

Nostalgia for women of purity, honesty and strength: reflections on the images of diasporic Korean women of China and Uzbekistan in recent Korean films

1. Introduction

Recently ethnic Korean women of China and Uzbekistan became fashionable in Korean popular culture. Several popular cultural products including film, TV drama, and documentary present ethnic Korean women of China and Uzbekistan as main characters. All of these popular cultural products are regarding romantic relationship of diasporic Korean females with South Korean males. For example,, in the last few years at least two films, one TV drama, and a documentary presented ethnic Korean women's romantic relationship with South Korean males. The 2005 film *Innocent Steps* (*Taensŏ ūi sunjŏng*, directed by Park Yŏng-hun) deals with a love story of an ethnic Korean girl from China, Jang Chae-rin. Another film in the same year *Wedding Campaign* (*Na'ui kyŏrhon wŏnjŏnggi*, directed by Hwang Pyŏng-guk, 2005), is also about two South Korean men from a rural area falling in love with ethnic Korean women of Uzbekistan. This film was based on the 2002 KBS documentary series *Nochonggak Ujŭbek Kada* [Old Bachelors' Trip to Uzbekistan], which was the real stories of South Korean bachelors going to Uzbekistan in search of ethnic Korean spouses. Currently the KBS is also showing daily TV drama series *Yŏlahop Sunjŏng* [A pure-hearted nineteen-year-old girl], which is about a love story of a nineteen year old ethnic Korean girl from Yŏnbyŏn, China.

Though these films, documentary and drama are quite different from each other in their genre, settings and plots, they share many similarities. First of all, they all deal with romantic relationship between South Korean males and Korean diasporic females from countries such as China and the former Soviet Union (CIS: Commonwealth of Independent Countries). Secondly, the ethnic Korean female protagonists in these stories, Ch'ae-rin from China (*Innocent Steps*), Lara from Uzbekistan (*Wedding Campaign*)¹ and Kukhwa in *Yŏlahop Sunjŏng*, have similar personal attributes. These female protagonists are commonly depicted as good-natured, innocent, honest, and courageous figures. In the case of the TV documentary *Nochonggak Ujŭbek Kada* [Old Bachelors' Trip to Uzbekistan] there appear several ethnic Korean women of Uzbekistan ((Goryŏ saram) and no one is particularly depicted as an innocent or honest figure. Nonetheless, the male protagonists – South

¹ In original storyline Lara is an ethnic Korean from Uzbekistan. Later, however, the film director made her to be a North Korean defector who is in Uzbekistan in search for an opportunity to go to South Korea. [Source: web].

Korean bachelors – revealed their belief that ethnic Korean females of Uzbekistan are innocent and idealistic (less materialistic) in comparison with the women of capitalist societies, particularly South Korea. This is the reason why they chose Korean women of Uzbekistan.²

The facts that all these stories deal with similar romantic relationships between South Korean males and ethnic Korean females, and the female protagonists are depicted similarly -- innocent and honest – provokes our interests. Romantic stories of Korean males and overseas Korean females are not new in Korean films. However, in general, overseas Korean females (especially Korean Americans) have been represented rather negatively in Korean films, especially in regard to their ‘westernized’ attitudes. For example, in *Kipko Purūnbam* [Deep Blue Night, directed by Bae Chang-ho, 1984) Jane, a Korean American woman, is portrayed as a materialistic person who married to an African American mostly to obtain US citizenship and she later agrees to disguise a marriage for the male protagonist, who is an illegal migrant from Korea. Similarly, in the film *Churakhanūn Kosūn Nalgaega Itta* [All That Falls Has a Wing, directed by Chang Kil-su, 1989) the female protagonist, Yunju, craves for America and leads a dissolute life in which she cares only materialistic and sensual pleasures. Compared to the rather negative representations of Korean American women, the images of these ethnic Korean women from (less developed) China and Uzbekistan are very positive. Korean Chinese and Korean Uzbek women are innocent, pure, and idealistic in the recent popular cultural images.

Why South Korean popular cultural products use ethnic Korean women from China and Uzbekistan so frequently? Why ethnic Korean women of these less developed countries are represented as such positive and desirable figures? This paper investigates this particular representation of ethnic Korean women from China and Uzbekistan in recent Korean films and drama. While exploring this particular images of the Korean diasporic women in these popular cultural products, this paper will discuss the cultural, social and political implications of the representation in the context of the needs and desires of contemporary Korean society. In particular, it reflects on the reasons why contemporary Korean society desires such qualities – innocence, purity, and strength -- in Korean diasporic women of the less developed societies.

