Changes in the Perception of Work in Korea from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Late 1970s*

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It is widely recognized that one of the most important prerequisites of industrialization involves mobilizing the labor-force's commitment to industry. Of various aspects of labor commitment, the subjective perception of the meaning and value of work is probably the most crucial of social psychological factors. In view of this, this paper aims to examine ways in which ideas about work developed and changed in South Korea from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, the period marking the country's remarkable transition from economic backwardness to dynamic industrialization. In the process, the following observations are made: 1) pre-industrial economic culture in the late nineteenth century Korea was largely shaped and influenced by Confucian ethics, which generally regarded work and commercial activity as inferior and demeaning; 2) the perception of work during the Japanese colonial period was primarily informed by the ideal of independence; 3) the political chaos during the post-liberation period hindered the formation of positive conceptions of work and economic growth; and 4) the "official" ideology of work during the 1960s and 1970s equated economic objectives with national aspirations and drew upon pro-growth Confucian ethics. This paper will trace these ideas about work in historical perspective and sociologically analyze their relevance to economic stagnation or growth in South Korea. In addition, this study will draw attention to many areas of comparison concerning the role of values in economic transformation, particularly those involving Japan and other Newly Industrializing Economies (NIEs).

Keywords: work, work ethic, Korea, nationalism, Confucianism, economic development

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Introduction

In the Weberian tradition, it has been asserted that some form of cultural endorsement of work—the creation of a "work ethic"—plays a pivotal part in promoting industrialization (Weber 1968). The need for new workers to accept industrial norms of work discipline, management authority, punctuality, and machine pacing has also been recognized as essential in fostering industrial process (Kerr et al. 1964; Moore 1965). As E. P. Thompson (1967: 57; see also 1966) argued in his classic article, creating an industrial labor force "entails a severe restructuring of working habits—new disciplines, new incentives, and a new human nature upon which these incentives could bite effectively." Changes in values of work are thus a contributory cause, as well as a social consequence, of capitalist development and modernization.

Indeed, one of the most important factors for the "economic miracle" of South Korea has been the creation of an industrial work ethic emphasizing both the national and personal need for modernization. This new perception and ideology of work had to be developed in order to motivate and discipline workers to participate voluntarily in the industrialization process and to rationalize and legitimize Korean capitalistic modernization. Although the remarkable economic growth of South Korea has been well documented by many scholars (Wade and Kim 1978; Kim and Roemer 1979; Hamilton 1986; Woronoff 1983; Jones and Sakong 1980), most studies have focused on the role of the state and on the cooperative relations between state and entrepreneurial elites, with little attention being given to the contribution of Korean labor. To date there has been no comprehensive historical or sociological study as to how Koreans' perception of work has changed over the years.

In an attempt to redress this imbalance, this paper attempts to examine ways in which views about work changed in Korea from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s. Four distinct periods of Korean economic history will be surveyed in order to bring into relief the ways in which social-structural conditions exerted powerful influence on people's perceptions of work. It will be argued that the mobilization of an industrious labor force in Korea has been made possible by both the pro-growth precepts of Confucian ethics and the government-sponsored ideology of nationalism. Finally, the paper will examine comparatively the relevance of the ideologies of work to economic development in other countries.

Perception of Work during the Late Nineteenth Century Korea

The latter part of the nineteenth century marks Korea's social and economic transition to the modern era. In this period, the Korean economy comes to develop many of the key founding elements of industrial-commercial practice, including the use of money as means of exchange, the rise of independent farmers producing increasingly for market returns, and the emergence of independent artisans. The economy, however, remained based in agriculture, with only limited small-scale, labor-intensive handicraft production. There was as yet no industrial entrepreneurship, for manufacturing was virtually non-existent in this largely self-sufficient agrarian society, and there existed only a very weak mercantile class (trade being confined to government-licensed merchants and to contractors).

Korean culture at the time was still characterized by the predominance of Confucianism, which had permeated all aspects of Korean society since the founding of the Joseon dynasty in 1392.[1] The prevailing economic thought esteemed agriculture as the source of all wealth and viewed commerce as a base profession (Kim 1982:46). This adverse view towards commerce was sustained by two basic rationales: the Confucian worldview—the ideological product of a bureaucratic stratum of cultured landowners (Weber 1951)—associated commerce with greed and moral abasement, and hence as a major cause for human suffering and social turmoil;[2] and commerce was traditionally an exclusive activity of the commoners. Indeed, the pervasiveness of Confucianism was such that "agriculture, the financial base of the scholar-literati, became a major vocation, and commerce and industry for the lowly" (Yi 1983:132-3).

