women by Muslims aroused widespread resentment among the Burmese<sup>37</sup>. In 1935, one of the authors of the Burmese nationalist press wrote about Muslims: "[they] have taken possession of the wealth of the Burmese people and also their daughters and sisters"<sup>38</sup>. Such views at that time were already common, and the perception of Muslims as a threat to the Buddhist population persists to this day.

During World War II, hundreds of thousands of Indians left the country for fear of repercussions and reprisals by the Burmese -- justifiably. The Japanese, who invaded Burma in 1941, used the Burmese nationalists to provoke ethnic cleansing, which turned into the war in Rakhine. Although nationalists had been trying to organise paramilitary organisations before, it was Japan who helped them create the Burmese Independence Army<sup>39</sup>. The army was formed mostly by Burmese, often ideologically associated with the nationalist movement Dobama Asiayone (*We Burmans Association*), who received the promise of a "free country"<sup>40</sup>. The British supported the Muslim-dominated North Rakhine and the Japanese reinforced the Buddhist South. Even after the war, the Burmese State did not control the zone completely<sup>41</sup>. This war was yet another moment in history which contributed to the strengthening of the ethnic identity associated with Buddhism.

The hero of the struggle for independence, Aung San, was also accused of the cold-blooded murder of a Muslim village chief. Due to his popularity, the British decided not to take him in for trial. Today's Muslim community often recalls this incident as evidence that the violation of their rights was included from the beginning of independence. It should also be noted that many Muslims (though not

---

<sup>37</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, pp. 30-37.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, p. 76.

<sup>40</sup> M.P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, New York: Cornell University Press 2005, pp. 48-50.

<sup>41</sup> J. Leider, 'Rohingya: the name, the movement and the quest for identity'. in *Nation building in Myanmar*, Yangon 2013, pp. 239-241.



all) during the war remained faithful to the British, which was another reason for rising contempt. Burmese followers of the prophet Muhammad would be associated largely with the colonial invaders and as traitors from there on out<sup>42</sup>.

### Independence period

General Aung San was murdered before the country achieved independence. After his death, the vision of the state as a federation in ethnic harmony began to fade. Soon the country plunged into civil war<sup>43</sup>. In the first months of independence, a number of different Muslim organisations emerged. Some of them were associated with ethnic groups (like Mon Muslims) and often fought for their own national interests. For example, a part of the Arakan Muslims fought for their own independent state. However, some Muslims declared *jihad* (holy war), like those led by the popular musician Jafar Hussain (Jafar Qawwal). Their aim was to create an Islamic state in the west of Burma<sup>44</sup>. Some of them wanted to join Pakistan<sup>45</sup>. These operations assured many Buddhist nationalists in their convictions about Islam. Mujahedeen often called themselves “Rohingya” and this was actually the first time this name became widespread, with some Muslim politicians even using it in the fifties. Using this term they wanted to unify Muslims of Chittagonian origin in Northern Rakhine and find a connection to Burmese Islamic history<sup>46</sup>. Protests by Buddhist nationalists, who see the Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and a threat to *dhamma*, are why until today the Myanmar government does not recognise the Rohingya as an official ethnicity.

The chaotic rule of Prime Minister U Nu and his attempts to establish Buddhism as the state religion not only did not improve the situation, but strengthened the false division between Buddhist Burmese and non-Buddhist minorities. In the nation's capital, tensions between the two religions occurred constantly<sup>47</sup>. Sometimes they were violent, as in 1961

---

<sup>42</sup> M. Smith., *The Muslim...*, p. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> W.M. Charney, *A History...*, p. 72-78.

<sup>44</sup> G. Defert, *Les Rohingya de Birmanie. Arakanais, musulmans et apatrides*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2007, pp. 229-230, M. Smith., *The Muslim...*, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Thant Myint-U, *Myanmar's resurgent nationalism shapes new political landscape*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Thant-Myint-U/Myanmar-s-resurgent-nationalism-shapes-new-political-landscape>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>46</sup> J. Leider, *Rohingya...*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>47</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, p. 104.

when armed monks took offence at the building of a new mosque on the outskirts of Rangoon. Police had to intervene and the protesters set fire to the mosque and surrounding Muslims shops, resulting in a number of deaths<sup>48</sup>.

It was the army that first stabilised the situation. General Ne Win, who was inspired by Marxism<sup>49</sup>, recalled Aung San's idea of a secular state and pursued a policy aimed against his predecessor - Prime Minister U Nu. The first years of his regime were welcomed positively by many Muslims. Ne Win revoked the banning of ritual slaughter and even established the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha) as a national holiday. In addition, the Burmese government in 1961 signed a ceasefire with the Rohingya guerrilla military - today the pact is brought up by Muslim activists as proof of recognition of the existence of minorities<sup>50</sup>. Ne Win's policy was not well received by most of the Buddhist clergy<sup>51</sup>. In response to criticism, the dictator ordered the Buddhist *sangha* to get rid of fake monks<sup>52</sup>. His general policy was well summed up by his own words that "for the Army, it is important to keep the 'bearded fellows' separate from the 'bald headed fellows'"<sup>53</sup>. Lastly, his efforts to turn Burma into a socialist paradise failed - mainly for economic reasons.

The situation of Muslims drastically declined when the new junta of General Than Shwe took power after the 1988 mass protests. It had a strictly Buddhist nationalist approach. Being Burmese meant being Buddhist. Burmanisation in politics became a dominant trend according to this idea. Religious minorities were treated as lost sheep who had been led astray by foreign powers. The junta launched the operation "King of Dhamma", which meant large-scale buddhisisation. National radio and television urged people to convert to Buddhism<sup>54</sup>. Many children from ethnic areas were sent by force to be novices in monasteries. In the Kachin State, crosses were removed and in their place pagodas were built. In Arakan the same thing happened to many

---

<sup>48</sup> M. Smith., *The Muslim...*, pp 100-104.

<sup>49</sup> Ne Win was strongly against communism although he considers Marxist methods as useful.

<sup>50</sup> G. Defert, *Les Rohingya de...*, p. 148-150, M. Smith., *The Muslim...*, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> J. Sisley, 'La robe et le fusil: le bouddhisme et la dictature militaire en Birmanie', *Politique et religion en Asie orientale*, Vol. 32, 2001, p. 175.

<sup>52</sup> M. Yegar, *The Muslims...*, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> R. Taylor, *General Ne Win: A Political Biography*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015, p. 521.

<sup>54</sup> J. Sisley, *La robe et...*, pp. 184-190.

mosques<sup>55</sup>. Muslims become the scapegoat of the Than Shwe's policy. The government's proselytism went even so far that in some places for converting to Buddhism peasants could get a river buffalo - an animal of high value in Burmese rural areas<sup>56</sup>.

General Ne Win had tried to keep religion away from public affairs – during the reign of the new junta it was the opposite. More important abbots and monks received political voices, including monks with a radically anti-Islamic point of view. In this period, the 969 Movement was born.

### The 969 Movement and MaBaTha

The movement was established in 1990 and was probably inspired by a book by U Kyaw Lwin, who used the number 969 as cosmologically stronger than 786 - the number of Southeast Asian Muslims which indicated their business properties. 786 represented the phrase: "In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful", while 969 was connected to "three jewels of Buddhism": the nine attributes of the Buddha, the six attributes of *dhamma*, and the nine attributes of the *sangha*<sup>57</sup>. As a movement 969 was decentralised. The followers, both lay people and monks, raised voices similar to those from the thirties - they accused Muslims of having economic privileges, abusing women, and fast, uncontrolled population growth<sup>58</sup>.

On January 2014 U Wirathu, along with other prominent monks in Mandalay, launched the "Organisation for the Protection of Race, Religion, and Belief", abbreviated as *MaBaTha* (an acronym). According to one member, "Forming this association makes us stronger, as if we have built a fortress in Upper Myanmar which people from different religions won't be able to destroy,"<sup>59</sup>. Many members of the 969 movement were absorbed by the *MaBaTha*. The organisation not only campaigned against Muslims, but also successfully lobbied in the

---

<sup>55</sup> B. Rogers, J. Woodrum, *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 2010, pp. 145-147.

<sup>56</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, p. 218.

<sup>57</sup> M. Jerryson, *The Rise of Militant Monks*, <http://www.lionsroar.com/the-rise-of-militant-monks/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>58</sup> T. Fuller, *Extremism builds among Myanmar's Buddhists*, <http://old.seattletimes.com/text/201235489.html>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>59</sup> R. Vandenbrink, *Myanmar Buddhist Monks Launch Group for 'Defending Religion'*, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/buddhist-congress-01152014180734.html/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

government for a series of controversial laws to protect Buddhism. For example, one law required Buddhist women to register if they intended to marry non-Buddhists<sup>60</sup>. Even though nationalist monks claimed that they did not support any single politician or political party, their agitation could be treated as the fifth column of the junta. Even after the 2015 election when the National League for Democracy (NLD) won significantly and obtained a majority of the total seats (235 in the House of Representatives and 135 in the House of Nationalities) the *MaBaTha* has remained a powerful and influential organization.

Above all, the movement see Muslims as a threat to the development of Buddhism in Burma. Their views are reflected in a song entitled: *We will fence our nation with our bones*, which was played during their rallies:

“Buddha’s Wisdom shines over our land

In the defence of the Bama race and the Buddhist faith we will stand at the front line.

These people [the infidels/Muslims] live on our [Buddhist] soil.

They drink our water.

They break our rules.

They suck our wealth.

And they insult us the host.

They destroy our youth.

Alas, they are just ungrateful, worthless creatures”<sup>61</sup>.

In the Buddhist nationalist’s worldview, religion is strictly connected with Burmese national identity. The ethnic identification is built on the opposition to Islam. Identity based on the opposition was characteristic for the *Dobama* movement during the pre-independence time. They focused primarily on the rejection of British and Indian patterns. Then, Buddhism did not play such a big role (still Marxist ideology was present), but minorities were excluded, for cultural betrayal and collaboration<sup>62</sup>. Similar to *Dobama*, 969 (and from 2014 the *MaBaTha*), is a broad-based social movement created as a response to the uncertainty of fast changes. For both *Dobama* and the *MaBaTha*,

---

<sup>60</sup> H. Wardle, *Burma passes controversial law on marriage of Buddhist women to non-Buddhists*, [www.lionsroar.com/burma-passes-controversial-law-on-marriage-of-buddhist-women-to-non-buddhists/](http://www.lionsroar.com/burma-passes-controversial-law-on-marriage-of-buddhist-women-to-non-buddhists/), (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>61</sup> P. Fuller, *Preaching by the 969 and Ma Ba Tha movements*, <https://drpaulfuller.wordpress.com/category/969-movement/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>62</sup> M. P. Callahan, *Making Enemies...*, p. 30-35, M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, pp. 74-77.

the main enemy is from abroad and is trying to destroy the uniqueness of being Burmese. The nationalist monk U Wirathu, an example of a leading Islamophobic voice in Myanmar, accused Muslims for the sanctions the US imposed on Burma because he suspected the presence of Al-Qaeda in the country<sup>63</sup>. When *Dobama* was calling for a rejection of British clothes and food<sup>64</sup>, U Wirathu urged a boycott of Muslim products and stores and promoting a "Buy Buddhist" campaign<sup>65</sup>. *Dobama* as a social movement received massive support from the Burmese and even the colonial government decided to tolerate its activism<sup>66</sup>. Even after being imprisoned for several years for his hate-filled sermons,<sup>67</sup> U Wirathu did not lose his influence, and the incident rather increased his legend. After his release in 2012, he received support from government officials who were trying to use him for their political gains. In response to a "Times" article about violent Buddhism in Myanmar, even president Thein Sein replied that the 969 movement "is just a symbol of peace" and Wirathu is "a son of Lord Buddha"<sup>68</sup>.

Many Buddhist nationalists, including U Wirathu, who was called the "Militant Monk" by his supporters and once called himself a Buddhist bin Laden<sup>69</sup>, condemn violence. Although the 969 pamphlets reject violence<sup>70</sup>, they seem to legitimise it at the same time. It seems that the defence of *dhamma* and *sasana* stands above all else. Monks connected to the *MaBaTha* use several arguments according to Buddhist tradition to support their view. In one story, Buddha in his past life killed

---

<sup>63</sup> H. Beech, *The Face of Buddhist Terror*.  
<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/full-text-of-the-banned-time-story-the-face-of-buddhist-terror/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017)..

<sup>64</sup> M. P. Callahan, *Making Enemies...*, p. 36.

<sup>65</sup> H. Beech, *The Face of Buddhist Terror*.  
<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/full-text-of-the-banned-time-story-the-face-of-buddhist-terror/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>66</sup> M. P. Callahan, *Making Enemies...*, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> H. Beech, *The Face of Buddhist Terror*.  
<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/full-text-of-the-banned-time-story-the-face-of-buddhist-terror/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>68</sup> H. Hindstrom, *Burma president backs anti-Muslim 'hate preacher' Wirathu*,  
<http://www.dvb.no/news/politics-news/burma-president-backs-anti-muslim-%E2%80%98hate-preacher%E2%80%99-wirathu/28955>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>69</sup> S. Bengali, *Monk dubbed 'Buddhist Bin Laden' targets Myanmar's persecuted Muslims*,  
<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-ff-myanmar-monk-20150524-story.html>,  
 (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>70</sup> M.J. Walton, S. Hayward, 'Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar', *Policy Studies*, No. 71, 2014, p. 24.

a man. He saw that the man would kill 500 people in the future, so killing him was an act of compassion and choice of a lesser evil. In the eyes of the nationalist monks, it looks like the perfect excuse. If they apply some kind of violence, it is only because it will prevent even more evil. In one of his speeches, U Wirathu quoted texts from the *Kālacakra Laghutantra*, which was rather strange, because it comes from a different tradition - Vajrayana Buddhism. The prophecy for the victory of Buddhism in a war with Islam which *Kālacakra* contained fitted well with U Wirathu's political view<sup>71</sup>. The common argument is that Buddhism disappears from the world because of Islam and countries like Afghanistan, Indonesia or Bangladesh were Buddhist in the past<sup>72</sup>.

Since the nineties, the conflict has turned violent many times. In 1997, due to rumours about a rape by a Muslim, the country was swept up by protests. In Mandalay, 18 mosques were torched and many houses that belonged to Muslims were destroyed. In the streets, violent mobs led by monks burned the Quran and preached anti-Islamic words<sup>73</sup>. In 2001 there were more violent riots in Taungoo caused by the destruction of Buddhist statues in Bamiyan by the Taliban. In response to this, a mob led by Buddhist monks destroyed a historic mosque in Taungoo. Protests covered the whole region; once again, there were suspicions that the riot might have been controlled by the junta as the monks had radios, normally available only for uniformed services<sup>74</sup>. In 2012 several riots erupted in Rakhine after the rape and murder of an ethnic Rakhine woman. As a result, at least 166 Muslims and Rakhine were killed and tensions grow across the country. U Wirathu and other radical nationalists have been partly responsible for increasing tensions, while on the wave of the political thaw they saw an opportunity to speak more freely. In 2013 anti-Islamic incidents and violence occurred almost in every big city in Myanmar. Often riots were provoked by rumours e.g. in 1 July 2014 two people were killed in Mandalay after information about the raping of a Buddhist woman which appeared on U Wirathu'

---

<sup>71</sup> C. Cameron, *Monk Wirathu's 969 quotes the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra*, <http://zenpundit.com/?p=29028>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>72</sup> M. Walton, S. Hayward, *Contesting Buddhist...*, pp. 17-8.

<sup>73</sup> A. Asif, *Burma: Planned Religious And Racial Riots Against Muslims: A Historical Overview*, <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/8539>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>74</sup> Sanooaung, *Masjids damaged by SPDC THUGS in Taungoo*, <https://sanooaung.wordpress.com/2010/03/07/masjids-damaged-by-spdc-thugs-in-taungoo-english/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

Facebook profile<sup>75</sup>. As a result of prolonged conflict and persecution almost a half million Rohingya fled the country in September 2017. This is twice as many as in 1978<sup>76</sup> and it shows how bad the situation is currently.

Despite the commitment of some world figures of Buddhism to urge Burmese Buddhists to end Islamophobia, including both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, the attitude of the *MaBaTha* and Buddhist nationalists receive support from countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka. In the latter case, we notice the emergence of groups very similar to 969, such as Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist power group)<sup>77</sup>. Also it must be noticed that the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are very pro-western Buddhist teachers. The Buddhist world is divided on the case of Myanmar. In the country, the methods of U Wirathu were condemned by some important abbots from the Burmese *sangha*, but it is also difficult to see unequivocal evidence. The conviction that there is a threat from Islam is widespread. One of the most well known Burmese monks, the Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw, condemned violent methods, but in the same speech he also stressed that, “we, the East Asian Buddhist countries are living in constant daily fear of falling under the sword of the Islamic extremists. As we are lacking power and influence, we cannot compete against with the rapid growth of the Islamic world.” He also referred to the Rohingya: “In 1948-49, by the name of Mujtahid, those illegal immigrants revolted against the Burmese army. Their intention was to establish a separate Muslim state. The Burmese army had to confront the Islamic Mujahedeen. Today, they neither call themselves Bengalis nor Mujahedeen. But, calling themselves Rohingyas, they are trying to demand a separate homeland. They also burned their houses by themselves as if it was done by Burmese Buddhists”<sup>78</sup>. These words of one of the greatest moral authorities in the country show perfectly how Buddhist nationalism is strong in Myanmar today.

---

<sup>75</sup> M. Walton, S. Hayward, *Contesting Buddhist...*, p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> M. Lubina, *Birma: centrum...*, p. 244.

<sup>77</sup> M. Walton, S. Hayward, *Contesting Buddhist...*, p. 55.

<sup>78</sup> P. Fuller, *The possible causes of Islamophobia in Burma*, <https://drpaulfuller.wordpress.com/2014/08/22/the-possible-causes-of-islamaphobia-in-burma/>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

## Conclusions and further prognosis

The removal of the King by the British led to the collapse of the Buddhist state and cosmology. This resulted in a trauma, the consequences of which are felt to this day. As indicated, Buddhism is intimately linked with politics and a secular vision of the country is by definition at odds with the one presented by religion. It should come as no surprise that monks pressure leading politicians to stand up in defence of Buddhism and *dhamma* - in other words - to take the attitude of *dhammaraja*.

Broad-based social movements like 969 and the *MaBaTha* are not centralised and are easy to characterise. Their activists can be classified as Buddhist nationalists, but also they differ from each other e.g. not all of them are supporters of U Wirathu, and many condemn any acts of violence. In a context of fast societal change, Buddhist nationalism is seeking to strengthen national identity and giving society a common enemy - due to historical circumstances and particularly Islam. It is an especially attractive scapegoat for those who have not managed to improve their status during the current economic changes and also for the government to divert attention from other problems. Similarly, like *Dobama* in the past, the *MaBaTha* gets widespread endorsement from most of the Burmese. This support is especially present online through social media like Facebook<sup>79</sup>. Paradoxically, the popularity of the group could rise on the wave of reforms from 2010 giving greater freedom to the media, the press, and the associations.

Despite that in July 2016 when there were two mob attacks on Muslims communities and Aung San Suu Kyi's government threatened the *MaBaTha* using legal action against them for hate speech, the leader of the National League for Democracy remained silent and ambiguous. This attitude is responsible from a political perspective. If she denounces an army intervention on the Rohingya in Rakhine state, she could lose not only her social support, but also the generals could threaten her power<sup>80</sup>. The current government in the same manner as the junta before it has refused to give the Rohingya right to be a legitimate minority and identified them as "immigrants from Bangladesh" despite

---

<sup>79</sup> Thant Myint-U, *Myanmar's resurgent nationalism shapes new political landscape*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Thant-Myint-U/Myanmar-s-resurgent-nationalism-shapes-new-political-landscape>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

<sup>80</sup> M. Lubina, *Pani Birmy Aung San Suu Kyi. Biografia polityczna* [Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. A Political Biography], Warszawa: PWN, 2015, p. 491-495.



that meaning they would have been illegal immigrants for at least a hundred years. The presence of armed groups like the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in the region also works against the Rohingya case and the image of Muslims in Myanmar. It is also important to notice that some members of the National League for Democracy are supporters of the *MaBaTha* – in 2015 the party even refused to field any Muslim candidates<sup>81</sup>.

It is hard to predict U-Wirathu's future career, but it can be assumed that Buddhist nationalism's impact on politics and its fight with Islam will not decrease in the coming years. Social instability, the disappointment with the democratic system and economic changes, uncertainty about the future and the growing separation of conflicting groups will continue to serve radical voices and polarities. There is also the risk that, with the rise of religious and ethnic tensions the army will carry out another coup and recover full power.

Buddhist nationalism still will play an important role between the NLD and the generals' political game and it is important to not overlook the phenomenon of Buddhist nationalism.

---

<sup>81</sup> H. Hindstrom, *NLD blocked Muslim candidates to appease MaBaTha: party member*, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/election/news/nld-blocked-muslim-candidates-to-appease-ma-ba-tha-party-member>, (accessed: 26.10.2017).

## Feminism and nationalism in South Korea: empowering Korean women during the nation- building process\*\*

### Abstract

Since the time of its emergence in the late 19th century, Korean feminism had close ties with the development of nationalism, which initially opposed the political conservatism of the Joseon Dynasty and later opposed the aggressive colonial regime that hampered the establishment of a nation-state. After liberation from the Japanese colonialism, Korean feminism developed within as pro-government, nationalistic ideology (conservative groups), and as the movement for democratization (progressists). The inextricable link between nationalism and feminism led to the creation of diversity of feminist concepts and views on the nature of women's liberation, which equally, though differently, was comprised by Korean nationalists. The liberalization of South Korean politics and economy at the end of 1980s – early 1990s resulted in the emergence of postmodern feminism, which raised essentially new issues of women's development such as the elimination of domestic violence against women, protection of rights of sexual minorities, elimination of discrimination against women in the labor market, etc. Thus, the evolution of Korean feminist ideology reflects the significant challenges of national development in the nation-building process.

**Key words:** nationalism, feminism, nation-building, economic modernization, democratization, women's empowerment

### Introduction

In 2012, for the first time in the political history of South Korea, a woman was elected the president. A winner of the presidential elections

---

\* Associate professor at the School of Asian Studies, National Research University Higher School of Economics, and research fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences

\*\* The publication was prepared within the framework of the Academic Fund Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2017-2018 (grant № 17-010073) and by the Russian Academic Excellence Project “5-100”.

was Park Geun-hye, the elder daughter of military dictator and president of the Republic of Korea Park Chung-hee (1961-1979). Though Park Geun-hye was a second woman-politician who nominated her candidacy for the presidency in South Korea<sup>1</sup>, she became the first who could win presidential elections. Park Geun-hye's election campaign attracted a significant interest from the international and Korean feminist organizations, many of which truly believed that her presidency would contribute to the development of women's rights in the country that is known for its male-dominated politics and patriarchal political culture.

Park Geun-hye skillfully used a feminist rhetoric in her presidential campaign by adopting a slogan, a "prepared woman president", as campaign's slogan. In 1997, Kim Dae-jung used practically the same slogan but without a reference to gender. The slogan of his presidential campaign was a "prepared president," which was to stress the Kim Dae-Jung's preparedness to become the president of South Korea because he had nominated his candidacy for the presidency for the fourth time. Stressing femininity of the candidate, Park Geun-hye was to symbolize a "new era of hope" in South Korean politics based on the principles of gender equity. Overall, her win ought to testify to the progressiveness and civility of the modern South Korean society.

It is true that despite Park Geun-hye's history-making win, her election has split both the feminist organizations and the Korean society as a whole. For the female participants of the student and labor movements for democratization (1970-1980), Park Geun-hye was just the embodiment of her father, Park Chung-hee, and they even refused to consider her as a woman<sup>2</sup>. The progressive Korean feminists, who participated in the movement against Park Chung-hee's and his successor's authoritarian regime, eventually could not support Park Geun-hye's candidacy during the presidential campaign in 2012. They found her image of the selfless daughter of Korea, never married, without children, sincerely dedicated to the Korean nation, to be a far-fetched PR

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1987, Hong Sook-ja was nominated for the presidency from the Social Democratic Party but later withdrew her candidacy and supported Kim Yong-sam during presidential elections.

<sup>2</sup> In August 2016, I interviewed 15 female participants of the student movement for democratization (1970-1980), many of whom noted that biologically Park Geun-hye could be identified as a woman, but socially and politically she was far from being a woman because she had not expressed any solidarity with women's needs in Korea.

trick. Unfortunately, the progressive Korean feminists could not significantly influence the results of the presidential elections, and Park Geun-hye finally won the campaign, owing largely to the political legacy of her father<sup>3</sup>.

The political scandal around Park Geun-hye and her shadowy advisor and friend Choi Soon-sil erupted in South Korea at the end of October 2016. It caused a surge of negative emotions from the Korean feminists, who at this time were united in their attitudes towards the first woman president, who as they thought had discredited not only the nation but all Korean women. The scandal provoked a vigorous debate among Korean feminists over the issues of women's participation in politics: "What do we mean by a 'woman president,' what do we expect from a woman president, should we stress the femininity of a women president?" On November 26, 2016, the representatives of 30 female organizations held a joint meeting at the Kwanghwamun central square in Seoul to express non-confidence in Park Geun-hye's government and their worries about some gender issues caused by the anti-Park Geun-hye's protests. Firstly, they worried that Park's impeachment would lead to stronger resistance to women in positions of power<sup>4</sup>. Secondly, they were dissatisfied with a misogynistic tone to much of the criticism of Park Geun-hye. During anti-Park's demonstrations, one could hear how protesters, males, and mass media often called Park Geun-hye a 'hen', 'Miss Park', or 'Kangnam ajumma' [in this case, a contemptuous treatment of Park Geun-hye, which was to stress that she was just a woman from the luxurious district Kangnam (Seoul), and not a true president]<sup>5</sup>. The feminists worried that

---

<sup>3</sup> Park Pauline. Hillary Clinton and Park Geun-hye: a progressive feminist analysis of presidential politics in the US and Korea: <https://www.paulinepark.com/2017/01/hillary-clinton-park-geun-hye-a-progressive-feminist-analysis-of-presidential-politics-in-the-us-korea/> (accessed 22.11.2017); A lecture by Lee Jin-ok ("About Future Politics after 'woman' president Park Geun-hye"), a representative of the Korean Women's Political Solidarity, organized by the Women's Hotline (non-governmental organization), 09.02.2017: <https://hotline.or.kr:41759/news/30473?ckattemp=1> (accessed 22.11.2017)

<sup>4</sup> Miranda Watson. Being Bold For Changes: South Korea's Online Feminist Movement by Miranda Watson: <https://theowp.org/reports/being-bold-for-change-south-koreas-online-feminist-movement/> (accessed 22.11.2017)

<sup>5</sup> Lee Yu-jin. A Feminist Declaration "Don't Betray and Don't Humiliate 'Women'": [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/772101.html#csidxe228d14725e0e4ebf7910035399a189](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/772101.html#csidxe228d14725e0e4ebf7910035399a189) (accessed 21.11.2017); Megha Rajagopalan, Lee Jihye. This is what South Korean Women Think of Their President's Impeachment:

misogynistic discourse could negatively affect the women's empowerment in South Korea. Thirdly, they explained the reasons for the Park Geun-hye's dramatic downfall by the power structure in South Korea. For feminists, Park Geun-hye's political power was based on the close ties with chaebols, large Korean corporations, that used people as tools for their own empowerment and enrichment. This power structure implied patriarchal relationships between the subjects entrusted with authority, who were capable of influencing the decision-making in the Korean society. Thus, for the South Korean feminists, the Park Geun-hye's downfall illustrated the persistence of the traditional gender norms that so far determined the power relations in Korea, which is contrary to the declared gender equity and adherence to liberal values<sup>6</sup>.

