

# The Modern Production of Multiple Meanings of the Baekdudaegan Mountain System\*

Je-Hun RYU and Doo-Hee WON

## Abstract

*In the late 1990s, enthusiasm for hiking the Baekdudaegan mountain system expanded beyond professional mountain climbers to the general public. Along with the increase in interest in Baekdudaegan, a series of efforts were made to arrange legal protection for Baekdudaegan. Eventually, the Korea Forest Service, with support from congressmen, proposed a special law with the sole purpose of protecting Baekdudaegan. In executing the law, the protection of the natural ecosystem was considered to be much more important than the promotion of national identity. After the enactment of the Baekdudaegan Protection Act, each administrative body, at both the local and national level, has individually used the term “Baekdudaegan” to realize its own political and economic objectives and ideologies. The term has also been used as an ideological tool to construct regional alliances among the local governments that share geographical proximity to Baekdudaegan. As Baekdudaegan evolved into an individual space, it began to be perceived as a space where an individual could mentally prepare to overcome hardships. In conjunction with the new symbolic meanings attached to Baekdudaegan, prominent individuals have recently begun hiking the Baekdudaegan in order to bolster their public image.*

**Keywords:** Baekdudaegan, national feeling, ecological system, Baekdudaegan Protection Act, Korea Forest Service, individual space

---

\* This article is a revision of a paper presented at the annual symposium of the Association of Korean Cultural and Historical Geographers, Seoul, October 27, 2012. The authors are very grateful to Dr. Ethan Yorgason, Professor in the Department of Geography, Kyungpook National University for his extensive, as well as intensive, proof-reading of the early manuscript of this paper.

Je-Hun RYU is Professor of Geography at Korea National University of Education. E-mail: jhryu@knue.ac.kr.

Doo-Hee WON is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography, Korea National University of Education. E-mail: madmoi97@hanmail.net.

## Introduction

In the late 1980s, the term “Baekdudaegan 白頭大幹” (literally, “White Head Great Ridge”) came into use mainly by mountain climbers in South Korea. They were later followed by progressive newspapers, which frequently used it as a symbolic term to refer to the Korean peninsula as a whole. During that time, however, the term “Baekdudaegan” still supplemented rather than replaced the concept of various mountain ranges, such as Sobaeksanmaek and Taebaeksanmaek. For example, the expression, “a part of Baekdudaegan is equivalent to the line of Sobaeksanmaek,” was widely used even to refer to Sobaeksanmaek itself. In the 1990s, owing to the increase of leisure time and the diffusion of mountain-climbing culture, the term “Baekdudaegan” became more widespread. At the same time, NGOs and mountain climbers advocating for environmental protection began to criticize the human damage to the Baekdudaegan mountain system.

Beginning in 1995, the 50th anniversary of liberation from Japanese occupation, Baekdudaegan was used as a term to replace “Taebaeksanmaek,” a term that was criticized for its colonial legacy. Baekdudaegan as a term, thereafter, became significant in the representation of the Korean peninsula in environmentalist discourses, and this term replacement was considered among the general population to be a starting point in overcoming the colonial legacy of Japan as well as the traditional knowledge of watersheds in the field of academic geography. Accordingly, a broad and diverse spectrum of discourses has sought to define Baekdudaegan. All of these definitions are products of a variety of ideologies and interests of the different users of the term. Because Baekdudaegan originally existed as a conceptual entity rather than a physical one, it is open to various cultural political agendas within which people delimit its geographical extent to fulfill their own ideologies and interests.

In fact, Baekdudaegan can now be classified into four kinds of geographical space, depending on the intention of its users. The first classification is the narrowest, with geographers regarding it as a line, equivalent to a watershed. This concept of Baekdudaegan has often been used by mountain climbers who hike along the Baekdudaegan mountain ridges. The sec-

ond classification, delineated by the Korea Forest Service, has a geographical area which measures 263,427 hectares, and is based on the Baekdudaegan Protection Act. The third classification corresponds to the chain of mountains stretching from Baekdusan through the mountain ranges of Geumgangsan, Seoraksan, Taebaeksan, and Deogyusan to Jirisan. The fourth classification has the largest geographical extent of all of the definitions and is used to define Baekdudaegan in symbolic terms. The fourth geographical definition has been used actively by administrative bodies, both central and local, as well as private companies. Since the promulgation of the Baekdudaegan Protection Act (2005) in particular, such groups have actively created different definitions to promote their public image through their association with the sacredness of Baekdudaegan. They were then followed by ordinary individuals who wanted to employ Baekdudaegan as a space where they could overcome ordeals during economic crisis. Finally, politicians joined in on the cultural politics surrounding Baekdudaegan in order to demonstrate publicly that they were truly nationalistic by hiking along the crest line of Baekdudaegan.

Considering these contexts, this study examines the cultural politics of the spectrum of participants who have created and attached meanings to Baekdudaegan to realize their own ideological interests. In this examination, it makes an attempt to understand how society makes sense of Baekdudaegan by endowing it with meaning, and often, changing that meaning to complement social changes. Using social construction theory, this study focuses on the questions regarding what can be considered a claim-making process, specifically: Who makes claims about specific meanings? Who is the audience that listens to these claims? How are these claims made and contested, using facts, rhetoric, and metaphor? The data used for the analysis of the discourse on Baekdudaegan are drawn from daily newspapers, popular magazines, and government documents and reports. In particular, in order to examine the modern revival of “Baekdudaegan” as a term, archives of daily newspapers published from 1986 until 1999 were retrieved from the Naver News Library.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Naver News Library, accessed July 21, 2012, <http://newslibrary.naver.com/search/searchByDate.nhn#>.

## The Modern Revival of Baekdudaegan as a Term

The term “Baekdudaegan” began to be used actively in the public in the 1980s. On April 2, 1986, Yi Wu-Hyung, a self-educated researcher of old maps in Korea, wrote an article about Baekdudaegan in *Kyunghyang Shinmun* at the same time as the reproduction of *Daedong yeojido* 大東輿地圖 (Detailed Map of Korea).<sup>2</sup> Yi proposed that all the lines of Baekdudaegan, both main and subsidiary, acted as watersheds dividing the mountains’ waters and forming river basins that roughly corresponded to cultural areas. The term “Baekdudaegan” appeared again in these two major newspapers in 1987 when newspapers reported on the New Year’s program titled “Korean Fantasy Baekdudaegan,” broadcasted by KBS, the national television network. They assessed the program positively for drawing a living picture of the nation’s land by filming scenery from the southernmost Sajabong peak in Haenam-gun county through Sobaeksanmaek and Taebaeksanmaek mountain ranges to Seoraksan mountain.

Then in April 1990, the term “Baekdudaegan” appeared in *Dong-A Ilbo*, which had never used the term before. The newspaper reported that Chungcheongbuk-do province proposed that the holy fire to be used for the national athletic games be obtained from the peak of Taebaeksan mountain. It cited the words of the political leaders in Chungcheongbuk-do province that Taebaeksan rose high at the backbone of Baekdudaegan (*Dong-A Ilbo*, April 7, 1990). In the same year, Go Eun, a renowned poet, wrote in *Dong-A Ilbo* that North and South Koreans were bickering with each other while cutting down the very long backbone of the national land. He claimed that the wire fences and other barriers in the DMZ were disconnecting Nangnimsanmaek mountain range in the north from Taebaeksanmaek mountain range in the south.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in January 1992, Choe Gwang-Sik, the emeritus president of the Korean Association

2. Kim Yu-gyeong, “*Daedong yeojido* cheot bokkan” (The First Reproduction of *Daedong yeojido*), *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, April 2, 1986.