In regard to work, it was primarily conceived in terms of manual labor and was not esteemed. This was largely due to Confucianism that glorifies the pursuit of knowledge and righteousness as the highest virtue of humanity (see Yao 2000). Work was thus regarded as an unpleasant and demeaning activity that was incompatible with the development of the mind or cultural enrichment. Confucianism also viewed manual work as interfering with nature, which was exalted as an integral part of the universe or "heaven." Confucianism dictated that nature is not a mere material entity but a normative entity: nature is not an

1. The Joseon dynasty is the last and longest lived imperial dynasty of Korea (1392-1910), during which Neo-Confucianism was accepted as the ideology of the state and society.
2. Such Confucian worldview also prevailed in other parts of Asia at the time, including China and Japan.

object of mastery or utilization by human beings, but a manifestation which exists beyond human conquest. Such a view of nature retarded any attempt for commercial activity.

Ideologically sustained by Confucianism, the class structure during this period closely reflected the work culture. The landed gentry, *yangban*, constituted a ruling class of scholar-bureaucrats,[3] while the class of men in the middle (*jungin*)—those in the service of the royal and aristocratic families as technical-personnel—stood between the ruling and commoner classes. Commoners were further divided along three occupational layers: peasants, artisans, and merchants. At the bottom of status hierarchy was an array of menial jobs including private servants, butchers, entertainers, and other social outcasts (Lee 1962:303-24). Confucianism in traditional Korean society articulated:

> … a severely discriminating sense toward professions....it held such a discriminatory idea by occupations as the official gentlemen (or scholar), farmer, artisan, merchant in the order of high and low ranks in society, making the first the highest and the last two the lowest.... The traditional idea of Korean Confucianism did not have much respect for technical and physical or manual labor but rather despised this. Laboring for material production could not have the qualities of being the gentleman.... Trade and commerce, without being esteemed, even nominally, had been regarded as the meanest sort of work. (Choi 1966:82)

Besides Confucianism, the Korean perception of work during the latter part of the Joseon dynasty was considerably influenced by *silhak*, which literally means the School of Practical Learning. As a set of reforms and "enlightenment" ideals developed by progressive intellectuals in the latter half of the Joseon dynasty, *silhak* represented an ideology propitious to the development of capitalism, featuring both utilitarian and pragmatist principles. In direct reaction to Neo-Confucianism, it discarded the view of nature as a normative entity regulating human beings and their society, perceiving it instead as a purely material entity (Kim 1982:38). It also re-conceptualized nature according to a practical theory of utilization. Water and fire, for example, were viewed as forces of energy to be utilized for practical pur-

3. In traditional Korea, one became a scholar-bureaucrat by passing a state examination, which tested contestants on their knowledge of Confucian literature.

poses, including commercial activities. The concept of virtue was also modified: *silhak* thought stipulated that virtue has no practicality and that virtue is not a necessary but a luxurious faculty of human reason (Kim 1982:45). By emphasizing the importance of the ethical justness of commercial and industrial activities, *silhak* also hinted at the positive value of work, as well as the importance of practical work, in overcoming various national ills, such as poverty and foreign encroachment. While *silhak* contained ideas favourable to the modernization process and the rise of capitalism, it failed to transform the Korean economy and society for two reasons: first, the thought was simply not congruent with the existing economic and social order; and second, Neo-Confucianism sustained an overwhelming influence on the worldview and behavior of Koreans.

The Gabo Reforms (*Gabo gyeongjang*) of 1894 also deserve mention (see Lew 1972). The reforms, which were initiated by the Korean government under Japanese direction in the name of strengthening Korea's sovereignty and promoting socio-economic and cultural progress, brought about the reorganization of governments at various levels, revision of the examination system, introduction of a new monetary system, and military reorganization. Also, greater social fluidity was facilitated with the abolition of slavery and with the granting of the right to engage in trade for the *yangban*, or the elite literati class. Although these reform measures were imposed upon Korea by the Japanese to tighten their grip on Korean administration, the modernizing intent of the reforms can be said to have increased the public awareness of the need for self-strengthening, economic development, and social progress, all of which also hinted at the positive value of work.