During the political crisis in South Korea, the question about the restructuring of power relationships has emerged again in the feminist agenda. This question was actually outside the feminists' attention since the democratic transition of the Republic of Korea in 1987. The roots of the issue lie in Korean nationalism, and in particular in the complicated interactions between nationalism and feminism throughout the modern history of Korea. The present paper aims to demonstrate how the feminist thought and movement was developed in South Korea, and how feminism correlated with various forms of Korean nationalism during the building of a modern nation-state based on the rule of law and democracy.

### **The origins of feminist thought in Korea**

Korean feminism emerged within the old Confucian culture during the declining years of the Joseon Dynasty. It flourished under the Japanese colonial rule, acquired mature forms and ideological diversity. Unlike Western feminism, which appeared under the conditions of a developing industrial economy, gradual adopting by the emerging nation-state the concept of civil society as a core of its national ideology, Korean feminism arose under the absolute monarchy and semi-feudal economy. If the Western feminist movement started from the women's struggle for

---

[https://www.buzzfeed.com/meghara/the-fall-of-south-koreas-president-has-exposed-a-ton-of-sexi?utm\\_term=.bkb0BRGE5#.em45d6oGM](https://www.buzzfeed.com/meghara/the-fall-of-south-koreas-president-has-exposed-a-ton-of-sexi?utm_term=.bkb0BRGE5#.em45d6oGM) (accessed 21.11.2017)

<sup>6</sup> Lee Yu-jin. A Feminist Declaration "Don't Betray and Don't Humiliate 'Women'": [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/772101.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/772101.html) (accessed 21.11.2017)

suffrage and equal property rights, the starting point of Korean feminism was a movement for the female education. Korean male intellectuals were the first who raised the issue of women's education. The leaders of the Enlightenment movement (*gaehwa undong*), Yu Gil-jun, Park Yeong-hyo, told in their works about the equality of women and men in the West, highlighting female education system as a major factor in the progressive development of European countries. Later, the leaders of the "Independence club" (*Dongnip hyeophoe*) developed the ideas of women's education based on the western standards. Both the Enlightenment movement and the Independence club identified the issue of women's education as a prerequisite for the formation of a modern nation-state<sup>7</sup>. By advancing female education as a primary step of enriching Korean women with human rights, Korean intellectuals attempted to reevaluate traditional roles of women. They strived to escape from the old Confucian past to modernity, to create a new Korean society, where women's illiteracy would be no longer ignored. The Korean newspapers, edited in the late XIX- early XX centuries (*Dongnip sinmun*, 1896, *Hwangseong sinmun*, 1898, *Jeguk sinmun*, 1898, *Daehan maeil sinbo*, 1904) were "mediators of producing a new "people" (min) called *sinmin*, *inmin*, *kungmin*, and summoning women as members of this new "people" in to the public sphere"<sup>8</sup>.

In spite of the emergence of women's rights issue within the discourse of enlightenment and modernity initiated by Korean intellectuals, it was very limited and elitist. The more significant targets of the discourse were socio-political institutes of the Joseon state, which confronted modernity, and, as a consequence, the formation of the nation-state. In this regard, the problems of female education were always subordinate to the more tangible tasks of national development, such as demolition of absolute monarchy and creation of a new political system that is based on the division of power and the rule of law. Moreover, the aims of developing female education did not go beyond the concept of "wise mother and good wife", which became a motto of female education in the school system under the Japanese rule. According to this concept, women were to be educated for the sake of better education for their children, rational

---

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth M. Wells, 'The Price of Legitimacy: Women and the Kūnuhoe Movement, 1927-1931' in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*. Ed. By Gi-Wook Shin, Michael Robinson. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999, p.198-199.

<sup>8</sup> Suh Jiyoung, 'The "New Women" and the Topography of Modernity in Colonial Korea', *Korean Studies*, Vol. 37, 2014, p.15.

operation of the household and effective support of their husbands. This approach to women's education did not allow to break away from the prevalence of patriarchy. It simply reformulated the tasks of women's development, while retaining the rudiments of Confucian ethics. As before, motherhood remained an essential feature of women's social duties that determined their life and well-being within the Korean society<sup>9</sup>. Even the first women's social organization, which was created by the upper class married women in 1898, the Praise and Encouragement Society (*Chanyanghoe*) acted according this approach. The major achievement of the Society was an establishment of the first women's educational institute in Korea, the *Sunseong* Girls' School. As an elitist women's association, the Praise and Encouragement society had a limited sphere of influence and scopes. "Largely composed of the privileged, such organizations upheld the power of women in a high society whose sense of *noblesse oblige* prompted them to educate their less-fortunate sisters"<sup>10</sup>. Neither the Society nor the *Sungseong* Girls' School functioned for a long time. In 1900, the Society was dismissed, and sometime later, the School was closed. However, by insistently promoting female education, the leaders of the Society stimulated the governing Kojeon Emperor and its government to move towards establishing female schools<sup>11</sup>.

The colonial modernization and development of national liberation movement under the Japanese rule resulted in the emergence of the first

---

<sup>9</sup> In 1930-1940s, the traditional concept of motherhood that dominated throughout the Joseon era was reconsidered by the Japanese colonial authorities in terms of the modern nationalism. According to a new approach, a woman was not just a mother, who raised children and took care of the family, but also a subject of the nation, and as such could significantly contribute to the prosperity and empowerment of the Japanese nation. It explains why the colonial authorities actively encouraged the involvement of Korean women in the industrial production and the public awareness campaigns for mobilization of the nation's spirit (국민총력운동). *The Modern and Contemporary History of Korean Women* (한국 근현대여성사). Ed. By Jeon Kyung-eok, Yu Suk-ran, Kim Eun-sil, Sin Hui-seon. Vol. 1, Seoul, 2011, pp.87-88.

<sup>10</sup> Kim Janice, *To Live to Work. Factory Women in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, p.8.

<sup>11</sup> Lee Seong-hee, *Korean Women in the Modern History* (근대사 속의 한국 여성), Seoul, 2014, p.56.

female journals<sup>12</sup> and all-national female organizations including representatives of different social backgrounds. For the first time in Korean history, women established politically oriented organizations: the Patriotic Women's Society (*Aeguk buinhoe*), the Women's Society for Korean Independence (*Daehan dognrip buinhoe*), the Socialist League of Korean Women (*Joseon yeoseong donguhoe*), the *Geunuhoe* (Friends of the Rose of Sharon), etc. As Kim Heisook noted, "Many women thought that participation in independence movements was a way to attain equality with men. Thus, feminism and nationalism were not in conflict because women could find escape through nationalist movements without scruples regarding activity outside their home. Nationalism awakened women to the logic that they could do something meaningful for themselves, for the family (especially their fathers, brothers, and sons), and for their own home"<sup>13</sup>.

During the Japanese occupation, Korean feminist groups divided ideologically into three directions: socialist, cultural nationalism, and Christian (Protestant missionaries). Aside from these three groups stood Korean women novelists and artists, such as Na Hye-seok, Kim Won-ju, Kim Myeon-seon, who developed their ideas on femininity through novels, paintings, and journalism. By their provocative style of behavior, open criticism of patriarchy and traditional views on Korean women's duties, they were called New Women (*sinyeoseong*) by Korean mass media, comparing them to Old-Fashioned Women. The latter were regarded "as living behind the times, helpless and isolated from the changes accompanied by new lifestyles and new ideas, staying indoors or in the countryside, and adhering to feudal conventions"<sup>14</sup>. Unlike the women-socialists or women-Protestants, united within Young Women Christian Association (YWCA, 1922), New Women suggested a completely new approach to understanding women's chastity and body<sup>15</sup>. Factually, they

---

<sup>12</sup> The first female journal was "The Woman's World" (여자계) that was published in 1917-1920. In 1920, by the initiative of Kim Il-ryeop "The New Woman" (신여자) was created, but only four issues of the journal were published. From 1923 to 1934 the Gaebyeok Publishing House published a female magazine "The New Woman" (신여성).

<sup>13</sup> Kim Heisook, *Feminist Philosophy in Korea: Subjectivity of Korean Women*, *Signs*, Vol. 34, No.2, 2009, p. 248.

<sup>14</sup> Suh Jiyoun, 'The "New Women" and the Topography of Modernity in Colonial Korea', p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Rhee Jooyeon, '«No Country for the New Woman»: Rethinking Gender and Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea through Kim Myōngsun', *Acta Koreana*, vol. 17, No.1, 2014,



were the first who initiated a discourse on women's sexuality in Korean culture. Although both socialists, Protestants and cultural nationalists arose the issues of women's liberation. While for Christians, women's liberation was achieved through love for God, for socialists and nationalists, it was attained through national liberation. However, New Women thought about women's liberation exclusively in the framework of individual freedom. In this sense, they tried to escape from a Confucian tradition based on patriarchy, within which the woman's body had always entirely belonged to the family, and never to her as an individual.<sup>16</sup>

Although the colonial modernization led to expansion of women's social duties by involving them in the developing industries, commerce services, and education through public schools for girls, it did not influence the change of women's legal status. It remained as low as it was under the Joseon Dynasty. As previously, women did not have a legal right to inherit or to be the head of the family, "unless she was the only one in the family. A married woman could own property, but her husband had the right to control it. Unfaithfulness was a basis for divorce to a wife but not to a husband"<sup>17</sup>. For this reason, some Korean scholars do not mention a period of the Japanese occupation when analyzing the development of Korean feminism<sup>18</sup>. They consider that because there were no essential changes in the social status of women under the Japanese rule, there was no need to point out this period intentionally.

The colonial regime had no specific policy aimed at improving women's social status. The policy of modernization, which indirectly contributed to the awakening of women's social conscience, was based on

pp.399-427; Speaking about Na Hye-seok (나혜석을 말한다). Ed. By the Society for Studying Na Hye-seok's Literary Works and Paintings. Seoul: Deoso chulpan hwangeumal Publishing Comp., 2016, pp. 82-91.

<sup>16</sup> Protestant missionaries significantly contributed to the women's enlightenment in Korea, but, as Choi Hyaewol rightly noted, they tried to stay within a Confucian tradition as much as they could. The young Koreans who attended mission girls' schools were under close watch by the administration. The missionaries' adherence to religiosity and domesticity practically made impossible for their pupils to reconsider the traditional views on gender and body. Choi Hyaewol, *Gender and Mission. Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp.104-107.

<sup>17</sup> Koh Whang-kyung, 'The Status of Women in Korea', *Pi Lambda Theta Journal*, vol. 27, No. 3, 1949, p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> Shim Young-hee, 'Changes of Women's Policy in Korea during the recent 30 year', *Gender and Society* 6 (2), 2009, pp. 9-44; Chong H. Kelly, *Deliverance and Submission. Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008.

the principles of inequality and hierarchy of the Japanese and Korean cultures, capitals, and people. The technical and economic improvements that accompanied colonial modernization could not overcome the underdevelopment of the Korean economy as a whole. Therefore, the double-standard policies of the Japanese government resulted in hybridization of the colonizers' and the colonized cultures<sup>19</sup>. Regarding Korean women, it meant that even though their life became more multifaceted and malleable to adopting modernity, it continued to be based on patriarchy and inequality.

### **Feminism and Nationalism after Liberation of Korea: From Integrity to Controversy**

The liberation of Korea from the Japanese colonialism in August 1945 led to an unprecedented political activity of the Korean people. Korean nationalist and left-wing socialist groups started their political activities with a renewed vigor. Driven by the desire to establish as soon as possible an independent Korean state that was free from the disgraceful remnants of the semi-feudal colonial past, Korean nationalists and communists suggested various ideologies and projects of the future nation-state. Fairly soon after the liberation, Korean communists were out of the political power in South Korea, giving way to the extreme rightist nationalists such as Rhee Syng-man, Lee Beom-seok, An Ho-sang, and others.

Rhee Syng-man, the first president of the Republic of Korea, Lee Beom-seok, the prominent leader of the Korean youth groups and the first prime minister, and An Ho-sang, the first minister of education, understood Korean nationalism in their own way. However, all of them shared the view that the state is a foundation of the Korean nation. An Ho-sang wrote that: "If the home is a house of the family, the state is a house of the nation. The state is more precious than an individual or class. The state is bigger than any public organization or political party. The essence of the life, as well as one nation's nature, reveals itself through the highest appreciation of the state and nation [by the people]"<sup>20</sup>. By focusing on the state and by evaluating it as a core of the Korean nation, *minjeok*, South Korean political leadership put the interest of the state (governing regime)

---

<sup>19</sup> Kim Janice C.H., *To Live to Work. Factory Women in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, p.11.

<sup>20</sup> Cit. by Park Chan-seung, *The Nation and Nationalism (민족-민족주의)*, Seoul: Doseo chulpan sohwa, 2010, p. 229.

above the interests of its citizens. This understanding of the Korean nation and the state led to contradictions between Korean feminism and nationalism.

As Kim Hei-sook rightly noted, feminism and nationalism clashed after the liberation of Korea. "Women's primary role had been defined as being the mother (homemaker) who was supposed to perpetuate the traditional family clan by giving birth to sons in accordance with Confucian values. While actively participating in the process of Westernization understood as modernization, most Korean men, including nationalists, ironically thought feminism was Western propaganda that should be blamed for women's neglect of family values"<sup>21</sup>. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Korea, women were granted equal rights with men in all spheres of social life. At that time, Korean women called these changes in their legal status a "dual liberation", because they were liberated both politically and socially<sup>22</sup>. For the first time, four Korean women were elected to the Korean Interim Legislative Assembly (1946-1948), and later, one woman was elected to the National Assembly of the first convocation (Im Yeong-sin, Women's National Party of Korea, 1948-1950). However, the declared formal equality of men and women in civil rights was not accompanied by changes in the family law, inheritance rights, and protection of maternity and childhood. In 1949, in the article about a social status of Korean women soon after liberation, Koh Whang-kyung expressed hope that the newly established South Korean government would adopt laws that truly guarantee equal rights to women<sup>23</sup>.

Theoretically, the Rhee Syng-man's conception of nation-state, known as the One-People Principle (*ilminjuui*), implied a model of liberal democracy with national specifics. It was quite a primitive and one-sided ideology, which was more clearly formulated in the works of An Heo-sang than those of Rhee Syng-man. The ideology mainly aimed to unite the Korean nation against the threat of Communism and the Soviet Union while stressing the deep roots of the Korean culture and people, and the great importance of the state consolidating the nation. In spite of the obvious statism and extreme nationalism, the One-People Principle comprised the basic ideas of democracy and civil society. Thus, the

---

<sup>21</sup> Kim Hei-sook, *Feminist Philosophy in Korea: Subjectivity of Korean Women*, p. 248.

<sup>22</sup> Koh Whang-kyung, *The Status of Women in Korea*, p. 155.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

ideologists of the First Republic of Korea created a controversy between political reality and official propaganda.

In broad terms, Koreans understood democracy as a rule by the people. Then, the question arose: “If women were only formally granted equal rights with men while being excluded from the decision-making processes in South Korea under Rhee Syng-man's regime, then who were the people?” Since the beginning of the South Korean state, women's public organizations raised a question about the equal distribution of political power. The other urgent tasks of women's development were reforms in marriage, divorce, inheritance laws, and child custody. The main task, from the point of reforming family law, was an abolition of the family-head system (*hojuje*), which was a core of patriarchal rights in Korean society. The family-head system substantially constrained the development of women's rights in South Korea, maintaining patriarchy and gender inequality. “From early on, the women's movement in Korea recognized the *hojuje* as a symbol of discrimination against women and worked very diligently to change and eventually abolish the law.”<sup>24</sup> However, it took a long time to achieve all of those goals that were stated by the Korean women's movement soon after the liberation.

In the 1950s, among the organizations advocating for legal reforms in the family law, there was the Federation of Korean Women's Groups (*Daehan yeoseong danche hyeobihoe*) headed by Lee Tae-young (1914-1998), the first female lawyer in Korea. The Federation consisted of seven groups: the Korean Association of University Women (*Daehan yeohaksa hyeobihoe*), Korean Association of YWCA (*Daehan YWCA yeonhaphoe*), Korean Women's Association (*Daehan Buinhoe*), Society for the Research of Women's Issues (*Yeoseong munje yeonguhoe*), Korea Women's Christian Temperance Union (*Daehan yeoja gidokkyo jeoljehoe*), Korea Catholic Women's Association (*Daehan cheonjugyo buinhoe*), and Korea Buddhist Women's Association (*Daehan pulgyo buinhoe*)<sup>25</sup>. In 1959, many of these groups founded the Korean National Council of Women (KNCW), which became the most important female organization during the Park Chung-hee military dictatorship. Later, the KNCW joined the International Council of Women and its founding

---

<sup>24</sup> Oh Jaelim, ‘Women's Political Participation and the Change of Family Law – A Case Study of the Abolition Process of Family Head System (the Hojuje) in Korea’, *Asian Women* 23 (2), 2007, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Seung-kyung, *The Korean Women's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p. 21.

president Kim Hwal-lan, who was one of the prominent female leaders of Korea in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Under Rhee Syng-man and Park Chung-hee's regimes, only pro-government organizations could survive. As Sohn Seong-young wrote, "In such a conservative era pro-Japanese people were predominantly those with power and a majority of pro-Japanese people continued to serve as leaders of women's organizations"<sup>26</sup>. For example, Kim Hwal-lan, as a leader of YWCA and the first Korean president of Ewha University, was also known for her collaborative ties with the Japanese colonial authorities. In spite of her spotty reputation, she continued to play a leading role in women's movement in 1950-60s.

The authoritarian regimes constrained the development of women's rights in South Korea through the revival of conservative family values and resistance to structural reforms of the family law. As a result, the women's policy had a limited scope, covering mainly the most vulnerable women such as low-income mothers, prostitutes, and unwed mothers. Although Park Chung-hee officially did not deny democracy and liberalism, which made possible development of feminism in the West, he reconsidered them in terms of the Korean nationalism. "Nationalistic democracy" of Park Chung-hee implied the superiority of the nation over the individual. According to Park Chung-hee, individual freedoms and human rights guarantees could not ensure stability and state's efficiency. He truly believed that democratic elections weakened the nation's strength by threatening its stability and security<sup>27</sup>. In order to justify his own views on liberal values, he suggested distinguishing between "big freedom" (*keun jayu*) and "little freedom" (*jageun jayu*). At the current stage of the national development, Koreans had to sacrifice their "little

---

<sup>26</sup> Sohn Seong-young, 'The Women's Movements in Korea: Transition and Prospects', *Asian Women*, 9, 1999, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Kim Ji-hyung, 'The Dismantling and Continuance of the Governing Ideology of Park Chung Hee from 1960s to 1970s: Centering round Mutual Constraints of Anticommunism and Democracy (1960-1970 년대 박정희 통치이념의 변용과 지속 - 민주주의와 반공주의 및 상호관계를 중심으로)', *Minjujuui-wa ingwon* (Journal of Democracy and Human Rights), 2013, № 13 (2), pp.178-180.

freedom” to achieve “big freedom” that meant, in his opinion, the uprooting of Communism and advancing the economic growth<sup>28</sup>.

It is not surprising that under authoritarian regime there was no progress on the development of women’s rights in South Korea. Shim Young-hee called the women's policy led by the South Korean government in 1945-1980s a “residual welfare policy,” stating that “there was no proper women's policy specifically targeted at women in general”<sup>29</sup>. The most massive women's organization in the 1970s, the New Village Women's Association, whose membership reached 3 million by 1979<sup>30</sup>, was created to support political agenda of the Park Chung-hee regime and to maintain the traditional image of women as “wise mother and good wife.” In 1979, a South Korean scholar, Yoon Soon Young, wrote that “in the name of nationalism, Korean wives and mothers are told to be self-sacrificing “virtuous women.” In the name of nationalism, activists are told to do things the “Asian way” - quietly, without the aggressive marches and public demonstrations of the Western women's movement”<sup>31</sup>. All of this meant that the structural reforms of the family law and empowering of women were possible within the fundamentally new political surroundings free of extreme nationalism and authoritarianism.

### **Empowering Women through Democratization and Economic Modernization**

In the 1970s, the intensive industrialization and modernization of the South Korean economy led to a rapid urbanization and a gradual increase in household incomes. South Korea was changing its image as an agrarian and underdeveloped country, and along with this was changing its social structure. The growing working class and students launched the movement for democratization, demanding political liberalizations, namely, guarantees of civil and political rights, such as freedom of

---

<sup>28</sup> Kang Jung-in, Ha Sang-bok. Park Chung-hee’s Political Thought: Illiberal Conservatism for Modernization (박정희의 정치사상 – 반자유주의적 근대화 보수주의), *Hyeondae jeonchi yeongu* (현대정치연구), 2012, № 5, p.203.

<sup>29</sup> Shim Young-hee, ‘Changes of Women’s Policy in Korea During the Recent 30 Year’, *Gender and Society* 6 (2), 2007, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Kim Seung-kyung, *The Korean Women’s Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> Yoon Soon Young, ‘The Labor of Women: Work and Family’, *Signs*, Vol. 4, No.4, p. 758.

assembly and expression, and ensuring space for civil society activism. The pro-democracy movement consisted of many social and religious groups, including female organizations. The largest female organizations that opposed the dictatorship were the Christian Academy, Korea Church Women United (*Hanguk gyeohoe yeoseong yeonhaphoe*). Although formally these were female religious organizations, they had specific political goals. The Christian Academy, which was headed by Kang Won-ryeong, functioned as an educational organization to train labor activists. Korea Church Women United (KCWU) “took a leading role in condemning sex tourism, and exposing government’s complicity with it”<sup>32</sup>. KCWU supported families of political prisoners and the labor movement.

The participation in the movement for democratization allowed Korean women to declare themselves as politically motivated social activists instead of merely “wise mothers and good housewives.” Women’s economic participation rate had been continuously growing since the 1960s. It was 26.8% in 1960, 36.5 in 1970, 42.8 in 1980, and 47.0% in 1990<sup>33</sup>. Along with the growth of female workers, the number of female students steadily increased at the end of 1970s – early 1980s. In Pae Eun-kyeong’s opinion, who was a professor of sociology and women’s studies at Seoul National University, it was an important factor for the awakening of the political conscience of young Korean women<sup>34</sup>. Female students started to participate in the movement for democratization following the example of their progressive male classmates, who had been already engaged in the *minjung* movement. One of the respondents, who was interviewed by me in August 2016, said that only 20 % of students regularly attended the classes at the university in the early 1980s, while the rest were engaged in the opposition activities. It meant that if someone stayed in class, he or she could be treated as a pro-government, conservative person, and non-progressive.

In the late 1970s, Korean youth became “increasingly discontented with the traditional constraints of arranged marriages, sex segregation, classical education, and the taboos of discussing sexual morality”<sup>35</sup>. The increasing interest of Korean youth in the problems of women’s

---

<sup>32</sup> Kim Seung-kyung, *The Korean Women’s Movement and the State*, p.23.

<sup>33</sup> Shim Young-hee, *Changes of Women’s Policy in Korea During the Recent 30 Year*, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Pae Eun-kyung, professor of sociology and women’s studies at Seoul National University, 24.08.2016. Audio-file.

<sup>35</sup> Yoon Soon Young, *The Labor of Women: Work and Family*, p.752.

development motivated the Ewha University board to establish Women's Study Programme (1977) and then Korean Women's Institute (1979). The creation of the feminism-oriented bachelor's programme was widely publicized in South Korean media. Open debates emerged between women activists and Confucian conservatives. Critics blamed women activists for following the Western ideas and for betraying the national identity. Supporters of the Women's Studies Programme thought that its creation was as natural as electricity or telegraph, which were derived from the West<sup>36</sup>.

Since the mid-1970s, the influence of the international women's movement on the formulation of women's policy of the UN member states has gradually increased. From 1975 to 1995, four International Conferences on Women were held. The most notable result of the first conference was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDW), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979<sup>37</sup>. All signatories committed themselves to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women [CEDW, 1979]. South Korea signed the Convention in 1984 and established two organizations to address women's issues: Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI, 1983) and the National Committee on Women's Policies. The KWDI was established under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, and it was responsible for developing women's policy for the government. In 1985, the KWDI elaborated its first plan for women's development, which later was submitted by the National Committee to the government. Thus, the Framework Act on Women's development was adopted. It identified three stages for administrative institutions to implement the tasks of women's development: the consolidation period (the period before 1985), the preparation period (1985-95), and the implementation period (1995-2000)<sup>38</sup>. In 1988, by the appointment of the Second Minister of State for Political Affairs with a special focus on women, the first women's policy machinery in the South Korean government was established. Under the Kim Dae-jung

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 751.

<sup>37</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm> (accessed 10.08.2017)

<sup>38</sup> Kim Seung-kyung, *The Korean Women's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, p. 26.



presidency, the staff was transferred to the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs (1998) and renamed into Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) in 2001, and subsequently into Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) in 2005.

The gender mainstream policy at the global level coincided with a widespread involvement of Korean women in the movement for democratization. In the 1980s, several important female organizations were established: Association for Women's Equality and Friendship (1983, *Yeoseong byeonguhoe*), Korea Women's Hotline (*Hanguk yeoseong jeonhwa*, 1983), Alternative culture (*Tto hanau munhwa*, 1984), Korean Women's Associations United (*Yeoseong danche yeonhap*, 1987), and Korean Women Workers' Association (*Hanguk yeoseong nodongjahoe*, 1987). All these organizations, to a greater or lesser extent, participated in the movement against the governing authoritarian regime of Chung Doo-hwan. The left-wing female activists were setting the tone for the entire movement, considering that women's liberation was possible only through socio-political transformation. They identified "the governing regime with monopoly capitalism, military fascism, and US imperialism... This paradigm was directly reflected in the women's movement without any filtering"<sup>39</sup>. Until the 1990s, Korean feminist scholars sympathized with this point of view because they were more inclined towards the evolutionist approach of women's liberation. Contrary to the structuralist's point of view, Korean scholars have never thought about "women's oppression in terms of men against women but in terms of political and economic systems"<sup>40</sup>. The successful political changes at the end of 1980s, an abolition of the military regime, influenced the feminism by making it more multifaceted and flexible.

