Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies Vol. 25 No. 2 (2018)

Emergent Cultural Identities of *Jaehan Miguk Hanin*: From Marginalization to Global Nationalism

Christian J. Park*

| Contents |

| Abstract |

To make sense of globalizing South Korea and the return migration of Korean Americans as they navigate in the transnational hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and nation, this paper introduces a new word 'miguk hanin' as a replacement for 'jaemi gyopo' which refers to an imagined group of ethnic Koreans residing in the US. Therefore, Korean Americans who havemigrated to South Korea and residing in South Korea would be called 'jaehan miguk hanin.' The focus of this paper is to examine the different types of Korean American return migration and the emergent cultural identities negotiated and redefined by Korean Americans as they are perceived in dichotomized images of global Korean heroes and 'failed' immigrants.

Korean Americans are not a homogeneous group, but consists of various people with different ethnic identities or senses of belonging that are constantly shifting. Accordingly, Korean Americans residing in South Korea are constructing emergent cultural identities of their own. Considering

* Associate Professor, Dept. of Cultural Anthropology, Hanyang University ERICA.

the ethnic status and history of Korean American diasporic community which has been oscillating between a Korea-centered to a Korean American focus, *jaehan miguk hanin* faced with differentiation do not redefine their identity in simple nationalist terms as Americans vis-à-vis the Koreans. Rather, the process of identity negotiation can be understood in two as a strengthening of a transnational identity of 'Korean Americans' as a response to the marginalization in South Korea and the formation of a new ethnic identity of global Koreans.

▪ Key words: Ethnic Identity, Return Migration, Global Korean, Marginalization, *Miguk Hanin*

I. Introduction

"You know, I really understand what's going on because I know how things work in South Korea. But it is like my body is trying to tell me it does not understand. And slowly my body is building frustration and anger in me. You know, if I were a foreigner I would quit and get out of here immediately." A post-doc researcher who has been living outside South Korea for more than 13 years and just returned to South Korea for a permanent faculty position at the university where I worked shared a personal observation after a couple of weeks of work. His transition from the US to South Korea was far from smooth both physically and psychologically. More importantly, as days passed by, he began to realize how much he was different from the Koreans. To be clear, he is a South Korean who was born in South Korea but left South Korea to go to Europe 13 years ago to pursue advanced academic degrees and worked in the US, for the last 5 years.

Many Korean migrants who returned from the West experience a second culture shock when returning home after a long period of sojourn outside their homeland. Most common symptom is the frustration that builds up inside them as they observe many cultural differences in daily lives like waiting in a line, separating personal and public spheres, being more individualistic, having friends or colleagues regardless of age, etc.

Despite the popular rhetoric like "the blood is thicker than water" and "all people of Korean decent are one homogeneous ethnic nation" ethnic Korean migrants from different parts of the world commonly called as Korean diaspora experience ethnic marginalization and in some instances rejection from their ethnic homeland as culturally foreign minorities. As Tsuda (2003) notes, even in the absence of racial differences with the host populace, ethnic return migrants become new types of ethnic because of the cultural differences they have acquired while living abroad for generations. This is reflected in various terminologies used and differential treatments given by South Koreans to different ethnic Koreans: 'Joseongjok' (Korean Chinese), 'Goryeoin' (ethnic Koreans from the former Soviet Union countries), 'Jaeil gyopo' (Koreans in Japan), and 'Jaemi gyopo' (Korean Americans).[1] *Jaemi gyopo* literally means 'overseas Koreans' residing in the US but connotes co-ethnic subordinates living away from the center (South Korea) and, in this case, in the US. Thus, *gyopo* is a Korean word generally referring to 'overseas Koreans' but recently used limitedly to 'overseas Koreans' with permanent resident status and their descendants in the developed countries like the US, Japan, and West European countries. The official South Korean term for 'overseas Koreans' is *jaewoe dongpo* or simply *dongpo* meaning compatriots. For

1) For the romanization of Korean, the New Romanization Code prescribed by the South Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism is observed.

Korean Americans, it would be *jaemi dongpo* (overseas Koreans residing in the US).

The level of their marginalization and social segregation vary depending on social characteristics of the returnees such as age, gender, the country of residence (and the specific region like the east and west coasts or the mid region in the case of the US) and socio-occupational status. For those from less developed who become unskilled workers, such as Korean Chinese returnees, their marginalization and stigmatization as a culturally foreign minority are further exacerbated. Although the level of marginalization is far less compared to Korean Chinese return migrants, Korean American 'returnees' are ethnically marginalized because of their cultural differences.

It is this marginalization that causes ethnic return migrants to react against the homeland country and develop counter-identities by reaffirming and strengthening their feeling of affiliation to their country of residence. In other words, one can assume that return migration of Korean Americans and their subsequent experience of ethnic marginalization would cause the dynamic balance between their dual ethnic identities to shift notably from the Korean to the American side. However, the return migration of Korean Americans is not that straight forward process.

First, in the words of Xiang Biao (2013), the process of return migration is a dialectical process between differentiation and coalescence. On the one hand, Korean Americans are differentiated legally and culturally South Koreans and other ethnic Koreans from countries of residence. On the other hand, the South Korean state promoted the "all-embracing, naturalizing notion of 'return' in public discourse ascribes particular universalistic meanings to diverse return flows" with the legislation of the Overseas Korean Act which attracted

highly-skilled labor and capital from Korean American communities (Biao 2013, 6). Kwon (2015, 14) writes that aside from the economic opportunities in South Korea, Korean Americans she met had the desire to find their ethnic roots and explore the cultural heritage.