2. Desirable Feminine Attributes: purity, honesty and strength

Both films, *Innocent Steps* and *Wedding Campaign* depict ethnic Korean females, from China and Uzbekistan respectively, as women of purity, honesty and strength. These two ethnic Korean females, far from being materialistic or opportunistic, pursue decent life and true love. Both Kim Lara and Chang Chae-rin represent ideal feminine values that are considered as traditional feminine virtues in Korea.

² In the documentary one of the two male protagonists, Kwang-tae, states that Korean women of Uzbekistan are “not materialistic as contemporary Korean women are.” (Nochonggak Ujūbek Kada, KBS documentary Ingan Kūkjang, 2002).

Chae-rin and Kukhwa: purity and innocence

Chae-rin is a nineteen years old girl from Yŏnbyŏn, the home of the two million Korean Chinese. Chaerin comes to South Korea in disguise of her sister who won the championship at the Yŏnbyŏn Korean Autonomous Region's Dance Contest. A South Korean dance company invited her sister to Seoul, but Chae-rin comes, disguising her sister, as her sister married recently and could not accept the offer. Yŏng-se, who once was the most promising dancer, is sent by the dance studio to meet her at the port of Inchŏn. Yŏng-se has a bitter memory of the past: he had lost his girl friend (and dance partner) Se-yŏng to his rival Hyŏn-su, who has good background and money. Soon after Chae-rin's arrival the dance studio discovers that she is not the talented dancer whom they wanted to bring from China to Korea. Though Chae-rin wants to learn dance, she is abandoned by the studio and with no support and no place to stay, she finds a work at a night club. Yŏng-se feels sympathetic to Chae-rin and decided to teach her sports dancing as she is determined to learn it. Through the practice of dance they get closer to each other gradually and become a good team. It is then when Hyŏn-su takes Ch'ae-rin away from Yŏng-se with tricks and violence. The gangsters hired by Hyŏn-su breaks Yŏng-se's leg so that he would not be able to dance any more. Having lost Chae-rin and become lame, Yŏng-se gives himself up to despair. Chae-rin, however, is different from Se-yŏng -- Yŏng-se's girlfriend who had betrayed him for his rival Hyŏn-su. Chae-rin leaves Hyŏn-su regardless of the prospect of fame and wealth. Chae-rin returns to Yŏng-se, knowing that he sincerely loves her.

The film shows the pure-heartedness of Chae-rin who chooses genuine love over material success. Despite Yŏng-se's being a loser in Korean society – with no money and being lame – Chae-rin returns to Yŏng-se. In so doing, the film contrasts Chae-rin to Se-yŏng, who represents contemporary South Korean women in terms of their seeking for materialistic opportunities over pure love. The film also makes its viewers feel nostalgic about the 'good old days' when people (especially women) were pure and innocent. Chae-rin says that she is from China where fireflies fly all over. This provokes a deep nostalgic feeling among contemporary South Koreans who remember their childhood with fireflies, which disappeared in urban areas. This imagined past is contrasted with the present where people are highly materialistic and opportunistic.

Here Chae-rin is similar to Kukhwa, the female protagonist in the TV drama *Yŏlahop sunjŏng* [A pure-hearted nineteen-year-old] even though this drama is a kind of Cinderella story. In the drama Kukhwa is a Korean Chinese girl who is an orphan. She comes to South Korea and she meets many people including Yunhu. Yunhu is a typical elite man, who is smart, handsome and rich. Though they do not like each other in the beginning, the two eventually feel love to each other. Both Chae-rin and Kukhwa look attractive to South Korean male viewers particularly because of their good-natured attributes which reminds them of the virtuous traditional Korean women. They are innocent, generous, and independent-minded. Chae-rin and Kukhwa often say "Irossumda" ("I'm fine" or "I'm OK") to anyone who shows his/her sympathy to them. They are idealistic and pure in mind and body and they wait for true love.