## Conclusion

The amendment to the Constitution in 1987 was a watershed in the socio-political and economic development of South Korea. The starting political and economic liberalization of the governing regime symbolized a finishing line of the long route of Koreans towards a modern nation-state that is based on democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. This does not mean that the nation-building process has stopped at this point of the historical route, but it essentially changed the tasks for further national

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Yoon Soon Young, *The Labor of Women: Work and Family*, p.754.

development. The women's movement responded to the ongoing socio-political transformations by formulating new challenges for women's development. They demanded to introduce quotas for the legislative assemblies and governmental committees to increase a political participation of women in Korea. At the end of 1980s – early 1990s, the majority of Korean women shared the opinion that inception of quotas will lead to equal opportunities for men and women in the decision-making process<sup>41</sup>. The younger generation tended to prefer female candidates at elections more than the older one, which decreased discrimination against women in politics<sup>42</sup>. Women's organizations launched a series of campaigns for legal reforms, providing education for future female leaders and for enhancing public awareness of gender equality in political areas<sup>43</sup>. As a result of the continuous efforts of women's movement, gender quotas were first introduced in South Korea in 2000 (30 percent quotas for female candidates in proportional representation lists, and subsequently increased to 50 percent quotas in 2004). The adoption of the gender quotas allowed to strengthen political empowerment of women, thus opening new possibilities for young women to enter politics.

Important changes have occurred in the family law. In 2005, National Assembly finally passed a bill abolishing the family-head system (*hojuje*). Due to an active persuasion by women deputies as well as the continuous pursuit by women's organizations, the last remnant of the Confucian-based family law was abolished. Although the conservative groups, such as Korean Clan Leaders Federation, Alliance for the Korean Orthodox Family Institution, Mothers for Saving the Nation, tried to prevent abolishing of *the hojuje*, within new socioeconomic and political circumstances, the majority of Koreans no longer supported their views on family relationships. Along with the revision of the Family Law, in the 2000s many other laws were adopted to embody gender equality and guarantee women's rights in South Korea. All these measures undermined

---

<sup>41</sup> Chun Kyung Ock, 'Women's Political Empowerment in Korea: Legitimacy and Prospects', *Asian Women* 2, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> Park Kyung-Ae, 'Political Representation and South Korean Women', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 58, No.2, 1999, p. 440.

<sup>43</sup> Oh Kyung Jin, 'Women's Political Participation in South Korea and Activist Organizations', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 22(3), 2016, p. 340; Lee Hui-suk, *Local Self-Government and Women's Political Empowerment* (지방자치와 여성의 정치세력화), Seoul: Dasan chulpansa, 2016, pp. 79-86.

the foundations of patriarchy and of the Confucian approach to women's social role, making the South Korean society more receptive to the feminist rhetoric

## Mea culpa phenomenon: Comparative study of apologies in the Japanese, American and Hungarian Media

### Abstract

In the Japanese media, individuals and corporate executives bow in front of the cameras tearfully asking for forgiveness for their misconduct. Compared to media apologies in the Europe and the United States, it is clear that the Japanese are following strict formal rules, including even the length and the degree of the bow during the apology, while Western apologies are diverse. The comparative case-study of this study shows not only the uniqueness of Japanese apologies but structural differences in apologies between cultures based on the understanding of responsibility.

**Key words:** apology structure, media event, cultural differences, responsibility, comparative study

### Introduction

“I am sorry” is a common expression in Japan. The Japanese apologize frequently not only in their personal lives but also on television, in which “apology interviews” are held in various situations, such as a politician who had an affair with a colleague, a singer who stripped naked and shouted in the park at night, and a company that poisoned millions by outdated dairies. In the apology interviews, the apologizer typically stands in front of the cameras; bows deeply and apologizes and promises not to act in that way again. They usually dress formally, and some may even cut their hair as a blatant expression of remorse. There are such scandals in Europe and the United States, but apologies are less frequent. In addition, Japanese apologies tend to have similar patterns, but Europeans and

---

\* Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Americans apologize in various ways, sometimes just merely uttering sorry.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how apologies function in different cultural fields, by scrutinizing the differences of media apologies in each culture. This paper argues that the apology interviews held in Western cultures predominantly imply both social and economic responsibilities, while in Japan, apologies are mainly for emotional appeals. Further, the Japanese apologize within a day after the incident, but in Europe and the United States, it is common that the apology comes 3 or more days after the incident; if at all. The purpose of the Japanese apology interview is to express the apologizer's remorse in an effort to mitigate the public's anger and media's criticism. In shaping of Japan's media apologies, TV journalists assume key roles as mediators between the accused and accusers.

To verify my hypothesis, this study compares apology conferences in the media from Japan, Hungary and the United States, and analyses the apologies with understanding the cultural background of crisis communication. The three countries were chosen based on Hofstede's cultural typology, which states<sup>1</sup> that Japan is a collectivist country, the United States is an individualist, and Hungary has changed from collectivism to individualism after the collapse of the communist system. The aim of this research is to clarify the apology differences in each country and create a cultural typology of apologies.

### **Research method**

Comparative content analysis is used to investigate differences in crisis management between the three countries. Table 1 shows the eleven cases from the three countries categorized in five types for analysis. In the first type, "Celebrities' apologies", responses to moral failures of professional entertainers were compared and analysed. In the United States, Mel Gibson was arrested for driving under the influence and while sitting in the back of a police car he said that "Jews are responsible for all the wars on the world<sup>2</sup>." In Hungary, András Stohl (popular actor and TV personality) crashed his car while drunk causing injuries to two people. In Japan, Tsuyoshi Kusanagi (member of the popular male idol group

---

<sup>1</sup> Hofstede, "National Cultural Dimensions" [www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/](http://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/) (accessed 10.02.2017)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDfUhlBgfoU> (accessed 15.04.2017)

SMAP) caused a night-time public disturbance at Tokyo park while drunk and naked. In the second type, “Politician apologies”, American and Japanese politicians’ apologies on private issues were compared. In the United States, former President Bill Clinton apologized for his sexual affair with Monica Lewinsky. In Japan, parliamentary vice minister of the Agricultural Ministry and member of the Liberal Democratic Party, Yuko Nakagawa apologized for kissing her married colleague Hirofumi Kado after a photo was published of the couple kissing in public. The third category of apologies, “Corporation accident apologies”, focused on accidents of companies that occurred in Japan and Hungary. In both cases, it was unclear as to whether natural damage or personal mistake caused the failure. In Hungary, an aluminium factory’s dam broke and 800,000 cubic meters of red mud flowed out destroying surrounding villages and causing the deaths of 11 people. In Japan, highway tunnel ceiling panels fell down causing 11 people’s death. The fourth type, “Corporation apology”, centered on corporate moral issues from the United States and Japan. In the U.S. a passenger with cancer was removed from an Alaska Airline flight with the reason being that no emergency landing could be made if the passenger experienced a medical emergency. In Japan, JR railways had an overhead pillar problem between two Tokyo stations, which disrupted train service and caused problems for passengers. In the fifth type, cross cultural comparisons of corporate apologies were conducted. The two cases included Toyota’s apology to the U.S. Congress over three recalls of its automobiles, and McDonalds apology in Japan for using chicken from China instead of Japan and founding plastic and other items in McDonald’s products.

This study is based on content analysis of newspaper articles and television images. In content analysis, the focus is on individuals’ apology style and includes: 1) their explanation of circumstances; 2) recognition of their own failure; 3) their sense of responsibility; 4) and their future commitment through their verbal and non-verbal expressions. In the case of a company apologies I focused on the leadership, either the president or upper management, and analysed their expressions and comments.

	JAPAN	USA	HUNGARY
Celebrities' apology	Kusanagi Tsuyoshi	Mel Gibson	Stohl Andras
Politicians' apology	Nakagawa Yuko	Bill Clinton	
Corporation apology (accident)	NEXCO		MAL Ltd.
Corporation apology	Japan Railways	Alaska Airlines	
Cross-cultural corporation apology	McDonalds	Toyota	

Table 1. Selected cases for comparative research

### Apologies in Social Orientation Aspects

#### Celebrities' Apology

Two cases from the United States<sup>3</sup> and Hungary<sup>4</sup> were compared in which the accused spoke about their mistakes from their point of view in deep-interviews, searching the psychological reasons for their

<sup>3</sup>Mel Gibson (a popular American actor) was arrested for drunk driving on July 28, 2006. While he sat in the police car he said to the officer, "You are a Jew, and Jews are responsible for all the wars on the world." This anti-Semitic expressions hurt many people's feelings. Gibson gave a special interview to GMA Exclusive and talked about his feelings on that day. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDfUhlBgfoU> (accessed 15.04.2017)

<sup>4</sup>András Stohl is a popular entertainer in Hungary. He was also an actor and was working as an announcer on many TV programs. In 2010, a couple of people were injured in a car accident where Stohl was driving drunk. He lost more than half of his media and theater work shortly after the accident. The trial judgment announced him guilty and he entered the prison for five months. The special interview was taken about his feelings before entering prison. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtE8fxHOVPc> (accessed 06.03.2016)

misconducts. However, they not only apologized but showed self-punishing, saying that “I know I was stupid” or “I should not have done that” in order to gain sympathy and compassion from the viewers. As Otani<sup>5</sup> pointed out in an NHK TV program, “by crushing your face by yourself and punishing yourself first, you protect yourself from being punished by others.” For this reason Japanese apologizers often resort to “*marugari*” (cutting their hair very short, or even shaving their head) as a sign of remorse. However, in the case of Western celebrities, self-punishing can be seen in the same way, but cutting hair is not considered a show of regret. Gibson and Stohl showed self-punishing in order to reduce the anger of the public and to restore their reputation, but they did not shave their hair.

In Japan<sup>6</sup>, Kusanagi apologized in a TV show after his incident; however, as a punishment, his agency isolated him from Japanese society for five weeks by confining him to his apartment. It can be also seen as a self-punishment to get forgiveness from the society. At his apology show, he did not go into the details of the act, but he did apologize for disturbing the society. As seen in the case study, it is common to the apologizers to speak from the perspective of the people being apologized, using expressions like “I am really sorry”, “I caused you trouble”, “I made you worry”. However, in the case of the United States and Hungary, such expression are very rare, they rather use, “I was stupid”, “I shouldn’t have done that.” Moreover, there was an expression in Gibson’s interview, where he did not even understand the feelings of Jews. As such, while self-centred individualist Americans and Hungarians first see how much inconvenience the incident caused to them, group-focused collectivist Japanese first judge how much trouble they caused to the group, and do not see the incident from their own point of view. This reaction may come from the difference of collectivist and individual cultures.

---

<sup>5</sup> “丸刈りでおわび！？ニッポンの”謝罪” NHKG 週刊 FU.KA.YO.MI.”:21:02

<sup>6</sup> Kusanagi Tsuyoshi is a member of the Japanese idol group SMAP. In 2010, he got drunk and stripped naked in a Tokyo park and behaved unacceptably until the police arrested him. Immediately after the incident he lost many of his work for a while, advertisements featuring him were suspended, and he was forced remain in his apartment for five weeks as punishment. After the five week isolation, he apologized again in a live show and returned to show business. Itaya, "Kusanagi Tsuyoshi return SMAP SPECIAL LIVE."2009.06.01. FUJI TV.



### Politician's Apology

In this category an American<sup>7</sup> and a Japanese<sup>8</sup> politician's apology interviews were compared. Nakagawa was forced to apologize by the Parliament, she showed regret, she was ashamed, but did not mention the incident and did not use the typical Japanese apology words. During the whole apology, she did not look up, she apologized for disturbing the society, but not for her act. After the apology, she shifted the focus of the topic to her work and emphasized how much she can do for the society in the future.

On the other hand, former President Clinton admitted his lie and his sexual affair 40 seconds into his apology announcement. However, he did not consider this act as a sin against the public and did not apologize to the society at all. Clinton's aim was to restore relations with the American public, and to recover the relationship with his family. Therefore, he admitted his action, and said "I was wrong" but also expressed that this situation is nobody else's business but his family's and his. Clinton's apology ended in success, after the apology media focused on his job rather than his scandal. Clinton's approval rating returned to 66% by the end of his presidential term.<sup>9</sup>

According to Kellerman<sup>10</sup> and Tavuchis<sup>11</sup>, whether politicians and leaders apologize or not is an important issue. Basically, politicians consider their mistake carefully, and if the mistake has future impacts they apologize, but if there is no impact they do not. Furthermore, since all the words they use have deep meanings, words are chosen very carefully.

---

<sup>7</sup> Bill Clinton was the President of the United States from 1993 to 2001 and began a relationship with Monica Lewinsky who worked at the White House as an intern in 1995-96. Lewinsky talked to her colleagues about the affair, and the story was recorded on tape. The scandal was released in January 1998, Clinton refused comment. However, on August 17, 1998 he apologized to the U.S. public.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEmjwR0Rs20> (accessed 22.02.2016)

<sup>8</sup> Nakagawa Yuko is a politician of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan. A tabloid magazine reported the details and published a photo, that in 2015 February she kissed a married colleague. Nakagawa hospitalized herself for two weeks after the scandal and later made a public apology in the Parliament. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wKVbg-3FJA> (accessed 02.11.2016)

<sup>9</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/18/clinton.poll/> (access 20.05.2017)

<sup>10</sup> Kellerman, Barbara. "When Should a Leader Apologize—and When Not?" Harvard Business Review, 2006. <https://hbr.org/2006/04/when-should-a-leader-apologize-and-when-not> (accessed 10.12.2016)

<sup>11</sup> Tavuchis, Nicolas. *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*. Stanford University press, 1991. p6.

### Corporate apology (accident)

For this comparison, two serious accidents were selected from Japan<sup>12</sup> and Hungary<sup>13</sup>, and both received widespread attention in their respective countries. The level of the two accidents, the number of the casualties were similar. In the two cases, it is clear that the Central Nippon Expressway Company (NEXCO) was well prepared in advance. NEXCO had crises management plans before the accident, and this is why they held a press conference immediately after the accident and apologized twice. The president apologized in the first instance and the president of safety service division apologized in the second instance. Also, it can be seen that they carefully selected the words they used. They strongly emphasized apology for the victim's family without mentioning the word "responsibility". In Japan, apologizing immediately after an accident, does not mean also taking responsibility. The words they used rather referred to the future, ignoring past actions and facts.

On the other hand, Magyar Aluminium Zrt. (MAL) in Hungary seemed to have no preparation for crisis situations. After the accident, the president of the company did not show up. Four days later he finally conducted a press conference, but he only emphasized that "MAL has done everything according to the rules." It was a major failure of MAL that they did not provide information to reporters. In not disclosing more information, it encouraged reporters to investigate the accident, and eventually tarnished the reputation of MAL.

### Corporate apology (Misconduct)

A big difference in corporate apology was that in the case of Alaska Airline<sup>14</sup>, press conference was not held and the president did not appear.

---

<sup>12</sup> On December 2, 2012, a concrete board (1.7 tons) suddenly fell down in a highway tunnel about 1,700 meters from the exit Otsuki-shi Yamanashi City, Yamanashi Prefecture. Three cars were crushed and nine people were killed. The Sasago Tunnel was managed and operated by Nakanihonkousoku Ltd. (NEXCO). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzflwPbak-c> (accessed 16.10.1017)

<sup>13</sup> On October 4, 2010, at a aluminum factory located in Ajka City, northwest of Hungary, the wall of the waste accumulation dam broke, red mud of 800,000 cubic meters flowed out, destroying the surrounding villages, and killing 10 people. MAL Co., Ltd. managed and operated the aluminum factory. source:TV2 Tenyek 2010.10.08.

<sup>14</sup> On April 6, 2015, a cancer patient was taken off from Alaska Airline's plane flying from Honolulu to San José. Alaska Airlines said it was in order to protect the passengers' health, because there is no possibility for emergency landing from Hawaii to the continent, so they decided not to take this passenger. Finally, the company apologized. Source:KTLA5 News (accessed on 09.05.2015)

Alaska Airlines only apologized by sending a comment to AP news agency and to all media. The comment included the apology, saying, “We regret the inconvenience Ms. Sedway experienced yesterday and are very sorry for how the situation was handled.”<sup>15</sup>

In the case of Japan Railways Company<sup>16</sup> (JR), they similarly posted an apology comment on their website, briefly explaining the circumstances and apologizing to the customers. However along with the apology comment, they also held an apology conference, where JR executives bowed and apologized.

In both United States and Japan it is a common practice that companies release comments on their homepages, but in Japan not only the comment but visually apologizing in front of the media is also required. In other words, in Japan, it is considered insufficient to apologize only by text.

#### Cross comparison of corporate apologies

It happens sometimes that a company causes trouble overseas, and they need to apologize in different countries. In this situation should the apology collate to the culture of the country where the problem caused or should they apologize in their own cultural way? Kellerman<sup>17</sup> says apologies are formalized by culture, content and gender. Furthermore, the apologizer must understand that different cultures’ viewers differently interpret apologies.

Analysing Toyota's apology<sup>18</sup> more emotional words appeared than in Japanese apologies. In Japan, emotions are expressed in a subtle way, bowing, showing tears, but in the United States emotion is primarily expressed with words rather than body language. Conversely, it means that Japanese do not put as much emphasis on the selection of words as

---

<sup>15</sup> KTLA5 News (accessed on 09.05.2015)

<sup>16</sup> On April 12, 2015, JR East had a problem that the overhead pillar between Kanda and Akihabara stations in the Yamanote line collapsed, and the train was stopped. On the 12th, train service delays affected about 400,000 people. On April 12, JR East issued an apology comment and also held a press conference and apologized. Fuji TV NEWS 04.13.2015.

<sup>17</sup> Kellerman, *When Should a Leader Apologize—and When Not?*

<sup>18</sup> In America, Toyota caused a recall problem three times. In 2009, the floor mat and the accelerator pedal caused problem, and in 2010 a problem of accelerator pedal occurred again. Also in 2010 due to the problem of anti-lock brake system a recall has happened. It is recorded that 37 people died together due to the three problems. Toyota recalled 9 million cars as a whole and also apologized. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZeiD2-Rbg4&t=221s> (access 27.02.2017)

Americans do. The structure of Toyota's apology, can be divided into three parts: 1) Toyota's ideology; 2) the explanation of the recall problem; and 3) quality control management. Aiko Toyota repeated about customer safety three times and finished his speech with an emotional appeal, "My name is on every car, you have my personal commitment that Toyota will work vigorously and seriously to restore the trust of our customers."<sup>19</sup>

In comparison, the apology of Sarah Casanova, President of McDonald's Japan<sup>20</sup> was unique in Japan. She apologized twice, first in December 2014 on the company earnings announcement and second February 2015 in an apology conference. A clear difference can be seen between the two apologies. In the first apology, Casanova held an American style press conference without a fixed apology and bowing, but in the second one, by looking at her nonverbal communication, it is evident that Casanova delivered a setted Japanese apology. At the beginning of the second apology conference, along with her other company directors Casanova bowed, and the length of the bow was longer than a usual apology bow. Although her both speech were held in English in the second one she used the strict Japanese apology phrases in English and structured her apology in a Japanese way.

In comparing Casanova's first and the second apologies, her outfits also changed drastically. In the first one, she appeared with untied hair and in casual dress, but in the second apology, she tied her hair and dressed a little less causally (or a little more formally) with a white shirt and grey suit. In this way, the second apology fit the usual apology paradigm of Japan. According to Asami<sup>21</sup>, an apology symbolizes the sincere intention of not hiding anything. Because of this, Casanova changed her clothes, and deeply bowed at the second interview. However, according to Era<sup>22</sup> in McDonald's apology he said, "I felt that something was not quite right. I got the impression that it was choreographed."

---

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZeiD2-Rbg4&t=221s> 10:07 (access 28.10.2017)

<sup>20</sup> In July 2014 it developed that McDonalds was using chicken from China, and in December 2014 a plastic part was found in McDonald's sundae. Because of the many troubles two apology conferences were held, one was in December 2014, the second one on Feb. 5. 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ito, Masami. "Apologizing in Japan: Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word." *The Japan Times Online*, February 21, 2015.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/02/21/national/social-issues/apologizing-japan-sorry-seems-hardest-word/> (access 13.05.2016)

<sup>22</sup> Ito, *Apologizing in Japan*

Conceivably, Casanova was forced to apologize in the Japanese style and therefore she was not really able to muster the necessary emotional skills.

### **Conclusion of the Study: Structure of the Apology**

This paper compared individual apologies and corporate apologies from three countries. The target countries were Japan classified as a collectivist country and the United States and Hungary classified as individualist countries. As such, it is evident that apologies in different cultural circumstances, especially apologies in the media are delivered following different procedures. The next section of this paper focuses on where exactly these differences come from.

#### **(1) Individual Apology**

By comparing the three countries' apologies, similar patterns in America and Hungary can be found, while the Japanese apology manner is completely diverse. In the case of Europe and the United States, usually an interview is held, and the apologizer utilizes the self-punishing method. In these countries, it is understood that self-punishing is one of the processes needed to eventually receive societal approval, leading to forgiveness.<sup>23</sup> However, in Japan, punishing yourself is represented in the change of appearance (*marugari*; cut or sometimes shave the hair) or an act (bowing, *dogeza*). In Western apologies, sincerity is shown by the apologizer through participation in some type of "volunteer" activities. There is a tendency to destroy the image by yourself and to restore it with volunteer activities. However, in Japan, there is no volunteer activity, indicating that the apology process ends with the apology itself. In other words, the apology itself has an important role in Japan, and it always assumes a fixed style. If the apologizer does not show sincerity in the apology, the society will provide some form of punishment. In the case of SMAP's Kusanagi, sincerity was shown through five weeks of isolation from the world; a severe punishment in a collectivist country. Of course, it can be said that all celebrities' apologies are performances, but the culture defines the method in which sincerity is proved. In Western countries it done through words; in Japan through appearance.

In the case of politicians, both cases were held due to private issues, both were carefully prepared, the manuscript was written for them. Apologizers admitted their failure, but they did not apologize for their

---

<sup>23</sup> “丸刈りでおわび!? ニッポンの”謝罪” NHKG 週刊 FU.KA.YO.MI.”

mistakes to the society. Unlike celebrities, politicians do not easily apologize for private matters. However, since the media broke their image due to the incident, for their future they need to recognize and admit the failure. The significant difference between the cases in Japan and the United States is that while former President Clinton put strong effort on choosing the words he used, Ms. Nakagawa's non-verbal expressions were more emphasized. Furthermore, in Clinton's apology, he stated a strong opinion about the facts, he directly addressed the camera (and in this way, the American public), he declared that it is not a public matter rather it is between his family and God. In Japan, religion never appears in the apology in any form. In Nakagawa's apology, she avoided eye contact, kept her head down, and although she accepted the failure, the apology was not for her personal failure but for disturbing society. She strictly used the standard Japanese apology expressions and did not expressed any own opinion. No matter what the apology is for, it is expected that the word "sorry" must be used.

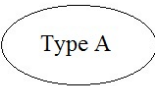
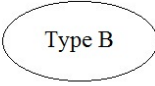
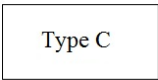

	Foreign	Japan
Individual	 Type A	 Type B
Corporation	 Type C	 Type B

Table 2. Structure of apology

Based on the aforementioned cases, individual apologies can be divided into two types: Type A (Foreigner Type) and Type B (Japanese Type).

**Type A (Foreigner Type):** The characteristics of this type include: 1) Recognizing and admitting one's own failure; 2) willingness to appear in front of the media in order to recover the broken image; 3) having a strong opinion about the situation; 4) willingness to share the opinion with the public; 5) in some cases, engaging in volunteer activities to prove sincerity in order to repair the broken image; 6) choose words with intentionality and use facial expressions carefully; and 7) viewing society as an audience but not apologizing to them.

**Type B (Japanese Type):** The characteristics of this type include: 1) admitting the failure sufficiently and apologizing within a day after the incident happens; 2) using society as a victim of the incident therefore saying apologetic words to society, but being vague about what they are actually apologizing for; 3) not revealing their opinion about the facts of the incident to the public; 4) scripted text with fixed expressions; 5) greater emphasis placed on expressions than words (etc. bow, crop the hair, *dogeza*, and tears); and 6) presentation of the apology is important.

In the case of individuals, the appearance in the media is similar but the contents are diverse according to the cultural fields. In Table 2 above, these apologies are indicated with the ellipse around them.

## (2) Corporate Apology

In the corporate apologies, the structure is different. In case of a foreign company, either a general apology announcement is released or there is no apology at all. However, in Japan, similar to individual apologies, companies apologize within a day after the accident and they definitely bow in front of the media. To provide clarity for the reasons behind this, it is necessary to understand legal and cultural differences.

In all three countries, in case of corporate incidents, there is a distinction between legal responsibility and moral responsibility. Legal responsibility is determined by the courts, but moral responsibility and any kind of act towards the society is decided by the company itself. In Western cultures, legal responsibility and moral responsibility are clearly distinguished, but if someone admits his failure, it is believed that this is acceptance of both legal and moral responsibilities. In cases where responsibility is decided by the trial, moral responsibility is usually not expressed, but if the case is not a legal problem, many companies take

moral responsibilities. However, even in the case of moral responsibility, usually only apology announcements are released<sup>24</sup>.

On the other hand in Japan, even if the incident infers legal responsibility, many companies take moral responsibility as well. Why is the manner of taking responsibility different from that in Western countries? In the United States and Hungary, it is understood that the apology shows the admission of responsibility, and this action will not be profitable for the trial. In other words, if an apology is issued prior to the trial verdict, it means that all mistakes are accepted and it is believed that it will affect the judgment. However, in Japan, these responsibilities are clearly separated, and the apology includes moral responsibility, but not legal. In Japan the common thinking is that the apology will not impact financial support for the aggrieved party. However, for example in Hungary it will<sup>25</sup>. This is why Hungarian and American companies avoid apologies even in a moral sense, and it is the reason why Japanese companies are unconcerned about apologizing immediately after the incident (and before a trial?).

From a cultural point of view, individualistic Americans, even if they own companies, do not take responsibility for the failure of another person<sup>26</sup>. Of course, they will make efforts to restore the damaged company image, but apologizing in front of the media for the failure of other employees is uncommon. Furthermore, in European and American companies, it is clearly defined who is responsible for what, and therefore, easier to tell who made the mistake. However, in a collectivist country like Japan, the company is a united group, and thereby is responsible for the individuals of this group<sup>27</sup>. The company is like a family and success and mistakes are equally shared. In short, this is why corporate apologies are similar to individual ones.

As shown in Table 2, in the case of foreign companies, there is a Type C (Foreign Company Type) named apology. However, Japanese companies' apologies are performed in the same way as individual ones.

---

<sup>24</sup> Emese Kovacs: *社会的機能としてのメディア「謝罪」 The social function of media apologies* Musashi University, doctoral thesis, 2016. p.108.