3. Go Eun, “Hwajinpo-eseo han hae-reul bonaemyeonseo” (Letting a Year Go in Hawjinpo), *Dong-A Ilbo*, December 28, 1990.

for Mountain Climbers, spoke highly of Baekdudaegan. He sang the praises of Taebaeksan as a mountain that had risen quickly after the rise of such mountains as Geumgangsan, Seoraksan, and Dutasan along the powerful stretching line of Baekdudaegan (*Dong-A Ilbo*, January 8, 1992).

In February 1992, the term “Baekdudaegan” was used for the first time directly by a newspaper reporter who described Jirisan mountain as the last line of Baekdudaegan (*Dong-A Ilbo*, February 27, 1992). It can be assumed that newspaper reporters had not thought until then that the expression would be publically acceptable. However, one year later, starting from 1993, the term began to be used often as an alternative to the names of publically recognized mountain ranges. Such a fundamental change in attitude was partly due, on the one hand, to increasing academic interest in *fengshui* geography and, on the other hand, to the popular trend of erasing Japanese colonial legacies.

In the beginning, the term “Baekdudaegan” was partially used as a way of interpreting *fengshui* geography on the Korean peninsula.<sup>4</sup> In the 1990s, a strong wave of academic liberalization, following political democratization, spread through the Korean peninsula. KBS broadcasted a program on the interpretation of Seoul from the perspective of *fengshui* geography, while commemorating the 6th centennial of locating the national capital at present-day Seoul.<sup>5</sup> The more progressive newspaper *Kyunghyang Shinmun* went further to apply *fengshui* theory to the reinterpretation of national land. From July 1992 to August 1993, a series of fifty-five special columns with the title “Rediscovery of *Fengshui*” was carried in the newspaper. From October 1993 to June 1994, the controversial geographer Choe Chang-jo also wrote a series of special columns titled “New Pilgrimage to the National Land” in the same newspaper. All of these columns shared explanations of the earth’s energy flowing along the main and subsidiary lines of Baekdudaegan.

4. Yi Gi-dong, “Gogae deuneun pungsu baram” (The Resurgence of *Fengshui*), *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 8, 1993.

5. “Pungsu-reul tonghae bon seoul-ui yeoksa: hanguk-ui mi” (Looking at the History of Seoul through *Fengshui*: The Beauty of Korea), *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 17, 1993.

In general, it was well known that the idea of *fengshui* geography emphasized the primacy of Baekdusan as the origin from which the line of Baekdudaegan stretched south on the peninsula (Jang 2011, 82). It was thus believed that traditional knowledge of the mountain systems would likely have followed *fengshui* geography. Such changing attitudes toward *fengshui* geography, in turn, provided momentum to promote public recognition of Baekdudaegan. The second factor in the rise of Baekdudaegan as a publically recognized term was the popular trend of rejecting Japanese colonial legacies. People increasingly came to regard the Baekdudaegan mountain system as an alternative to the understanding of mountain systems that had originated during Japanese colonialism.

It is generally recognized that Yi Wu-hyung was the first to question the legitimacy of the existing mountain systems. On July 24, 1986, he argued in *Chosun Ilbo* that the Japanese colonial government intentionally changed the names of mountain ranges. However, his argument did not attract popular attention until the 1990s when discussions about the complete eradication of Japanese colonial legacies began in earnest. In such a sociopolitical atmosphere, young mountain climbers claimed that it was a Japanese conspiracy to treat Taebaeksanmaek, Sobaeksanmaek, and Charyeongsanmaek as if they had been disconnected from each other (Kyunghyang Shinmun, January 19, 1991). Accordingly, they thought that it was appropriate to revive the traditional knowledge of the mountain systems. At the governmental level, it was also argued that the concept and reality of Baekdudaegan should return to their original status in order to correct the Japanese misunderstanding of the national land. It was believed that such a mistake in naming the mountain ranges was certainly intentional, traceable to Japanese colonialism.<sup>6</sup> To the government, then, Baekdudaegan was simply an alternative to the names of mountain ranges.

It was, however, mountain climbers who made the greatest contribution to the broad diffusion of popular knowledge concerning Baekdudaegan. In 1986, *Seupocheu rejeo* (Sports and Leisure) became the first popu-

---

6. Jo Yeong-hwan, "Baekdudaegan-eul dasi itja" (Let's Reconnect Baekdudaegan), *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 8, 1996.

lar magazine to use the term “Baekdudaegan.” Then, in 1988, a special issue on Baekdudaegan appeared in a professional magazine, *Excelsior*, published by the Korean Union for University Mountain Climbers.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, two popular magazines targeting mountain climbers, *Saram-gwa san* (Man and Mountain) and *Wolgan san* (Mountain Monthly), introduced the term. They carried columns about hiking along the main and subsidiary lines of Baekdudaegan.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, in 1990, a series of condition reports on Baekdudaegan appeared in the progressive newspaper *Hankyoreh* (April 22, 1993).

What was the most important meaning of Baekdudaegan for mountain climbers? The realization that they could hike completely along the ridge of Baekdudaegan, an idea impossible with the Japanese concept of mountain ranges, was very significant for them. However, even before the concept of Baekdudaegan existed, there were mountain climbers who completed treks along mountain ranges such as Sobaeksanmaek and Taebaeksanmaek. In April and August of 1986, before the term “Baekdudaegan” was used publicly, reports on the attempt to hike along Taebaeksanmaek and Sobaeksanmaek appeared in the magazine *Wolgan san*.<sup>9</sup> Mountain climbers thought that they could walk completely along the ridges of Taebaeksanmaek and Sobaeksanmaek because these two mountain ranges were connected with each other to form a huge continuous line. In the end, this effort failed because they were confronted with a river that stood in the way.<sup>10</sup>

7. An Gang, “Baekdudaegan-ui insik-gwa girok-ui yeoksa” (The History of the Recognition and Records of Baekdudaegan), Baekdudaegan First Field (An Gang’s website), August 23, 2005, [http://www.angangi.com/bbs/zboard.php?id=meeting&page=1&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select\\_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=10](http://www.angangi.com/bbs/zboard.php?id=meeting&page=1&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=10).

8. “Bangtongdae sanakbu baekdudaegan 704 killo jongju” (Mountain Climber’s Club of Korea National Open University Hiked 704 Kilometers through Baekdudaegan), *Wolgan san* (Mountain Monthly), October 1989.

9. “Taebaeksanmaek jongju” (Hiking the Taebaeksanmaek), *Wolgan san*, April 1986; “Agassideul sobaeksanmaek 30 il jongju” (Young Girls Hiked the Sobaeksanmaek in Thirty Days), *Wolgan san*, August 1987.

10. Bak Seung-gi, “Baekdu-eseo tomar-kaji hanjulgi-ro ieotda” (I Connected the Ridges from Baekdu to Tomal into One Line), *Saram-gwa san* (Man and Mountain), April 1990, quoted in Jo (1997, 24).