'Return migration' can simply mean a movement of return to the country of origin. This may also be referred to by terms such as counter-diasporic migration, counter-stream migration, re-emigration, reverse migration, etc. But many scholars focused more on the process referred to as diasporic return migration or ethnic return migration whereby people return to their homeland country or place of origin after having resided for in another country or region (Tsuda 2003; 2013). All forms of migration frequently disrupt and de-center the ethnic identities of migrants as migrants are thrust into a completely different sociocultural environment. Since ethnic identities are relationally defined through cultural contrasts with other groups, when return migrants are marginalized or differentiated by their homeland society, their former self-consciousness is challenged and problematized.

Most importantly, there is a problem of defining Korean Americans. Korean Americans refers generally to 2nd or later generations of Korean immigrant in the US or, simply put, US born Korean Americans. However, when one considers the historical consequences of US-South Korea relations, there are two distinctive groups of US born Korean Americans. One is, in a proper sense of the term, 2nd or later generation of Korean immigrants who grew up in the US. Another is the children of Koreans who sojourned in the US for a certain period for work, study, or, in small cases, birth tourism and returned to South Korea. Socio-culturally, Korean Americans can be defined as those who are US citizen, may or may not be bilingual but are fluent in English and identify more with American culture. They include many 1.5 generation Korean immigrants and some 1st generation Korean

immigrants including international adoptees with US citizenship or permanent resident status. In South Korea, the definition and terminology of Korean Americans such as *jaemi gyopo* are further complicated with changing perceptions in times. This will be discussed in detail below.

To make sense of globalizing South Korea and the return migration of Korean Americans as they navigate in the transnational hierarchies of race, ethnicity, and nation, this paper introduces a new word 'miguk hanin' as a replacement for 'jaemi gyopo' which refers to an imagined group of ethnic Koreans residing in the US. Therefore, Korean Americans who have migrated to South Korea and residing in South Korea would be called 'jaehan miguk hanin.' The focus of the paper is to examine the different types of Korean American return migration and the different ethnic identities negotiated and redefined by Korean Americans as they are perceived in dichotomized images by South Koreans in their ethnic homeland as globalized Korean heroes and 'failed' immigrants.

In addition, this paper will show that the generic term *jaemi gyopo* referring to Korean Americans is not only outdated in the age of transnationalism as the word *jaemi* which literally means 'in the US', thereby, cannot be applied to Korean Americans living in South Korea or in China or in other places outside the US. It is also framed in a center/periphery model where the center is the South Korean nation-state and the periphery is Korean diaspora. Furthermore, it is an essentialist designation given by the center (South Korea) to lump together individuals with various socio-cultural characteristics into a homogeneous group. Whether you are US born, 1.5 or 1st generation living in the east coast or the South or young or old, if you are from the US then you are designated as *jaemi gyopo.* Even if such a person has been living in South Korea for more than 10 years, that person

would still be called *jaemi gyopo*.

Korean Americans are not a homogeneous group, but are consisted of various people with different ethnic identities or senses of belonging that are constantly shifting. I would argue that to explain the change in Korean American returnees' ethnic consciousness in terms of deterritorialized migrant nationalism (Tsuda 2013), which refers to national loyalties articulated outside the territorial boundaries of the nation-states, would be problematic. Considering the ethnic status and history of Korean American diasporic community which has been oscillating between a Korea-centered to a Korean American focus, Korean American return migrants faced with differentiation do not redefine their identity in simple nationalist terms as Americans vis-à-vis the Koreans.[2] Rather, the process of identity negotiation can be understood in two as a strengthening of a transnational identity of 'Korean Americans' and the formation of a new ethnic identity of global Koreans.

The ethnographical data used for this paper is from intermittent fieldworks I conducted in 2002, 2006, and 2016. I carried out participation observation in a private elementary school class taught in English in 2002 and churches providing English services in 2006. I also conducted in-depth interviews with Korean American returnees and South Koreans in Seoul in 2002, 2006, and 2016.[3]

---

2) I agree with Tsuda (2003) that it is impossible to fully understand the ethnic identities of Korean American return migrants without first understanding their prior status and identity in the US as an ethnic minority since their sociocultural experiences back in the US inevitably condition how they interpret and react to their ethnic experience in South Korea. However, the ethnic status and history of Korean Americans are too vast and complex to cover in this preliminary work on Korean American return migration. For detail and insightful discussions on the ethnic status and history of Korean Americans, I would like to recommend Chang (2000) and Abelmann and Lie (1997).

3) All names of interviewees have been changed for anonymity.

II. Dichotomized Perception of *Jaehan Miguk Hanin*

The perception of Korean Americans in South Korea is not static or homogeneous but constantly changing. In fact, several opposite images of Korean Americans compete to become representative of the general perception of Korean Americans. Up until the early 1980s, South Koreans were envious of Korean immigrants to the US, but by the early 1990s, their children and they are perceived as *dongpo* (compatriots) who are suffering with hard labor to maintain small business in hostile neighborhoods and discriminated by the mainstream society in the US. Similarly, before 1994 Korean immigrants in the US were perceived as traitors who deserted the nation and rob it of its material and human assets in the form of 'brain drain' as many Korean immigrants were professional or entrepreneurial (Ablemann & Lie 1997; Park 1997). Thus, the word *gyopo* used to refer to ethnic Koreans carried a derogatory meaning suggesting they are in the fringe or away from the center, therefore a low rank in status. With the change of perception, the word *gyopo* fell out of use and is replaced with the new word *dongpo* meaning equal compatriots. However, when President Kim Young-sam launched a state policy of globalization (segyehwa) in 1994, Korean Americans were promoted as valuable assets South Korea in globalization.