Kim Lara: honesty and courage

As stated above, *Wedding Campaign* (Hwang Byong-guk, 2005) is based on the TV documentary *Nochonggak Ujubek Kada* (Old Bachelors' Trip to Uzbekistan, 2002). This documentary follows two South Korean bachelors' journey to Uzbekistan in their effort to find marriage partners. This trip and dating are arranged by match-making agencies. This is popular business these days as there are substantial number of Korean bachelors who want to marriage ethnic Korean women of Uzbekistan and other former socialist countries. As in the *Nochonggak Ujubek Kada* in the film *Wedding Campaign* two South Korean males, Man-taek and his friend Hi-cheol, go to Uzbekistan for possible marriage partners. Their guide in Uzbekistan is Kim Lara, and even though she pretends to be a Uzbek Korean, she is actually a defector from North Korea. Lara works for the match-making company to make enough money to obtain a South Korean passport so that she can go to South Korea. Her plan depends on how successful she is in match-making her South Korean customers.

Though Lara tries very hard, her customer Man-taek, who is a farmer from rural Andong, North Kyongsang Province, fails in attracting girls in several dates. Man-taek is helplessly shy and, unlikely his friend H-cheol who attracts girls, he cannot look at his dates in the face. Lara's boss now plans to introduce Man-taek a bad girl whose primary purpose of marriage is not to form a family but to go to Korea to make money. However, Lara discovers what her boss plans for Man-taek, and though this would bring her benefit, and she feels sympathetic to Man-taek, who is very shy but simple and honest. Therefore, Lara aborts Man-taek's date against her boss' plan. It was discovered soon and now Lara's plan to obtain a South Korean passport goes wrong. Eventually, the match-making agent gets attention from Uzbek authorities and all the South Korean bachelors are ordered to leave the country. By now Man-taek feels love to Lara, but he has to return to Korea, leaving Lara behind. After returning from Uzbekistan, heart-broken Man-taek leads desolate life. After a year, South Korean intelligence agency calls him that a woman from Uzbekistan is calling for him. It was Lara who successfully defected to the German Embassy in Uzbekistan and made her way to Korea in search of Man-taek.

Like Chae-rin in *Innocent Steps*, Lara chooses love over materialistic success, in this case obtaining a South Korean passport. Though pure and innocent, these women are far from weak. In reality, another commonality between Chae-rin and Lara is courage and mental strength. Chae-rin is strong enough to take the adventure of coming to South Korea in place of her older sister. She also refuses the fame and wealth guaranteed by Hyön-su and seeks for her love Yöng-se. Lara also acts against her own personal interests when she aborted her boss' plan to cheat Man-taek. Lara eventually follows Man-taek by crossing the walls of the German Embassy in Tashkent.

Such strength in women has been valued in Korean tradition. In traditional Korea, women's virtue did not stop at purity, honesty and physical attractiveness. Virtuous women are expected to show great courage and strength for their family. In particular, she should be strong enough not to other males forcefully destroy her chastity. Such a tradition made women to carry small knives as a decoration. These films imply the nostalgia of South Korean males for Korean women with traditional values, who, seem to be lamentably rare in South Korea today.

Similar characters are observed among North Korean female characters in South Korean films. The 2006 film *Kukyongui Namchok* (South of the border, directed by Ahn Pan-seok, 2006) and *Namnam Pug'nyo* [Southern man northern woman, directed by Chong Cho-sin, 2003] also show similarly-charactered female protagonists. They are innocent, non-materialistic and courageous in the face of love. South Koreans also view their brethren in North Korea as pure (but primitive) people. Grinker (1998) observes that for South Koreans North Korean is highly valued for its purity “because it is seen as fixed in time, and yet it is denigrated as primitive for the same reason (Grinker 1998: 56).”

3. The Losers and Redemptive Love

Interestingly, in the above mentioned films, both male protagonists – Yōng-se and Man-taek -- are losers in South Korean society. Yong-sae and Man-taek represent the uneasy situation of contemporary South Korean males and the society. Regardless of their hard work and good personality they are losers in the society. They represent the frustrations of South Korean society and its stagnant economy. Poor, unsuccessful, and disrespected, they are far from happy people. However, they become happy after they are ‘rescued’ by the redemptive love of the protagonists.