<sup>25</sup> Kovacs: *社会的機能としてのメディア「謝罪」 The social function of media apologies* p109.

<sup>26</sup> Harry C. Triandis: *Individualism collectivism*, westview Press, 1995. p78.

<sup>27</sup> Takie Sugiyama Lebra: *Japanese Patterns of Behaviour*, University of Hawaii Press, 1976. p36.



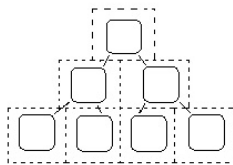
**Type C:** The characteristics of this type include: 1) always happens after the incident has been carefully investigated (in some cases, after a number of days); 2) minimize the apology words and show feelings of sympathy; 3) no mention of responsibility and avoid those questions; 4) non-verbal expressions, apologies should not be expressed; and 5) apologies can be completed with a short announcement.

**Type B:** The characteristics of this type include: 1) admitting the failure sufficiently and quickly after the incident happens; 2) using society as a victim of the incident therefore saying apologetic words to society, but being vague about what they are actually apologizing for. Although they must have opinion about the fact they never show it to the public. Words are prepared, using fixed expressions. More emphasis are put on expressions than words (etc. bow, crop the hair, *dogeza*, and tears). Visualizing the apology is very important.

It is clear from this aspect that Japanese companies are in a different position from foreign companies, which is proved by the presence of company presidents at apology conferences. It is commonly understood that companies should apologize when they fail, but is it necessary for the president to personally appear at the apology? In Japan, the president apologizes in case of crises, even for actions that they were not personally responsible for. However, in case of American and Hungarian companies, the president will appear depending on the importance and level of the scandal. However, for small problems, the responsible officer, not the president, should apologize.

So why does the president always apologize in Japan? The answer can be found in the characteristics of company structure.

#### American corporation



#### Japanese corporation

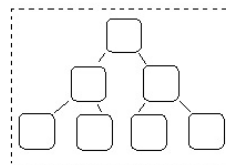


Table 3. Structure of responsibility in the United States and Japan.

As shown in Table 3, in foreign companies, all employees have the scope of responsibility of their jobs; therefore, failure can be clearly identified. As an individualistic country, each employee is responsible for their own failure and shared responsibility is unnecessary. As Kellerman<sup>28</sup> writes, according to the importance of scandals or failure not only the president but also an officer can apologize. However, in Japan, company officers' apology is not thought to be proper or sufficient. As indicated previously, one of the reasons for this thinking is that companies are considered as family and the family head needs to stand above and take responsibility for all the members. This also explains why company apologies in Japan are similar to the apologies issued by individuals, and why presidents must appear in most corporate apology cases. The president of Toyota who appeared in the hearing in the United States, was greeted by the chairman as follows: "Let me thank you both for being here. I think it's very good that you came, it shows your concern in the part of Toyota."<sup>29</sup> We can interpret this greeting as a signal that the appearance of company president was appreciated.

### **(3) Comparing cross cultural corporate apologies**

Finally, looking at the cross-cultural comparison of apologies, a clear difference can be seen between a Japanese apology in the United States and an American apology in Japan. The similarities in both apologies was the appearance of the company president and that the president's announcement had no concrete explanation for the incident. In the Toyota case, the president expressed feelings of sympathy rather than an apology, and promised to make efforts to avoid such accidents. Of course, Japanese bows or other typical Japanese nonverbal signs were not part of the apology. Surprisingly, the president clearly took responsibility. In order to restore the company's image, there were some emotional expressions, for example, he mentioned the he loves cars, more than anyone. Such an expression would not be used during an apology in Japan.

In the McDonald's case, usual expressions were evident; a foreigner president bowed in front of the Japanese media during the apology. There was no mention of responsibility, but the president made emotional

---

<sup>28</sup> Kellerman, *When Should a Leader Apologize—and When Not?*

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MahW7IG8t8o> 00:15 (accessed 18.09.2017)

remarks at the end of the presentation regarding regaining customers' confidence.

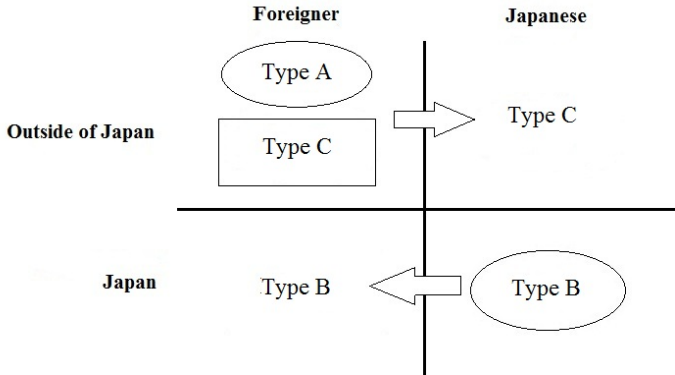


Table 4. Types of apologies according to cultural areas

In this cross-cultural comparison of apologies, the most important aspect is the setting where the apology is held. Apologizers must apologize to viewers on each setting, and the apology needs to be setted to every society. Even if they apologize in the same way and use the same words as in their own cultural background, in a different social orientated community it might not be understood. Furthermore, when considering an apology as performance, there is a possibility that a completely different meaning will be conveyed unless the performance is tailored to the new setting. There are important characteristic apology marks in each cultural setting which are essential in presenting a suitable act. In America's case, it is important to take responsibility, but in Japan responsibility is a secondary question; the speed and the visualization of apology matter more.

Finally, it is possible to clarify the structure of apology in foreign countries and in Japan. The apology presented in a foreign country is different in the case of individuals and companies, but in Japan it is similar for both. Furthermore, Japanese companies' apology in the United States lose the Japanese characteristics and visualize elements of apology, and much more emphasis is placed on the question of responsibility. On the other hand, foreign companies apologizing in Japan showed a typical

form of Japanese apology including bowing and typical apology expressions. In short, the most important matter when apologizing is to adjust actions to the cultural expectations where the apologies are performed.

Apology is a global phenomenon. With an apology conflict cannot be avoided, but apology is a gesture to accept what happened and bring closure.<sup>30</sup> It is a transaction between the apologizer and the victim, a gesture to show regret and confession which is motivated by self-interest but performed due to social pressure. It is an act that shifts from the past to the future. As a conclusion the research shows the variation of apologies in intercultural aspects. In the Japanese apology visualization is the most important element, strongly reflects the social norms and cultural characteristics of Japan. Outside of Japan, in all apologies aside from visualization responsibility is a delicate but serious topic, which needs to be clarified. Each social field needs to be researched and fully understood what the cultural expectations are in apology and every act and verbal manifestation need to format to those apology expectation in order to achieve transculturally forgiveness.

---

<sup>30</sup> Tavuchis, Nicolas. *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation* p 5-6.

## Rhetorical Devices in Old Japanese Verse: Structural Analysis and Semantics.

### Part II: From Semantics to Hermeneutics

#### Abstract

In the first part of this study we had a deep look at the morphology and structure of the phrases concerned. This showed a partial misbalance in the direct (or linguistic) meaning and literal translation/interpretation of makura-kotoba (MK) collocations. In an attempt to bridge their semantics and pragmatics, here I will refer to hermeneutics, as a psychological means of interpreting the literal meaning. The results are presented in the conclusions, offering a Western reader a direct and clear definition of makura-kotoba and its main special traces.

**Key words:** culture, hermeneutics, hint, interconnection, makura-kotoba, Martin Heidegger.

One of the leading researchers of hermeneutics in the field of Japanese studies, Michael F. Marra, wrote: "...whatever goes under the umbrella of Japanese literature, art, religion, history, philosophy, and so on, would not exist in its modern form without the paradigms that hermeneutics provided in forcing Japanese authors to talk about Japan with a language which was originally devised for a reading of the Bible<sup>1</sup>". Linguistics and hermeneutics are commonly considered to be mutually exclusive fields of study. Recently however, linguistic approaches have shown themselves to be effective approaches for textual interpretation. Here I attempt a

---

\* The Institute of Middle and Far East, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland (michal.lubina@uj.edu.pl).

1 Michael. F. Marra, *Essays on Japan. Between aesthetics and literature*, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010, p.231.

linguistic analysis of OJ MK to achieve a more in-depth understanding of their meaning.

I must acknowledge that many would object to the method of combining linguistics – a scientific field, with hermeneutics – a philosophical approach. Indeed, fundamentally linguistics aims at objectivity, while hermeneutics necessarily entails subjective interpretation. Yet in the course of this study it became evident that none of the existing forms of linguistic analysis — numerical, concurrent, structural, syntactic — would offer a Western reader a comprehensive understanding of MK. Thus it was decided that a hermeneutic approach would be useful in explaining the core of OJ MK. Semantics, one of the stages of linguistic analysis, is connected with hermeneutics – the interpretation of texts and their units. As spiritual life receives its full expression through the process of writing, understanding this life looks at the interpretation – one might say, linguistic interpretation – of its written expressions, which enables the interpreter to reproduce the mental life of the author<sup>2</sup>. Linguistic analysis and understanding, however different they may be, are interrelated as a full understanding should be based on explanation, while explanation is useless without the self-understanding process. By employing a hermeneutical approach it becomes possible to identify the main conditions influencing the sensual process of understanding OJ. Thus we should admit that “understanding” refers to the comprehension of the sign’s meaning, transferred from one consciousness and perceived by another.

Such a combined use of hermeneutical and linguistic approaches has recently been utilised by Pierre Van Hecke in his study *From Linguistics to Hermeneutics*<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Michel F. Marra wrote about hermeneutics with reference to Japanese aesthetics and literature. Suzuki Sadami<sup>4</sup> and Haruo Shirane<sup>5</sup> also compiled a collected work on Japanese hermeneutics

---

2 Martin Heidegger, *On the way to language*, USA: Harper and Row, 1982, p. 10-11.

3 See: Pierre Van Hecke, *From linguistics to hermeneutics: a functional and cognitive approach to Job 12-14*. The Netherlands: Brill. 2011.

4 Suzuki Sadami, *What is bungaku? The reformation of the concept of «literature» in early twentieth century Japan in Japanese hermeneutics. Current debates on aesthetics and interpretation*, ed. M. Marra. USA: University of Hawai’i Press. 2002. pp. 176 – 188.

5 Haruo Shirane, *Constructing «Japanese literature»: global and ethnic nationalism in Japanese hermeneutics. Current debates on aesthetics and interpretation*, ed. M. Marra. USA: University of Hawai’i Press. 2002. pp. 165 – 175.

with contributions to Japanese literature<sup>6</sup>. Most notable however, is the work of Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), who offered a systematic explanation of the relationship between hermeneutics and linguistics. Ricoeur analysed and built upon the work of the two outstanding twentieth century authors of philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976).

Heidegger's *A Dialogue on Language Between a Japanese and an Inquirer*, is of particular significance<sup>7</sup>. *On the Way to Language* in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, written by Heidegger in 1959 is essentially a dialogue that reconstructs the meeting Heidegger had with Tezuka Tomio, a Japanese scholar of German literature. The focus of the dialogue is the aesthetic term *iki* and its correspondence in Western languages. Here we will not delve into this complex aspect of Japanese aesthetics, as Marra has already done so in detail in his book<sup>8</sup>, but the explanations offered by Heidegger regarding core differences between Japanese and Western languages could be helpful when demonstrating the meaning of OJ MK and why it is so difficult for Western readers to understand them: "...We Japanese do not think it strange if a dialogue leaves undefined what is really intended, or even restores it back to the keeping of the undefinable...", said Tezuka Tomio<sup>9</sup>. Collocation *nuNpa-tama-nō ywo* alludes to the twinkling of the night or the beauty of hair. In English we find the translation, "jade gem night<sup>10</sup>", which is not connected to twinkling or hair. There is one other translation of *nuNpa tama-nō*, which is representative when speaking about the connotations within this expression. In "A Web in the Air" Cranston introduces a translation of MYS 8-1646 with the analysing collocation, made by his student, and writes that: "...this constitutes an unusual translation of the poem"<sup>11</sup>:

MYS 8 -1646

1)夜干玉乃 2)今夜之雪尔 3)率所沾名 4)将開朝尔 5)消者  
惜家牟

6 See: M. Marra (Ed.) *Japanese hermeneutics. Current debates on aesthetics and interpretation*, USA: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.

7 Martin Heidegger, *On the way to language*, USA: Harper and Row, 1982.

8 Marra, *Essays on Japan...*, p.57.

9 Heidegger, *On the way...*, p. 13.

10 Edwin A. Cranston, *Waka anthology. Volume one: The gem-glistening cup*, USA: Stanford University Press, 1993, p.9.

11 Edwin A. Cranston, *Uta no iroiro: hon'yaku ha sika no sika mata ha sika* [What's the translator doing to our poems]. Kyoto, Nichibunken, 1999, pp. 50-51.

1) nubatama no 2) koyopi no yuki ni 3) iza nurena 4) ake-mu asita ni  
5) ke-naba wosi-kye-mu

HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO  
OWEEEEEEEEEEEE Snow! SNOW! Let's you and I go play in the snow.  
We can't wait for tomorrow, we gotta do it NOW. Anthracite night  
anthracite in the anthracite night like leopards.

Like leopards like leopards running. Like leopards, like leopards:  
LEAPING and landing. Blackberries, blackberries, blackberries  
OHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHYEAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH  
HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHwooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo  
oooooooooooohaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa. Are you nice and wet. I'm nice and wet  
[Cranston 1999, 50-51]

Moreover, it makes it rather difficult to call this an interpretation. It is noteworthy, however, that the author was inspired by the *nuNpa-tama-nō kōyōpi* connotation which he showed in the mood of the song. According to Heidegger's comment about understatement as a characteristic of the Japanese language, in his discussion with Tezuka Tomio:

“...The phrase gives a hint of the nature of language;

– It seems to me you have just said a ... word;

– Then that hint would be the word's basic character;

– It did indeed. And while I was translating, I often felt as though I were wandering back and forth between two different language realities...<sup>12</sup>”. The opinions exchanged by both scholars are important, as the alternative translation offered in the Cranston rendition of *nuNpa-tama-nō* attests to Heidegger's words:

“...That is part, I believe, of every dialogue that has turned out well between thinking beings<sup>13</sup>...”. The OJ MK *arata ma-nō tōsi* signifies the year of new spirits. On this note, Tsuchihashi makes references to the ancient belief in *tama*<sup>14</sup> (spirit, soul) and the renewal of spirits at the beginning of each year. *TosiNkami* (gods of the year) provide new spirits

12 Martin Heidegger, *On the way to language*, USA: Harper and Row, 1982, p. 10.

13 Ibidem, p. 13.

14 **Tama**, formally **mitama**, in the Japanese complex of beliefs refers to a soul or divine, or semi-divine spirit; also is an aspect of a spirit. Several *mitama* are recognized in Shintō, including the *ara-mitama* (with the power of ruling), the *kushi-mitama* (with the power of transforming), the *nigi-mitama* (with the power of unifying, or harmonizing), and the *saki-mitama* (with the power of blessing). Some shrines pay homage to a particular *mitama* of a deity, such as the separate shrines dedicated to the *ara-mitama* and the *nigi-mitama* of goddess Amaterasu.



each year to promote the prosperity and happiness of the family/individual. Yet, this “year of the new powers” cannot be construed directly from the combined meanings of the lexemes. Does the expression intend to evoke the image of “a year of bright, raw gems”? Most likely, it does not.

Heidegger wrote: “...Thus we wanted to know in fact only how European aesthetics might be suitable to give a higher clarity to what endows our art and poetry with their nature.

– You have already mentioned what prevented you: the language of the dialogue was European; but what was to be experienced and to be thought was the East Asian nature of Japanese art...<sup>15</sup> In the case of *ya kumwo tat-u iNtumwo* the poetry revolves around a female, since the clouds pile up one upon the other, building numerous fences in order to hide a woman from view (*tumaNkōmi-ni ya peNkaki tukur-u*). These barriers are metaphorical walls that block the object of the viewer’s admiration from sight.

M. Marra offered his own translation of this poem:

Many clouds rising,  
 Many layered clouds rising a manifold-fence  
 Hiding my bride from sight,  
 Clouds are forming a manifold fence,  
 Oh, that manifold fence!<sup>16</sup>

To this Heidegger wrote: “...You did not, then, seek for a general concept under which both the European and the East Asian languages could be subsumed.

– Absolutely not. When you now speak of hints, this freeing word emboldens me to name to you the word by which to us the nature of language is – how shall I say...

– ...perhaps hinted...<sup>17</sup>

aNtusa yumyi ma yumyi

In ancient Japan, the catalpa tree was considered to have sacred power and objects carved from its wood were highly esteemed, such as the *Azusayumi*, a round bow made from catalpa (for details see for example

---

15 Heidegger, *On the way...*, p. 25.

16 Marra, *Essays on Japan...*, p.397.

17 Heidegger, *On the way...*, p. 17.

the study by C. Blacker<sup>18</sup>). Such bows were considered to contain something extremely valuable within them and were used not only as weapons, but also as sacred tools due to the string sounds that appeared to be spirit mediators.

The use of the *azusayumi* as a summoner of spirits was an ancient practice and is evident in the use of the word *aNtusa yumyi*, a MK for *yoru* (a verb meaning either “to approach” or “to possess”) for the catalpa bow. Due to the close association between the two words, we can infer that when the bow sounded, spirits were compelled to approach and possess the waiting medium<sup>19</sup>. Heidegger and Tezuka’s discussion is of a similar note:

“...We understand only too well that a thinker would prefer to hold back the word that is to be said, not in order to keep it for himself, but to bear it toward his encounter with what is to be thought.

– That is in keeping with the hints. They are enigmatic. They beckon to us. They beckon away. They beckon us toward that from which they unexpectedly bear themselves toward us<sup>20</sup>...”

Through these words, Heidegger shows that we need not take knowledge as primary and see understanding or interpretation as what is derived from it. Essentially, he reverses the common derivation that knowledge stems from understanding. How, then, does one understand the world? Heidegger suggests that “unless objects inhere in an interpretative context, they could not be understood<sup>21</sup>”. I think, here we may also add the following quotation from E. Cranston’s (I may suggest that Prof. Cranston’s works to a greater extent have something in common with what Heidegger wrote about Japanese, but this essence of Japanese language and literature is expressed in another way of beauty and admiration, not psychology. See, for example the introduction to the anthology<sup>22</sup>, or “Web in the air”) book: “...Certainly, the notion of poetic natural growth within the process of translation, not completely under rational control, is seductive to a translator who has worked long at his or

---

18 Carmen Blacker *The catalpa bow: a study of shamanistic practices in Japan*. Routledge, 1999.

19 Carmen Blacker, *The catalpa bow. A study of shamanistic practices in Japan*, UK: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1989, p. 148.

20 Heidegger, *On the way...*, p. 15.

21 David Couzens Hoy, ‘Heidegger and the Hermeneutic Turn’ in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Charles B. Guignon (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 183.

22 Edwin A. Cranston, *Waka anthology. Volume one: The gem-glistening cup*, USA: Stanford University Press, 1993, p.xxi.

her craft. They descend into a poem and allow something to happen and serve as a medium for new growth. Yet the translation is not merely passive. “The word “craft” already suggests that one thinks about what one does. The translator has his own ideas of what makes a poem “flow” and gropes about for the life within the original, listening to it quietly and letting it whisper “yes” or “no” to his attempts to make something new. The “something new” that the decoder tries to create works itself into existence between compulsion and restraint. Different translators hear different voices, hence the odium that sometimes is attached to the rival version. Whether the translation is a success or failure, the final product has dubious ontological status<sup>23</sup>.”

### Conclusions

This study attempted to explain to the Western reader the essence of MK, rather than a new way of translating Old Japanese verse and its expressions. Most Kiki songs belong to an oral tradition that existed long before they were written down. They were a part of preliterate societal communication, rather than the result of work by individual poets.

As many scholars (Alexander Mescheryakov, or Liudmila Ermakova in Russia, Edwin Cranston, or Hellen C. McCullough in USA, etc.) believe, the original function of the MK was to adorn the name of places and divinities with words of praise in order to please the spirits. Jun'ichi Konishi wrote about the close relation of MK with kotodama<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, belief in the magical properties of such words is perhaps the best way to account for their persistence long after their loss of meaning, although considerations of tone and euphony as well as the simple force of tradition could have played an increasingly important role with time.

Given the limited size of the corpus, KiKi MK cannot always be distinguished from non-formulaic adjectival expressions. Nevertheless it is apparent that the technique was employed extensively<sup>25</sup>. The analysis of previous works on MK reveals that there are few English-language studies in spite of the fact that MK could surmount to the quintessence of Japanese culture, religion and world views.

---

<sup>23</sup> Cranston, *Waka anthology*..., xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Jin'ichi Konishi *A History of Japanese Literature, Volume 1: The Archaic and Ancient Ages*. Princeton University Press. 1984., p. 203.

<sup>25</sup> Hellen Craig McCullough, *Brocade by Night: „Kokin wakashu” and the court style in Japanese classical poetry*. Stanford University Press, 1985, p. 82-83.

In attempt to solve this puzzle, which consists of the following questions:

1. Why do Western scholars ignore some of those collocations in their translations.

2. What is the connection between MK and the main body of Old Japanese songs, since mainly they seem to have little, if no semantical connection.

3. What is the scheme of their functioning at the level of pragmatics.

It was made an attempt to make the full and overall analyses of MK's morphology, semantics and pragmatics.

Morphology is well described in the first part of this study; its results are quite obvious, showing the semantics of each phrase, which is not the same as it is pointed out in various translations. So, we have some kind of misbalance of linguistic meaning and literal translations. The fact of avoiding MK translations in some cases became quite understandable.

To make their pragmatics clear for the Western readers in the second part of this study we tried to use Heidegger's way of explanation alike facts. Roughly speaking, we have here some kind of hints, which having a very deep cultural and historical background, provide the connotation to the whole song. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this study has to be continued with analyses of further sources.

To summarise, let the quotation from Heidegger's above-mentioned dialogue: "...because the explanation may issue in a discussion<sup>26</sup>...", motivate further scholarly study of Old Japanese language *makura-kotoba*.

---

26 Heidegger, *On the way...*, p. 24.

## Appendix 1. General Abbreviations

EDAL Etymological Dictionary of Altaic Languages<sup>27</sup> (Dybo et al., 2002)

JDB *Jidai betsu kokugo dai jiten*<sup>28</sup> (Omodaka et. all 1967)

JLTT *The Japanese Language Through Time*<sup>29</sup> (Martin 1987)

KJ *Kojiki*, 712 CE<sup>30</sup>

KJK *Songs of Kojiki*<sup>31</sup>

KiKi *Kojiki and Nihon Shoki*

MK *makura-kotoba*

MKJ *makura-kotoba jiten*

MYS *Man'yōshū*, ca. 759 AD<sup>32</sup>

NS *Nihon shoki*, 720 AD<sup>33</sup>

NSK *Songs of Nihon Shoki*<sup>34</sup>

WOJ *Western Old Japanese*

## Grammatical Terms

ASSER Assertive

ATTR Attributive

CAUS Causative

CL Classifier

COM Comitative

COMP Comparative

CON Conjunctive gerund

CONC Concessive gerund

COND Conditional gerund

CONJ Conjunction

CONJC Conjectural

COOP Cooperative

---

27 Sergei Starostin, Anna Dybo, and Oleg Mudrak *Etymological Dictionary of the Altaic Languages*. vol. 1-3. Leiden: Brill. 2003.

28 Hisataka Omodaka et al. (ed.) *Jidai betsu kokugo dai jiten. Jyodaihen*. [A large dictionary of the national language by periods. Old Japanese], Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1967.

29 Martin S. E. *The Japanese language through time*. USA: Yale University Press. 1987.

30 Frellesvig, Stephen Wright Horn, Kerri L. Russell, Peter Sells, *The Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese*. [<http://vsarpj.orinst.ox.ac.uk/corpus/ojcorpus.html#Kojiki>]

31 Ibidem.

32 Ibidem.

33 Ibidem.

34 Ibidem.

---

COOR	Coordinative
COP	Copula
DAT	Dative
DEB	Debitive
DES	Desiderative
DV	Defective verb
EMPH	Emphatic
EV	Evidential
EXCL	Exclamation
FIN	Final verbal form
GEN	Genitive
GER	Gerund
HON	Honorific
HUM	Humble
INF	Infinitive
INTER	Interjection
LOC	Locative
NEG	Negative
NML	Nominalizer
PAST	Past tense
PEJ	Pejorative
PERF	Perfective
POSS	Possessive
PREV	Preverb
PROG	Progressive
PT	Particle
REC	Reciprocal
RETR	Retrospective
SUB	Subordinative gerund
SUBJ	Subjunctive
SUP	Suppositional
TENT	Tentative
TERM	Terminative
TOP	Topic

Appendix 2. *Partial songs of “Kojiki” and “Nihon Shoki” with romanization, glossing, translation and morphemic analyses*

Here I will make full analyses of the songs, mentioned in both parts of this study, as a part of my project – «*Songs of «Kojiki» and «Nihon Shoki». New English translation with glossing, morphemic analyses and commentaries*» to appear in 2018.

KJK 77<sup>35</sup>

*Original text*

1)阿志比紀能 2) 夜麻陀袁豆久理 3) 夜麻陀加美 4) 斯多備  
袁和志勢 5) 志多杼比爾 6) 和賀登布伊毛袁 7) 斯多那岐爾 8)  
和賀那久都麻袁 9) 許存許曾波 10)夜須久波陀布禮

*Romanisation*<sup>36</sup>

1) asi pyikiy-nō 2) yama-N-ta tukur-i 3) yama-N-takamyi 4) sita-  
Npiy-wo wasise 5) sita-Ntwop-yi ni 6) wa-Nka twop-u imwo-wo 7) sita  
nak-yi ni 8) wa-Nka nak-u tuma-wo 9) kōNsō kōsō pa 10) yasu-ku paNta  
pur-e

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>37</sup>

1) foot low DV/ATTR 2) mountain-GEN-field create-INF 3)  
mountain-GEN-height 4) bottom pipe-ACC cover 5) bottom visit-NML  
DV-INF 6) I-POSS visit-ATTR beloved-ACC 7) bottom cry-NML DV-  
INF 8) I-POSS cry-ATTR spouse-ACC 9) today.night PT TOP 10)  
gentle-INF skin touch-EV

*Translation*<sup>38</sup>

(Near) the mountain (with) broad feet (I shall) make a field. Like a  
high mountain, and (there is) a pipe under it. Secretly I shall come to my  
beloved. (I) secretly cried, cried about/for my wife, and today's night (I)  
will gently touch (her) skin.

KJK 3<sup>39</sup>

*Original text*

35 Ekaterina Levchenko, *Songs of “Kojiki” and “Nihon Shoki”: a new Russian translation with the original text, romanization and glossing*. USA: Amazon publ. 2017.p. 126.