Be that as it may, in South Korea, there is a dichotomized perception of Korean Americans as either global Koreans or 'failed' immigrants. According to Cho (2012, 226), Korean Americans arouse deep suspicion among South Koreans directed at their potential status as failed immigrants and inauthentic English speakers. Many South Koreans still consider the US as the primary symbol of advanced

country and modernity and aspire to emigrate. So, it raises the question why any American would come to live in South Korea. A follow-up question would be "are they running away from something in the US?"

To understand how Korean Americans are perceived in South Korea, it is important to understand South Korean society's obsession with English and the wide acceptance of American middle-class culture. Although the image of the US as the "land of opportunity" and the promise of the "American Dream" have worn off in recent years, the US is still the number one country of destination for many Korean emigrants and travelers. I would add that in South Korean society today English proficiency and many of American popular culture are symbols of globality and success. According to a survey among 147 college students conducted by Bak (2005), most of the students felt the need to speak English fluently in order to work and succeed in a globalizing world. Using English as a gatekeeper, almost all major South Korean companies and higher education institutions demand a high score in various English proficiency tests from their prospective employees or students (Shim & Park 2008). There is an estimation that the total amount of private English education expense is 10 trillion won. South Koreans spent most of their private education expense in learning English either in private language academies or studying abroad. Another development is the increasing number of universities offering classes with English as the medium of instruction in almost all disciplines (Shim & Park 2008, 147).

In the early stage of globalization, South Korean people's desire to learn English took on a different attitude. When I interviewed an owner of a private English academy for kindergarten and elementary school students in 2000, she told me that South Korean parents preferred "real Americans", in other words, white Americans. Their

logic was if they are spending a huge amount of money to teach English to their children, they want “authentic” or “native” English taught by white Americans and it had to be American English and not British or Australian English. The terminology used to designate foreign English teachers is *woneomin* or native speakers and the image of native speakers is always white Americans. Cho (2012) rightly points out that such exclusionary elements of the term *woneomin* demonstrate how linguistic competence is not something that people have but rather is something that people are attributed with. In this context, Korean Americans were not real Americans. In fact, their Koreanness was never questioned to a point that it is imposed to Korean Americans who did not behave like South Koreans or did not speak Korean.

However, in 2006, the same person who told me that parents preferred white Americans for English teachers said that parents now prefer Korean Americans because they know how to study hard and excel in school. Claire who works at a prestigious English language academy confirmed this when she said “there is only one white teacher and rest of us are Korean Americans. My academy is well known to be very competitive and to teach hard.” The academy owner explained that as time went on parents and academy owners realized that so called “native speakers” did not understand the pressure the kids have not only to learn English but also perform well in English class in school. “You have to teach Spartan style or you won’t be able to survive in this market,” the academy owner proclaimed. After 10 years, the situation has changed little.

In fact, a similar understanding has spread to South Korean universities which have sought to hire white academic professionals mainly from the US as their international faculty members. Now more and more universities are hiring Korean American academic professionals

after having negative experiences with international faculty members who are completely foreign and could not adjust to the South Korean lifestyle, Korean language, and, especially, university bureaucracy and left after or even before completing the 2-year term of the first employment contract. The increase of the number of classes with English as the medium of instruction does not mean the use of English is wide spread in the everyday work setting. In many cases, these international faculty members are isolated and ignored by the university and department administrations, and fellow Korean faculty members who do not speak English fluently.

On a broader and cultural level, however, the preference of Korean American academic professionals is closely linked to the change of South Korean attitude toward English and American culture. In today's globalized world, English is no longer an American centered language. While the South Korean economy diversified to different parts of the world, English became an international language. Furthermore, with successful economic development South Korea began to promote an image of global Koreans with slogans like "Genuinely Korean things are genuinely globalized things." In this context, Korean Americans are perceived as Koreans who are fluent in English and understand the competitiveness of South Korean society. To the South Korean parents, they are global Koreans who are models for their children.

The perception of Korean Americans as a role model or a hero is very much promoted in South Korean mass media today. In recent years, the South Korean mass media has shown a great interest in Korean Americans who have succeeded in the US. Korean American celebrities in sports and entertainment such as Michelle Wie, a golf star, Hines Ward, the Super Bowl XL MVP, Margaret Cho, a comedian and a star of a sitcom, Sandra Oh, an actress, Sarah Chang, a violinist, are regularly reported in the South Korean news. Almost

every time the news is accompanied with a hint of a national pride that ethnic Koreans are loved and praised by Americans and the world. Occasionally, Korean American politicians and governmental officials are also featured. In addition, Korean American characters make frequent appearances in South Korean TV dramas. A prime example is one of the most highly acclaimed TV drama series titled "Winter Sonata." One of the main protagonists was a young professional Korean American who is bilingual and talented in many ways. Park (박준규 2003) writes that these portrayals of celebrities and young professional Korean Americans in the South Korean mass media result in the creation of an image of Korean Americans similar to the image of model minority projected onto Asian Americans in the US after the 1960s.