South Korean Bachelors: good-natured, but victims and losers

Both Man-taek in *Wedding Campaign* and Yong-se in *Innocent Steps* are ‘good’ men in Korean standard. They are hard-working and honest. Both of them are shy and rather passive in expressing their feelings of love to their female partners. Man-taek is a farmer in a rural village in Andong, North Kyōngsang Province. As many rural males in South Korea today, Mantaek is unable to find a wife even though he is already in his late 30s. While being a bachelor is lonesome, Man-taek feels particularly sorry to his mother who complains “a woman with no luck of husband does not have luck with her son.” Therefore, Man-taek’s problems come partly because of his inability to fulfil the Confucian ideal of lineage continuation.

Yōng-se is a dancer who is passionate about achieving high level artistic dancing. He once was the most promising dancer in Korea. However, he is cheated by his competitor Hyōn-su and even lost his girlfriend (Se-yōng) to him. This leaves him wounded both physically and emotionally. He is a victim of injustice. His painful memory of losing his girlfriend to his rival makes him cynical. He became almost hopeless until he was called to teach Chae-rin.

Both Chae-rin and Lara feel love (with Yong-se and Man-taek respectively) after they find the pure love of their male partners. Both males, who are rather shy, need active approaches of the women. They are pure in the sense that they do not value money or success too much. Rather they value pure love. Chae-rin wants to return to China regardless of her apparent success with Hyon-su (the successful dancer with lot of money and background). Lara does not allow the bad girl, whose primary intention is just go to South Korea to make money (possibly as a prostitute), to meet Man-taek and instead Lara herself takes him out to abort the meeting. These

female protagonists have been kept “pure and clean” in distance from the hustle bustle of their homeland (South Korea) as if they were prepared for the good males of the country who became undesirable.

Redemptive Love

These female protagonists fall in love with the male protagonists, two South Koreans, regardless of the latter’s being losers in South Korean society. It is the female protagonists, not males, who initiate love in the two films.

This reflects the realities of South Korean society where males of low class and rural areas are considered undesirable for marriage partners and thus those males have to find their spouses overseas. This is one reason why Korean men are having difficulties in finding spouses in Korea. As it is seen in the KBS TV documentary (2002) one of the male says that he came to Uzbekistan to marry an ethnic Korean woman because “they are not materialistic as South Korean women.” The reason why such films appear in early 2000s is not an accident. South Korean society has felt somewhat stagnated already for more than a decade since its economy stopped the rapid growth, for which the country gained a global fame as a “miracle” nation. The nation seemed to have lost its vision after the turbulent 1980s when politics was alive. As the revolutionary left lost its energy and widely incorporated into liberalist market capitalism, everything looked vacant. Its economy was not only stagnant but it also lost its confidence after the late 1990s financial crisis.

Once North Korea was viewed as a new frontier which can stimulate South Korean economy, by offering cheap labour, resource and much needed road to continent. Nonetheless, it was proven that things would not move as South Koreans desire. In *Wedding Campaign* the female protagonist, Lara, is depicted as a North Korean defector in Uzbekistan. She needs South Korean passport – which shows South Koreans’ imagination that North Koreans also long for South Korea as their saviour. The film never questions if they will have a good life in South Korea. In any way, Lara longs for South Korea and Man-taek needs a wife.

Nostalgia: The background itself stimulates nostalgic feelings from the viewers. The country side scenery of Andong, North Kyongsang Province in *Wedding Campaign* remind viewers of the idyllic life of rural village. The shabby urban sceneries of Uzbekistan (*Wedding Campaign*) and Yanbian (*Innocent Steps*) also bring similar effects in the minds of viewers in addition to the dialects and clothing of the protagonists.

International Marriages in Korea

This reflects the social reality that increasing number of South Korean males seek for their spouses overseas. About twelve per cent of marriages in South Korea today are ‘international’ and the most popular spouses for Korean males are ethnic Koreans from China and Uzbekistan. Considering the “developed but lost its tradition” South Korea, such ‘pure’ Koreans are highly valued as spouses for South Korean men. Indeed, many South Korean males seek their spouses among Chinese Korean females.

As mentioned above, each year the number Chinese Korean females who marry South Korean males increases. Almost 12% of all marriages in South Korea are ‘international’ marriages, and among them more than half are between Chinese Korean females and South Korean males. According to the data from the Ministry of Justice, between 1990 and 2004 total 128,762 foreign women married South Korean males. Among them 47.4 per cent are ethnic Koreans from China.³ International marriages between South Koreans and foreigners rose from 12,319 cases in 2000 to 35,447 cases in 2004. (Statics Bureau of Korea). Most of them live in rural areas. According to statistics, the number of children born between South Korean and foreigners are same as follows: Kyeonggi (1480), Seoul (688), Chonnam (587), Chonbuk (517), Kyongbuk (468) and Kyongnam (457). In Chonnam have the biggest number of children below 12: 2,000 in 2006 (Hangyore 2006.2.15).