Figure 1. A Map of Baekdudaegan Emphasizing Its Connectivity, Depicted as a Tree with Roots

Source: *Wolgan san* (March 1994).

The idea that the ridges were connected to each other continuously without any interruption was an innovative concept to such mountain climbers. Mountain climbers, who had not felt the need to hike the whole length of the ridges before, began to aim to achieve the goal of hiking the Baekdudaegan in its entirety, deeming it a successful completion. For example, in 1991, Nam Nan-Heui, the first woman who had succeeded in hiking through Taebaeksanmaek, hiked Baekdudaegan.

Mountain climbers, who realized that they could walk along a series of ridges, lauded the merits of Baekdudaegan more than ever. They regarded Baekdudaegan not only as a mountain range that had been mishandled by the Japanese, but also as a real space whose ridges could be hiked. They proved that hiking Baekdudaegan was useful in making the idea of Baekdudaegan real, while spreading

the legitimacy of Baekdudaegan as a venerable traditional concept. Ultimately, in their view, Baekdudaegan was the physical entity, creating experiences that most Koreans would share by hiking on it. It was even depicted as a tree with a firm root that every Korean should commonly care for (Fig. 1).

Accordingly, in 1994, a non-government organization for citizens was formed to revive the legitimacy of Baekdudaegan (*Yonhap News*, February 5, 1994). That organization later developed into a civil movement to protect Baekdudaegan's physical environment. In addition, it also developed the idea of making contact with the North Korean government in order to extend the mountain trail toward Baekdusan mountain in North



Korea, the farthest end of Baekdudaegan (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, January 19, 1991). For instance in 1991, when Nam Nan-Heui completed her traversal of Baekdudaegan in South Korea, she expressed her thoughts: “I saw a little hope that I could go on walking along it until I reached Baekdusan mountain” (Nam 2004, 8). This expression represented her regret that she could not cross over the DMZ into the North Korean territory due to the division of the nation.

### **The Meaning of Baekdudaegan over Time in the Movement to Protect Baekdudaegan**

In 1990, the magazine *Saram-gwa san* (Man and Mountain) carried a series of special columns with the title, “Baekdudaegan geongang jindanseong” (Medical Examination Report on Baekdudaegan). In the report, mountain climbers complained about the destruction of mountains that they saw while hiking through Baekdudaegan. In 1994, an important moment came when reports warned that Baekdudaegan faced the crisis of losing its connectivity along its ridge due to the development of limestone mining on Jabyeongsan mountain. Eleven civic bodies, concerned with environmental issues, actively participated in a movement to prevent the mining on the mountain (*Hankyoreh*, April 5, 1994). Moreover, to some of the movement participants who believed in *fengshui* geography, the severing of the ridges meant the disconnection of earth energy flowing along it.<sup>11</sup>

Although the cement companies insisted that the civic movement was motivated only by the belief in *fengshui* geography, they could not win the public’s support for their mining (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, February 11, 1996). Given the context, in which environmental problems attracted popular attention, the development of limestone mining became a symbol of environmental destruction. The result was the reduction of mining activity on Jabyeongsan mountain, which in turn provided the momentum to

---

11. Yi Gyeong-jae, “Noksaek-euro saenggak-haja: yukji-e seom-i neulgo itda” (Let’s Think Green: Islands Are Increasing on the Shore), *Hankyoreh*, May 4, 1994.

make a public request for measures to protect Baekdudaegan (*Yonhap News*, April 26, 1996). In 1995, such efforts in the movement were extended to even include civic protest against the construction of Yangyang dam (*Hankyoreh*, August 12, 1995).

In response to this sociopolitical atmosphere, the Ministry of Environment announced an ambitious plan in 1995, as part of a comprehensive environmental plan, to turn the entire nation's land into an ecologically connected zone (*Hankyoreh*, January 25, 1995). The plan's main purpose was to connect all the natural eco-systems on the mountains whose ridges had been physically separated by road construction. According to the plan, the ecologically connected zone could be created through construction of artificial facilities and tunnels to connect the separated ridges, providing green routes for wild plants to be disseminated as well as for wild animals to move freely. The plan was based on the idea that mountain ridges should be used for wild animals and plants to freely move along ecological routes.

In the pursuit of an ecological zone of a nationwide scale, Baekdudaegan's ridges were seen to provide the main ecological routes on the Korean peninsula. For example, *Hankyoreh* reported that a wild plant called *solnari* (nodding lily), common in North Korea, was found on Deogyusan mountain (August 23, 1996). Furthermore, *Dong-A Ilbo* reported the rumor that a tiger came down along Baekdudaegan to the south of the DMZ (November 28, 1995). There were also reports that a disease found on the pine leaf called *sollip heukpari* (codiplosis Japonensis), which originated around Gyeongsangbuk-do province, extended from beyond the DMZ up to Baekdudaegan in North Korea, including Geumgangsan mountain (*Kyungghyang Shinmun*, August 1, 1998).

The ecological significance attached to the ridges of Baekdudaegan eventually led to the term "Baekdudaegan" taking on a symbolic meaning to represent the entire Korean peninsula. The meaning extended from an ecological route for wild animals and plants to a physical route that would connect North Korea with South Korea. The term came to symbolically mean the route by which the divided Koreas could be reunited. People proposed a reunification movement by having tigers come and go along

Baekdudaegan between the two Koreas.<sup>12</sup> Mountain climbers also asked for public permission to visit North Korea in order to complete their trekking along Baekdudaegan. In 1996, the secret infiltration of a North Korean submarine into the East Sea further strengthened the symbolic meaning of Baekdudaegan as it could act as a physical means of reunifying divided Koreas. At that time, the government presumed that North Korean spies had snuck onto the eastern coast from the submarine and escaped to North Korea through Baekdudaegan after they had been publicly exposed. Ironically, news reports on the escape of the spies gave additional publicity to Baekdudaegan's connectivity (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 12, 1996).

In the late 1990s, passion for hiking along Baekdudaegan expanded beyond professional mountain climbers to the general public. In response to popular demand, the Korea Forest Service initiated a project to open the trekking trail between Seoraksan and Jirisan mountains. A group of professional mountain climbers, by contrast, were opposed to the project because they feared that the trail might upset the equilibrium of the ecological system (*Dong-A Ilbo*, January 8, 1996). At the same time, several companies sent their employees to participate in the popular trend of hiking through Baekdudaegan. In 1997, for instance, Daewoo Electronics employees completed the trek through Baekdudaegan, all while promoting wishes for the environment, reunification, and harmony on the nation's land (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, March 3, 1997). After the trekking was over, they filed a report to the Ministry of Environment and civic environmental bodies by recording the environmental destruction they observed along the way (*Dong-A Ilbo*, May 12, 1997).

For a few companies, however, the underlying intention was to associate the positive and popular image of Baekdudaegan with their own brand. For instance, a construction company posted a newspaper advertisement that turned the identity of Baekdudaegan into national identity and then into its own identity (Fig. 2). After the foreign exchange crisis of 1997, in particular, the number of companies using Baekdudaegan to pro-

---

12. Yi Jong-chan, "Horangi neomnadeulge cheolchaekseon ilbu geodeonaeya" (Iron Fences Should be Removed to Enable Tiger Crossing), *Hankyoreh*, July 16, 1999.

mote company images increased (*Dong-A Ilbo*, January 3, 1998). The most representative was a beer company that sought to overcome its economic troubles in 1998 (Fig. 3). In its advertisement, the company added Baekdudaegan’s clean image to its own in order to evoke feelings of nationalism. In the midst of the foreign exchange crisis in 1997, the company’s goal was to emphasize the will, courage, and indomitable spirit to overcome the crisis. Subsequently, after the foreign exchange crisis, Baekdudaegan began to be used as a metaphor to represent the nation itself as well as the nation’s environment.