On the other hand, South Korean media occasionally fuels an opposite image of Korean Americans that inflames anti-Korean American sentiments and raises questions about their return. Occasionally, a news article reports about Korean Americans getting arrested or getting fired due to their involvements in scandals or simple acts of moral degenerates. According to Cho (2012), a flurry of scandals involving sex, drugs, and fake diplomas, regardless of whether they directly involve Korean Americans or not, revived long-standing suspicions of Korean American returnees as failed immigrants and moral degenerates.

According to a weekly news magazine (『주간동아』 2006/06/13), in 2001, 116 Korean nationals residing in the US with permanent resident status convicted of crimes were deported by the US government. The number almost tripled in 2004 to 316. In 2005, it is estimated that around 1,000 *jaemi gyopo* were deported to South Korea as part of the zero-tolerance policy of the US government to deport non-citizens convicted of crimes or those with past criminal convictions without the

avenue of relief. In 2016, a newspaper predicts that as large as 160,000 Koreans would face deportation under the Trump administration (*The Korea Times* 2016/11/14). Again, almost all Korean American return migrants are unrelated to this. Nevertheless, just like the news of scandals, Korean Americans are associated with the negative image based on the essentialist designation of *jaemi gyopo* as a homogeneous group and the suspicion that they are failed immigrants. Such repatriation may be categorized as the return of failure if the word failure is understood narrowly to mean the returnees' failure to obey the laws of their host societies and the positive image of the returnees in South Korea.

Lastly, it is important to consider the perceptions of *jaehan miguk hanin* themselves. In short, the perceptions are contradictory and fluid. Cho (2012) who researched Korean American male English teachers in Seoul illustrates a spectrum of images that Korean Americans have of themselves when they are living—and not just visiting—in South Korea. One is that they came to South Korea on a whim to leave their boring job and life and come to an exciting place and well-paid jobs. Especially for males who enjoy the privileges of Korean patriarchy, they come to South Korea thinking of it as their last hurrah. Another image is that Korean Americans are tools or 'butler' who serves South Korea in the age of globalization or worse yet, 'English prostitute.' Cho (2012, 233) sums up poignantly the expression of 'English prostitute' as revealing the desire of South Korean society's obsession with English, the role of entertainer that English teachers often took on to make their classes fun and lively, and the sense of physical exhaustion and emotional depletion that English teachers experience as their own lives and skills became used up while those of their students improved.

Most importantly, the dominant image of Korean American return migrants of themselves is the people caught in the in-between. Korean

Americans who are stereotyped as 'forever foreigners' in the US come to South Korea in search of belonging. However, "their experiences while living in their perceived "motherland" make them realize that cultural differences set them apart from Korean nationals" (Kim 2012). A Korean Canadian researcher describes Korean American returnees as "hidden foreigners living in their parent's homeland" and further explains that Korean American returnees perceived that they "received the worst of both worlds. They are not given the privileges of neither the native Korean nor the Anglo-American. They do not have the legal privileges of a Korean citizen and are not rewarded for their cultural and language privileges of a Westerner" (Kim 2010, 78-80). Perhaps, it is in this context that many *jaehan miguk hanin* call themselves 'gyopo' not fully understanding its connotation but understanding it as a mark of cultural difference.

III. Return Migration of *Miguk Hanin*

In 2015, the number of 'Korean Americans residing in South Korea' with F-4 visa is 46,061 which is more than double that of 2005 (18,409) (차규근 2015; 법무부 2005). According the South Korean visa system, the definition of Korean American here is an American born or naturalized citizen. The South Korean government considers this group to be *migukgukjeok dongpo* (ethnic Koreans with US nationality) which is a new subgroup under *jaemi dongpo.* Another figure related to return migration of Korean Americans given by the South Korean government is the number of 'permanent return migrants' from the US. According to the diplomatic white papers published by the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs annually from 1997 to 2005, the number of 'permanent return migrants' of *jaemi dongpo* is 20,738. This

survey is a legal process in that the permanent return migration requires the relinquishment of permanent resident status to the US government, and submitting the official document to the South Korean government in order for *jaemi dongpo* to receive a South Korean resident registration number.

In general, they would be considered 'miguk hanin.' Although they are not the prime object of research on the transformation of ethnic identity of Korean American return migrants who through the experience of return migrating and interacting with the new host society redefine their ethnic consciousness, the process of return is a complicated one involving differentiation and coalescence. In fact, a closer look at the return migration of Korean Americans shows that not only the governmental figures tabulated with a narrow legal definition of Korean American are unhelpful but by overlooking the situational and cultural contexts of Korean American ethnic identity, they prevent us from seeing the process of return migrating and identity negotiation as a complicated and fluid process.

For example, Park (박준규 2003) writes that, in 2000, there were around 30,000 Koreans dual nationals. Among them, about 2/3 have both Korean nationality and US citizenship. Since the new nationality act revised in 1999 stipulates that any Korean with dual nationality aged above 22 will automatically lose his or her Korean nationality, we can assume that 30,000 dual nationals whom the South Korean government keeps records are all aged below 22 and born in a foreign country. Thus, roughly, 20,000 are US born Korean Americans. Many of them are children of Korean migrants without permanent resident status. Claire and Amy belonged to this group. They were born in the US and returned to South Korea with their parents when they were young, 'returned' again to the US for college education, and 'returned' again to South Korea. As they grew older they were re-categorized as

'Korean Americans residing in South Korea' or "F-4's" named after the residential visa given to ethnic Korean with foreign nationality. In other words, the return migration of Korean Americans not only involves actual movement from a country of residence to the homeland, but also involves moving between the different legal statuses of Korean Americans defined by the South Korean government.