Work Ethic during the Colonial Period, 1910-1945

What is characteristic of the Korean economy during the colonial period is that all economic policies and subsequent economic development reflected the changing needs of Japan, not Korea (Hamilton 1986:9-20; see also Suh 1978). Like the colonizers in other parts of the world, Japan's imperialist policy during this period was simply to cultivate Korea as a supplier of raw materials and as a consumer of products from Japan (Zo 1982:157).[4] The Japanese colonial regime

4. There has been a long-standing controversy over the role of Japan in Korea°Øs remarkable eco-

restricted the private business activities of Koreans, fearing that successful Korean enterprise would not only furnish an economic base for an independence movement but would also reduce the business opportunities of Japanese entrepreneurs in Korea. Although there was a considerable expansion of manufacturing during the colonial period, the Korean economy remained dominated by small-scale agricultural processing and by household industries supplying consumer goods.

Perception of work was still not favorable for economic growth since there was only limited indigenous industrial entrepreneurship, with Japanese owning and managing most of the industry. For those Koreans who worked as laborers and low-level supervisors, work must have been an alienating experience. Not only were the products of their labor not theirs, but the profits were appropriated by the "enemy" to advance their imperialistic ventures. There was also alienation between workers who worked for Japanese and those who worked for Korean-owned industries. The workers employed in Japanese manufacturing were often suspected of sympathizing with the Japanese cause. The concept of work during this period was thus linked, at least at the subconscious level, with the reality of Japanese domination, making the Korean people feel uneasy about industrial labor.

It was only with the rise of an independence movement in 1919 that the Korean perceptions of work began to change. The ideology of independence perceived economic progress favorably and as necessary: it regarded economic development as indispensable for independence and for the self-determination of the nation. As Mangap Lee (1980:279) writes, "[t]he main objectives of the Korean nationalist movement after the Independence Movement were to promote the capacity of Korean people through education and training, to develop their industrial capacity in order to fight for political autonomy." Accordingly, leaders of the nationalist movement began to embrace the idea of regaining sov-

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nomic growth that began in the 1960s. Korean historians have maintained that Korea's industrialization has been the making of Koreans themselves, while the revisionists, most of whom are historians and Koreanists based outside of Korea, have insisted that the seeds of modernization and industrialization were sown by the Japanese during the colonial period. The revisionists highlight the role of the Japanese in shaping modern Korean capitalism by referring to their input in, among others, building infrastructure and factories, bringing in capital, transferring technological know-how, and implementing modern bureaucracy (see Eckert 1991; McNamara 1990; Shin and Robinson 2001).

ereignty through economic development, and this idea eventually reached Korean workers, many of whom empathized with it. The favorable perception of economic progress thus meant a more positive view of work, particularly when linked with the idea of national independence. As a result, Korean-owned industries flourished with the support of the Korean people (Juhn 1977). The Korean industrialists themselves presented their activities to the people as nationalistic operations devoted to build industry to safeguard the country from Japanese imports and strengthen it for eventual independence (Janelli 1993:69; see also Wells 1985).

The most notable example of a nationalistic expression through industrial enterprise is the case of Kyongsong Textile Company (Cho 1971). The basic motivation of its founders was to establish a Korean-owned and operated industrial enterprise to foster economic independence. Nationalistic sentiment was articulated in many of the company's policies, such as the policy of exclusion of Japanese as stockholders or employees. In the process, the company took full advantage of its Korean ownership in marketing its products by stressing that they were made by Koreans for Koreans. The company "tailored" its products to meet Korean tastes and needs, and its products were branded with legendary and uniquely Korean names, such as *Bullocho* (the magic fungus for longevity), *Sansam* (mountain ginseng), and *Samsinsan* (the mountain of the legendary three founders of Korea, or of the three gods governing childbirth) (Cho 1971).

Another example of the relationship between Korean business enterprise and the independence movement is evident in the case of the Honam Bank, which was founded by Chunho Hyun (Cho 1971:133-137). As an active participant in the independence movement in Korea and abroad, Hyun founded the bank in hope of furthering independence. He made it a bank policy not to hire Japanese, not to make loans to Japanese citizens or organizations, and not to use Japanese language—as was required by the Japanese authority—in conducting bank business.

A third example involves the Paeksan Company, a trading company founded by Huije An (Cho 1971:200-209). This company was founded with the definite purpose of aiding the independence movement in Korea and abroad. The company established branch offices in Korea and one in Manchuria, funneling funds to the independence movement by concealing them in the form of commercial transactions.