In addition, companies took advantage of trekking through Baekdudaegan to advertise their products and improve the company image



Figure 2. A Business Advertisement  
Source: Maeil Business Newspaper, March 24, 1996.

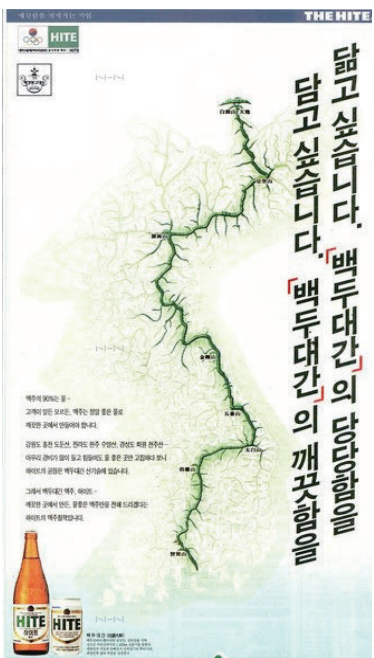


Figure 3. A Commercial Advertisement  
Source: Dong-A Ilbo, November 3, 1998.

(*Korea Economic Daily*, March 26, 2000; *Maeil Business Newspaper*, May 8, 2001). Even foreign companies participated in the hiking in order to transform their images into ones that appealed to Korean consumers' nationalistic feelings (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, June 18, 2001). Such company behavior has been maintained up to the present to encourage the spirit of challenge and innovation in business culture (Korean Re 2009, 13).

### The Legal Meaning of Baekdudaegan

After the mid-1990s, along with the growth of popular interest in Baekdudaegan, a series of efforts began in order to create laws which would protect it. Two rationales lay behind the proposal to establish laws for its protection: first, it represented what Koreans originally shared as a nation; second, it occupied a very significant place in the national ecosystem. In order to make Baekdudaegan a legal object to be protected, it was necessary to identify the range's physical extent that would correspond to an ecological system. The problem, however, was due to the symbolic and psychological aspects of Baekdudaegan that evoked nationalistic feelings. The symbolism attached to Baekdudaegan made it difficult to precisely designate the mountain range's geographical extent.

The first reason the Korea Forest Service pursued legal measures to protect Baekdudaegan was to prevent the destruction of the mountains caused by large-scale limestone mining sites (*Yonhap News*, April 26, 1996). Such an ecological approach, however, was met with the objection that it was absurd to bestow legal forest-protection status only to Baekdudaegan since other major mountains in Korea were facing the same problem. The best way, then, to make Baekdudaegan's legal protection exceptional was to appeal to nationalistic feeling. In this context, in 1997, a law professor named Han Bok-Ryong contributed a special column to the *Dong-A Ilbo*, justifying the legal protection of Baekdudaegan. He insisted that the main reason it was necessary to bestow legal protection upon Baekdudaegan was to revive the national spirit lost during Japanese colo-

nialism. At the same time, he also proposed the notion of Baekdudaegan as a physical entity that should receive legal protection (*Dong-A Ilbo*, January 3, 1997).

In the enactment process, however, the Korea Forest Service and the Ministry of Environment competed against each other for sole management rights over Baekdudaegan. The Korea Forest Service took the lead through its plan to designate the area as a protected area of “natural forest” and “forest with birds.” It also made plans to enlarge the area set aside for the conservation of biological diversity (*Yonhap News*, February 9, 1997). Nonetheless, those who supported the efforts toward legal status continued to justify the legitimacy of protecting Baekdudaegan with the argument that it was a national symbol. In their view, the conservation of Baekdudaegan was a way to reconstruct the true national identity that had been damaged during Japanese colonialism.<sup>13</sup>

Once the justifications to protect Baekdudaegan were able to persuade the government, administrative bodies suggested a variety of legal terms. In 1998, the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements suggested guidelines for the fourth comprehensive plan on national development. Following this report, the Ministry of Construction and Transportation planned for the construction of Baekdudaegan as a national eco-park. The plan was not only to connect national parks, mountains, and rivers to make a green ecological axis, but also to open exploring trails in order to “discover the national spirit” (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, September 10, 1998). Thus, on the level of land development, Baekdudaegan was seen mainly as an ecological zone on the Korean peninsula. Environmental specialists from both Koreas showed a common interest in conserving the ecosystem, connecting Geumgangsan mountain in North Korea with Seoraksan mountain in the South (*Yonhap News*, September 11, 1999).

Then what was the political motivation calling for Baekdudaegan’s legal protection? In 1999, thirty-seven congressmen, including Bang Yong-

---

13. Seo Jae-cheol, “Minjok jageung sangjing bojon sigeup” (The Urgency of Preserving National Symbols), *Hankyoreh*, February 10, 1998.

Seok, became the first group to propose a law to protect Baekdudaegan. Called the Baekdudaegan Conservation Law, it envisioned thorough control measures to prohibit development of all kinds, reflecting the fear of reckless development (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, September 19, 1999). According to the law, development would only be allowed under the condition that the Minister of Environment recognized the inevitability of development. In such a case, however, 50 percent of the financial investment into the development would be paid to the Ministry of Environment (*Yonhap News*, September 21, 1999).

As seen above, in a legal context, Baekdudaegan's natural landscape was its most important characteristic. Because it was recognized for its significance as an ecological zone that had been affected only minimally by man, it had to be protected. It was argued that the protection of Baekdudaegan was needed immediately since main habitats and migration routes for wild animals could be destroyed by development, and thus the food chain for rare wild animals might collapse.<sup>14</sup> In 1999, the Korea Forest Service enacted measures to designate ten areas as protected natural forests and to extend existing protected natural forests for Baekdudaegan (*Hankyoreh*, December 20, 1999). In 2000, the Ministry of Environment also followed the Korea Forest Service in establishing measures to conserve and manage Baekdudaegan. These measures were based on the evaluation that the main ridge of Baekdudaegan was the ecological zone least disturbed by human development; thus, it merited complete conservation (*Korea Economic Daily*, November, 7, 2000). In 2001, the Ministry of Construction and Transportation planned to install migration routes for the wild animals in the form of overhead bridges in order to integrate Baekdudaegan's ecological systems (*Hankook Ilbo*, February 18, 2001). Ultimately, in 2003, the Korea Forest Service enacted the Management of Mountainous Districts Act to prevent damage to mountain areas, including Baekdudaegan. The law enabled the service to designate the mountain

---

14. Jeong Sang-yeong, "Baekdu daegan gaebal sapjil-e meogi saseul hweson simgak" (Serious Damage to Food Chain due to Development of Baekdudaegan), *Hankyoreh*, December 28, 1999.



systems' main ridges as limited only to the areas with forests (*Yonhap News*, December 26, 2002).