The return migration of Korean Americans cannot be categorized into a single type since the reasons for and temporality (occasional, temporary, and permanent) of the return are many and varied. Following the numerous typologies suggested by King (2000), the return migration of Korean Americans can be considered as a return movement between countries of broadly equal economic and cultural status. Using a much more integrated model of typology which is built around the historical evolution of the migration process and reflects the dialectical relationship between return and the acculturation, the return migration can be categorized into four types: return of conservatism, return of innovation, return of failure, and return of retirement (King 2000; quoted by Sinatti 2014). However, as any typology of returnees must consider situational or contextual factors there are many cases of return migrations that do not fit into one type but overlap between the different types of return. More important, there are always exceptions which make the return migration of Korean Americans complex. In this section, I will examine two possible types of Korean American return migration: return of familialism and return of innovation. Familialism can be defined as an ideology that puts priority on family. However, Korean familialism involves more than just immediate family and extends to kin and to nation. In this sense, return of familialism strengthens the naturalization of return and coalescence of Korean ethnicity while return of failure exacerbates the differentiation of ethnic Koreans. Return of innovation suggests migrants with return aspirations

that are qualitatively different from those held at the time of departure as a result of obtaining advanced academic degrees or special skills and who bring back new values and ideas or are expected to do so. There is also return of failure found among the return migration of Korean Americans which was discussed above. Lastly, there is also remigration as many *jaehan miguk hanin* go back to the US after a certain period of stay in South Korea. In a personal communication, Kwon (2015) informed that all her informants have left South Korea in 2017. Cho (2012) also writes about the high expectation of many Korean Americans to go back, and two informants who went back to the US. This return must also be explore further.

1. Return of Familialism

Most of Korean American returnees that I interviewed said their decision to return to South Korea was greatly influenced by their relationships with their parents, directly or indirectly. On a lighter note, Kwon (2015) mentions similar personal narratives of Korean American returnees on their reasons for the return. Paul returned to help his father who struggled with financial problems and to meet his mother separated when Paul was 5 years old after the divorce. Aaron who is studying at a graduate school in Seoul at the time of the interview tells that one of the reason he returned to South Korea was to get the permission from his parents. Grace in her late fifties whom I interviewed returned to South Korea permanently 10 years or so ago to take care of her ill mother. She returned with her husband while all their children remained in the US. “It was easy for us to decide because all my kids were grown up at that time. We could leave them behind.” Her return migration would most likely lead to a creation of another form of return migration by her children, perhaps occasional

returns or a permanent return.

Claire, Amy, and Nancy whom I met in 2006 said they came to live in South Korea because of their parents' request. As for Susan who got married in South Korea and has one daughter, she and her two sisters and a brother discussed and agreed that she would return to South Korea with their parents. Although he still lives in the US, David said he too also considered coming out to South Korea because of his parents. As the first son, he feels he should take care of his parents who are now over 75 years old.

Many scholars of Korean American studies have pointed out the important roles of kin and family ties in socio-economic lives of Korean Americans (Min 1998; Park 1997; Park 2005). A strong sense of family ties and a clear understanding of the roles and expectations within the family are not limited to the first-generation Korean immigrants but are reproduced among second-generation Korean Americans. Park (2005, 31) writes that when asked, "What is your parents' number one priority in life?" 89 percent of Korean Americans stated that children and/or family are their parents' first priorities. Perhaps, when the same question is asked to migrants the majority will answer almost the same with Korean Americans as most or significant part of the cost of their staying abroad is supported by their parents back home. Such parental priorities that stress children would naturally produce a burdensome sense of obligation among the children. Therefore, most of the returns, for whatever the reasons, are often talked about within the family in one way or another.

If familialism is understood to be an ideology with a linear trajectory from family to community, then to nation similar to the understanding of Confucian moral commitment extending from family, community, and to the state (Kim 1998), the return of familialism can also be understood as a returning to homeland, root, and nation-state of origin.

Just as Korean Americans talk much about their family they also talk much about how they are interested in finding more about their ethnic or national cultural heritage or root.

Another development is a small number of Korean Americans are voluntarily joining the South Korean military service. *The Chosun Ilbo* (『조선일보』 2014/05/10) reports that from 2004 to 2010 a total of 510 men from the US holding green cards or US citizenship joined the South Korean military service. Most of them are permanent residents in the US whose military service is waived. Nevertheless, they chose to complete the military service requirement to eliminate any restriction in working or living in South Korea when they decide to return to South Korea. A few Korean Americans also joined the South Korean military service saying it is their duty to the home nation and the way to becoming a "proper man" in the Korean sense. Such reasons are closely tied to maintaining close connection with the extended family and the nation which is the ultimate Family.

Bak Ji-hun (박지훈 2016) is a case in point. He immigrated to the US with his parents when he was in the first year of middle school. 10 years later, his family acquired a permanent residence status. As a green card holder, Bak is waived of the South Korean military service as long as he does not stay in South Korea for more than 6 months. After residing in the US for 5 years, he will be qualified to apply for US citizenship. However, contrary to many Korean American young men, he decided to join the South Korean military to complete his duty to serve the military service. He writes that it was his original plan he made up in middle school and the phrase "You are like a Korean national team player! You represent your country!" his mother told him when he had troubles adjusting in the US that led him to make the decision to enlist in the South Korean military. Similarly, Bak Jeong-hun (박정훈 2016) enlisted in the South Korean military because

he did not want to become a banana (a slang used against Americanized Asian Americans) but a real Korean instead. As such, return migration of Korean Americans as return of familialism centers around filial piety, national root, and national duty.