The independence movement and its espoused ideology, therefore, "heightened people's support for, and expectations from, industries owned by Koreans" (Zo 1982:159). Still, there remained an element of ambivalence in perceiving

work: while working for Koreans was viewed positively, working for Japanese was not. Furthermore, the fact that Korean industrialists prospered only by collaborating with and conceding to Japanese policies and the fact that some even profited from the manufacturing of Japanese war materials and trade with Japan made many Koreans question the integrity of these industrialists. Many Koreans resisted work precisely because they feared that their work might contribute to the strength of Japanese economy. This ambivalence and hesitation was compounded by the fact that Korean entrepreneurs maintained a marginal existence, for lack of capital, governmental assistance, and technological knowledge—which was systematically denied to Korean entrepreneurs—confined their enterprises to small-scale ventures. Also, the prevalent Confucian value that perceived manual work as demeaning persisted. In a word, while people's identification of economic progress with independence had a positive effect on their understanding of work, its impact was minimal due to the economic, cultural, social, and psychological ramifications of foreign domination.

Economic Stagnation during the Post-Liberation Period, 1945-1960

The sudden end of World War II in 1945 brought an immediate withdrawal from Korea of all Japanese technicians, managers, and entrepreneurs, which seriously disrupted production activities in many, if not all, industrial plants (Kim and Roemer 1979:21). The legacy of the Japanese colonial exploitation of Korea was such that the new independent authorities had scant resources and limited skills in rebuilding and modernizing the economy. An additional setback was the separation of the industrial north from the agricultural south in Korea, dislocating the even distribution of industrial facilities and skilled manpower resources.[5] The few industries that were located in the south were unable to operate for lack of raw materials. In 1946, for example, the number of South Korean manufacturing plants that were still in operation was reduced by more than half of the

5. The pre-civil war Korean situation bears much similarity to the circumstances in Germany before its unification. After the liberation, the Russian forces maintained a peace-keeping role in the north, providing military support to Kim Il-sung's communist party, while the American force was responsible for the south. The presence of the two super powers, in effect, resulted in an informal separation of the country.

pre-1945 figure and those in operation were producing at only 20 percent of capacity (Brown 1973:31). The colonial concentration of heavy industry in the north, which had about 86 percent of overall production, including a heavy industry sector predominance in metals, chemicals, electricity and cement, left South Korea, where light industries, such as textiles, food processing and lumbering, were concentrated, with an unbalanced and malfunctioning manufacturing sector (McCune and Grey Jr. 1950:57). The collapse of trade between the north and south, attendant upon Cold War politics, coupled with the absence of trade with a defeated and devastated Japan further contributed to economic hardship and chaos in the south.

The post-liberation period in Korea is also marked by the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-53), which left the South Korean economy in total ruin. Many production activities were suspended, and of available resources, most were expended solely on political stabilization. Politics, therefore, took priority over economy; the goal of national defense was deemed more important than economic growth. Largely because of such political instability, the government lacked a definite economic policy during this period; in fact, its basic "economic policy" was to solicit more foreign aid. As a result, the abundant surplus of labor available for the expansion of light manufacture sat idle. The government's only input into labor mobilization took the form of encouraging the organization of anticommunist unions under the umbrella of the *Taehannochong* (Federation of Korean Trade Unions).[6]

The skepticism and pessimism that emerged in South Korea in the wake of such political disorder and military vulnerability naturally intensified doubt about the prospect of economic development (Hong 1967:197-8). Cole and Lyman (1971:81) agree in identifying national self-doubt as the core factor of economic underdevelopment in South Korea in the 1950s:

> It was a self-doubt connected with prospects for South Korea as a separate economic entity [that debilitated economic growth]....It [self-doubt] was also extended to uncertainty about the qualities of character and leadership available in Korea for the implementation of a just and effective economic development effort.

6. The regime was also noted for its brutal suppression of labor unions and for its firm control over union activities.

Such general pessimism and despair about the prospects for economic growth as well as the authoritarian regime's preoccupation with anticommunism formed a major obstacle to the formation of positive conceptions of work and economic growth. Work was once again left destitute of whatever positive values it held, for political despair, poverty, and economic disorganization and pessimism rendered work to be futile and ineffectual in overcoming various social and national ills. As a consequence, South Korea's vast undeveloped human resources were left untapped until the early 1960s when the new government introduced initiatives and economic policies that contributed to the development of an "official" ideology of work.