36 Levchenko, *Songs of “Kojiki”...p.126*.

37 Author's elaboration.

38 Ibidem.

39Levchenko, *Songs of “Kojiki”...p.56*.

1)夜知富許能 2)迦微能美許登 3)奴延久佐能 4)賣迺志阿禮婆 5)和何許許呂 6)宇良須能登理叙 7)伊麻許曾婆 8)和杼理迺阿良米 9)能知波 10)那杼理爾阿良牟遠 11)伊能知波 12)那志勢婆多麻比會 13)伊斯多布夜 14)阿麻波世豆迦比 15)許登能 16) 加多理基登母 17)許遠婆 18)阿遠夜麻迺 19)比賀迦久良婆 20)奴婆多麻能 21)用波伊傳那牟 22)阿佐比能 23)惠美佐迦延岐弓 24)多久豆怒能 25)斯路岐多陀牟岐 26)阿和由岐能 27)和加夜流牟泥遠 28)曾陀多岐 29)多多岐麻那賀理 30)麻多麻傳 31)多麻傳佐斯麻岐 32)毛毛那賀爾 33)伊波那佐牟遠 34)阿夜爾 35)那古斐岐許志 36)夜知富許能 37)迦微能美許登 38)許登能 39)迦多理基登母 40)許遠婆

*Romanization*<sup>40</sup>

1) ya-tipökö-nö 2) kamiy-nö myi-kötö 3) nuye-kusa-nö 4) mye-nisiar-e-Npa 5) wa-Nkakökörö 6) ura-su-nö töriNsö 7) imakösö pa 8) wa-N-töri-niar-am-ey 9) nötipa 10) na-N-törin-iar-am-uwo 11) inötipa 12) na-si-se-tamap-yi-sö 13) i-sitap-uya 14) ama-pase-Ntukap-yi 15) kötö-nö 16) katar-i-N-kötö mö 17) kö-woNpa 18) awo-yama-ni 19) pyi-NkakakuraNpa 20) nuNpatama-nö 21) ywopaiNte-n-am-u 22) asa-pyi-nö 23) wem-yisakaye-k-yi-te 24) taku-N-tunwo-nö 25) sirwo-kyitaNtamuky 26) awa-yuky-nö 27) waka-yar-u mune-wo 28) söNtatak-yi 29) ta-Ntak-yi-ma-naNkar-i 30) ma-tama-N-te 31) tama-N-tesas-i-mak-yi 32) mwomwo-naNka-ni 33) ipan-as-am-u-wo 34) ayan-i 35) na-kwopiy-kyikös-i 36) ya-tipökö-nö 37) kamiy-nö myikötö 38) kötö-nö 39) katar-i-N-kötö mö 40) kö-woNpa

*Glossing with morphemic analysis*<sup>41</sup>

1) Yatipoko-GEN 2) god-GEN HON-(exalted) affair 3) weak-grass-GEN 4) woman-DAT PT exist-EV-COND 5) I-POSS heart 6) creek-sandbar-GEN bird PT 7) now PT TOP 8) I-OSM-bird DV-INF exist-TENT-EV 9) later TOP 10) you-OSM-bird DV-INF exist-TENT-ATTR-ACC 11) life TOP 12) NEG-die-CAUS(INF)-HON-INF-do 13) PREF-to be anxious(?)-FIN PT 14) sky-run(?)-fly-INF 15) thing-GEN 16) talk-NML-GEN-thing PT 17) this-ACC 18) green (blue)-mountain-LOC 19) sun-POSS hide-COND 20) jade-gem-COMP 21) night TOP exist-PERF-TENT-FIN 22) morning-sun-COMP 23) smile-INF-flourish-come-INF-

<sup>40</sup> Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p.56.

<sup>41</sup> Author's elaboration.



SUB 24) mulberry-GEN-rope-COMP 25) white-ATTR arm 26) foam-snow-COMP 27) young-?-ATTR breast-ACC 28) embrace-INF 29) embrace-ATTR entwine-ACT 30) INT-jewel-COMP-hand 31) jewel-COMP-hand stick-INF-entwine-INF 32) (numeral + noun + LOC) 33) sleep TOP sleep-HON-TENT-ATTR-ACC) 34) extremely DV-INF 35) NEG-yearn-HON-INF 36) yachi poko-GEN) 37) god-GEN HON-(exalted) affair 38) thing-GEN 39) talk-NML-GEN-thing PT) 40) this-ACC

*Translation*<sup>42</sup>

Yatipoko, Deity lord. I am a women – feeble grass. My heart is a bird of the creek. Right now (I) may be a free bird of its own, later your bird I will be. Don't lose (your) life. Restless, running in heavens – story, told story, these are the words (of the story). When the sun hides under the dark mountain, jade gems night will come. Come, smiling like the morning sun. (You) will embrace and intertwine (with your) white arms, like mulberry ropes, (my) young breast like flaky snow. Hands like jewels, (your) hands like jewels, will entwine (with mine). Stretch (your) legs, sleep leisurely. Do not yearn so loudly, Yachipoko, Deity lord. Story, told story, these are the words (of the story)

KJK 50<sup>43</sup>

*Original text*

1) 知波夜比登 2) 宇遲能和多理迹 3) 和多理是迹 4) 多弓流  
5) 阿豆佐由美麻由美 6) 伊岐良牟登 7) 許許呂波母閤杼 8) 伊斗良牟登 9) 許許呂波母閤杼 10) 母登弊波 11) 岐美袁淤母比傳  
12) 須惠幣波 13) 伊毛袁淤母比傳 14) 伊良那祁久 15) 曾許爾淤母比傳 16) 加那志祁久 17) 許許爾淤母比傳 18) 伊岐良受曾久流 19) 阿豆佐由美麻由美

*Romanization*<sup>44</sup>

1) ti paya pyitō 2) uNti-nō watar-i-ni 3) watar-i-Nse-ni 4) tat-er-u 5) aNtusa yumyi ma-yumyi 6) i-kyir-am-u tō 7) kōkōrō pa (o)mōp-ey-Ntō 8) i-twor-am-u tō 9) kōkōrō pa (o)mōp-ey-Ntō 10) mōtō-pye pa 11) kyimiyi-wo omōp-yi-(i)Nte 12) suwe-pye pa 13) imwo-wo omōp-yi-(i)Nte 14) irana-ky-eku 15) sōkō-ni omōp-yi-(i)Nte 16) kanasi-ky-eku 17) kōkō-ni omōp-yi-(i)Nte 18) i-kyir-aNs-u sō k-uru 19) aNtusa yumyi ma-yumyi

42 Ibidem.

43 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p. 103.

44 Ibid. p. 104.

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>45</sup>

1) thousand rock people 2) Uji-GEN cross-NML-LOC 3) cross-NML-stream-LOC 4) stand-PROG-ATTR 5) catalpa bow PREF-bow 6) DLF-take-TENT-FIN DV 7) heart TOP think-EV-CONC 8) DLF-take-TENT-FIN-DV 9) heart TOP think-EV-CONC 10) root side TOP 11) lord-ACC think-INF-exit(INF) 12) top side TOP 13) beloved-ACC think-INF-exit(INF) 14) regret-ATTR-NML 15) there-LOC think-INF-exit(INF) 16) sorrow-ATTR-NML 17) here-LOC think-INF-exit(INF) 18) DLF-cut-NEG-INF PT come-ATTR 19) catalpa bow PREF-bow

*Translation*<sup>46</sup>

At the stream crossing of Uji, (where are) the people, (who) crush thousands rocks, there stood a catalpa tree bow, a true bow. (I) thought in my heart (to) cut this bow here, I wanted to take it here; thought (that) I wanted (it) in my heart. At the roots (of the tree, I) remember (my) lord, at the (tree) top (I) remember (my) beloved, (I) remember (my lord) there without regret, (I) remember (my beloved) here with sorrow. (I) returned without cutting a catalpa bow, a true bow.

KJK 30<sup>47</sup>

*Original text*

1)夜麻登波 2)久爾能麻本呂婆 3)多多那豆久 4)阿袁加岐  
5)夜麻碁母禮流 6)夜麻登志宇流波斯

*Romanization*<sup>48</sup>

1)yamatō pa 2) kuni-nō ma-pwo-rō-Npa 3) tatanaNtuk-u 4) awo kakyi  
5) yama-Nkōmōr-er-u 6) yamatō si urupasi.

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>49</sup>

1)Yamato TOP 2) province-GEN INT-show.up-DV-CON 3) extend.heap-ATTR 4) dark fence 5) mountain-confine-PROG-ATTR 6) Yamato PT beautiful

*Translation*<sup>50</sup>

If Yamato—the highest province, (is closed round by) dark, extended fences, confined in mountains. How beautiful Yamato is!

KJK 57<sup>51</sup>

45 Author's elaboration.

46 Ibidem.

47 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p.85.

48 Ibid. p.85

49 Author's elaboration.

50 Ibidem.

51 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p.110.

*Original text*

1) 都芸泥布夜 2) 夜麻斯呂賀波袁 3) 美夜能煩理 4) 和賀能煩禮婆 5) 阿袁迹余志 6) 那良袁須疑 7) 袁陀弓 8) 夜麻登袁須疑 9) 和賀 10) 美賀本斯久迹波 11) 迦豆良紀多迦美夜 12) 和芸弊能阿多理

*Romanization*<sup>52</sup>

1) tuNkyinepuya 2) yamasirō-N-kapa-wo 3) miyanōNpōr-i 4) wa-NkanōNpōre-Npa 5) awo ni yō-si 6) nara-wo suNkiy 7) woN-tate 8) yamatō-wo suNkiy 9) wa-Nka 10) miy-Nka pwo-si kuni pa 11) kaNturakiy taka miya 12) wa-Nka iypye-nō atari.

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>53</sup>

1) many.mountains.peaks(?) 2) Yamasiro-DV (ATTR)-river-ACC 3) palace climb-INF 4) I-POSS climb-CON 5) dark clay fine-FIN 6) Nara-ACC pass.by 7) small-shield 8) Yamato-ACC pass.by 9) I-POSS 10) watch-POSS desire-FIN province TOP 11) Kaduraki high palace 12) I-POSS house-GEN near.

*Translation*<sup>54</sup>

Yamasiro river, (with) many mountain peaks. Going to the palace, (I) go to the palace. I passed Nara (with its) dark clay, (I) passed Yamato (with its) small shields. I want to see my province – high palace of Kaduraki, near my home.

KJK 75<sup>55</sup>*Original text*

1) 波迹布邪迦 2) 和賀多知美禮婆 3) 迦芸漏肥能 4) 毛由流伊弊牟良 5) 都麻賀伊弊能阿多理

*Romanization*<sup>56</sup>

1) panipu-Nsaka 2) wa-Nka tat-i-myi-reNpa 3) kaNkyirwo piy-nō 4) mwoy-uru ipye mura 5) tuma-Nka ipye-nō atari

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>57</sup>

1) Panipu hill 2) I-POSS stand-INF-watch-COND 3) shimmer sun-GEN 4) burn-ATTR house cluster 5) spouse-POSS house-GEN around

52 Ibid. p 110.

53 Author's elaboration.

54 Ibidem.

55 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*125p.

56 Ibid. p. 125.

57 Author's elaboration.

*Translation*<sup>58</sup>

When I stand at Panipu hill and watch the house cluster around (my) wife's house burning like (the) shimmering sun

KJK1<sup>59</sup>

*Original text*

1)夜久毛多都 2)伊豆毛夜弊賀岐 3)都麻基微爾 4)夜弊賀岐  
都久流 5)曾能夜弊賀岐袁

*Romanization*<sup>60</sup>

1) ya kumwo tat-u 2) iNtumwo ya-pye-N-kakyi 3) tuma-N-kōmiy-ni  
4) ya-pye-N-kakyi tukur-u 5) sōnō ya-pye-N-kakyi-wo

*Glossing with morphemic analysis*<sup>61</sup>

1) eight cloud rise-ATTR 2) iNtumwo eight-CL-DV(ATTR)-fence 3)  
spouse-GEN-be.secluded(NML)-LOC 4) eight-CL-DV(ATTR)fence  
make-FIN 5) this eight-DV(ATTR)-fence-ACC

*Translation*<sup>62</sup>

Idumo, (where) eight clouds arise. (I) am making eight-layered fence  
for (my) spouse to seclude herself. This eight-layered fence.

KJK 82<sup>63</sup>

*Original*

1)阿麻陀牟 2) 加流乃袁登賣 3) 伊多那加婆 4) 比登斯理奴  
倍志 5) 波佐能夜麻能 6) 波斗能 7) 斯多那岐爾那久

*Romanization*<sup>64</sup>

1) ama-N-tam-u 2) karu-nō wotōmye 3) ita nak-aNpa 4) pyitō sir-i-n-  
uNpey-si 5) pasa-nō yama-nō 6) patwo-nō 7) sita-nak-yi n-i nak-u.

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>65</sup>

1) sky-GEN-fly-ATTR 2) Karu-GEN girl 3) greatly cry-COND 4)  
person know-INF-PERF-DEB-FIN 5) Pasa-GEN mountain-GEN 6)  
pigeon-COMP 7) bottom-cry-INF DV-INF cry-FIN

58 Ibidem.

59 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p. 51.

60 Ibid p. 51.

61 Author's elaboration.

62 Ibidem.

63 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p. 130.

64 Ibid. p.130.

65 Author's elaboration.

*Translation*<sup>66</sup>

Sky flying Karu girl. If (you) cry strongly, people will know. Like a pigeon on the Pasa mountain (she is) crying secretly.

KJK 28<sup>67</sup>

*Original*

1)多迦比迦流 2)比能美古 3)夜須美斯志 4)和賀意富岐美  
5)阿良多麻能 6)登斯賀岐布禮婆 7)阿良多麻能 8)都紀波岐閑  
由久 9)宇倍那宇倍那 10)岐美麻知賀多爾 11)和賀祁勢流 12)意  
須比能須蘇爾 13)都紀多多那牟余

*Romanization*<sup>68</sup>

1) taka pyikar-u 2) pyi-nö myi-kwo 3) yasumyis-i-si 4) wa-Nka opö  
kyimyi 5) ara tama-nö 6) tösi-Nka k-yi pu-re-Npa 7) ara tama-nö 8) tuki  
pa k-yi pey-yuk-u 9) uNpey na uNpey na 10) kyimyi mat-i-Nkat-an-i 11)  
wa-Nka kyes-er-u 12) osupyi-nö suswo-ni 13) tuki tat-an-am-u yö

*Glossing with morphemic analysis*<sup>69</sup>

1) high shine-ATTR 2) sun-GEN HON-child 3) peace.be.filled-INF-  
PAST/ATTR 4) I-POSS big lord 5) new gem-GEN 6) year-POSS come-  
INF pass-EV-CONJ 7) new gem-GEN 8) month TOP come-INF pass  
(INF)-go-FIN 9) indeed PT indeed PT 10) lord wait-INF-POT-NEG-INF  
11) I-POSS wear (HON)-PROG-ATTR 12) cloak-GEN hem-LOC 13)  
moon raise-NEG-TENT-FIN PT

*Translation*<sup>70</sup>

High shining Prince of the Sun, my Lord, (who) rules peacefully. Like  
new gems years come and pass, like new gems months come and pass  
away. Indeed, indeed, (I) can hardly wait for (my) lord, (since) on the  
cloak hem, I wear, the moon should rise.

NSK 68<sup>71</sup>

*Original*

1)等虚辞陪邇 2)枳彌母阿閑椰毛 3)異舍儺等利 4)宇彌能波  
摩毛能 5)余留等枳等枳弘

*Romanization*<sup>72</sup>

66 Ibidem.

67 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p. 83.

68 Ibid. p.83.

69 Author's-elaboration.

70 Ibidem.

71 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki"...*p.168.

72. Ibid. p.168.

1) tökösip-ey ni 2) kyimyi mo ap-ey yamo 3) isana töri 4) umyi-nö pamamo no 5) yör-u tökyiNtökyi-wo

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>73</sup>

1) eternal-FIN side-LOC 2) lord PT meet-EV PT PT 3) whale take-INF 4) sea-GEN sea.weed-GEN 5) cross-ATTR time.time-ACC

*Translation*<sup>74</sup>

Oh, forever (you) will meet (me), the lord! On the whale-hunting seaside, (where) sea weeds(are/grow)...As time and time pass by.

NSK 83<sup>75</sup>

*Original*

1)伊儼武斯盧 2)可簸沂比野儼擬 3)寐逗愈凱磨 4)儼弭企於己陔智 5)曾能泥播宇世儒

*Romanization*<sup>76</sup>

1) ina musirwo 2) kapa swop-yi yanaNkiy 3) myiNtu yuk-ey-Npa 4) naNpyik-yi okö-tat-i 5) sönö ne pa us-e-Ns-u

*Glossing with morphemic analyses*<sup>77</sup>

1) rice straw mat 2) river lie.along-INF willow 3) water go-EV-COND4) bend-INF rise-stand-INF 5) this root TOP loose-EV-NEG-FIN.

*Translation*<sup>78</sup>

The rice-straw mat. (Like the) willow along the river – when the water goes – (its branches) trail and rise. (But) its roots are not lost.

NSK 104<sup>79</sup>

*Original*

1)斯那堤流 2)箇多烏箇夜摩爾 3)伊比爾惠弓 4)許夜勢屢 5)諸能多比等阿波礼 6)於夜那斯爾 7)奈礼奈理鷄迷夜 8)佐須陔氣能 9)枳彌波夜那祇 10)伊比爾惠弓 11)許夜勢留 12)諸能多比等阿波礼

*Romanization*<sup>80</sup>

1) sinateru 2) katawoka yama-ni 3) ipyi-ni wete 4) köy-as-er-u 5) sönö tapytö apare 6) oya na-si n-i 7) nare nar-i-ky-em-ey ya 8) sasutakey nö

73 Author's elaboration.

74 Ibidem.

75 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki" ...p. 174*

76. Ibid. p. 175.

77 Author's elaboration.

78 Ibidem.

79 Levchenko, *Songs of "Kojiki" ...p. 187.*

80 Ibid. p. 187

9) kyimyi pa ya na-kyi 10) ipyi ni wete 11) köyaseru 12) sönö tapyitö  
apare

*Glossing and morphemic analyses*<sup>81</sup>

1) be.high-ATTR 2) Katawoka mountain-LOC 3) food DV-INF  
starve-SUB 4) rest-HON-PROG-FIN 5) this traveler INTER 6) parent  
have.no-FIN DV-INF 7) you born-INF-PAST/FIN-TENT-EV PT 8)  
insert-ATTR bamboo-GEN 9) lord TOP PT have.no-ATTR 10) food DV-  
INF starve-SUB 11) rest-HON-PROG-FIN 12) this traveler INTER

*Translation*<sup>82</sup>

(On) high Katawoka mountain. Poor traveler, alas! – the food has been  
eaten, (and you) are having a rest. Being born without parents, (you) have  
no lord to insert a bamboo. Poor traveler, alas! – the food has been eaten,  
(and you) are having a rest.

---

81 Author's elaboration.

82 Ibidem.

## In Search of Prestige and a Lost Position: Russia's Policy in the Korean Policy\*\*

### Abstract

Since the fall of the USSR, Russia has been trying to improve its position in the Korean Peninsula. In the 1990s this ended in almost total failure. Only in the 2000s did one see an improvement in Russia's position: Moscow was able to balance its position in the Peninsula, achieve good relations with both Koreas and was invited to Six-Party Talks. Unfortunately, these beneficial circumstances did not last long. Since then Russia has been a rather non-active international player in the Peninsula, which has usually been bound up to Chinese actions. Hence, despite the ups and downs, Russia's position since 1991 has been quite constant – that of a secondary great power in Korea.

### Introduction

Russia has been active in the Korean Peninsula since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It had its moment of superiority in the aftermath of WWII when the USSR controlled half of the Peninsula. Although the DPRK was able to distance itself from Moscow in the 1960s, the USSR remained influential in North Korea until the end of a Soviet era. This all changed in the 1990s when Russia's position diminished significantly. Since President Vladimir Putin's first term Russia has been trying to restore its position in order to boost its international profile. Nevertheless, the results are mixed: Moscow's importance has improved in comparison to Yeltsin's time, though it is still far behind the Soviet level and unlikely to develop further.

### Theoretical introduction: realism and Russia's great power syndrome

This article deals with Russia's policy in the Korean Peninsula since the early 1990s, from the perspective of political science. It will be based theoretically on the realistic approach to international relations,

---

\* Jagiellonian University, Department of Middle and Far East Studies, Faculty Member. Studies Political Science, Burma Studies, and China studies.

\*\* This article is the result of the research project (grant) nr DEC-2011/01/N/HS5/02426 supported by National Science Center (NCN).



combining two sub-schools that emerged from classical political realism: neorealism and neoclassical realism.

The realist school of international relations claims that the archaic, Hobbesian, character of the international system forces states to provide for their own security and interests; power relations dominate at the expense of values. The realists believe that although since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the world has changed, become more globalized and interdependent, with more international institutions striving to make it a better place, and although the language of politics has changed to become more inclusive, nevertheless states' behaviour is still based on traditional, *realpolitik* imperatives: national interests, national security, power projection, management of the strategic balance and emphasis on the primacy of state sovereignty. To put it simply: "interests come before values."<sup>1</sup>

In Russia, realism (in its different forms) remains the dominant school of political thinking, though naturally embodied in a local understanding, vocabulary and discourse: "the ruling elites in Moscow and Beijing have been brought up in a strategic realist culture that emphasises the element of struggle in an often viciously competitive world, where power relations dominate at the expense of allegedly universal values"<sup>2</sup>. In the Russian vision of *Realpolitik* the world is characterised by a constant struggle for power: "war or the preparation for a new war became the way Russian civilisation has survived"<sup>3</sup>. In the Russian worldview, power relations dominate at the expense of allegedly universal values. Moscow rejects the Western idea of progress (e.g. North Korean crisis Russian have been unconcerned about non-proliferation) and considers the "US primacy and unipolarity as a temporary aberration of international politics."<sup>4</sup> Thus, Russia's political behaviour is "based on traditional, 19th century *Realpolitik* imperatives: national security, power projection, management of the strategic balance and emphasis on the primacy of state sovereignty"; the only difference is the discourse: the Russians have learned to use more modern and inclusive language. Instead of a zero-sum

---

<sup>1</sup> Kaplan, Robert, *The Realist Creed*, Stratfor, 19.11.2014, accessed June 1, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Bobo Lo, *The Axis of Convenience. Russia, China and the New Geopolitics*, London-New York 2008, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Bobo Lo, L. Shevtsova, *A 21st Century Myth. Authoritarian Modernization in Russia and China*, Carnegie Center Moscow 2012, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*, London-New York 2014, p. 138 and 147.

calculus or balance of power, they speak of interdependency and universal threats and challenges”<sup>5</sup>.

Great power syndrome has been another important feature in analysing Russian conduct<sup>6</sup>. The conviction of Russia’s cultural and moral superiority that predestinates it to become a superpower is an imperative deeply rooted in the Russian mentality. The historical process of creating the Russian identity made it inseparably tied with the imperial tradition; Russia existed not so much in time, as in space<sup>7</sup>. The Russian concept of nation-building was a concept of expansion: the Russians cared more about conquering more lands than about economic, political or cultural development<sup>8</sup>. Being a superpower remains a key aspect of the Russian mentality. This superpower status, however, not understood in the classical aspects of political science (power as a state with force and resources) but rather “in reference to the 19th century’s vague metaphysical concepts of an empire as a global leader and an exclusive centre of culture, statehood and spirituality”<sup>9</sup>. The great power syndrome still has an important, if not a decisive influence on how Russia functions. This is associated with the “need for recognition and respect,” which was undermined by the USSR’s fall<sup>10</sup>. For historical reasons, Russia possesses a great need to be recognised by other subjects. This is a “complex phenomenon, known as an affiliation conjunction: recognition of oneself is based on being recognised by others whom one recognises.” As Leonid Radzikhovski put it, the Russians have a giant need for respect, but throughout the centuries, the fear was the only means of being respected that they had mastered was: “if someone is afraid of us, then he will

---

<sup>5</sup> Bobo Lo, *op. cit.*, p. 3-174; A. Petersen, K. Barysch, *Russia, China and the geopolitics of energy in Central Asia*, CRR Report 2011, 16 XI.

<sup>6</sup> For more, see: Michał Lubina, *Russia-China. A Political Marriage of Convenience*, Budrich Publishers, Opladen-Berlin-Toronto 2017, p. 32-38.

<sup>7</sup> M. Nizioł, *Dylematy kulturowe międzynarodowej roli Rosji (The Cultural Dilemmas of Russia’s International Role)*, Lublin 2004, p. 67-71.

<sup>8</sup> This comes from a specific attitude towards the land; territory here is almost sacred, R. Bäcker, *Rosyjskie myślenie polityczne za czasów prezydenta Putin (Russian political thinking during president Putin’s)*, Toruń 2007, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> D. Orieszkin, *Imperialny projekt Rosji – smutna perspektywa (The Imperial Project of Russia – a Sad Perspective)*, [w:] *Imperium Putina (Putin’s Empire)*, Warszawa 2007, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup> S. Bieleń, *Tożsamość międzynarodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej (International Identity of the Russian Federation)*, Warszawa 2006, p. 31.

respect us”<sup>11</sup>. This is where the need for a great power status and Putin’s popularity is coming from: “Russia pays a lot of attention to being treated and perceived as an equal and as one of the key decision makers in a multipolar world order; this self-perception as a great power is closely related to the syndrome of humiliation that Russia feels it experienced at the end of the Cold War; by imagining the state as a great power, the Russian elite hopes to overcome and compensate for the period of smuta (trouble and depression) of the 1990s”.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the current Russian leadership has been building a national identity on rebuilding the Russian state’s great power status. The worldview of the contemporary Russian elites synthesises the Russian Empire and the Soviet traditions and may be characterised as “moderate neo-imperialism”. It promotes the zone of influence (CIS) and bases on the archetype of space and claim on the geo-strategic and cultural uniqueness of Russia<sup>13</sup>. Russia’s pillars of “great power” (*derzhavnost’*) are traditional: sheer geographic size, a vast nuclear arsenal and abundant natural resources: “Russian policy makers tend to view the world through a Cartesian lens: ‘we think we are a great power, therefore we are’; self-aggrandisement and mythmaking are as important as substance in promoting the idea of Russia as globally influential player”<sup>14</sup>.

This statement means that no matter who is in the head of Russia, foreign policy will follow imperialistic aims. But this is not so when we look at the foreign policy of the Yeltsin government. An excessive tendency to generalise one vision of Russian foreign policy strategy leads to some misinterpretations of those factors which determine Russian foreign strategy, depending on the period. In private, the domestic factors seem to be ignored here. For example, the war in Eastern Ukraine, in which Russia has been involved, was not caused only by Putin’s ambitions to regain the status of superpower. The causes are more complicated. I would not simplify the interpretation of Russia’s involvement in this war, analysing it from the point of superpower

---

<sup>11</sup> L. Radzichowski, *Traktat o szacunku (The Treaty on Respect)*, „Newsweek (Poland)” 2007, 20 IV.