Thinking it had lost the protection initiative to the Korea Forest Service, Vice-Minister of Construction and Transportation Kang Gil-Bu questioned the legitimacy of Baekdudaegan's legal protection. He suggested that the proposal to legally protect Baekdudaegan was strongly motivated by the idea of mountain worship, which he considered a superstition. His criticism of legal protection for Baekdudaegan was influenced by the argument that *fengshui* geography was behind the new law (*Dong-A Ilbo*, September 20, 1999). He went on to argue that a new approach should be taken in regards to Baekdudaegan since the mountains occupied a large portion of the nation's land.<sup>15</sup> In spite of his argument, however, a special law to protect Baekdudaegan was proposed on the foundation of the Management of Mountainous Districts Act.

In 2001, 18 congressmen proposed the Baekdudaegan Conservation Law. A year later, in 2002, twenty congressmen submitted a proposal for its revision under the name "Baekdudaegan Conservation and Management Law." In 2003, twenty-five congressmen proposed another version of Baekdudaegan Conservation Law. In 2002, Congressman Yi Jeong-Il stated the reason for the law proposal was to maintain and conserve the ecological system on Baekdudaegan through protection measures:

Baekdudaegan is a definite body that maintains the national spirit and frame of the Korean peninsula. For this reason, it has a high enough value that must be protected. In spite of its value, its ecological system has been destroyed and severed by large-scale mining development, dam construction, resort-district construction, and so on.<sup>16</sup>

His statement clearly indicates that the ultimate goal of the law was to pro-

15. Kang Gil-Bu, "Sanak sungbae-wa jayeon boho" (Mountain Worship and Natural Protection), *Korea Economic Daily*, November 13, 2000.

16. Appendix to the Minutes of the 243rd Plenary Session of the 16th National Assembly, Seoul, National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, December 9, 2003, [http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms\\_data/record/data2/243/pdf/243za0020a.PDF](http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms_data/record/data2/243/pdf/243za0020a.PDF).



tect the natural ecological system.

Nonetheless, his statement failed to scientifically explain the necessity of protecting Baekdudaegan's ecological system as a special unit. He simply stated that it was not ecologically separate from the other mountain systems on the Korean peninsula. Others argued that the existing Management of Mountainous Districts Act could well provide the means to protect Baekdudaegan's ecology. Another argument suggested that the Mountain Management Law was meant to manage all the main ridges of mountain systems on the Korean peninsula and thus it was contradictory to separately classify Baekdudaegan as an independent legal unit.<sup>17</sup>

The solution to the arguments against the enactment of protection laws was to ascribe the legal foundation for the protection of national identity rather than ecosystem. In 2003, during the 16th National Assembly, the head of the Korea Forest Service was called into the Agriculture, Forestry, Maritime Affairs, and Fisheries Committee. Standing before the committee, he tried to justify the bill as an issue of national identity.<sup>18</sup> Another congressman, Yi In-Gi, evaluated the bill to be significant as a public document that would evoke national pride and spirit, which had been dormant for one hundred years.<sup>19</sup> In his mind, the proposal was a legal instrument to publicize and elevate Baekdudaegan's status to that of a national symbol.

When it came to legal execution, however, the protection of the natural ecological system was deemed much more important by the congressmen than the promotion of national identity. The emphasis was placed

---

17. Minutes of the Legislation and Judiciary Subcommittee of the Agriculture, Forestry, Maritime Affairs, and Fisheries Committee, the 234th Plenary Session of the 16th National Assembly, Seoul, National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, October 25, 2002, [http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms\\_data/record/data2/234/pdf/234jcb001b.PDF](http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms_data/record/data2/234/pdf/234jcb001b.PDF).

18. Minutes of the Legislation and Judiciary Subcommittee of the Agriculture, Forestry, Maritime Affairs, and Fisheries Committee, the 236th Extraordinary Session of the 16th National Assembly, Seoul, National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, February 19, 2003.

19. Minutes of the Legislation and Judiciary Subcommittee of the Agriculture, Forestry, Maritime Affairs, and Fisheries Committee, the 236th Extraordinary Session of the 16th National Assembly, Seoul, National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, February 19, 2003.

exclusively on the natural landscape rather on the cultural landscape, the combined work of people and environment. Article 1 of Baekdudaegan Protection Act states:

The purpose of this Act is to prevent damage to Baekdudaegan due to indiscriminate development by describing matters necessary for protecting the Mountain Range, thereby helping conserve national land in an environmentally sound manner and creating a pleasant natural environment.

According to the law, therefore, the protected area was ideally meant to be designated as a natural area, corresponding with the range of third-order drainage basin. The authority to designate protected areas on Baekdudaegan, when necessary, lay in the hands of the head of the Korea Forest Service (KFS 2003, 59). When the law was first enacted, the head of the Korea Forest Service had to compromise with the local residents who protested strongly against it. As a result, in reality, the ideal range of the protected area, which could be represented by a core zone, was reduced from the third-order drainage system to the first-order drainage basin. The protected area had a dual structure, consisting of core and buffer zones. Even the core zone often had a range narrower than the range of the first-order drainage basin. In the face of strong protests from local residents, it was limited only to the area that had favorable conditions for physical and biological management within the first-order drainage basin. The buffer zone was also often limited to the area with favorable conditions for physical and biological management within and without third-order drainage basins (KFS 2006, 443).

Consequently, the Baekdudaegan Protected Area, which was actually designated based on the Baekdudaegan Protection Act (2005), was limited only to an area as large as 263,427 hectares. It mainly covered the ridges of Baekdudaegan that touched on administrative areas, as many as six provinces and 32 cities and counties. Today, moreover, the protected area does not maintain the same distance from the ridge all along the line of Baekdudaegan. In the worst cases, it has a very irregular pattern characterized by core and buffer zones that are completely irrelevant to the range of

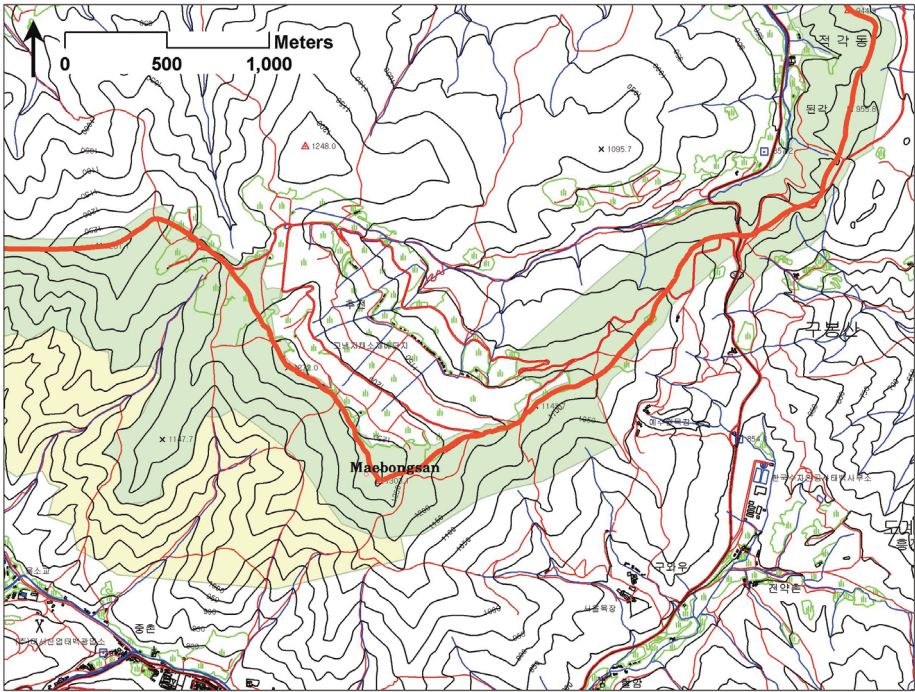


Figure 4. The Baekdudaegan Protected Area near Maebongsan Mountain

Source: KFS (2005, 231).