The Ideology of Work during the Industrialization Phase, 1961-1979

The turning point in the economic history of Korea was the 1961 military coup. Pressed by the need to gain legitimacy, the Korean military government, led by the coup leader Park Chung-hee, perceived the construction of a self-sufficient national economy as the most urgent objective, accordingly initiating a series of economic plans with "free enterprise" directed and assisted by governmental supervision and intervention. The basic direction of development planning was "guided capitalism": the government took the lead in mobilizing capital by nationalizing banks and expanding diplomatic ties to facilitate foreign loans and investment; channeled capital into industries targeted for development; granted investment priorities to manufacturing and export-oriented industries; encouraged domestic savings; provided tax and exclusive licensing privileges to exporters; and modernized agriculture and increased its production (Kim and Roemer 1979; Jones and Sakong 1980; Song 1997; Kim, J. 2002; Mason *et al.* 1980; Kim, E. 1988, 1991). In line with these economic policies that proved to be effective in industrializing the nation, the Korean government faced the difficult task of stimulating the voluntary participation of the people in the industrialization process. What made such task complicated was not only the traditional antipathy toward manual labor and national self-doubt, but also the fact that industrial work entailed facing conditions that were largely alien to Koreans: isolation from families, since most factories were located in urban centers; removal from *gohyang*—literally meaning one's birthplace or hometown but laden with culturally significant identity and emotion;[7] and working under conditions of rig-

orous monitored discipline. Obviously essential for ensuring the active participation of potential workers was the development of a new perception of work which could overcome the traditional disregard for manual labor and cause individuals to commit to industrial labor. This was particularly pressing in light of the fact that the country's initial economic growth relied on export-oriented, labor-intensive light industries, such as textiles, clothes, and shoes (see Koo 1990, 2001).

Crucial to the industrialization of Korea was thus a fundamental change in basic social values, particularly those pertaining to work. And in an effort to create an able and willing labor force, the government exalted work to a position never before held. The most striking aspect of this ideology of work is that it was developed to create genuine consensus in seeing the individual's commitment to industrial labor and concomitant economic development as the key to various national goals such as overcoming poverty, facilitating effective defense against the communist North, and strengthening Korea's sovereignty, etc. In fact, hard work—and attendant industrialization—was advanced as the best solution to all social ills. The government thus launched a national campaign to encourage Koreans to participate actively as industrial laborers, urging them that work was a social obligation and a patriotic duty as well as a moral duty. In doing so, the government associated the concept of work with ethnic nationalism or *minjokjuui* and advanced the notion that the motive force for participation in labor was not self-interest, but rather a contribution to Korea's nation-building.[8] The government-sponsored ideology of work also insisted that every employee had to sacrifice individual interests and participate voluntarily in the national project, enduring low incomes, long hours of work, and difficult working conditions—all of which were said to be "temporary"—in order for the country to become industrialized (Bae 1989:362).[9] In this way, work was given

7. Koreans have always had strong attachment to their hometowns because that is where their ancestors are buried and where their spirits live (see Goldberg 1979). Moreover, their hometown is where their roots are; it is their emotional and spiritual home from which they derive a sense of continuity or constancy in place. The magnitude of their attachment to hometown is attested to by the fact that a vast majority of Koreans visit their hometown to conduct ancestor worship during the extended holidays of Korean Thanksgiving and Lunar New Year's Day.
8. It is also true that, while the official ideology of work articulated the importance of nation, society, and community, the practical strategy heavily relied on the simple material interests of the individuals.
9. The ideology justifying long hours of work and low wages for the sake of the collectivity can

religious overtones, replete with the notion that the more each individual worked, the better off everyone would be, including the company and, more importantly, the country.

Beginning in the early 1960s, therefore, the Korean government advanced the goal of *geundaehwa* ("modernization") as a historical task facing the Korean people (Kim, U. 1986). Nationalistic elements then came to encompass the entire content of modernization and the industrial economy was viewed as the necessary basis for a modern state and society. As Kyongdong Kim (1988:212), a distinguished Korean sociologist, put it:

> Face-saving in the world community, shedding of the shameful colonial memory, and insuring security in the face of the potential threat from the aggressive North were put forth as the nationalistic rationale to embark on the formidable task of economic reconstruction. Fortunately, the people in all sectors, regions, and walks of life responded positively to the government's call for mobilization and cooperation.