<sup>12</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations...* p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> J. Fiedorow, *Rosyjskie supermocarstwo: mity i rzeczywistość (Russian Superpower: Myths and Reality)*, [in] *Ibidem*, p. 121, p. 64-74; Bobo Lo, L. Shevtsova, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Bobo Lo, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

ambitions. But this is one of several cases for rethinking the wider approaches to the Russian foreign strategy.

This great power status syndrome has important implications for Russian policy in the Korean Peninsula, as Korea is another playground for improving Russia's international position.

### **“The concert of Asia”: the conceptual source of Russia’s policy in the Korean Peninsula**

Moscow's general vision of international relations is based on a soft rejection of the current system which the Kremlin consider unjust and wants to modify it into a better one: a “new model of international relations” that supports Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and stands against Western unilateralism<sup>15</sup> This approach places Moscow in the “coalition of the unwilling”<sup>16</sup> – it hails multipolarity, objects to the Western use of force (military interventions sanctioned by universal values), defends territorial integrity and state sovereignty form of external interference, and detests democratisation attempts.<sup>17</sup> At the top of the list is the importance of a strong state that enjoys full freedom of action internationally.<sup>18</sup>

Russian perception is based on a certain vision of the international system, based on combating American hegemony in international relations, albeit softly – Russia represents “soft balancing” against the US hegemony.<sup>19</sup> Instead of unilateral hegemony, Russia dreams of the 21st century's equivalent of the 19th century “concert of powers”, with its rough equivalence between major powers and strategic checks and

---

<sup>15</sup> Михаил Титаренко, *Геополитическое значение Дальнего Востока. Россия, Китай и другие страны Азии*, Москва 2008, p. 269-271. Russia-China joint communiques/declarations are particularly illustrating in this regard, see e.g. *Совместное заявление Российской Федерации и Китайской Народной Республики о всестороннем углублении российско-китайских отношений партнерства и стратегического взаимодействия*, Президент России. Официальный сайт, 2010, 27 IX

<sup>16</sup> David Shambaugh, *Chinese thinking about World Order*, [in:] *China and the International System. Becoming a World Power*, ed Xiaoming Huang, Robert Putnam, London-New York 2013, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: *Совместная Декларация Российской Федерации И Китайской Народной Республики О Международном Порядке В XXI Веке*, 27.02.2006, www.mid.ru.

<sup>18</sup> Dmitri Trenin, *From Greater Europe to Greater Asia? The Sino-Russian Entente*, Carnegie Center, 09.04.2015

<sup>19</sup> Chaka Ferguson, *The Strategic Use of Soft Balancing: The Normative Dimensions of the Chinese-Russian 'Strategic Partnership'*, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 2 (2012).

balances to restrain hegemonic influences. Thus it proposes “exclusive clubs”<sup>20</sup> of great powers, where those powers would not be restrained by others’ actions and would act in accordance with concert of powers’ logic. The “relations between powers in a new, polycentric international order” preferred by Moscow “should be based on an oligarchic consensus of great powers, civilisational pluralism, the de-ideologisation of interstate relations, the absolute non-interference in the internal affairs of ‘great powers’, respect for their spheres of influence, and the prioritization of business co-operation”<sup>21</sup>.

This 19<sup>th</sup> “concert of powers” logic has been serving as a theoretical, conceptual source for Russian policy making in the Korean Peninsula since the early 2000s. The “Concert of Asia” is a kind of great powers’ condominium supervising the region, where they would collectively deal with the most important issues in Asia-Pacific<sup>22</sup>. Moscow wanted to see “a strategic architecture of checks and balances” in East Asia which would have two cardinal virtues: it would restrain the exercise of hegemonic influence of Beijing and Washington and would allow secondary actors, such as Russia, a greater say in regional decision-making.<sup>23</sup> This ‘Concert of Asia’ logic has been applied by Russian diplomacy in the Korean Peninsula since 2000. It was born out of recognition of Russia’s weakness there; weakness caused by the fall of USSR and Yeltsin’s unskilled policy there.

### **The Disaster of the 1990s: Russian Korea policy during Yeltsin’s decade**

Since 1991, Russia has inherited the Soviet legacy in the Korean Peninsula: strong yet complicated relations with Pyongyang and weak yet promising relations with Seoul. The Kremlin had hoped to become a balancer in the region, but in due course lost its position completely. Moscow-Pyongyang relations deteriorated and reached their lowest point in bilateral history, while Moscow-Seoul promising cooperation did not materialise. The decade concluded with the 1998 disastrous economic crisis for Russia, which buried any hopes for an ambitious policy in the Peninsula.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> W. Rodkiewicz, *The Turn to the East...*, s. 6.

<sup>22</sup> A. Acharya, *A Concert of Asia?*, „Survival”, vol. 41, no 3 (Autumn 1999), p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> Bobo Lo, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

In the 1990s Russia's Korea policy was still burdened by history. Both Moscow and Pyongyang remembered that after initial Soviet hegemony, Kim Il-Sung was able to partially liberate himself from the Soviet's iron grip in the 1960s and has since then successfully maneuvered between Moscow and Beijing<sup>24</sup>. Despite official praises and common communistic ideology, Soviet-North Korean "brotherly relations" left a legacy of distrust, dislike and failed hopes for reunification (on North Korean side) and sense of North Korean betrayal, ungratefulness, and unpredictability for the Russian side. On the other hand, it produced a solid intellectual ground for both relations, as the USSR possessed an impressive amount of Korea specialists while DPRK's nomenclature was fluent in Russian. This intellectual heritage, however, was soon lost.

During perestroika period Gorbachev lost any interest in North Korea and recognized South Korea in 1990. He hoped for South Korean investments in the Russian Far East. In return for recognition of South Korea, Seoul granted USSR a \$3 billion loan, but Moscow had managed to receive only approx. 1/3 (\$1.47 billion) before the Soviet Union collapsed; once it happened Seoul suspended the rest of the loan<sup>25</sup>. Yeltsin has continued Gorbachev's redirection towards South Korea. He "sided unequivocally with Seoul"<sup>26</sup> for both ideological and economic reasons alike. Yeltsin has chose Seoul as the place of his first visit to the region and during his presidency Russia ceased to support the North Korean economy due to its own bad condition – in 1995 alone Russia's trade volume with South Korea was \$3.2 billion, while trade with DPRK dropped from \$3.5 billion in 1988 to \$100 million in the mid-1990s<sup>27</sup>. North Korea felt offended and DPRK-Russia relations hit a nadir: in 1990s "the North Korean press was full of horror stories about the chaos

---

<sup>24</sup> More about Kim Il Sung and his relations with Russians, see (in English): Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960*, Rutgers 2003; Idem, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, Oxford 2013; and (in Polish), Waldemar J. Dziak, *Kim Ir Sen. Dzielo i polityczne wizje (Kim Il Sung and Political Visions)*, Warszawa 2001; Idem, *Korea Północna. U źródeł rodzinnej sukcesji władzy (North Korea. The Sources of Family Succession of Power)*, Warszawa 2009.

<sup>25</sup> A. N. Fedorovsky, *Russian Policy and interests in the Korean Peninsula*, [w:] Russia and Asia: The Emerging Security Agenda ed. G. Chuffrin, New York 1999, p. 394; Y. V. Tsyganov, *Russia and China. What is in the pipeline?* [in:] Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>26</sup> Bobo Lo, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> J. C. Moltz, *Russian Policy on the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Monterey Institute of International Studies, April 2003.

and suffering of the Russian people” due to the transformation from communism to capitalism<sup>28</sup>.

Moscow cared little about the DPRK, as it had high hopes for cooperation with South Korea. Russia, which had just (briefly) started believing in democracy, hoped that ideological convergence would help it in South Korea. The Kremlin had hoped to get into the South Korean market, which turned out to be wishful thinking, as this market had already been dominated by the USA and Japan. Moscow claimed that it was selling Seoul “defensive” arms, but tanks are hard to be considered as such; this enraged Pyongyang; to make matters worse, Seoul at the same time announced that it was accepting weapons as a part of a repayment of the Soviet loan. Nevertheless, Moscow offered South Korea rockets, but then the US moved in: Washington intervened and made the fulfillment of the contract impossible<sup>29</sup>. Russia’s half-hearted attempts in South Korea were completely abandoned after the 1998 economic crisis that effectively ruined Russia’s economic perspectives there.

Russian policy in the Korean Peninsula in the 1990s ended badly – Moscow’s position lowered dramatically in comparison to Soviet times. The Kremlin became marginalized and had no voice in the most important issues on the Korean Peninsula. The most visible sign of Russia’s weakness was its exclusion from North Korean nuclear programme peace negotiations – Russia was not included in four-party talks (USA, China and the two Koreas) and Pyongyang rejected the Russian offer of providing energy in return for abandoning the nuclear programme<sup>30</sup>. Moscow’s ambitions to mediate between two Koreas ended up in a failure too due to weak contacts with South Korea. Thus in the 1990s, Russia was not able to play the role of a balancer and reduced its position significantly in the region compared to Soviet times.

---

<sup>28</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia: A step towards a worldwide anti-hegemonic front?*, Al-Jazeera, 22.06.2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/n-korea-russia-step-toward-worl-201462253320470677.html> (access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>29</sup> Y. V. Tsyganov, op. cit., p. 302; H. Gelman, *The Changing Asia Area [in:] Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in a Changing Asia*, ed. S.W. Garnett, Washington D.C. 2000, 403-408.

<sup>30</sup> Sang-Woo Rhee, *Russia and a new balance of power in East Asia: implications for stability on the Korean Peninsula*, [w:] *Russia and Asia...*, p. 404-410.

### **Putin's personal diplomacy and the Six-Party Talks**

Upon ascending to power in 2000, Putin decided to regain Russia's position in the Korean Peninsula. Since he knew he could not count on China (Beijing did not feel the need to invite Russia into Korean affairs)<sup>31</sup>, he opted for "personal diplomacy" to get Russia a seat at the negotiating table (he travelled to Pyongyang in June 2000; Kim Jong-il paid a revisit in August 2001 and in August 2002 (the next one, however, took place only in 2011)<sup>32</sup> – and he was proved right. Thanks to his rapprochement with Kim Jong-Il in the early 2000s, North Korea (not China!) proposed including Russia in six-party talks to maintain the balance<sup>33</sup> (from Pyongyang's perspective, Russia possessed several important assets: its veto right at the UN Security Council, opposition to the US and the possibility of discreet transfer of money via Russian banks).

North Korea policy making also helped Russia for a while. As most of East Asia has built its prosperity on peace and stability, North Korea chose to survive via constant provocations and political blackmails – it has brilliantly "made a living out of blackmail for 20 years now, having successfully mastered the role of a beggar with a stick"<sup>34</sup>. This corresponds well with Russian foreign policy making, which "thrives on a degree of uncertainty that enables it to pretend to greater influence than is actually the case (in such moments it is) able to assume the guise of a major player – a pretense unsustainable during the relatively peaceful 1990s (...) when the other powers were in a state of 'controlled' but tense

---

<sup>31</sup> L. Buszynski, *Overshadowed by China: The Russia-China Strategic Partnership in the Asia-Pacific Region*, [w:] *The Future of China-Russia Relations*, ed. Bellacqua, Kentucky 2010, p. 271.

<sup>32</sup> *Bilateral relations of Russia and DPRK*, Embassy of Russia to the DPRK, [on-line:] <http://www.rusembdprk.ru/en/russia-and-dprk> – 14 V 2014. In 2000 Russia and DPRK have signed treaty on friendship, good neighborhood and cooperation, *Договор о дружбе, добрососедстве сотрудничестве между Российской Федерацией и Корейской Народно-Демократической Республикой*, „Дипломатический Вестник” сентябрь 2000 год официальные материалы, [on-line:] [http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/dip\\_vest.nsf/99b2ddc4f717c733c32567370042ee43/711eab749094784c32569840051161d1?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/dip_vest.nsf/99b2ddc4f717c733c32567370042ee43/711eab749094784c32569840051161d1?OpenDocument) – 14 V 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Л.В. Забровская, *Шестисторонние переговоры: проблемы и перспективы*, [in:] *Корея:*

*Взгляд из России*, Москва 2007, p. 8-29.

<sup>34</sup> Yu Bin, *Pivot to Eurasia and Africa: Xi Style*, „Comparative Connections” 2013, vol. 15, no 1, [on-line:] [http://cis.org/files/publication/1301qchina\\_russia.pdf](http://cis.org/files/publication/1301qchina_russia.pdf) (access: 05.12.2016)



balance, even a modest Russian input could prove surprisingly effective”<sup>35</sup>.

This was the case with the six-party talks: participation in these talks was Russia’s biggest success on the Korean Peninsula in the 2000s. Moscow had hoped that these talks would herald the new Northeast Asian regionalism that would sustain Russian presence in the Korean Peninsula<sup>36</sup>. This clearly showed how Russia perceives the idea of the “concert of Asia” – as a great powers’ condominium that deals collectively with regional problems (here: the North Korean nuclear programme); Russia, even as a peripheral member, still remained at the negotiating table, which was important for Moscow for reasons of prestige. This is how Russia achieved its most important goal of rebuilding its position, at least partially, after the USSR’s fall and the disastrous 1990s<sup>37</sup>.

Putin’s success, too, was balancing Russia policy vis a vis both Koreas (during Soviet times Pyongyang had dominated the picture while during Yeltsin’s era it was Seoul). Putin, on the other hand, “has managed the considerable feat of simultaneously improving relations with both Koreas (though of course this improvement is asymmetrical: political in the case of Russia-DPRK relations, economic in Russia-ROK relations); this balancing act not only highlights the Kremlin’s commitment to strategic diversity but also reflects an understanding that the best chance of playing an active part in East Asia affairs is to portray Russia as a ‘good regional citizen’ committed to positive-sum outcomes”<sup>38</sup>. Unfortunately for Russia, this is a false picture is difficult to sustain given Russian worldwide actions elsewhere (during crises, such as Georgian and Ukrainian, Russia behaves in the non-Asian way: it resolves to force which time deepens the perception of Russia’s cultural and civilizational strangeness to Asia). To make matters worse, Russia’s hopes for biggest posture on Korean Peninsula were built on the idea of six-party talks’ success, and this success turned out to short-lived.

---

<sup>35</sup> Bobo Lo, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>36</sup> Buszynski, *op. cit.*, p. 277; for Russian perspective on the talks, see: Александр З. Жебин, Ким Ен Ун, *Перемены на Корейском полуострове: вызовы и возможности*, Проблемы Дальнего Востока. - 2008. - N 2. - p. 83-100

<sup>37</sup> А. И.Мацегора, *Современная политика России на Корейском полуострове*, [in:] *Россия и Корея в меняющемся мире*, Москва 2014, p. 14-19.

<sup>38</sup> Bobo Lo, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

Six-party talks collapsed due to the actions of the North Korea which in 2006 conducted nuclear weapons testing. Until then the international community was convinced that Pyongyang was bluffing; now it became obvious that it possesses nuclear weapons. That meant further isolation of the DPRK and beginning of the end of the six-party talks (formally the last talks took place in 2008, but since the nuclear weapons testing it became clear that the problem would not be resolved through negotiations)<sup>39</sup>. All powers reacted strongly, even China which “lost face” – North Korea showed in public that China did not control it (until now nobody does). Despite that, China was able to digest this bitter pill and proved its pragmatism once again: despite the lowering of diplomatic ties, after 2009 Sino-North Korean economic relations intensified – China started investing heavily in North Korea in order to prevent the DPRK’s collapse<sup>40</sup>. China, therefore, fulfilled its main goals – to vassalise North Korea and to prevent Korea from unification. As for the Russian policy after the 2009 stalemate, it usually joined China in joint actions on North Korea<sup>41</sup> and did not try to conduct an overly ambitious policy.<sup>42</sup> Thus, North Korea’s uncompromising stance had limited Russia’s options to maneuver in the Korean Peninsula.

### **Great Plans, Little Results: Russia-South Korea Relations**

Unfulfilled opportunities for Russia for playing a bigger role thanks to the Six-Party Talks have been complemented by equally unfulfilled chances for intensification of relations with South Korea. Russia has been dreaming of selling its resources to South Korea and attracting South Korean investments in Russian Far East for almost three decades now. The results, however are modest: far behind optimistic expectations.

---

<sup>39</sup> *The Six-Party Talks at a Glance*, Arms Control Association, May 2012, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/6partytalks> – 19 VI 2014.

<sup>40</sup> O. Pietrewicz, *Specjalne strefy ekonomiczne jako przykład bardzo trudnego wprowadzania reform w Koreańskiej Republice Ludowo-Demokratycznej (SEZ as an example of difficult reforms in DPRK)*, [in:] J. Włodarski, K. Ziedler, M. Burdelski, *Korea w oczach Polaków (Korea in Poles’ eyes)*, Gdańsk 2012, s. 398-402; Idem, *U źródeł stanowiska Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej wobec Półwyspu Koreańskiego w świetle wydarzeń z lat 2009-2012 (The Genesis of CPR’s policy towards Korean Peninsula from the perspective of 2009-2012 events)*, [in:] J. Rowiński, O. Pietrewicz, *Półwysep Koreański: wyzwania i zagrożenia (Korean Peninsula: Challenges and Threats)*, Toruń 2013, p. 243-283.

<sup>41</sup> Александр З. Жебин, *События в Корее: взгляд из России*, [in:] *Россия и Корея...* p. 23-30.

<sup>42</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations...* p. 146.

The decade of the 2000s in Russia-South Korea relations went unnoticed despite some high profile summits<sup>43</sup>. At the beginning of the decade, Putin has called on Seoul<sup>44</sup>, Kim Dea-Jung and Roh Mu Hyun have both visited Moscow<sup>45</sup> and Russia has backed Seoul's "sunshine policy"<sup>46</sup>. But that's all: the failure of "sunshine policy" and six-party talks stalled RF-ROK relations, too.

The new dynamism was supposed to be inserted into Russia-South Korea relations with the inauguration of "Russia's pivot to Asia" (in 2010/2011; internationally from Vladivostok's APEC summit in 2012). The purpose of this "Russian pivot" was, again, the need to keep great power status: "three hundred years ago great power status dependent on position on the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea; now it depends on the position on the Pacific"<sup>47</sup>. Today "Russia is still a world power because of a long stretch of the Pacific coastline and what lies between the Pacific coast and the Urals: Siberia with its resources. Making full use of this potential is a passport to the future; failure to integrate the east would spell the demise of Russia as a major player"<sup>48</sup>. There was one implicit rationale of the pivot, too. It was to "reduce Moscow's rapidly growing political and economic Sinocentrism" – the notion behind it was that overdependence from China blocks Russian policy options<sup>49</sup>. Intensified relations with South Korea were hoped to partially balance the overdependence on China in Russia's Asia-Pacific policy.

---

<sup>43</sup> For the academic, yet official view of bilateral relations, see: *Перспективы российско-корейских отношений на период до 2030 года*, DRRK, Seoul-Moskva 2013, [https://vk.com/doc358527\\_437478783?hash=f532ad655653654dd0&dl=298e0ccd45e012c27a](https://vk.com/doc358527_437478783?hash=f532ad655653654dd0&dl=298e0ccd45e012c27a) (Access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>44</sup> "Russia makes up lost ground with Korean proposals". *Asia Times*. 2001-02-27, <http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/CB28Ag01.html>, access: 01.12.2016.

<sup>45</sup> *В Москву с официальным визитом прибыл президент Республики Корея Но Му Хен*, 1TV, 20.09.2004, [http://www.1tv.ru/news/2004/09/20/239550-v\\_moskvu\\_s\\_ofitsialnym\\_vizitom\\_pribyl\\_prezident\\_respubliki\\_koreya\\_no\\_mu\\_hen](http://www.1tv.ru/news/2004/09/20/239550-v_moskvu_s_ofitsialnym_vizitom_pribyl_prezident_respubliki_koreya_no_mu_hen) (access: 01.12.2016).

<sup>46</sup> More on "sunshine policy" and its failure, *Sunshine Policy failed to change North Korea*: report, Reuters, 18.11.2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-korea-north-sunshine-idUSTRE6AH12520101118> (access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>47</sup> Ф. Лукьянов: *Мы и новая Азия*, Совет по внешней и оборонной политике, 2013, 11 XI.

<sup>48</sup> D. Trenin, *Moscow on the Pacific: the Missing Piece in the Pivot to Asia*, Carnegie Center Moscow, 2013, 30 X,

<sup>49</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations...* p. 102.

The beginning was good. In 2010, Russia and South Korea signed a memorandum on South Korean participation in Russia's Far East modernisation that included e.g. construction of a bilateral industrial complex in the Nakhodka Free Economic Area in Russia's Far East and gas-fields development in Irkutsk (Eastern Siberia)<sup>50</sup>. This memorandum was an important message then – “a strong political signal, as a similar memorandum with China was signed only a year later” – but proved to be a gesture only: “the implementation of Russia's Korea concepts proved, yet again, problematic and Russia has not achieved any breakthrough so far”.<sup>51</sup> The same story repeated itself in 2013, when during the Russian-South Korean summit in 2013<sup>52</sup> both countries pledged to intensify cooperation in the development of the Russian Far East, agriculture, science, technology, space, military-technical equipment and many other areas<sup>53</sup>. The reality on the ground, however, is that most of the project remained on paper and the only breakthrough was in the human factor: during the summit Putin and Park Guen-Hye announced visa-free travel for citizens of both countries starting from 2014<sup>54</sup>. This indeed increased the number of Russian tourists in South Korea but tourism is a marginal issue in bilateral relations between the two countries.

What is much more important is that the grand “intra-Korean” plans have not materialised. During 2013 summit Putin proposed a trans-Korean railway (connected to the Transiberian railway) and trans-Korean pipeline; Seoul's answer under Park Guen-Hye was caution<sup>55</sup>. There were several reasons behind this agenda, such as Park's tough policy towards North Korea<sup>56</sup> and Seoul's lack of faith in the possibility of fulfillment of

---

<sup>50</sup> РФ и Южная Корея заключили ряд соглашений о сотрудничестве, *izvestia.ru*, 10.11.2010

<sup>51</sup> Marcin Kaczmarski, *Russia-China Relations...* p. 104.

<sup>52</sup> *Официальный визит в Республику Корея*, Президент России. Официальный сайт, 13 XI 2013, [on-line:] <http://news.kremlin.ru/visits/19617> – 4 VI 2014.

<sup>53</sup> С 2014 года Россия и Южная Корея перейдут на безвизовый режим, *Российская газета* (13 ноября 2011) <http://www.rg.ru/2013/11/13/itogi-site.html> (access: 01.12.2016)

<sup>54</sup> С 2014 года Россия и Южная Корея перейдут на безвизовый режим, *Российская газета* (13 ноября 2011) <http://www.rg.ru/2013/11/13/itogi-site.html> (access: 01.12.2016)

<sup>55</sup> *Seoul Cautious on Putin's Far East Development Push*, *The Wall Street Journal Asia* 13 XI 2013, [on-line:] <http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2013/11/13/putin-arrives-in-seoul-on-far-east-development-push/> – 4 VI 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Although Park has called her policy towards North Korea a “trustpolitik” (see: Park Guen-Hye, *A New Kind of Korea*, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/northeast-asia/2011-09-01/new-kind-korea>, access: 05.12.2016; Tom Nagorski, *South Korea's New President Promises Era of 'Trustpolitik'*,

these grand projects and thus after 2013 nothing happened. Russian enthusiasm evaporated with time, too. The same applies to the idea of the gas pipeline via the Korean Peninsula from 2011-2012. It was conceived as potential leverage in negotiations with China, but the small size of it (10-bcm?) made it symbolic only, whereas the political risks involved undermined the idea from the very beginning; finally when Gazprom signed a big gas contract with Beijing in 2014, this made the “implementation of the (Korean) project almost impossible”.<sup>57</sup> The most important, long-term reason why those two grand projects have not materialised until now is simple: “necessary investments are too large given the political risks”<sup>58</sup>.

Thus, great plans have not materialised (as the pivot itself which turned out to be “flawed diversification of Russian foreign policy”)<sup>59</sup>. That is why FR-ROK relations despite being good and stable did not lead to the improvement of Russia’s position in the Peninsula.

### **The ephemeral intensification of Russia-DPRK relations**

In 2014, there appeared another opportunity for Russia to boost its profile on the Korean Peninsula; it happened from a surprising side: North Korea. Kim Jong-Un since his succession to power in 2011 has been trying to liberate the country from Chinese dependence and has at least partially diversify the foreign policy of the DPRK (the execution of pro-Chinese Jang Song-Taek was the most visible sign of these attempts)<sup>60</sup>. This was in accordance with the traditional North Korea foreign policy paradigm: North Korea’s elite has “always striven to have at least two (preferably mutually antagonistic) great power sponsors” (...) to extract the maximum amount of aid possible, while not coming under any undue influence”<sup>61</sup>. An understanding of the fact that economic overdependence on China is risky and worrisome, Pyongyang started attempts, at least

---

Asia Society 25.02.2016, <http://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/south-koreas-new-president-promises-era-trustpolitik>, access: 05.12.2016), she has taken a harsh line against Pyongyang in return for its behavior, e.g. closing Keasong complex.

<sup>57</sup> Marcin Kaczmarek, *Russia-China Relations...* p. 106.

<sup>58</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

<sup>59</sup> W. Rodkiewicz, *The Turn to the East...*, p. 1-30.

<sup>60</sup> *Kim Jong Un's uncle Jang Song Thaek executed* in North Korea, Dailymail 12 XII 2013, [on-line:] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2522859/Kim-Jong-Uns-uncle-Jang-Song-Thaek-executed-North-Korea-traitor.html> – 19 VI 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

partially, to fix it and balance China's influence<sup>62</sup>. Russia seemed to be a good partner to help improve the DPRK's position against China, so North Koreans reached out to the Kremlin.

Initially, Moscow was unconcerned by "Pyongyang's charm offensive"<sup>63</sup>. The Ukrainian crisis, however, changed the political dynamics. Russia, isolated from the West, decided that improving relations with North Korea also had a chance. Calling Russian actions an attempt to "create a worldwide anti-hegemonic front" is perhaps going too far, but certainly Moscow hoped "to divert US resources and also increase Moscow's bargaining power vis-a-vis Washington"<sup>64</sup>.

This explained the outburst of diplomatic activity between Russia and the DPRK. In the Spring of 2014, Alexander Galushka, Russian Minister for the Development of the Far East, and Yuri Trutnev, Russian Vice-Premier, called Pyongyang<sup>65</sup> in return for Kim Yong-nam, the North's formal head of state's attendance at the Sochi Olympics (he visited Sochi despite the fact the DPRK did not participate in the Olympics); there were also rumours of Kim Jong-Un's planned visit to Moscow for the Victory Parade on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015 (he didn't show up eventually)<sup>66</sup>. North Koreans, too, accepted the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia<sup>67</sup>.