2. Return of Innovation

According to Cindy, many Korean American specialists and professionals have returned to South Korea to work in big corporations like Samsung or universities to a point that there is a brain drain in the US. She worries that South Korean corporations and universities will destroy the foundation and reputation built by Korean American academic professionals and scientists over the years. Many news reports support her statement.

In fact, it is not a big secret that many of the Korean Americans currently working in top managerial positions in the US IT industry have considered moving to different and higher positions in South Korea when US IT industry stagnated. David who recently started his own IT related company in Silicon Valley with another Korean American said he has also considered returning to South Korea to teach. Although this did not happen, he became more of occasional returnee who returns to South Korea to visit his parents and on business trips.

Cindy returned to South Korea in 2003. Her case is a good example of the return of innovation. Having earned her Ph.D. degree in Internet network communication, she worked for a research and development center affiliated with a big telecommunication company in the US. But when her research project came near to an end with no prospect for renewal, she decided to actively search for a teaching position in South Korea. With her extensive research experience and her school ties of

SNU, the most prestigious university in South Korea, she was careful in picking the university where she would teach. She wanted to work and teach in a prestigious higher education institution where she can maximize her career and experience and, also, work with the brightest students. But, later on, she admits "With my credential [in other words, my SNU school background] I cannot go to second level universities. People will think of me as a failure." In her mind, her return to South Korea is clearly seen as a promotion and not demotion.

The image of Korean Americans serving to bridge two worlds is very popular in the discourse of Korean American ethnic identity, to be discussed below. It could be said that the desire to become a bridge between South Korea and the US was fostered by the image of Korean Americans as assets for globalization of South Korea discussed above. It is a case where Korean Americans appropriate an external and positive image into their own internal image.

IV. Cultural Identities of *Jaehan Miguk Hanin*

As of 2010, over 1.7 million Korean Americans reside in the US (East-West Center n.d.). The Korean American community is not a homogeneous community. Within the community various ethnic identities centered on Korean ethnicity are found. One reflection of this is the numerous terminologies used to refer to the Korean American community. As mentioned above, in Korean language, *jaemi* (residing in America) *gyopo*, *jaemi dongpo*, and more recently *jaemi hanin* are popularly used to designate or self-define Korean Americans. The first two terminologies are under the spotlight in the recent discussions on

the proper terminology for Korean Americans as they conjure up a strong image of Korean diaspora's suffering and pain and presume Korean Americans as subordinates or wanderers.

Korean Americans who should refer to themselves and be called *jaemi hanin* argue that *gyopo* and *dongpo* are homeland state-centered terminologies. By calling themselves *jaemi hanin* they are asserting a diasporic identity which is under construction and competition among the transnational networks of approximately 7 million ethnic Koreans. I say competition because the word *han* (the name of Korean nation) is unique to South Korean nationalism. In the last half century, North and South Koreans have created two distinctive national identities around the words *joseon* and *han*, respectively. This competition for legitimacy is already found among Koreans in Japan and the signs are appearing among Korean Chinese in South Korea (Ryang 2000; 박준규 2006). It would be very awkward to call Korean Americans *jaemi joseonin*. But in Japan, there are a significant number of ethnic Koreans who call themselves *jaeil joseonin*, even if they are branded as pro-North Korean. They may be pro-North Korean, but the majority of *jaeil joseonin* insist on calling themselves *joseonin* and not *hanin* because *joseon* symbolizes the colonial and post-colonial legacies which are essential parts of their ethnic identity. They are called Joseonjeok (not to be confused with Joseonjok, Korean Chinese) and are legally state-less people with special permanent resident status in Japan.

In this regard, Korean American returnees are no longer *jaemi hanin* but *jaehan miguk hanin*. However, this term is yet to be widely used by South Koreans or Korean Americans themselves. Such a flux in naming of Korean Americans suggests that perhaps in the future when North Korea normalizes with the US, there might be a group of Korean Americans wanting to call themselves *jaemi joseonin*. Such a phenomenon is a good example of how territorially displaced migrant

groups continue to frame their experiences in nationalist terms of their homeland not only because they lack a political language necessary to articulate their transnational and post-national aspiration but also because transnational communities are unable to challenge the hegemony of the nation-state (Tsuda 2003, 246), even if that nation-state is divided into two competing states (Park 2013).

In this context, one would expect to find diverse ethnic identities of *jaehan miguk hanin*. Two particular ethnic identities are of special interest. In many conversations with 'Korean Americans residing in South Korea', I noticed that the words "Korean American" and "Korean Korean" are used to distinguish two distinctive identities found among Korean Americans. It seems that the terminologies are more to do with subjective cultural identification of Korean Americans based on behaviors and sense of belonging than with legal status of nationality or citizenship. Korean Americans are people who have a sense of belonging to the US regardless of their citizenship. Korean Koreans, on the other hand, are people who have a sense of belonging to South Korea regardless of their nationality or even if they are born in the US.