The slogans by which the government endeavored to unify public opinion all emphasized the collective aspects of work and national economic development. Slogan words and catchphrases abound, such as becoming *joongjinguk* ("a semi-developed nation") or *seonjinguk* ("an industrialized nation"); working hard for *gugwiseonyang* ("enhancing national prestige"), *soochool jeungdae* ("export increase") or *minjokjoongheung* ("regenerating the nation"); and working hard to enhance *googryeok* ("national strength") (Kim, U. 1986:43). There were other artificially highlighted words, such as *hamyeon doenda* ("If you try, it will work"), *seosin* ("firm conviction"), *gangnyokhan choojin* ("strong effort"), and *gyeoldan* ("determination"), which were often utilized in the rhetoric of early industrialization (Kim, U. 1986:43). Also, the positive attitude of "we can do anything" and the expression *jal saraboja* ("Let us work for a better life") were government slogans which aspired to communicate affirmative meaning to industrial work and industrialization. In addition, specific economic goals, including "one-billion dollar exports," "10 percent economic growth," and "10

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be, or has been, easily diverted to the service of private interests. It is also true that the alleged collective interest justified by the new ideology of work coincided more with the interest of certain groups and classes.

percent increase in national per capita income," all of which ultimately called for workers' active participation and sacrifice in the industrialization process, were advanced as being crucial for the nation's industrialization. Other slogans aimed at motivating workers were derived from militaristic expressions: e.g., Korea engaged in a *soochool jeonjaeng* ("an export war") and *mooyeok jeonjaeng* ("a trade war"); workers as *saneop jeonsa* ("industrial soldiers") and *soochool jeonsa* ("export warriors"); and the workplace as an "industrial fighting line."[10]

In assimilating the individual's commitment to industrial work and norms with national aspirations, the government-sponsored nationalism also drew upon not only Korea's culture and history—the country's "ethnic homogeneity" and historically-based sense of cultural achievement—but also upon strong anti-Japanese sentiments and anti-North Korean feelings extant among the public. In particular, the experience of Japanese colonial rule intensified nationalist sentiment, for Japan became a clear "enemy" against which most Koreans developed a passionate determination to match or outdo in its economic achievements. The fact that Japan, long considered culturally similar but inferior from the Korean perspective, had been the colonizer gave Koreans a strong conviction to rectify past mistakes by economically succeeding in the world community. Corporate slogans, such as "Let's Catch Up with Japan," "Let's Surpass Japan" and "Let's Beat Japan" were effectively utilized by the government and industries to motivate workers to work hard. Korean bitterness over the colonial experience had been thus usefully harnessed in the service of industrialization by the government. North Korea served as the other "external" enemy. Faced with the unrelenting threat of North Korean military infiltration, real or imagined, a vast majority of South Koreans internalized the idea that they must work hard to build a strong economy in order to equip their armed forces with state-of-the-art weaponry to guard against their belligerent northern neighbor. South Koreans also espoused the notion that they must work diligently in order to prove to the world that their society was more economically advanced than their counterpart in the north. It is also worth noting that the fear of the North Korean military and political and ideological infiltration prompted South Korean workers to largely

10. Bae (1986) refers to this kind of entrepreneurial ideology as a "Military Model" for many factories in Korea are organized like a military establishment, i.e., employees wearing the grey uniform, having ranks clearly displayed by the shape of their name tags, and being required to have their hair cut short.

accept the government justification for continued restrictions on labor movements, which were often portrayed as being anti-nationalistic, subversive, and sympathetic to North Korean causes.

A study of a Korean conglomerate (*jaebeol*) by Roger Janelli (1993:75-81, 109-23) offers a glimpse into what kind of devices were used to invoke nationalism in the workplace. Along with the repeated emphasis on the maxim of "What's good for the company is good for the nation," various expressions that consciously or subconsciously stirred nationalist sentiments were often emphasized in labor-management meetings and in company publications: *aeguk jeongsin* (a "patriotic spirit"), *urinara* ("our nation"), *urihanguk saram* ("we the Korean people"), and *urineun i nara ui jeolmeun ilggundul* ("We are the young workers of this nation"). The appeal to nationalist sentiments further involved a mobilization of national symbols: the South Korean flag was found in practically every office and when the national anthem was played over the public-address system each morning and evening, workers rose to attention, facing the flag (Janelli 1993:111-12). The national anthem and a formal salute to the flag opened each month's company meeting for corporate staff. Given this kind of strong emphasis on nationalism in the workplace, it is not surprising that the training of new recruits—which was held for up to a month at a training centre located in the countryside—also involved the reinforcement of nationalistic sentiments: each day opened with a salute to the flag and the singing of the anthem; lectures on Korean history and culture were offered by prominent scholars to instill pride in being Korean; and speeches that identified workers' diligence and economic growth with national aspirations were provided to prepare workers to work hard.