Note: The red line denotes the ridge line of Baekdudaegan, the green zone is the core zone, and the yellow zone is the buffer zone.

water systems. Around the Maebongsan mountain in Taebaek-si, for example, the protected area did not include a field for Chinese cabbages that grow well in cool, high-elevation temperatures. That was because farmers in the field were fiercely resistant to its inclusion into the protected area. Thus, the core zone around that mountain can scarcely be found on the west side of the ridge (Fig. 4). Considering all this, it can be argued that the Baekdudaegan Protected Area is not a natural but an artificial area, the product of compromise with local residents.

## The Meaning of Baekdudaegan as a Regional Alliance

In contrast to its legal meaning, the term “Baekdudaegan” has primarily been used to indicate the wider geographical extent of the protected area and its adjacent area. It sometimes even includes administrative areas which house Baekdudaegan’s ridge within their boundaries. This phenomenon results from the mixture of legal entity, national image, and ecological value held by Baekdudaegan at the administrative level. Each administrative body, at both local and national levels, has used the term “Baekdudaegan” idiosyncratically to fulfill its own objectives and ideologies. In addition to the Korea Forest Service, at the national level, the Ministries of Environment, Land and Transportation, and Culture and Tourism have each developed concepts of Baekdudaegan that differ from those of the legally recognized Baekdudaegan Protected Area.

The Ministry of Land and Transportation, first of all, designates the widest geographical range for Baekdudaegan. In 1999, the term appeared for the first time in the Fourth Comprehensive Plan on National Land, which was announced by the Ministry of Land and Transportation. The plan focused on the significance of Baekdudaegan in terms of ecological resources as well as networks and cooperation between the two Koreas. The geographical extent also included all the administrative areas that contain parts of the ridges along the Seoraksan, Odaesan, Sobaeksan, Woraksan, Deogyusan, and Jirisan mountains, an area beyond the boundary of the official Baekdudaegan Protected Area (MCT 1999, 34). In 2005, while reflecting on the improving relationship between the two Koreas, the First Revised Plan on National Land emphasized the role of Baekdudaegan in extending cooperation between the two Koreas (MCT 2005, 130).

By contrast, in 2011, the Second Revised Plan on National Land classified the administrative areas adjacent to the Baekdudaegan Protected Area as “underdeveloped areas,” a category requiring an area-wide strategy of development (MLS 2011, 46). Finally, in 2011, the Ministry of Land and Sea advanced a project for the area-wide development of three inland administrative areas containing the Baekdudaegan Protected Area (CRD 2011, 1). According to the project, the so-called Baekdudaegan Mountain

Range Belt of Supra-Economic Region included six provinces and 28 cities and counties. It even included underdeveloped administrative areas, such as Hapcheon-gun, Andong-si, and Gokseong-gun, which were not contained in the Baekdudaegan Protected Area.<sup>20</sup>

On the contrary, the Second Tourism Development Basic Plan (2001), announced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, evaluated Baekdudaegan as the spine of the Korean peninsula (MOCT 2001, 93). The Third Tourism Development Basic Plan (2011) sought a way to develop Baekdudaegan as a belt for ecological and cultural tourism. Surprisingly enough, the belt included the Baekdudaegan Protected Area and its adjacent cultural areas such as Buddhist, Confucian, Silla and Baekje, Jungwon, and Gaya Culture Areas (MCST 2011, 139). This indicated that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism tended to define the Baekdudaegan as an area with its center in human settlements along the ridge.

Local self-governments of the areas that contain parts of the Baekdudaegan Protected Area have made use of the name Baekdudaegan in the construction of their local identity while utilizing the image of Baekdudaegan. Soon after the enactment of the Baekdudaegan Protection Act, the term “Baekdudaegan” was viewed negatively because any development was prohibited within the Baekdudaegan Protected Area boundaries. Some local governments, however, later gradually began to strengthen their local identities by utilizing the image of cleanness and national pride that Baekdudaegan represented.

A group of administrative areas, moreover, were united in a project of regional development under Baekdudaegan’s banner. In 2008, Taebaek-si,

---

20. The administrative areas that belong to the Baekdudaegan zone as part of the Super Wide-Area Development are: Gangwon-do province (Taebaek-si, Hongcheon-gun, Pyeongchang-gun, Jeongseon-gun, and Inje-gun), Chungcheongbuk-do province (Boeun-gun, Yeongdong-gun, Goesan-gun, Danyang-gun, and Okcheon-gun), Gyeongsangbuk-do province (Gimcheon-si, Yeongju-si, Sangju-si, Mungyeong-si, Yecheon-gun, Bonghwa-gun, and Andong-si), Gyeongsangnam-do province (Hadong-gun, Sanchaeng-gun, Hamyang-gun, Geochang-gun, and Hapcheon-gun), Jeollabuk-do province (Namwon-si, Muju-gun, Jangsu-gun, and Jinan-gun), and Jeollanam-do province (Gurye-gun and Gokseong-gun).

Yeongwol-gun, Pyeongchang-gun, and Jeongseon-gun, districts piercing through the southern part of Gangwon-do province, organized a special public body called Baekdudaegan Area-Wide Administrative Association. Its common aim was to advertise a variety of tourism resources that these administrative areas had in common (*Kangwon Ilbo*, June 16, 2008). In 2006, local governments jointly launched the project to revive indigenous agricultural products from Baekdudaegan (*Kangwon Domin Ilbo*, May 18, 2012). These governments include Yeongwol-gun, Pyeongchang-gun, Jecheon-si, Danyang-gun, Yeongju-si, and Bonghwa-gun; each belonged to the Administrative Cooperation Association of the Central Inland Regions (2004). Three administrative areas, Gimcheon-si, Muju-gun, and Yeongdong-gun, also pursued a cooperative project to jointly develop the areas around Samdobong peak within the Baekdudaegan Protected Area (*Yonhap News*, June 30, 2011). In 2011, Gangwon-do and Gyeongsangbuk-do provinces began an area-wide Baekdudaegan Green Mine Business Project (*NEWSis*, June 21, 2011).

Similarly, at the administrative level, although it originally designated the geographical extent limited to the Baekdudaegan Protected Area, the term “Baekdudaegan” has recently evolved in various directions, depending on individual local governments’ intentions. Baekdudaegan has evolved from a conceptual to a physical entity to support place identity. It has been used as an ideological tool to construct regional alliance among local governments that share geographical proximity to the range. Baekdudaegan was originally seen as a mountain that was contained within the boundaries of local governments, but has gradually evolved into a territory that pulls local governments together. Its geographical extent has extended to form a development zone that creates regional allies of local governments in order to create reciprocal development. Such regional alliance at the local level is now supported at the national level by the Ministry of Land and Transportation, which instituted the Development Strategy on the Supra-Economic Region.