Foreign wives are not a rarity in rural areas. In particular, poorer regions of North Cholla and South Cholla have bigger number of foreign wives. Their presence is everywhere and often they are considered as a revitalization force of abandoned rural communities. Recently there was a report that a Vietnamese wife of a Korean farmer in Chungghong Province became the leader of village women’s association.

4. De-territorialized nationalism in Korea

Confronted with the apparent threat of increased emigration, governments have responded by creating “deterritorialized nation-states” (Glick Schiller 1997:160-161) that encompass not only those who live within the country’s territorial borders

³ However, many of such marriages are schemes for immigration. Jaeoe Dongpo Shinmun (Nov. 16, 2005) reports that South Koreans believe that almost 90 per cent of theses marriages are fake. <www.doponews.net>

but also those who have migrated abroad. In other words, the nation-state attempts to expand its political influence beyond its borders in order to retain some control over its citizens overseas and ensure their continuing loyalty (Tsuda 2003:256-257).

Diaspora Nationalism

Both Ch'ae-rin and Lara long for South Korea as their ethnic homeland. South Korean government and civil society also try to promote Korean identity among overseas Koreans of China and the CIS by supporting them with language schools, Korean books and others. This is a typical case of “de-territorialized nationalism” as Appadurai (1996) and Clifford (1994) calls in the sense that nationalist project goes beyond national boundaries and diasporic community maintain nationalist sentiments outside of their ethnic motherland. The caption in this advertisement recounts that: (1) this girl feels proud of herself as a Korean, although she lives in China; (2) her grandfather fought for Korean independence during the colonial period, eventually being arrested and tortured by Japanese police as a result; (3) Doosan supports the Korean community in China by providing them with Korean books so that they can learn more about their “motherland” Korea.

In the case of South Korea it was not just the government, but also civic organizations and intellectuals who tried to promote nationalism among diasporas beyond the national territories. Many scholars and journalists have claimed that overseas Koreans are essential parts of the Korean nation. They further insisted that overseas Koreans are the most important resource for the nation in the globalizing world. Since the late 1980s there have been rising interests on overseas Koreans in South Korean media, academia, and government. It was the time when South Koreans felt confident about their country's economic power and also the time when the Communist bloc collapsed. China and the former Soviet Union were suddenly opened to South Koreans and the ethnic Koreans of these countries were virtually “discovered.” Before the 1980s the major focus has been on Korean communities in Japan and the United States. With the thawing of the Cold War regime in the 1980s and the subsequent opening of diplomatic relationship with China and the Soviet Union there has been an increasing numbers of scholarly research and journalistic reports on the Korean communities in China and the Soviet Union. Almost all of this research and the reports have been carried out in the principle of “pan-Korean” or “de-territorialized” nationalism as Appadurai (1996) and Clifford (1994) calls.

South Korean government stretches its arms to various overseas Korean communities to promote Korean culture, thus promoting Korean identity. It does so by supporting overseas Korean communities with Korean books, Korean language teaching personnel, and various cultural programs that are designed to promote Korean identity among overseas Koreans.

The size of the Korean nation grew through the 1990s due to the inclusion of “overseas Koreans” in the former Soviet union and China. The South Korean government expanded the number of overseas Koreans as it incorporates hitherto not included Chinese Koreans (2 million) and the former Soviet Union Koreans (half million). They also changed the name of overseas Koreans from haeoe kyopo (ethnic Koreans overseas) to chaeoe dongpo (Koreans living outside of Korea). Such expansion of the size of the “Korean nation,” was possible by globalization and ever

developing communication technologies. In a sense the “imagined community” of the Korean nation expanded to China and the former Soviet Union in the 1990s. Thus, the Koreans of the countries such as Uzbekistan and China suddenly are considered as important parts of the Korean nation. In particular, women of these countries gained attention from South Korean males who have difficulties in finding their spouses in South Korea.