Such a nationalism-inspired work ethic, first developed in the early 1960s by the government and industry, was cultivated into a full-fledged national campaign over the next two decades. Posters and pamphlets containing such work-exalting slogans were found ubiquitously on the walls of workplaces and on street billboards, while banners on the streets and those hanging inside and outside buildings ensured that there was no real escape from becoming aware of the urgency of industrialization and the necessity of hard work. National campaigns stressing both the need for diligent work and meeting export targets were also promoted through the mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.[11] Television and radio news programs, dramas, talk shows, and

11. Such economic nationalism also extended to calls for buying Korean-made goods.

newspaper and magazine editorials also did their part in voicing such needs by constantly reminding the masses of the hard times of the past and the need to push on with the "the economy first and foremost" policy. Even religious leaders, including priests, pastors and monks, were united in advancing these notions. Work was also promoted through awards and prizes: monthly and annual awards and prizes were given out to most productive workers at the company, industry, and national levels. The award ceremonies, especially the Ministry of Labor Award and the President's Award, were spotlighted by the news and other mass media. And these award ceremonies were replete with reminders that the country needs industrious workers whose commitment, sacrifice, and high productivity could and would make the difference in the success or failure of the country's industrialization attempts.

By drawing upon emotion-laden nationalism, therefore, the government and firms inspired workers to endure personal sacrifices for the national goal of uninterrupted economic development. The government constantly reminded them of the need for sustained economic growth to not only overcome such social ills as poverty but also to strengthen the country. The ideology of strengthening the nation through hard work and economic development enjoyed the widespread consent of Korean workers and people, especially because of their experience and knowledge of past national weaknesses and defeats.[12] Accordingly, until the late 1970s, only minimal labor disputes occurred, largely because workers had internalized that sacrifice was essential if the country and the company were to prosper. The nationalism extant in the new ideology of work also generated in Koreans a tremendous hunger for economic progress; and workers saw their labor as contributing immensely to national economic development and hence, nation-building. Consequently, work was made respectable even to the extent of stigmatizing unemployment, and those who voiced complaints at work were even seen as potential subversives, agents of social disorder who could interfere with national growth (Bae 1989:361-362). It is not surprising then that this is about when the familiar axiom of Ben Franklin, "Time is Money," became popular in Korea.

12. It is possible that Koreans' educational and work experience as well as military training—replete with the norms of punctuality, work discipline, and respect for authority—under the Japanese, especially towards the end of colonial rule, provided a fertile environment in which the new work ethic could be propagated to the masses.

This is not to argue, however, that workers' compliance with the "official" ideology of work was absolute. A segment of the industrial working class obstinately resisted the state's indirect justification of what was deemed factory exploitation. While it is true that most workers supported the official policies that advocated "development foremost," the state also had to rely on actual or threatened measures of coercion, i.e., a strict labor legislation and firm control over union activities. In fact, it was the state's anti-union measures, i.e., deregistration of all existing unions and a total ban on strikes, that ensured the emergence of politically acquiescent trade unions. Until the mid-1970s the government-sponsored national industrial union, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), operated primarily to implement government policy, moderate union demands, and discipline defiant workers.

The Role of Confucian Values in the Ideology of Work

In addition to the utilization of nationalism in the ideology of work, the Korean government also selectively emphasized certain Confucian values. Similar to Japan and other Newly Industrializing Economies of East Asia—Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan—Confucian values, such as respect for authority and elders, loyalty, and emphasis on education and diligence were deliberately transferred to new structures and groupings of the industrial setting: for example, communal or family loyalty was transformed into company loyalty; diligence for self-cultivation was changed to working hard for one's company; and domestic paternalism was adapted to modern industrial conditions (Morishima 1982; Tai 1989; Berger and Hsiao 1988). In this way, Confucian values of hard work and diligence were conveniently incorporated into the newly developed work ethic, thereby helping to shape a trainable, industrious work force in South Korea. Some of the Confucian-derived rallying words that were—and still are—utilized by the government and companies to galvanize workers to work hard include *euiyok* or "will," an internal drive to accomplish and succeed, *seongsil* ("sincerity"), and *huisaeng* ("sacrifice"), sacrificing for the sake of the company and the nation. Loyalty or *choongseong* was equally stressed at all levels in the workplace. The individual was expected to owe supreme allegiance to the company's interest and identify completely with the goals of the company. This is one reason why workers in the 1960s and 1970s were inspired to work twelve to fourteen hours a day and take only two days off a month. The Confucian ethic

also provided the ideological rationale for the workers' complete subordination to their superiors in the workplace. This value system with its superior-subordination relationship was vital for the smooth operation of industrial bureaucracy, which was the chosen instrument of cooperation and control in South Korea.