Soon concrete deals followed. Moscow canceled 90% of North Korean debts (\$11 billion)<sup>68</sup>, offered to build a gas pipeline and a railway to North Korean SEZ Rajin, as well as trans-Korean railway linked with Trans-Siberian Railway.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Pyongyang and Moscow agreed

<sup>62</sup> Александр З. Жебин, *Корейский полуостров как узел противоречий великих держав*, [in:] *Азиатско-тихоокеанское сотрудничество и место России и место России в региональном развитии*, под ред. К.А.Кокорева, Е.В.Супониной, Б.М.Волхонского. Рос. ин-т стратег. исслед. – Москва, 2014, p. 107-113.

<sup>63</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> *Завершился визит Министра РФ по развитию Дальнего Востока Александра Галушки в КНДР*, Министерство Российской Федерации по развитию Дальнего Востока, 25.10.2014, [http://www.minvostokrazvitiya.ru/press-center/news\\_minvostok/?ELEMENT\\_ID=2508](http://www.minvostokrazvitiya.ru/press-center/news_minvostok/?ELEMENT_ID=2508) (Access: 05.12.2016); *Визит Юрия Трутнева в Северную Корею*, Правительство России, 29.04.2014, <http://government.ru/news/12080/> (Access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>66</sup> *Przyjaźń Korei Północnej i Rosji. Świat ma powody do obaw*, WP.pl, 23.03.2015, [http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1329,title,Przyjazn-Korei-Polnocnej-i-Rosji-Swiat-ma-powody-do-obaw,wid,17379510,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=11833d&\\_tictsrn=5](http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1329,title,Przyjazn-Korei-Polnocnej-i-Rosji-Swiat-ma-powody-do-obaw,wid,17379510,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=11833d&_tictsrn=5) (Access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>67</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

<sup>68</sup> *Russia, North Korea Sign Debt Pact*, „Wall Street Journal” 2012, 18 IX.

<sup>69</sup> Zachary Keck, *To Hedge Its Bets, Russia Is Encircling China*, The Diplomat, 05.11.2013,

that bilateral transactions would be done in Russian rubles instead of US dollars<sup>70</sup>, Russia started investing in North Korean SEZ in Rason<sup>71</sup> and North Koreans declared that Russian companies operating in North Korea would “enjoy a number of unprecedented privileges”: they would be allowed to use the internet without restriction and would be issued visas under greatly simplified regulations<sup>72</sup>. Particularly surprising was the DPRK’s eagerness to present exclusive terms for Russian businessmen, especially in developing mineral resources<sup>73</sup>. Finally, 2015 was declared the “year of Russian-Korean friendship”<sup>74</sup>.

The intensification of Moscow-Pyongyang relations, however, from the very beginning had been built on weak foundations<sup>75</sup>. It was more a political sign than the beginning of fruitful economic cooperation<sup>76</sup>. Economically speaking, the Russian-North Korean rapprochement matters little. Russia has been unable (and unwilling) to provide aid, energy, and food to North Korea (as China has been doing for decades now); Moscow’s cancelling of the debt was politically making virtue out of necessity since Moscow knew Pyongyang would never repay it; furthermore, the DPRK is a poor country, with unqualified labour and little infrastructure and as such economically offers little space for cooperation<sup>77</sup>. The prospects of fulfillment of all these projects is

---

<sup>70</sup> *Россия и КНДР перешли на рубль в расчетах между странами*, RIA Novosti, 20.10.2014, <https://ria.ru/economy/20141020/1029182641.html> (access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. SSE Rason, *Things Are Brewing In North Korea's Rason Zone*, „The Forbes” 2013, 20 XI.

<sup>72</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

<sup>73</sup> How Russia-North Korea relations have recently surprised observers <https://www.nknews.org/2016/01/how-russia-north-korea-relations-have-recently-surprised-observers/>, 29.01.2016

<sup>74</sup> *Стартовал Год дружбы России и КНДР*, RG 14.04.2015, <https://rg.ru/2015/04/14/kndr.html> (access: 05.12.2016).

<sup>75</sup> Doug Bandow, *Russia and North Korea Play Nice: Vladimir Putin's Ukrainian Dance With Kim Jong-un*, The Huffington Post, 24.03.2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-bandow/russia-and-north-korea-pl\\_b\\_6934976.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/doug-bandow/russia-and-north-korea-pl_b_6934976.html) (access: 02.12.2016); for more nuanced, Russian perspective, see: С. С.Суслина, *Перспективы российско-южнокорейского экономического сотрудничества и новые вызовы мировой экономики*, [in]: *Россия и Корея в меняющемся мире...* p. 84-99.

<sup>76</sup> For more about Russia-DPRK Economic relations, see (in French): Nicolas Levi, *Elements de reflexion à la nature des relations entre la Corée du Nord et la Russie*, Academia.Edu, [https://www.academia.edu/14730437/Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_cooperation\\_between\\_North\\_Korea\\_and\\_Russia](https://www.academia.edu/14730437/Analysis_of_the_cooperation_between_North_Korea_and_Russia) (access: 06.12.2016)

<sup>77</sup> Doug Bandow, *Russia and North Korea Play Nice...*

uncertain at best (“the survival rate of these projects will be remarkably low”)<sup>78</sup> and the numbers are merciless: “in the mid-1990s, North Korea's trade with China roughly equaled its trade with Russia, but today Sino-North Korean trade volumes hover around the \$6.5b mark, exceeding Russo-North Korean trade volumes by 60-fold”; even if the DPRK and Russia reach their declared goal of increasing trade volume to \$1bn by 2020 (the goal itself is unlikely to be met) that would be around of “one-sixth of the current Sino-North Korean trade volume”<sup>79</sup>. Furthermore, even in the global economy’s niches where Russia is strong (arms sales), North Korea is too poor to buy the most advanced equipment (Su-35), let alone maintain it. That is why, from an economic perspective “ironically, Moscow’s chief economic interest in the North is a transit route to South Korea (...) the Putin government is interested in north Korea, not North Korea”<sup>80</sup>. But Moscow squeezed by 2014 sanctions had no funds to finance these ambitious projects (a nearly bankrupted Pyongyang could not finance them from the very beginning).

Thus, from the very beginning, the main aim of Russia’s intensified cooperation was probably to divert Western attention away from Ukraine, and to irritate Washington: “Russia demonstrated that it could make Washington pay for confronting Moscow over Ukraine”<sup>81</sup>. Pyongyang accepted this out of necessity – “beggars can’t be choosers” – in the conditions of near-total isolation, Pyongyang chose to play this political game as it cost the DPRK little, or perhaps even offered some small benefits (canceling of the debt). Accordingly, this has made this new Russia-North Korean rapprochement an “international Kabuki Theater” or “twisted tango”<sup>82</sup>. Whatever we call it, however, the intensified relations with the DPRK did not bring a significant improvement in Russia’s position on the Korean Peninsula.

---

<sup>78</sup> *How Russia-North Korea relations have recently surprised observers*, NK News, 29. 01.2016, <https://www.nknews.org/2016/01/how-russia-north-korea-relations-have-recently-surprised-observers/> (access: 05.12.2016)

<sup>79</sup> Andrei Lankov, *N Korea and Russia...*

<sup>80</sup> Doug Bandow, *Russia and North Korea Play Nice*

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid; Idem, *Friends with Benefits: Russia and North Korea's Twisted Tango* <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/friends-benefits-russia-north-koreas-twisted-tango-12369> (access: 05.12.2016).



## Conclusion

Since the fall of the USSR, Russia has been trying to improve its position in the Korean Peninsula in order to boost its international profile. Initially, these attempts ended up in almost total failure in the 1990s, when Yeltsin's clumsy foreign policy led to a lowering, not improving, of Russia's position on the Korean Peninsula. Things started a bit better with Putin's "personal diplomacy" vis a vis Pyongyang. Moscow was able to balance its position in the Peninsula and achieve good relations with both Koreas. Most importantly, the Kremlin was invited to Six-Party Talks and hoped to have a permanent say in regional policy making. Being part of the Six-Party Talks remains Moscow's biggest success in the Peninsula after 1991.

Unfortunately, these beneficial circumstances did not last long, as due to Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions the Six-Party Talks failed. Since then Russia has been a rather non-active international player on the Peninsula, that has usually ben band-wagoned to Chinese actions. Moscow has tried to intensify its relations with Seoul and to attract South Korean investment in the Russian Far East. This all, however, has turned out to be mere wishful thinking and will remain so as long as Russia's idea of greater engagement in the Peninsula will be built on hopes for grand infrastructure and energy projects (the Trans-Korean pipeline and railway) that require a serious improvement in the Korean political situation. Judging from the recent situation, there are no bright perspectives for such a scenario, though naturally the situation is dynamic and things might turn upside down again any time. As long as the situation does not change radically, however, Russia's options for improving its position there are limited. Despite the apparent ups and downs, Russia's position since 1991 has been quite constant – that of a secondary great power in Korea.

This leaves the Korean Peninsula with one important asset for Russia. Korea is not important per se, but as a reserve playground, a place to bargain political deals in return for favours elsewhere. This attitude was particularly visible in the Russian-North Korean rapprochement, which has been active since 2014. Russia wanted to divert attention away from Ukraine and to send a political signal to the West, particularly the US, that it could interfere in Korean affairs in the same way the US is perceived in the Kremlin to interfered in Ukraine, Russia's "near abroad". In this way, the Korean Peninsula serves Russia as a complementary area that supports

the general line of Russian policy makers: to regain global superpower status.

## Korean Shamanism – the Religion of Harmony in Contemporary Korea

### Abstract

Shamanism is one of the oldest religions that have existed on the Korean Peninsula. This system of belief, which is called Muism, provides a well-organised structure of the universe. Furthermore, it can be considered as a source of good values and emotions. It focuses on striving to achieve harmony and unity between man and the world around him. Moreover, it is monopolised by women and the kut ceremony has a significant value. The aim of the article is to explain these values and show how Korean shamanism is perceived today. The publication analyses the ideology, rules and features of Muism.

**Key words:** *Muism, mudang, kut, gangshinmu, sesummu.*

### Introduction

Shamanistic beliefs are the oldest religions that have existed on every continent. However, Korean shamanism, called *Musok* or *Muism*, shows very exceptionally specific features. It differs from other shamanistic religions because it is monopolised by women. Additionally, *Muism* has never been accepted as an official religion and supported by the Korean ruling class and the elites of society. It was made to function only at the margin of the Korean culture and society. One of the main reasons why *Muism* has been playing a marginal role and became the religion of women is due to Confucianism. In the Joseon dynasty (1392-1897) Confucian ideas had a remarkable impact on Korean culture, beliefs, political views and society. Krzysztof Gawlikowski has argued that the Confucian doctrine which helps sustain a patriarchal society, which means there must be gender segregation in the household, for example. This was even extended to religious ceremonies and rituals for the gods

---

\* Ph.D. Candidate, Department of the East Asia Studies, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Lodz.

and higher spirits<sup>1</sup>. Confucianism helped men satisfy their religious needs, but it also helped to completely exclude women from it. As a result, they needed to find a religion for themselves. Therefore, the Korean ruling class and elites of society treated the worshipped gods and a shamanistic *kut* ceremony as vulgar, trivial and suitable only for women and people of the lower classes of society. It should be mentioned that the *kut* ceremony consists mostly of singing and dancing moves. During the ritual, the shaman experiences an ecstasy through dancing vigorously, then reaches a trance-like state. Such religious activity was considered extremely inappropriate for men<sup>2</sup>.

According to the division of the Korean Peninsula into two opposing countries, the publication describes *Muism* only in South Korea (hereafter Korea), except fragments discussing historical times before 1945.

### **Shamanism and the Shaman**

Shamanistic beliefs are probably the world's oldest forms of religion, their origins are deeply rooted in myth, spirituality and are strictly connected with nature and its forces. In shamanism, the world is full of spirits, i.e. demons, gods, souls of the dead, which affect directly and indirectly all living beings. They play an important function and exist both in individual and collective lives.

The term shamanism is based on the word 'shaman', which comes from the Tungusic *saman*. It refers to a religious practitioner who is a person with extraordinary spiritual powers, which enable them to intermediate between the worlds of living beings and spirits<sup>3</sup>.

Hogarth Kim Hyun-key maintains that shamanism was once considered as would any other primitive religion. Today, many scholars agree that this term is notoriously difficult to define and there are many definitions dealing with the issue. Besides, the theoretical debate about the nature of shamanism has been going on but there is no consensus

---

<sup>1</sup> Krzysztof Gawlikowski, *Konfucjański model państwa w Chinach* [The Confucian State Model in China], Warszawa: ISP PAN, 2009, pp. 79-80.

<sup>2</sup> Oh Kyong-geun, 'Korean Shamanism – the Religion of Women', *International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 79-81.

<sup>3</sup> Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus*, London: Kegan Paul, 1935, p. 268.

about it<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, there are many definitions and descriptions of the shaman<sup>5</sup>.

Piers Vitebsky suggests that shamanism is not a religion, but a cross-cultural form of religious sensibility and practices<sup>6</sup>. Pieter F. Craffert adds that an individual being cannot belong to shamanism, but can take part in or benefit from this form of religion and its activities. Moreover, in some circumstances a person can become a shaman themselves through religious tradition or a particular cultural event.

According to P. F. Craffert, shamanism is a globally distributed and very ancient form of activities based on the human potential for experiencing shamanic states of consciousness<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Ake Hultkrantz indicates the term 'shaman' should be considered as a complex of beliefs and practices that revolves around a religious practitioner who uses it to achieve an alternate state of consciousness<sup>8</sup>.

Hogarth Kim Hyun-key argues that shamanism is best defined in terms of who and what the shaman is. All religious specialists have been known as mediums, fortune-tellers, magicians, exorcists, oracles, rainmakers or witch-doctors, just to name a few. They are capable of having direct contact with the higher spirits from the other world, controlling them and using their supernatural powers to help other people who suffer<sup>9</sup>.

Mircea Eliade describes the shaman as a 'psychopomp' who may also be a priest, a mystic and a poet as well as a magician and a medicine man. They are believed to cure, like all doctors, and to perform miracles, like all magicians. Such people are great masters of ecstasy. Shamanism is then a technique of ecstasy<sup>10</sup>.

Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff notes that the shaman is an important element of the 'psychomental complex' of his or her society, and helps to solve sickness, stress and danger<sup>11</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, *Korean Shamanism and Cultural Nationalism*, Seoul: Jimoondang Pub. Co., 1999, pp. 7-10.

<sup>5</sup> P. F. Craffert, 'Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2011, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> Piers Vitebsky, *The Shaman*, Boston: Duncan Baird, 1995, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Craffert, 'Shamanism...', p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> A. Hultkrantz, 'A Definition of Shamanism', *Temenos*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1973, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, *Korean Shamanism and...*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex...*, p. 268.

A. Hultkrantz defines the shaman as a professional and inspired intermediary who establishes a means of contact with a supernatural world through his ecstatic experience. He also receives his inspiration from his guardian or helping spirits<sup>12</sup>.

According to Ioan Myrddin Lewis's definition, the shaman is a person of either gender who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body<sup>13</sup>.

Despite the various definitions and descriptions of the shaman and shamanism, all scholars seem to agree about the most important features of the above-mentioned concepts. The most fundamental one is the shaman is capable of meditating between the worlds. To achieve this, they have to experience ecstasy, then reach a trance-like state. Another significant factor is that they are able to transcend the human condition and pass freely back and forth through different cosmological planets<sup>14</sup>. During the journey, the shaman is allowed to identify the true nature or essence of phenomena, to understand how this is implicated in the causation of events in this world and to act upon this understanding in order to change undesirable situations and sustain desirable ones<sup>15</sup>.

Shamans help people to gain the sympathy, approval and support of the gods. Their main function is to cure others of mental and physical diseases. They are also advisers and make use of their abilities to see into the past, the present and to foresee into the future. Moreover, shamans are representatives of tradition and culture. All shamanistic rituals reflect the customs and ethos of the society in which they occur. Hence, they preserve old customs and oral traditions, which are often lost in the passage of time<sup>16</sup>.

So, the shaman is a person of supernatural powers and incredibly strong will, who is able to intermediate between the realms of human beings and spirits. To achieve their goal, they have to experience ecstasy and a state of trance. Thanks to their uncanny powers, they are capable of

---

<sup>12</sup> Ake Hultkrantz, *Shamanic Healing and Ritual Drama*, New York: The Crossroad Pub. Co., 1996, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ioan Myrddin Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Furst, 'To Find Our Life: Peyote among the Huichol Indians of Mexico', in *Flesh of the Gods: The Ritual Use of Hallucinogens*, Peter Furst (ed.), New York: Praeger, 1972, pp. 136-160.

<sup>15</sup> P. Vitebsky, 'Shamanism', in *Indigenous Religions: A Comparison*, Graham Harvey (ed.), London and New York: Cassell, 2000, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, *Korean Shamanism and...*, pp. 12-13.

perceiving the true nature of phenomena to better understand how it dictates the causality of events and act upon it to uphold the world order.

### **Archaic Beliefs on the Korean Peninsula and the Myth of Tan'gun**

The origins of Korean shamanism are hard to determine. There is no doubt that archaic beliefs and cults in this region originated from animistic traditions, which were remarkably popular in the whole of Northeast Asia. The contemporary tribes treated nature and its forces as extraordinary and magical. There was a common belief that all unusual phenomena were full of gods or demons. Additionally, people believed that every single thing, even the smallest, was inhabited by higher spirits, which were suspected of perpetual correlation with the souls of living and dead beings. Moreover, the native people worshipped gods of mountains, rivers, rocks or plants and believed they had a powerful impact on the lives of human beings<sup>17</sup>. If man treated the gods well and remembered about them, they would gain their support and approval. Consequently, the gods were believed to help them reach happiness and good fortune.

First written records about any beliefs on the Korean Peninsula are in the Chinese text *Wei Chi*, which was composed in the Third Century<sup>18</sup>. Other records are the Korean texts *Samguk Yusa* and *Samguk Sagi*<sup>19</sup>. According to them, Koreans worshipped a God in Heaven, called Hananim. In the religious ceremonies performed in Spring and Autumn, they prayed to him for good fortune, happiness and health. They believed it was the Supreme Being who ruled over the entire world. These texts also tell us about the first rulers, who were simultaneously shamans.

Further information about ancient beliefs is found in myths and legends. One of these is the Myth of Tan'gun, the progenitor of the Korean people. It is the most significant foundation myth and refers to the god and the faith in his coming from heaven to earth that results in the union of heaven, earth and creation. According to it, Hwanung, son of Hwanin (Hananim), wished to descend from heaven and live on earth among human beings. At that time, a she-bear and a tigress prayed to him to transform them into human beings. The god gave them sacred herbs to eat and told them to stay in a cave for one hundred days and avoid the

---

<sup>17</sup> Halina Ogarek-Czój, *Mitologia Korei* [Korean Mythology], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1988, pp. 22-24, 30, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Ryu Tong-shik, 'Shamanism: The Dominant Folk Religion in Korea', *Inter-Religio*, Vol. 5, No. 5, Spring 1984, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Halina Ogarek-Czój, *Mitologia...*, p. 22.

sunlight. After twenty-one days the she-bear became a woman, but the tigress did not follow the guidance and remained a tiger. The bear woman was unable to find a husband, so she prayed to Hwanung once again for a child. The god metamorphosed himself and married her. The woman became the goddess mother of the earth. Through the union of the heavenly god and the human being, a new life was created. They had a son called Tan'gun Wanggeom, who founded the first Korean kingdom in 2333 B.C.<sup>20</sup>.

Ryu Tong-shik argues it is necessary to investigate the rituals of the ancient Korean people to better understand their beliefs. They may be divided into three sections. The first group is related to the sacrificial offering ceremonies and the belief in the light, which symbolises Hananim. The second one is connected with agriculture and the belief in grain goddess. The last section concerns the belief of creation and deals with exorcisms. At all these events, the ancient Koreans sang and danced with eating and drinking for many days and nights. Through these activities they could experience a group ecstasy, then a union with the gods<sup>21</sup>. So, it is seen that the songs and dance played a significant role and were the main elements in primitive Korean culture.

### **Korean Shamanism – *Muism***

Oh Kyong-geun assumes that *Muism* understands the world not through any natural phenomena, which could be explained scientifically, but believes that the supernatural powers control the world. According to Oh, Koreans used such shamanistic ways of thinking for thousands of years. However, he stresses that their social lives strictly follow Confucian values, while their mentality is still deeply rooted in shamanistic ideas of the world<sup>22</sup>. Lee Gyu-tae follows Oh's suspicions. He says the system of thought/philosophy of Koreans was seriously influenced by Buddhism during the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392), by Confucianism during the Joseon dynasty and by rational and scientific thinking in modern times. But shamanistic ideas did not disappear. They

---

<sup>20</sup> Ryu Tong-shik, *The History and Structure of Korean Shamanism*, Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2012, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-78.

<sup>22</sup> Oh Kyong-geun, 'Korean Shamanism – the Religion...', pp. 79-81.



are just deeply permeated in Korean minds and have remarkable impact on and exert influence on their lives still<sup>23</sup>.

Choi Joon-sik compares *Muism* to universal religions like Christianity or Islam. In his views, Korean shamanism does not have any generalised scriptures, fixed religious dogma or a unified organisation of priests. It is a natural system of beliefs, and it was able to spread deep roots in Koreans' daily life. Choi claims that shamanism as a religion performs a very practical function in human life. People naturally avoid any misfortune and pursue happiness in their lives. *Muism* provides peace and happiness between men and the world, where they live<sup>24</sup>. In other words, shamanism provides harmony – the order that is preserved between all existing things. Moreover, harmony is an ideal goal no matter for whom, where and when. It is an aim for everyone, at any time and in every place. However, the ideal state can only be attained when one remains open-minded and tolerant and religious barriers or canons are crossed. Therefore, harmony is the best embodiment of the ideal life. Choi Joon-sik says Korean shamanism does not focus on providing people with life after death or redemption of the soul. Furthermore, he argues that Koreans are very practical in their religious life because they frequently perceive any religion in terms of fortune or misfortune, which may be brought upon them. Such religious thinking is deeply influenced by shamanic concepts. To illustrate this theory, it should be stressed that *Muism* concentrates mainly on how one person or/and their family can achieve intangible assets and material benefits in this world by paying tribute to the gods rather than putting emphasis on universal virtues like wisdom, justice, freedom, immortality, mercy or love<sup>25</sup>.

It should be mentioned that Korean shamanism may be the best example of an unorganised religion with not well-organised canons and practices. But it possesses features of a well-formulated system of moral values, conduct, behaviour and beliefs<sup>26</sup>. In other words, *Muism* plays an

---

<sup>23</sup> Lee Gyu-tae, 한국인의 샤머니즘 [Korean Shamanism], Seoul: Sinwon-munhwasa, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Choi Joon-sik, 무교: 권력에 밀린 한국인의 근본 신앙 [Shamanism – the Fundamental Beliefs of Koreans Rejected by Political Power], Seoul: Mosineun-saramdeul, 2009, pp. 176-177.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>26</sup> Oh Kyong-geun, 'Korean Shamanism – Religion of Reconciliation and Coexistence', *Investigationes Linguisticae*, Vol. 31, No. 31, 2014, p. 36.

important function in Korean society because it is a system of proper values, emotions, morals and manners.

According to Yun I-heum, any man may learn and experience how to be open-minded and tolerant by observing the rules of the native Korean religion. In this case, he pays attention to the innumerable gods worshipped in *Muism* and explains that if there is a strong need, some of the gods may be easily added or removed. Such situations may occur during social transformations. It should be added that *Muism* does not treat its own gods in a preferential or superior way. Additionally, this phenomenon does not allow one to treat non-shamanic and other gods in an inferior way. In fact, all gods are perceived as equal and there is no hierarchy among them that functions in *Muism*. Extraordinarily important is the function of the gods in the socio-cultural sphere and their responsibility for some part of human life. In brief, what it is that they can do for people to help them achieve fortune and avoid misfortune<sup>27</sup>.

Hogarth Kim Hyun-key suggests that various elements and phenomena of nature appear as gods, as well as kings from past dynasties and many cultural heroes in Korean, and less frequently Chinese, history. As well as the indigenous Korean deities and saints, those from other religions, particularly Buddhism, often find their way into the shamanistic pantheon. Some female deities, like certain wives of the kings and culture heroes and those who are believed to be responsible for bringing a particular disease or for birth also feature strongly. He may conclude that a god is freely invented as the need arises<sup>28</sup>.

Oh Kyong-geun suggests that if each of the numerous gods performs its function, the order may be preserved not only in the world but also in the whole universe. However, the problem arises when the gods do not obey the rules and interfere with the functions of other gods. Then, the order is destroyed. In other words, each god plays a unique role of upholding the order in the world and even the universe by fulfilling its duties. So to speak, in *Muism* there is no need to preserve the hierarchy among gods because each one of them perpetuates its nature, personality and identity that are necessary to preserve the order. So, Korean *Muism* shows equality, harmony, order, tolerance and open-mindedness. These

---

<sup>27</sup> Yun I-heum, *한국인의 종교관 – 한국정신의 맥락과 내용* [Religious Views of Koreans – Context and Content of the Korean Spirit], Seoul: Seoul National University, 2001, p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, *Korean Shamanism and...*, p. 125.

features are also strictly connected with open-minded and tolerant Koreans<sup>29</sup>.

According to Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, deities in *Muism* provide three main functions. Firstly, there is always one god everywhere, which is responsible for every single place in the world. Secondly, deities protect people against misfortune and diseases. They are responsible for healing them when they get sick. In a manner of speaking, they are guardians of human beings. Thirdly, daily life with its all matters, is highly connected with the gods and their activities. That is why people should not forget about the gods and should treat them properly by performing the rituals. Such behaviour succeeds in gaining the gods' sympathy and approval, which results in keeping grudges, misfortune and resentments at bay<sup>30</sup>. However, it should be noted that the aim of Korean shamanism, or more likely the gods' aim, is to support people and their existence by protecting them against misfortune and bringing them peace, relief, happiness, health and fortune.

### **Korean Shamans – *Mudang* and their Function**

A shaman performs a main function in all animistic beliefs. It is no different in *Muism*, but here women monopolise the religious system<sup>31</sup>. In Korea, shamans, called *mudang* or *mu*, are mostly women. Generally, they may be divided into two categories – the northern type and the southern type.

The first type is called *gangshinmu*, that is to say a charismatic shaman who is possessed by a god or a demon. Therefore, to become *gangshinmu* one must experience a shamanic sickness, called *mubyong* or *shinbyeong*<sup>32</sup>.

Choi Gil-seong describes shamanic sickness as a pathological phenomenon. This mysterious, unexplained, incurable illness leads to a great physical and psychological suffering. There is no scientific explanation as to what causes this mental-exhausting disease. Simultaneously, the possessed human being often dreams of gods and demons, experiences illusions and hallucinations during day and night.