The timing of these two films is important. South Korean society, after the remarkable speed of economic growth in the last four decades, seems to be stagnant since the late 1990s. The 1997 financial crisis and all the grim scenes caused by the crisis – suicides, stagnant economy... -- was a big shock for South Koreans. First time in the last four decades South Koreans lost confidence in their society’s ability to grow. In addition, the rise of other Asian economies particularly China gave a sense of fear to South Koreans if they will be left out. This was the time when they looked for help from overseas Korean communities. Korean diasporic communities in the First World countries – US, Japan, Canada, Western Europe – were encouraged to invest in their ethnic homeland. They did respond to this call and overseas Koreans brought huge amount of money to South Korea in 1998.

South Korean intellectuals claimed that overseas Koreans are an important resource for South Korea. A researcher at the Samsung Economy Institute claims:

There live two million Koreans in China, eight hundred thousand in Japan, and one million and two hundred thousand in the U.S. The size of the overseas Korean population is almost five million, including those who are not identified or registered... The fact that overseas Koreans are concentrated in the four super powers, which are our neighbouring countries, is a great advantage for our global policy. We, together with those overseas brothers, must form a “Pan-Korean Economic and Cultural Community,” and let these overseas Koreans act as intermediaries between their host countries and us to develop bilateral relationships. Let them, principally, be loyal to their host countries and, secondarily, let them work to develop a [friendly] relationship between their host countries and South Korea (Ku 1995:177-178)

Such a notion that overseas Koreans would be beneficial for South Korea was not confined only among nationalist intellectuals. Business leaders also claimed the same. Well known founder of Hyundai Group, Chōng Chu-yōng claimed:

Although Japan began developing the Siberian resources much earlier than we did, the Japanese have not achieved much because of the unresolved territorial disputes between Japan and Russia. We can outdo the Japanese because we have many advantages compared to them. One of our advantages is that there are many Koreans on Sakhalin and in Siberia, and they speak Korean. Secondly, we can utilize those Chinese Koreans in Manchuria for our projects in Siberia... Working with the people who share the same language with us is much easier than working with the people whose languages are different from ours. These are the reasons why we Koreans can outdo the Japanese in developing Siberian resources (Chōng 1997:141-2).

Certainly, this was even more emphasized during the late 1990s financial crisis in South Korea. People openly insist that overseas Koreans should help their motherland:

Overseas Jews behind Israel’s influence in global politics and economy. Israel is not the only example. The remarkable economic development of China would not have been possible without the support of the fifty million overseas Chinese. Rise of the Vietnamese economy after the War was possible only thanks to the annual remittance of the one and half billion dollars from the overseas Vietnamese. Though they had fled from their motherland as “boat people,” they are now fulfilling their filial duty to their motherland. Now is the time when our country needs the patriotism both from the domestic Koreans and overseas brothers. No country will willingly suffer the pains [of financial crisis] in place of us, and no country will pay our debt [to the IMF] for us. We should overcome this economic crisis and repay the debt only with our own resources and national wisdom. There cannot be any difference between domestic Koreans and overseas Koreans since any crisis of our country will be the crisis of our nation (Kim 1998:3).

The message was clear: all the “children” of Korean nation – overseas Koreans – should help their “motherland” in crisis.

Such representation of ethnic Korean women from China and the former Soviet Union is not new in South Korea. Actually, such a pure and innocent image of Korean diasporic women from China and the former Soviet Union has been recurrent in South Korean public discourse. In the mid-1990s Doosan, one of the conglomerates, used such image in its advertisement (Figure 1). Presented in this advertisement is a modest-looking girl who is an ethnic Korean living in the Yŏnbyŏn Korean Minority Autonomus Region in Jilin Province of northeast China.

유준애!
 그녀는 조선족으로 불립니다.
 모두가 눈이 땅을 재만스라워했지만
 지금은 달라졌습니다.
 조선에서 온 사람들에게 사기를 당한
 아픔이 생긴 뒤부터입니다.
 그러나 그녀는 그녀의 할아버지가
 낳신 중국 땅에서 일본 경찰에게 끌려가
 3일 동안 거꾸로 매달리면서도
 독립을 외치며 빗방이 죽어간 조국의
 참모습을 다짐 갖더라고 회상합니다.
 또 모두에게 그 진정한 모습을
 알려주고 싶어합니다.