I have found that a similar differentiation found among *jaehan miguk hanin* and they respond differently to their ethnic marginalization in South Korea. For *jaehan miguk hanin*, ambivalent and dichotomized acceptance from South Koreans leads to a feeling that they do not belong 'here.' During an interview, Amy complained, "I don't know how they know, but they can always detect I am different than they are. They say my make-up is different or I dress differently. But come on. I saw some Koreans dressed really foreign. I don't know why I look different." She shook her head as if she could not understand and pauses for a moment before continuing on with her interview. Later on, she admitted that such differentiations make her feel she does not

belong “here” and that her “home” is in the US.

Such talk of “here and there” and “home” can be understood as reaffirming the ethnic identity as Korean Americans who have a stronger sense of belonging to the US than South Korea. However, Samantha claims that such dualistic thinking is a negative affirmation which more and more Korean Americans are moving away from. She continues to say that “I do not support the American state. Korean American means I am not Korean but also not American culturally. We are here and there. Home is where my friends are.”

Although Amy did not articulate in a specific way, I feel she was practicing her own Korean American identity like that of Samantha. Knowing fully well that the way she dresses sets her apart from South Koreans, she dresses the way she would in the US. While enrolled in a master’s degree program in a South Korean university she enjoys the benefits that come from a close patronage relationship with seniors South but she doe not impose such seniority over her juniors. She is asserting an ethnic identity of Korean American that takes the best of the both worlds, instead of a nationalist identity that is exclusively American or Korean.

On the other hand, Claire, too, acknowledges that people see her differently in South Korea when they find out she is a “US citizen.” She used the word “US citizen” instead of “Korean American,” demonstrating that she was a US born Korean American who grew up in South Korea and her sense of belonging is closer to South Korea than the US. In fact, she does not dress like “Korean Americans.” She was not wearing a t-shirt or carrying a back pack as Amy did. Instead she was carrying a brand-name hand-bag like any normal South Korean young woman would and was wearing expensive clothes in a latest style sought after by many South Korean young women.

She was born in the US and she spent her childhood before coming

to South Korea with her parents at age 9. She then lived in Hong Kong for a year when her parents move there for business. She was 13. After finishing high school at an international school for foreigners, she went back to the US for college. She admits shyly that it was her first time as far as she can remember to live so closely with white Americans when she lived in a dorm. After finishing her college education she returned to South Korea to work for a foreign news production company. When I asked why she returned to South Korea, she answered, "it's just comfortable to be amongst my own kind. There are much less cultural barriers with them than when I had to mingle with people in the US. I can continue feeling and being Korean and enjoy seeing the Korean identity, but in the US, I have to keep up being American and that isn't the most comfortable feeling because I will never be fully American."

In South Korean society, she is categorized as Korean American legally since she is one of the "F-4's" with US nationality. But, culturally, she is no different than any South Korean who went to the US with a specific aim in mind and returned. As for her ethnic identity, she represents a new of elite in South Korea that symbolize the changed status of South Korea as a developed and globalized country. What Claire said about "enjoy seeing her Korean identity mature" can be understood to be her adaptation into the newly emerging South Korean ethnic identity of global Koreans. Having US citizenship makes her a better candidate for a global Korean.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, return migration of Korean Americans is complex and heterogeneous experiences. Nevertheless, as I have discussed above, a

closer look at different cases of return migration shows that most of return migrations are explained and told in the frameworks of familialism, a strong characteristic found not only in South Korean culture but also in the Korean American community and of innovation or simply seeking economic opportunity and prestigious status. In addition, the experience of return migration for most Korean American returnees is an experience of ethnic marginalization or differentiation as they are perceived in dichotomized images of global Korean heroes and failed immigrants.

In response to such dichotomized and ambivalent perception, Korean American returnees redefine their ethnic identities differently according to their sense of belonging and experiences they had before the return migration. On the one hand, ethnic marginalization in South Korea causes Korean Americans commonly referred to as "gyopo" to question their sense of belonging to South Korea and discover that they are culturally different from South Koreans. This affirmation that they are different from South Koreans is paired with their experiences in the US which affirm that they are different from white or black Americans (Cho 2012; Kim 2012), thus contributing to the formation of porous 'Korean American' transnational identity that can easily hardened into dualistic and contentious diasporic identity. On the other hand, Korean Americans who can maintain strong *yeonjul* (ties) networks in South Korea maximize their experience of living abroad to get ahead and re-integrate into the South Korean elite class. They actively appropriate the image of global Koreans. At the end, these two trajectories are not fixed but fluid and occasionally crisscross each other to what can be best described as an entanglement of diaspora and transnationalism.

| References |

1. Journals and Book

박정훈 (2016). “바나나와 대한민국 사이에서.”『대한사람 대한으로』. 병무청, pp. 93-99.

박준규 (2003). “텔레비전 드라마 ‘겨울연가’와 디아스포라적 정체성.”『한국문화인류학』. 제36권. 제1호, pp. 219-245.

박지훈 (2016). “그 무엇보다 대한민국.”『대한사람 대한으로』. 병무청, pp. 60-65.

법무부 (2005).『2005년도 출입국관리통계연보』. 법무부.

외교부 (1997-2015).『외교백서』. 외교부.

차규근 (2015). “재외동포 관련 법규와 국내 거주 재외동포의 인권문제.”『국내 거주 재외동포와 인권 학술대회 자료집』. 국가인권위원회·재외한인학회.

Abelmann, Nancy and John Lie (1997). *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bak, Sangmee (2005). “From Strange Bitter Concoction to Romantic Necessity: The Social History of Coffee Drinking in South Korea.” *Korean Journal*. Vol. 45. No. 2, pp. 37-59.