## **The Meaning of Baekdudaegan for Taebaek-si City**

During the creation of Baekdudaegan as a legal concept, several local governments clashed heavily with the central government. After enactment, however, they tended to utilize the meanings attached to Baekdudaegan to advertise their place images. Taebaek-si, in particular, has very actively taken advantage of its location at the center of Baekdudaegan. In the 1990s, the city experienced local economic stagnation caused by the national policy of rationalizing the coal mining industry. The citizens of the city expected that a special law to support development in the closed mining area would revive the economy. Believing that the Baekdudaegan Protection Act would prevent local development, they fiercely protested against the new law. According to the original draft of the Baekdudaegan Protection Act, 55 percent of the Taebaek-si territory was designated as part of the Baekdudaegan Protected Area. But after negotiation between the city and the Korea Forest Service, only 17 percent of the town was included. The compromise with local residents decreased the geographical extent substantially. The citizens, including members of the municipal assembly, maintained a negative attitude toward the concept of Baekdudaegan for some time. They feared that the Baekdudaegan Protection Act would be stricter than the Green Belt Protection Law.<sup>21</sup>

Since enactment of the Baekdudaegan Protection Act in 2005, however, Taekbaek-si utilized Baekdudaegan's image to advertise its place identity. In 2005, the mayor pledged to the municipal assembly that he would pursue eco-friendly development. He said that such an approach to development would contribute to the preservation and management of Baekdudaegan. He also promulgated the idea of developing a variety ways of experiencing the ecology of Baekdudaegan, saying this would put the town on the map as the best eco-friendly city in the country.<sup>22</sup> In his

---

21. Minutes of the 114th Meeting of the Taekbaek-si Municipal Assembly, May 17, 2004, <http://council.taebaek.go.kr/CLRecords/Retrieval2/index.php?hfile=4A0110114001.html&daesu=4>.

22. Minutes of the 130th Meeting of the Taekbaek-si Municipal Assembly, November 25, 2005, <http://council.taebaek.go.kr/CLRecords/Retrieval2/index.php?hfile=4A0110130011.zhtml&daesu=4>.



greeting on the city's website, moreover, the current mayor asserts that the city is located at the center of Baekdudaegan, the spine of the Korean peninsula.<sup>23</sup>

The city also actively strives to replace the image of Taebaeksanmaek and Sobaeksanmaek mountain ranges with that of Baekdudaegan in place-marketing strategies. In its official introduction, the city is always described as a central location of the main ridges of Baekdudaegan. Taebaeksan mountain is advertised as the best location for seeing the panoramic view of the Baekdudaegan mountain system. It is well known that Taebaeksan's summit is the best location to observe the rising sun on New Year's Day. The name Baekdudaegan is now often used to attract attention in advertisements of the city's programs. For example, Baekdudaegan is now part of the title for the tour program promoting the enjoyment of Taebaeksan's snowy winter scenery and Baekdudaegan itself is advertised as an enjoyable tourist site for all.

### The Meaning of Baekdudaegan at the Individual Level

In Korea, mountain areas have traditionally been used as spaces for individuals to train oneself mentally or regain the spirit to overcome hardship. After the concept of nationalism was projected onto the popular image of Baekdudaegan, it has also evolved into an individual space. After the foreign exchange crisis in 1997, in particular, Baekdudaegan, like other mountain areas, began to be perceived as a space where an individual could mentally train to overcome hardship. To those who lost their jobs during the crisis, Baekdudaegan was sometimes seen as a sacred space where individuals could purify their spirit (*Hankyoreh*, October 16, 1998).

Those who were very ill also visited Baekdudaegan as a space where they could overcome crises of health. A medical magazine reported that a man in the fourth stage of stomach cancer made a full recovery after hik-

---

23. "Greeting from the Mayor of Tabak-si," accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.taebaek.go.kr/site/mayor/sub01.asp>.



ing through Baekdudaegan.<sup>24</sup> Runaway girls trekked along Baekdudaegan in order to forget their painful pasts (*Munhwa Ilbo*, August 4, 2005). Teachers accompanied their pupils who received disciplinary punishment through Baekdudaegan (*Kyeonggi Ilbo*, July 22, 2012). Baekdudaegan thus evolved from a public, national space that needed protection to a private space for individual reflection.

Such individual experiences about Baekdudaegan have often been publicized and used as tools of cultural politics. A newspaper reported that Kim Seong-ryong had walked along Baekdudaegan with his teenage son for 14 months, from May 1995 to July 1996. The president thereafter invited them to his office, and a book was written and published about their story. The father and son were eventually asked to act as models for public advertisements about juvenile guidance (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, December 29, 1997).

The goal in visiting Baekdudaegan for Kim and his son was to share a life experience together. Because they were from a socially weak tier of society, their story became a social issue, inspiring and encouraging people. Similarly, in 2012, the story of two fathers and their four teenage daughters completing the Baekdudaegan trek in three years and eight months became a social issue.<sup>25</sup> The fathers, spending a great amount of time with their daughters, gained faith in their capabilities while hiking. Baekdudaegan, in this case, eventually turned into a family space within which special experiences could be transferred from one generation to the next.

Recently, public figures have also tried to demonstrate their genuineness and promote their public images by hiking Baekdudaegan. For instance, the current mayor of Seoul, Park Won Soon, decided to hike Baekdudaegan before announcing his candidacy. He said he started the hike in

---

24. Song Bong-jun, "Baekdudaegan-eul neomeo, am-eul neomeo" (Conquering Cancer by Conquering Baekdudaegan), *Am* (Cancer Line), December 2006.

25. Son Su-won, "Ttallaemi-rang baekdudaegan jongju, musahi machyeotseumnida" (I Have Safely Completed Trekking Baekdudaegan with My Lovely Daughter!), *Wolgan san* (Mountain Monthly), December 2012.

order to reflect on his future steps.<sup>26</sup> The major news media noted his hiking, which in turn promoted his pre-election public image. A newspaper concluded that his trek led him to enter politics (*Sports Hankook*, February 11, 2013), an entrance through which he could realize his historical mission (*NEWSis*, January 27, 2013). Similarly, a current congressman, Chung Dong-young, said that he decided to hike Baekdudaegan after losing the presidential election in 2006 in an effort to connect to and understand the mind of the people.

In 2012, Han Biya, a famous figure in social movements, stated that she wanted to look into the nation's mountains and land by walking along Baekdudaegan (*Women's News*, August 10, 2012). Her trek, of course, became enough of a social issue to be carried in newspapers, thus raising her status within the social movement world. In 2011, a professional mountain climber from New Zealand, Roger Shepherd, completed his hike of Baekdudaegan in both North and South Korea. He called it a mountain system containing the treasures of the history, energy, and unlimited story of the Korean nation. He also confessed that walking along Baekdudaegan provided a new and needed adventure in exploring his own life (*Dong-A Ilbo*, November 15, 2011). For him, Baekdudaegan was a space open to individual interpretation, dependent on feeling, intention, and ideology.