작은 일부터 시작하는 큰 나라사랑-
 두산이 먼저 실천합니다.

DOOSAN
 두산그룹

Figure 1. “Ryu Chun-ae! She is called a Chosŏnjok” (Doosan’s 1994 advertisement)

However, the benefit of overseas Koreans is not only economic or political. Cultural aspects of them are even more important in the same discourse. Now, those overseas Koreans in China and the former Soviet union were viewed as the bearers of Korean tradition which disappeared in the industrialized South Korea.

South Korean perceptions on overseas Koreans is somewhat similar to the “Orientalism” that Edward Said showed in his study of the Western view of the Orient in the modern era. According to Said, Europe was merely fashioning an antipodal point of reference for itself by bringing into existence the conceptual category of the “Orient.” Thus, Europe could establish its own identity, against that of Asia, and justify its own hegemonic sense of culture and social superiority (Said 1978). Through the nationalist discourse, domestic Koreans have utilized overseas Koreans to provide themselves with hope when the former were in dire situation, viewing the latter as a source for help. At the same time, domestic Koreans have used overseas Koreans to define themselves as proud and civilized members of the Korean nation against the latter, considering that overseas brothers are the objects of the former’s guide.

South Koreans tend to view that Chinese Koreans are ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ while they themselves have lost such innocence while living in the modern world. This dichotomy of tradition-bearing Chinese Koreans and tradition-breaking South Koreans implies different roles for each group in the national community. For example, it is implied that Chinese Koreans would keep the old Korean tradition while South Koreans would innovate technologies and develop the national economy.

5. Conclusion

Both *Innocent Steps* and *Wedding Campaign* depict Korean diasporic females as innocent, pure, and strong. These are the feminine values nationally desired in contemporary South Korea, but are lamentably rare in South Korea today. Far from being materialistic or opportunistic, the female protagonists in these films eagerly help South Korean males, regardless of the fact that the males in the films are not very much desirable, actually “losers” within South Korea’s competitive society, in South Korea. The two male figures symbolize today’s South Korean economy that stopped the “miraculous” economic growth and has shown signs of stagnation. It is also the South Korean society that is floating without proceeding forward after the amazing era of “development” and “growth.” These films show the widely shared wish of South Koreans that their society can be revived by the “pure, innocent, and strong” ethnic Koreans from poorer countries such as China, Uzbekistan and North Korea. These women can save South Korean economy that has lost its usual strength (virility).

South Koreans tend to view that Chinese Koreans are ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ while they have lost such traditional Korean values while building the modern industries of South Korea. This dichotomy of tradition-bearing Chinese Koreans and

tradition-breaking South Koreans implies different roles for each group in national community. For example, it is implied that Chinese Koreans would keep the old Korean tradition while South Koreans would innovate technologies and develop the national economy. In this respect, such 'pure' Koreans are highly valued as spouses for South Korean people, particularly men. Indeed, many South Korean males seek their spouses among Chinese Korean women. Each year thousands of South Korean men marry Chinese Korean women. According to government statistics, about 12 per cent of all marriages in South Korea today are international and among them more than 70 per cent (some say 50 per cent) are between South Korean males and Chinese Korean women. Love stories between South Korean men and Chinese Korean women are popular in South Korean literature and popular culture. Not surprisingly, in these novels and films ethnic Koreans girls of China and the former Soviet union are depicted as people of innocence and honesty, virtues that are considered lamentably rare among today's South Korean women.

Similar views are found for North Koreans. Roy Grinker (1998) states: "... the north is highly valued for its purity because it is seen as fixed in time, and yet it is denigrated as primitive for the same reason" (p.56). He continues: "on the one hand, north Koreans are automatons blindly obeying the north Korean state and living in the past; on the other, they are "more Korean," "less international," and less materialistic" (p. 62). The 2003 film by Chŏng Cho-shin *Namnam Pug'nyŏ* (Southern Man Northern Woman), a romantic comedy in which a South Korean boy falls in love with a North Korean girl, shows similar dichotomy.

Both males are losers in South Korean society. But, they are the ones who worked hard in their profession: Young-se as a professional dancer and Man-taek as a diligent farmer. However, they also represent the stagnant economy of the country, which is not able to overcome the barriers to per capita income of \$30,000, which is a national motto. Government propagated that South Korea would reach the "sammanbul sidae" in the early 2000s.

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