Biao, Xiang (2013). Introduction: Return and the Reordering of Transnational Mobility in Asia. Xiang Biao, Brenda Yeoh, and Mike Toyota (eds.). *Return: Nationalizing Transnational Mobility in Asia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-20.

Chang, Edward Taehan (ed.) (2000). *The Korean Diaspora in the USA: Challenges and Evolution*. New Haven: East Rock Institute.

Cho, John (Song Pae) (2012). “Global fatigue: Transnational markets, linguistic capital, and Korean-American male English teachers in South Korea.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. Vol. 16. No. 2, pp. 218-237.

Kim, Brian Woohyun (2012). “Caught in the in-between: Negotiating Korean American Identity in South Korea.” *American Studies(Migukhak)*. Vol. 35. No. 1-2, pp. 47-88.

Kim, Ji-hoon Jamie (2010). “Transnational Identity Formation of Second-Generation Korean-Americans Living in Korea.” *Torch Trinity Journal*. Vol. 13. No. 1, pp. 70-82.

Kim, Kwang-ok (1998). “The Confucian Construction of a Cultural Community

in Contemporary South Korea." Shima Mutsuhiko and Roger L. Janelli (eds.). *The Anthropology of Korea: East Asian Perspectives*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, pp. 65-93.

King, Russell (2000). "Generalizations from the History of Return Migration." Dimal Ghosh (ed.). *Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair?* New York: United Nation, pp. 7-55.

Kwon, Kyumin (2015). "Negotiating Identities: The Experiences of Korean Americans in South Korea." MA. Diss., Seoul National University.

Min, Pyong Gap (1998). *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Park, Christian J. (2006). "Bringing the States Back In: A Diasporic Identity in the Post-Divisional Era." Paper presented at Asia Culture Forum 2006: a preliminary project 'Multiculturalism in Asia.' October 26-29, Gwangju, South Korea.

_____ (2013). "Crossing the border: South Korean tourism to Mount Kumgang." Valerie Gelezeau, Koen De Ceuster and Alain Delissen (eds.). *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the Sunshine Policy*. London: Routledge, pp. 34-49.

Park, Kyeyoung (1997). *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Park, Lisa Sun-hee (2005). *Consuming Citizenship: Children of Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ryang, Sonia (2000). "The North Korean Homeland of Koreans in Japan." Sonia Ryang (ed). *Koreans in Japan: Critical voices from the margin*. New York: Routledge, pp. 32-54..

Shim, Doobo and Joseph Sung-Yul Park (2008). "The Language Politics of 'English Fever' in South Korea." *Korea Journal*. Vol. 48. No. 2, pp. 160-185.

Sinatti, Giulia (2014). "Return migration as a win-win-win scenario? Visions of return among Senegalese migrants, the state of origin and receiving countries." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 38. No. 2, pp. 275-291.

Tsuda, Takeyuki (2003). *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

_____ (2013). “When the Diaspora Returns Home: Ambivalent Encounters with the Ethnic Homeland.” Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (eds.). *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 172-189.

2. Others

“미국에서 버림받고 한국에서 홀대받고.”『주간동아』. 539호. 2006년 6월 13일.

“愛國하고 스펙 쌓고… 국외 영주권자 자원입대, 10배나 늘었다.”『조선일보』. 2014년 5월 10일.

“160,000 Koreans in US illegally to face deportation under Trump presidency.” *The Korea Times*. 2016 November 14.

East-West Center (n.d.). “Korean American Population Data.” http://www.asiamattersforamerica.org/southkorea/data/koreanamericanpopulation. (accessed on December 8, 2017)

| **논문투고일** : 2018년 05월 16일 |
| **논문심사일** : 2018년 05월 28일 |
| **게재확정일** : 2018년 06월 03일 |

국문초록
아태연구 제25권 2호 (2018)

재한미국한인의 신생문화정체성:
주변화에서 글로벌국민주의로

박준규
(한양대학교 문화인류학과)

날로 글로벌화되고 있는 한국과 인종, 민족, 국민으로 구성된 초국적 위계질서를 헤쳐 나가야 하는 한국계 미국인의 귀환이주를 이해하기 위해 본 논문은 미국에 거주하고 있는 상상된 한민족집단을 일컫는 '재미교포'라는 용어 대신 '미국한인'이란 용어를 사용하고자 한다. 한국으로 이주한 한국계 미국인은 '재한미국한인'이라고 할 수 있다. 본 논문의 초점은 한국계 미국인이 행하는 귀환이주의 다양한 유형과 '글로벌한인영웅'과 '실패한 이민자'로 이분화된 미국한인에 대한 인식에 대응하여 타협되고 재규정되는 신생문화정체성을 살펴보고자 한다.

미국한인은 동질적이지 않다. 이들은 다양하고 지속적으로 변하는 소속감과 민족정체성을 가지고 있다. 한국 중심과 이민사회 중심을 오가는 미국한인 이민사회의 지위와 역사를 고려하면 '재한미국한인'은 단순히 미국인과 한국인이란 국민정체성 사이에서 존재하는 것이 아니다. 오히려 재한미국한인의 문화정체성은 한국에서의 주변화 경험에 대응하여 미국한인의 초국적 정체성을 강화하거나 새로운 글로벌한국인이란 정체성을 형성해 나가고 있다고 볼 수 있다.

▪ 주제어: 민족정체성, 글로벌한국인, 귀환이주, 주변화, 재한미국한인