---

<sup>29</sup> Oh Kyong-geun, 'Korean Shamanism – Religion of...', p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Hogarth Kim Hyun-key, *Korean Shamanism and...*, pp. 125-146.

<sup>31</sup> In Korean shamanism there are also male blinded fortune-tellers, called *p'ansu*; Lee Jung-young, *Korean Shamanistic Rituals*, the Hague and New York: Mouton, 1981, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Choi In-hak, *Korean Shamanism: From Field Notes*, Seoul: The Department of Korean Language and Literature, Myongji University, 1978, pp. 15-16.

What is important here, is that such person does not respond to the medical treatment applied by doctors. There is only one possible way to overcome the sickness. The haunted person must accept their fate and become a shaman. From that moment the shaman has supernatural powers and can perform their duties as a medium between the world of spirits and the world of people. However, if a possessed person does not accept their fate, the spirit, and refuses the gift of becoming the medium, the sickness is not only incurable but there is a risk it may affect their beloved family members and even lead to their death. The illness is a sign from a higher being because it chooses a person and becomes their guardian spirit, called *momju*<sup>33</sup>. People believe that only *gangshinmu* can experience an ecstasy and reach a trance state through conducting a ritual.

The second type is called *sesummu*, that is a hereditary shaman, usually practiced by women. This is a profession so it means that this sort of a shaman does not experience the ecstasy through conducting shamanistic rituals. This type of *mudang* inherits their profession from one of their parents, or a mother-in-law teaches her daughter-in-law how to perform and conduct shamanistic ceremonies and rituals. Additionally, every man can become *sesummu* but a process of becoming a shaman and its training is really hard and leads to mental and physical exhaustion<sup>34</sup>.

Oh Kyong-geun claims the shaman is a human being who needs extraordinary power and strength to communicate with gods and demons. These higher spirits are sacred creatures, a sacrum and that is why a person who wants to communicate with them must be blessed. But first, he or she must be an ordinary person who has to purify their soul through suffering excruciating physical and mental pain. All that differentiates the *mudang* from other ordinary people<sup>35</sup>.

The shaman plays an important function in *Muism*. Firstly, he or she conducts shamanistic ceremonies and rituals that are performed to bring fortune and happiness to ordinary people. Secondly, they are fortune-tellers. Thirdly, the *mudang* lives to support other human beings, which

---

<sup>33</sup> Choi Gil-seong, '샤머니즘의 비교' [A Comparison of Shamanism], in 비교민속학과 비교문화 [Comparative Folklore and Cross-Culture], Choi In-hak (ed.), Seoul: Minsokwon, 1999, pp. 363-364.

<sup>34</sup> Yang Jong-sung, 'Korean Shamanism: The Training Process of Charismatic 'Mudang'', *Folklore Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1988, pp. 21-22.

<sup>35</sup> Oh Kyong-geun, 'Korean Shamanism – Religion of...', p. 38.

explains their other function, namely they devote themselves to help other people resolve their truly complicated problems<sup>36</sup>.

As was mentioned above, Korean shamanism is monopolised by women. But how did it happen? Actually, it is an important question. Above all, the Confucian doctrine plays a key role here, because it strongly emphasises rational behaviour. But *Muism* in its teachings approves supernatural powers and higher spirits, like gods and demons. So it is far from rationality. Moreover, during the Joseon dynasty, the Confucian scholars considered shamanism as a vulgar, coarse, offensive and primitive thing. Therefore, they wanted to get rid of it as quickly as possible. What is more, women have been playing a central role in *Muism* as a whole, especially in its ceremonies. Besides, in the traditional (Confucian) Korean society, a man has a higher status than a woman. Further, the image of a female is rather negative<sup>37</sup>. Another aspect, which was mentioned, is also crucial. In Confucianism there must be gender segregation in the household. This was extended to religious and political spheres. Men fulfilled their spiritual needs, but women were excluded and had to find other forms of religious expression. Additionally, Koreans still believe that females are more inclined to shamanism. This is due to an historical assumption. In the past women's educational level was lower than men's. If they had been properly educated, they would have had relevant knowledge and would have forsaken shamanistic beliefs and practices. Furthermore, ceremonies in *Muism* consist of singing and dancing vigorously, which was perceived as unsuitable for men<sup>38</sup>. The above proves that men can also be a *mudang*.

### The Shamanistic *Kut* Ceremony

Yun I-heum considers the *kut* ceremony as the most important aspect of Korean shamanism. According to *Muism*, the gods, demons or souls of dead people become angry and further cause sorrow and evil things to ordinary men<sup>39</sup>. They do so because they have troubles to find their place in the other world. Choi Sang-chin and Kim Ui-chol believe the reason for that is their experiencing of *han*. It is a feeling emerging from negative emotions such as anger, sorrow, frustration, grief and resentment. The

---

<sup>36</sup> Yang Jong-sung, 'Korean Shamanism...', pp. 29-31.

<sup>37</sup> Choi Joon-sik, *무교...*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>38</sup> Choi Gil-seong, *한국인의 한* [Han of Koreans], Seoul: Yejeonsa, 1996, pp. 68-69.

<sup>39</sup> Yun I-heum, *한국인의 종교관...*, p. 85.

sacred creature experiences such emotions due to serious problems it encounters. So, to overcome *han*, bring back and uphold order, people should help higher spirits to resolve their issues. In result, the gods will provide fortune, happiness and support for people<sup>40</sup>.

John A. Grim argues there are a few offering ceremonies, which are distinguished from one another. They are identified according to their purpose such as healing the sick (*Pyong kut*), guiding the dead (*Chinogi* or *Ogu kut*), initiating a new shaman (*Naerim kut*), providing happiness (*Chaesu kut*), or bringing rain (*Yongsin kut*). The ceremony itself, its time and length and its identifying titles vary in different areas of Korea<sup>41</sup>.

The *kut* ceremony is a series of large rituals, consisting of several parts or scenes and it is performed for a specific purpose. First, the shaman has to prepare the sacrificial table by magically purifying it. Then, the offerings, which usually consist of food, alcohol, money or incense, are put on the prepared table. Later, the *mudang* performs the *cheongbae*, during which the shaman chants to specific rhythms supplicating higher spirits to come into their bodies. Then, there is *kongsu*, the most important part of the ceremony. Here, the gods are entertained to make them happy and willing to deliver a message of how to resolve a problem. Its importance is expressed at the moment when the spirit through *mudang*'s lips gives advice on how to solve a troublesome issue for the clients. Then, the shaman sends spirits back to the other world. It is worth noting that during the ritual the *mudang* sings and performs an energetic dance. The Korean drum, called *janggo*, also plays an important role in the ceremony. The shaman uses it to experience the state of ecstasy, then to reach the trance state<sup>42</sup>.

The *kut* ceremony itself plays a significant function in Korean society. It is the crucial element that unites people together. During the ritual all family members gather to pacify the gods. Moreover, the *kut* ceremony preserves Korean traditional values<sup>43</sup>.

---

<sup>40</sup> Choi Sang-chin, Kim Ui-chol, *Conceptual and Empirical Analyses of Han: An Indigenous Form of Lamentation*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> J. A. Grim, 'Chaesu Kut: A Korean Shamanistic Performance', *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 1984, p. 236.

<sup>42</sup> Yang Jong-sung, 'Korean Shamanism...', pp. 30-33.

<sup>43</sup> Ch'oe Kil-sung, 한국 무속 연구 [Korean Shaman Studies], Taegu: Kyemyong University Press, 1989, p. 41.

### **Korean Muism and Shamans in Contemporary Korea**

Without doubt, shamanism is an important part of Korean national culture and religion. It can be considered as a system of belief or as folklore. Throughout the centuries it was made to function on the margins of Korean culture and society. However, it is noteworthy how *Muism* finds itself in contemporary Korean society.

As was said, shamanism is a part of indigenous beliefs that are deeply rooted in Korean minds. Oh Kyung-geun and Lee Gyu-tae mention that it has had a remarkable impact on Koreans' mentality. There is a common belief, especially among the younger generation and citizens of big cities, that shamanism is a superstition, and this often leads them to treat it with disdain. Nonetheless, Korean people acknowledge it to be an intangible cultural asset. It functions as an influential repository of tradition and values<sup>44</sup>. It should be noted that after the Korean War, Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world. *Mudangs* were seen as relicts of a poor past and an element impeding modernisation and progress. In the 1970s, Park Chung-hee, the president of the Republic of Korea, initiated the *Saemaul Undong* Movement to modernise the country. At the same time, the *Misin Tapa Undong* Movement (to defeat the worship of gods) reached its peak and tried to forcefully eradicate *Muism*, mythology and other folk beliefs<sup>45</sup>.

Kim Chong-ho confirms *Muism* has been continuously suppressed despite the change of ruling ideologies throughout Korean history. The important fact is it has never been approved, but it always despised, no matter what ideology ruled in different periods<sup>46</sup>. It should be noted here that mostly elderly people who live in villages support shamanistic beliefs. Park Ki-bok more or less confirms this supposition in his documentary of the shaman world, *Yeongmae*. His film includes the communal rite in a fishing village with men and women joining the shamans in vigorous dancing. The camera shows happy faces, but each

---

<sup>44</sup> Choe Sang-hun: [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/06/world/asia/06iht-shaman.1.6527738.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=2%20](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/06/world/asia/06iht-shaman.1.6527738.html?_r=2&pagewanted=2%20) (accessed 06.12.2017).

<sup>45</sup> Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias, and the IMF. South Korean Popular Religion in Motion*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010, pp. 4-7.

<sup>46</sup> Kim Chong-ho, 'Cultural Politics or Cultural Contradiction? Prejudice against Shamanism in Korean Society', in *Korean Studies at the Dawn of the Millennium*, Cho Young-a (ed.), Melbourne: Monash University, Monash Asia Institute, 2001, p. 38.

face in the frame belongs to elderly people<sup>47</sup>. This also indicates that past values are idealised and an ancient religious nostalgia is still an important issue.

Laurel Kendall says Korean *mudangs* have claimed new respect as national icons. However, they are blamed for not adapting to modern times. Even more, the shamans are routinely criticised for charging high fees, encouraging excesses of offering food and ritual paraphernalia, performing abbreviated rituals and neglecting to learn the long chants and ritual lore held in the fragile memories of elderly shamans<sup>48</sup>.

Geoffrey Cain claims that Koreans are seeing a resurgence in interest in shamanism. He believes popular culture and the Asian financial crisis of 1997 helped in the revival of shamanistic beliefs on the Korean Peninsula<sup>49</sup>. L. Kendall also stresses the significance of the Asian financial crisis period, otherwise known as the IMF era. During it, the shamans saw many clients who had lost their jobs, clients at risk of losing their jobs, businesses, investments, clients who could not meet their payments, clients who had taken credits and clients experiencing domestic violence as a consequence of economic stress and suicides. Such economic instability hit the shaman world and helped it revive. Even when the crisis had receded, *mudangs* had clients who feared losing their positions, jobs and investments<sup>50</sup>.

Furthermore, G. Cain and Choe Sang-hun strongly claim that nowadays, Korean shamans are highly adaptable. They have found ways to fuse their ancient customs with modern expectations. Korean *mudangs* use the internet to offer online fortune-telling and book ceremonies. They even write posts on their blog sites and participate in TV shows. Both authors note that even politicians consult shamans, asking them where they should relocate their ancestors' remains to ensure good luck in their next election<sup>51</sup>. To conclude, Korean shamanism is an adaptable instrument that responds to the modern realities of society and economy.

---

<sup>47</sup> Pak Ki-bok, Cho Seong-u, 영매 : 산자와죽은자의화해 [Mudang: Reconciliation between the Living and the Dead], Seoul: Korean Film Council, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias...*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey Cain: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2010-02-07/modern-shamans-all-rage-s-korea?page=0%2C1> (accessed 06.12.2017).

<sup>50</sup> Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias...*, pp. 146-147, 151.

<sup>51</sup> Geoffrey Cain, Choe Sang-hun, *Ibid.*



## Conclusion

Han Do-hyun notes that shamanism has been considered by some foreign or native scholars as an archetype of Korean culture. Especially those who analyse Korean folklore, treat *Muism* as the root or core of Korean religiosity and culture<sup>52</sup>. However, the majority of Koreans considers *Muism* as vulgar, coarse, trivial and primitive superstition. Furthermore, it is treated with disdain. Additionally, Koreans deny they have any bonds with their indigenous religion. However, one can easily disprove this belief. That is because *Muism* is the essence of Korean culture, art, literature, myths and even religious beliefs.

Probably, the main reason why Korean shamanism is perceived as valueless and unimportant phenomenon is that *Muism* did not have political ambitions and still remains that way. Consequently, shamanism was not supported by the Korean ruling class and the elites of the society. Any religion not approved and supported by the powerful class of a society has automatically little chances to survive. Furthermore, such a system of belief is treated as inferior and without good values. Additionally, people do not know it, do not want to know it and treat it with prejudice.

Korean shamanism can be compared with the Japanese Shintō; actually both religions have many things in common. But the difference between them is the Japanese native religion is strictly connected with the ruling class. Moreover, it is not treated with disdain and superstition. Unfortunately, Koreans did not follow the same path.

It should be noted that Korea is a state of many religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity. What is important is that all of them coexist peacefully. *Muism* promotes certain values like tolerance, unity and open-mindedness. Its primary goal is to achieve harmony. These elements are common in Confucian or Buddhist philosophy.

Without any doubt, *Muism* owes its poor status in the socio-cultural sphere to the activity of Buddhist and Confucian monks and scholars. Also, the state ideologies of the Goryeo and the Joseon dynasties led to disapproval of the Korean native religion. However, *Muism* survived and has adapted to modern times.

---

<sup>52</sup> Han Do-hyun, 'Shamanism, Superstition and the Colonial Government', *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, July 2000, p. 34.

Furthermore, *Muism* is not a symbol of a stereotyped phenomenon. Interestingly, it is monopolised by females. It constitutes an indigenous part of the Korean culture, religion, tradition and national identity, which may be observed in the *kut* ceremony. It is a precious cultural and national heritage of the Korean state.

It is noteworthy that *Muism* adapted to modern times. *Mudangs* have connected ancient beliefs with the spirit of capitalism and benefit from it. According to L. Kendall, shamans reached material success. The evidence is easily seen. Good clothes, private cars, comfortable housing, decorated shrines, flourish rings and necklaces are signs of a successful practice<sup>53</sup>. The shamans' wealth proclaims that monotheistic religions are insufficient. People are greedy for fortunes in every aspect of their life. In contrast to monotheistic systems, *Muism* guarantees good luck. On the other hand, the wealthy may provide proof of the efficacy of the gods who have brought the shamans many clients. According to L. Kendall, the *mudangs'* financial status also results from good education, family background and breeding<sup>54</sup>, attributes that have a practical validity in Korea.

To sum up, Korean shamanism is deeply rooted in Korean minds. It functions as an important repository of tradition and culture. Undertaking shamanism is not a difficult process. However, *mudangs* with their beliefs are criticised for what they perform. Korean *Muism* has survived mostly in rural areas and in the minds of elderly people. Unfortunately, the younger generation is evincing doubts, founded on prejudice. Their lives are based on rationality or at least logical assumptions and modern approaches. They do not seem to believe that magic, rituals, modernity and rationality coexist in the one world as a complex fusion. Due to this, they will not support and accept shamanistic beliefs as a national native religion. Thus, the development of *Muism* into a higher spiritual culture is not possible regardless tolerance and open-mindedness of Koreans. Still, it will be perceived in a negative way.

---

<sup>53</sup> Laurel Kendall, *Shamans, Nostalgias...*, pp. 141.

<sup>54</sup> Laurell Kendall, *Getting Married in Korea. Of Gender, Morality and Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 85-119.



## BOOK REVIEW

**Lee Ahlam. North Korean Defectors in a New and Competitive Society, London: Rowman&Littlefield, 2016, 159 pages. ISBN: 978-0739192665**

The number of defectors from North Korea has increased significantly in the past decade. In South Korea as of 2017 about 29,000 North Korean refugees are said to have settled and many more are thought to be hiding in the border region between China and North Korea. Their stories are most valuable for understanding the totalitarian regime in the North and publicising unthinkable human rights abuses in the infamous gulags in which about 200,000-300,000 prisoners are believed to be forced to work under inhumane conditions. The book is only dedicated to a minor extent to the stories of these defectors. The publication is much more focused on what is happening when defectors settle in South Korea or other countries. The author is Lee Ahlam, an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Resource Development at Xavier University Cincinnati, Ohio.

The book *North Korean Defectors in a New and Competitive Society*, written by Lee Ahlam was published by Rowman&Littlefield in 2016. Excluding the preface, the conclusion and additional elements, the book consists of six chapters. Some 70% of the book is related to the situation of North Korean defectors in South Korea.

Chapter one is related to the policy of foreign states toward the situation of North Korean defectors. The author underlines that China is not only repatriating North Korean citizens to their country but also allows the defection of 2,000 North Korean people. Chapter two describes the journeys of North Korean to other countries where the reader will note that the average journey took 4 years. Chapter three discusses the problems North Korean defectors face in a “New Society”, providing only

those elements related to the South Korean case. The support of the South Korean government to defectors is mentioned in chapter four. The fifth chapter discusses the fate of North Korean defectors who are not living in South Korea. Chapter six proposes some policy implications related to the issue of North Korean defectors.

Still, for such a short book -- little less than two hundred pages --, this book provides a good deal of ground related to the adaptation of North Korean defectors to Western societies and demonstrates that many issues may be improved in spite of the willingness of the South Korean government in the case of that country. As a kind of precursor (the book was published in 2014), its content provides some unknown facts related to the situation of North Korean defectors based out of South Korea. In spite of the clarity of the book and its valuable knowledge, I do have some minor remarks that I want to point out below.

Firstly, the book provides an amazing number of data related to North Korean defectors in South Korea, but didn't deeply analyse interrelations between South Korean citizens and North Korean defectors in selected areas such as New Malden, a suburb in south-west London. Secondly, I would recommend to the author a discussion of whether issues faced by defectors are different for female and male defectors. Thirdly, the information provided by the authors is clear and verifiable thanks to the important bibliography mainly based on South Korean documents, nevertheless I would like to point out some issues. On page 51 the author underlines that investigations are done by the NIS. In some cases, US inspectors are also involved. Fourthly, I would like to underline that the author provides three successful histories of North Korean defectors: Jung Sung-san, Lee Soon-shil and Joseph Kim. On this case, the author didn't clearly define what is meant by successful. Secondly, each of them has a different profile, but I think it would be more valuable to provide a story of a self-made North Korean man in South Korea such as Choe Sae-ung, the owner of a financial company (SN뱅크). Unsuccessful stories may be also provided such as that of Lee Young-kuk, the bodyguard of Kim Jong-il, who couldn't fit in to the life in South Korea. He finally emigrated to Canada in 2015. Fifthly, I also suggest that the author focus also on testimonies provided by not fully trustable people such as Park, Yeon-mi (page 44, footnote 31) who was criticised to a certain extent by other defectors. Here I suggest that the author might refer to such information. Furthermore, on page 62, a paragraph is related to self-employed North Korean defectors, where the author mentions traditional North Korean

restaurants in South Korea, he indicated the “start of big business” but that point is not further developed, which I deeply regret. Regarding this matter, the author relays us in footnotes to a report entitled 탈북자가 말하는 남한 사회 prepared by Lee Joo-chul (p. 88).

In spite of the previously mentioned remarks, I definitely consider that this book is a wonderful addition to the growing field of North Korean studies, I would suggest the author make a second edition by updating data and discussing more about the situation of North Korean defectors not only in Great Britain, but also in Canada and the United States. I also suggest the author discuss interactions between North Korean defectors in the United States and Soy. I would also suggest to the researcher to incorporate a chapter related to the notion of North Korean defectors in the North Korean media, and to see how the approach toward these defections changed over the last years.

I also think that Lee Ahlam has prepared a brilliant book, and I would like to highly recommend this book as one of the best ways to understand the situation of North Korean defectors. In order to supplement their information on that issue, I would like to invite interested people to read North Korea's Hidden Revolution: How the Information Underground Is Transforming a Closed Society, a constructive book about the escape and the life of a North Korean defectors in South Korea and the United States written by Jieun Baek, a young but already distinguished American scholar with Korean roots. Her book gives more additional names and inside stories than the Ahlam one, but Lee Ahlam's book is definitely a more scholarly book. Jieun's one is more similar to a kind of novel. Interestingly both books were written with a humanitarian purpose, as each of the authors underlines that proceeds from books sales go to organisations that send information into North Korea. It's a real example of humanitarianism that should not only be underlined, but also firmly spread.

Dr Nicolas Levi

## BOOK REVIEW

**Kim Yong. With Kim Suk-Young. Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor, New York City: Columbia University Press, 2009, 168 pages. ISBN: 978-0-231-147447**

Kim Yong. With Kim Suk-Young. Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor, New York City: Columbia University Press, 2009, 168 pages. ISBN: 978-0-231-147447

The number of defectors from North Korea increased significantly in the past decade. In South Korea in 2017 about 29,000 North Korean refugees are said to have settled, and many more are thought to be hiding in the border region between China and North Korea. Their stories are most valuable for understanding the totalitarian regime in the North and publicising unthinkable human rights abuses in the infamous gulags in which about 200,000-300,000 prisoners are believed to be forced to work under inhumane conditions. This book tells us the story of Kim Yong, a former military official who escaped abroad.

The book Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor, co-prepared by Kim Yong and Kim Suk-young was published by Columbia University Press in 2009. Kim's disastrous story of his six-year detainment and outrageous escape from North Korea was interpreted by Kim Suk-young, a professor of Theatre and Dance studies from the University of California. Both prepared the book using a writing style balancing between poetry and journalism. The book comprises many interviews Kim Suk-Young held with Kim Yong after they met a couple of years ago. The novel is not only including the story of the North Korean military officer, but also some pictures related to Labour Camps established in North Korea.

Born in 1950, Kim Yong was sent to an orphanage in Pyongyang (p. 23) and was in the end received, at the age of nine, by a couple. Later he

received a military education. Kim Yong was made a lieutenant colonel in the North Korean National Security Agency and a career military officer earning foreign currency. Meanwhile, as an officer and a businessman of the North Korean Army, he was able to travel freely within the country and experienced a high level of corruption among party authorities.

His life changed in 1993 (p. 60), when North Korean authorities discovered that the young Kim had a father who collaborated with the Americans during the Korean War. Then the narrator was removed to labour camps (nos. 14 and 18) where he spent six years before he escaped. Kim Yong is the first person known to have escaped from Pyongnam Kaechun, the No. 14 detention centre, which is accurately described on page 80. Later he fled to South Korea through Mongolia and China. Later he moved to the United States, but finally he now resides in Seoul.

In the period 2012-2016, there is literally an flow of books prepared by North Korean defectors. *Long Road Home...* is a kind of precursor as it was published in 2009, and exposes the reality of Kwanlisos, North Korean labour camps, to the outside world. Until this period, although it is known that gulags exist in North Korea, little had been written on this topic.

Still, for such a short novel -- little over a hundred pages -- this compelling, but also terrifying provides a good deal of ground related to North Korean internal affairs and demonstrates that nobody can secure there. This volume is certainly not the last word on North Korea and its defectors. The book definitely has to be recommended, in particular for those who already possess a basic knowledge of North Korean affairs, as it provide some unknown facts related to the militarisation of the North Korean economy especially concerning the implication of military companies in the trade of seafood (p. 43). Furthermore, the novel gives a unique peek into the life of Pyongyang's high ranking officials of the Korean Worker's Party (Kim Yong met Ko Yeong-Hee, Kim Jong-Il's third-wife-to-be).

Therefore, I would like to recommend this book as one of the best ways to understand the institutional system of North Korea, which too often under-estimates the role of the North Korean Army in the economy of this country. In order to supplement their information, readers should also have a global view of North Korean society, and so I would like to invite them to read *The Great Leader and the Fighter Pilot: The True Story of the Tyrant Who Created North Korea* and *The Young Lieutenant Who*



Stole His Way to Freedom, a constructive book about the escape and the life of a North Korean defector in the western society prepared by No Kum-sok and Blaine Harden, which depicts the defection and the life of No Kum-sok, a former pilot of the North Korean Army. Concerning the life of high ranking officials of the Korean Worker's Party, I suggest reading the book Exit Emperor Kim Jong-Il: Notes from His Former Mentor, depicting not only the daily life of North Korean elites, but also the cruelty of the policy of the leader Kim Jong-il.

Dr Nicolas Levi

## ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA

**Articles submitted to the journal should not be submitted elsewhere.** Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to publish any material under copyright (see the 'Ghostwriting' and 'Statement for authors' files on [www.iksio.pan.pl/aav](http://www.iksio.pan.pl/aav)) **Articles must be in English, French or in German. The article should begin with an abstract of up to 100 words, followed by five keywords which should describe the article's main arguments and conclusions.** Manuscript length should be between 18 and 22 typewritten pages, maximum 40 thous. characters (including the main text, notes, and tables), and should be typed on A4 paper, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with ample margins on all sides. The entire manuscript must be 1½-spaced and numbered consecutively. The title, the author's name and her/his institutional affiliation should be at the top of the first page (do not use headnotes). All titles in non-Roman alphabets must be transliterated. An English translation of non-standard language titles should be provided in parentheses after the title.

**Footnotes at the bottom of the text page are obligatory.** Quotations must be numbered consecutively throughout the text, typed single-spaced in paragraph style, and grouped together as a unit following the text. The style of note citation should conform with the following examples.

1. Ivor Wilks, *Wa and Wala. Islam and Polity in North-Western Ghana*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 70.
2. Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 124.
3. Kareen Pfeifer, 'Is There an Islamic Economics?' in *Political Islam. Essays from Middle East Report*, Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.), Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977, p. 155.
4. Zygmunt Komorowski, *Kultury Afryki Czarnej* [Cultures of Black Africa], Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1994, p. 89.
5. L. Dimond, 'Rethinking of Civil Society', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 3, July 1994, p. 4.
6. Tafsir of IbnKathir: <http://www.qtafsir.com> (accessed 20.11.2011).

When notes to the same work follow after interruption, use the author's last name and a shortened title of the book or article.

7. Pfeifer, Is There an Islamic..., p. 154.
8. Ibid., p. 186.
9. Ibidem.

**Do not use op.cit.**

More substantial editing will be returned to the author for approval before publication. No rewriting will be allowed at the proof stage. Authors will be asked to return the material to the editorial office within 4 days of receipt, or approval will be assumed.

Articles are qualified on the basis of a double-blind review process by external referees. (see the 'Peer Review Process' file at [www.iksio.pan.pl/aav](http://www.iksio.pan.pl/aav)).

The journal is edited primarily in a print version. Articles from current and recent issues are also available online at [www.iksio.pan.pl/aav](http://www.iksio.pan.pl/aav).