## Conclusion

In 1986, Yi Wu-Hyung became the first figure who publicly expressed his interpretation of the meaning of Baekdudaegan in a newspaper article. He proposed that all the lines of Baekdudaegan acted as watersheds dividing the mountains' waters and forming river basins that roughly correspond-

---

26. Eom Ji-hye, "Jirisan-eun na-reul jakku banseong-hage mandeuneun san: Park Won Soon seoul sijang" (Mayor of Seoul Park Won Soon Says, "Jirisan Is the Mountain That Makes Me Reflect Over Again"), *Channel Yes*, February 16, 2013, <http://ch.yes24.com/Article/View/21542>.

ed to cultural areas. Since then, multiple meanings of Baekdudaegan have been produced by a variety of stakeholders, depending on their own interests and ideologies.

Baekdudaegan has provided a base for social constructs, of which a set of specific meanings were attributed to the characteristics and identities of people and places by common social or cultural usage. These social constructs have also been strongly influenced by powerful claim makers who are able to define and publicize particular problems. At the same time, the space of Baekdudaegan has been socially constructed and experienced, rather than being an innate backdrop to social life, while being turned into the plural spatialities. In accordance with social construction theory, therefore, this study makes an attempt to understand how Korean society makes sense of Baekdudaegan, particularly by endowing it with meaning and by often changing that meaning to complement social changes.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the production of meanings was strongly influenced by powerful claim makers, such as lobbyist groups, scholars, industrial companies, and journalists, who identified and defined Baekdudaegan and bring such meanings to the public attention through the media, based on their own agenda. Simultaneously, the interest in hiking Baekdudaegan extended from professional mountain climbers to the general public. During the economic crisis, Baekdudaegan came to represent the will, courage, and indomitable spirit to overcome hardships. In addition, companies took advantage of the idea of trekking through Baekdudaegan to advertise their products and improve their corporate image. Along with the growth of popular interest in Baekdudaegan, a series of efforts were led by the Korea Forest Service with the aim of promoting the protection of Baekdudaegan by law. Complications arose, however, since the psychological aspects of Baekdudaegan evoked nationalistic feelings. The newly attached symbolism made it difficult to designate the range's legal geographical extent precisely. To turn Baekdudaegan into a protectable legal object, therefore, it was necessary to bind the physical range with the conservation of ecological systems.

In the enactment process, the Korea Forest Service and the Ministry of Environment competed against each other for sole management control

over Baekdudaegan. The competition between these two organizations to lead the enactment process was partly due to the social trend dominated by environmentalism, which is often identified with singling out stretches of land in order to protect them from the ills of human intervention. Finally, the Korea Forest Service, with the support of a group of politicians, proposed a special law to protect Baekdudaegan based on the Mountain Management Law. According to this coalition of politicians, Baekdudaegan was worthy of legal protection for two reasons: nationalism and ecology.

In executing the law, however, the protection of the natural ecosystem proved more important than the promotion of national identity. The emphasis, then, fell exclusively on the natural landscape rather than on the cultural landscape, or the combined work of people and environment. After strong protests from local municipalities, however, enactment was limited to areas with favorable conditions for physical and biological management only. Thus, the Protected Area is often not a natural but an artificial area, the product of compromise with local residents. The border between nature and culture was merely a compromise, gained in contested negotiations between the Korea Forest Service and the local municipality.

In contrast to its legal meaning, the term “Baekdudaegan” has generally been used to indicate a wider geographical area that covers both the legally protected area and its adjacent areas. It sometimes even includes whole administrative areas which contain Baekdudaegan’s ridge within their boundaries. Each administrative body, at both local and national levels, has used the term Baekdudaegan to realize its own objectives and ideologies. In particular, local governments that are home to parts of the Baekdudaegan Protected Area use the name “Baekdudaegan” in constructing their local identity. They encode it in particular ways, to suit their own agenda in order to persuade or appeal to their intended audience.

Moreover, after feelings of nationalism were projected onto Baekdudaegan, it has evolved from a national space needing protection into a personal space for individual reflection. Frequently, such individual experiences hiking Baekdudaegan have intentionally appeared in the media, as models for public. Baekdudaegan was also used as a family space where special life experiences were transmitted from one generation to another.

Furthermore, public figures recently have tried to demonstrate sincerity and promote their public images by hiking Baekdudaegan. Overall, ever since the introduction of the term “Baekdudaegan” in the mid-1980s, Baekdudaegan itself has increasingly become a space open to multi-level interpretation, which is dependent on and used as a means of cultural politics.

---

## REFERENCES

- Jang, Ji-yeon. 2011. “Pungsu-ui yeoksaseong-gwa gojido jaehyeon-ui sanggwan-seong-e daehan geomto” (An Examination of the Relation between the Historicity of *Fengshui* and Cartography). *Hanguk gojido yeongu* (Journal of Korean Cartography) 3.2: 73-86.
- Jeong, Chi-yeong. 2011. *Gojido-wa sajin-euro bon baekdusan* (Baekdusan as Seen through Old Maps and Photographs). Bundang: The Academy of Korean Studies.
- Jo, Seok-pil. 1997. *Taebaeksanmaek-eun eopda* (There Is No Taebaeksanmaek). Seoul: Saram-gwa San.
- Korea Forest Service (KFS). 1996. “Baekdudaegan gwallyeon munheonjip” (Documents on the Baekdudaegan). Daejeon: Korea Forest Service.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003. “Baekdudaegan-ui gwalli beomwi seoljeong mit gwalli bangan surip-eul wihan yeongu” (A Study for the Management of Baekdudaegan’s Range Designation and the Management Method Establishment). Daejeon: Korea Forest Service.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005. “Baekdudaegan boho jiyeok jijeong hyeonhwang” (The Current State of Baekdudaegan Protected Areas). Daejeon: Korea Forest Service.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. “Baekdudaegan baekseo” (White Paper on Baekdudaegan). Daejeon: Korea Forest Service.
- Korean Re. 2009. *Baekdudaegan-eseo saeroun dojeon-eul kkum-kkuda* (Dreaming of a New Challenge at Baekdudaegan). Seoul: Korean Re.
- Nam, Nan-Heui. 2004. *Najeun san-i natda* (A Low Mountain is Better). Seoul: Hakgojae.
- Republic of Korea. Committee on Regional Development (CRD). 2011. “Naeryuk chogwangyeok gaebal-ui gibon gusang-eun ireosseumnida” (The Basics of the Super Wide-Area Development). *Jiyeok baljeon jeongchaek donghyang* (Regional Development Policy Trends) 4.

- Republic of Korea. Ministry of Construction and Transportation (MCT). 1999. *Je 4 cha gukto jonghap gyehoek 2000-2020* (The Fourth Comprehensive National Territorial Plan 2000-2020). Policy Document.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005. *Je 4 cha gukto jonghap gyehoek sujeong gyehoek 2006-2020* (The Fourth Revised Comprehensive National Territorial Plan 2006-2020). Policy Document.
- Republic of Korea. Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT). 2001. *Je 2 cha gwangwang gaebal giban gyehoek* (The Second Tourism Development Basic Plan). Policy Document.
- Republic of Korea. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST). 2011. *Je 3 cha gwangwang gaebal giban gyehoek* (The Third Tourism Development Basic Plan). Policy Document.
- Republic of Korea. Ministry of Land and Sea (MLS). 2011. *Je 4 cha gukto jonghap gyehoek sujeong gyehoek 2011-2020* (The Fourth Revised Comprehensive National Territorial Plan 2011-2020). Policy Document.