The Confucian concept of human harmony (*inhwadangyeol*) was also advanced as a part of the new work ethic. Indeed, the themes of harmony, solidarity and cooperation among employees were prominent company mottos of a vast majority of Korean companies (Janelli 1993:115; see also Yi, K. 1988). In particular, harmony was invoked in appeals for teamwork, in reminders of the mutuality of the company's and employees' interests, in warnings of external dangers, real or imagined, and in the use of the family as a metaphor for the company. Other group-oriented articulations included company life or workplace as *hyeopdongjeok saenghwal* (a "cooperative life-style") and *ilchegam* ("a sense of oneness").

A survey of the managerial principles of Korean companies, indeed, found the following moral themes to be most conspicuous: harmony and unity, sincerity and diligence, work and social responsibility, reliability, and sacrifice and service (Lee, H. 1989). All of these rallying words, displayed conspicuously in elevators and on the walls of offices and factories, emphasized the need to devote one's energies wholeheartedly and selflessly toward company goals. Expressed collectively, these values enabled Koreans at all levels in the organization to work hard on behalf of the company and the nation.[13] The Korean government and companies thus took advantage of traditional Korean values in order to build a loyal and diligent labor force that can be effectively mobilized and managed for the sake of the nation's industrialization. By articulating nationalism in economic terms and transforming the Confucian value system—discipline, hard work, dedication to duty, loyalty, responsibility, and achievement-oriented education—into a modern work ethic suited to an industrial society, the Korean government was able to mobilize Koreans to participate voluntarily as industrial laborers. In this way, the nationalism extant in the nascent work ethic reminded workers why they should work (hard), while the Confucian work ethic advised how they should.

13. These collective values led to moral and ideological conformity with the company which made it easier for management and government to exercise bureaucratic control over the workers. They were used eventually to justify factory exploitation, which in turn later provoked workers' resentment that developed into violent labor strikes.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how perceptions of work have changed in modern Korean history and how there is a close link between socio-political situations and the way people understand work and economic development. Prior to the beginning of rapid economic development in South Korea in the 1960s, for example, political chaos, compounded by the incompetence of the government and widespread feelings of uncertainty, self-doubt, and public distrust all denied the nation of a positive perception of work. It was only with the state's effective economic strategies that a constructive understanding of industrial work and economic development emerged in South Korea. Indeed, the economic development in the 1960s and 1970s had been the result of a combination of effective leadership and ideology—nationalism and pro-growth Confucian ethics—ingrained in bureaucracy and in the conception of work. This seems to have been true for Japan as well as for other NIEs of East Asia.

From the late 1970s, however, the exhortation to "work hard and sweat" for the national purpose began to lose its appeal among workers. That is when they began to realize that they were not getting their share of the booming economy, the economy that they felt was their making, the fruit of their diligence and sacrifice. That is also when the workers' patience ran out. After enduring years of working long hours for low pay in the hope of getting a fair share of the benefits of economic growth, workers began to reject the official policies of "development foremost" and make more demands for their own welfare and social rights. Also, the public in general and the workers in particular had increasingly begun to question the legitimacy of the authoritarian government. They had become more discontent over the moral hazards of conglomerates, which were often involved in many scandals involving politicians. When "political cracks" eventually emerged in the early 1980s, the pent-up demands of the working class rapidly coalesced, unleashing a wave of strikes, which climaxed during the summer of 1987. This showed that, after years of labor compliance under Park Chung-hee, the latent power of the Korean working class was gradually expanding as the success of export-oriented industrialization dramatically transformed the occupational structure. The result of this economic development was a proletarianized and vastly urbanized Korea.

There are four important conclusions of this study. First, this study shows that nationalism can be a major force in mobilizing the necessary workforce for industrialization. The government-sponsored nationalism in South Korea drasti-

cally changed people's attitudes toward economic action and economic roles, thereby providing the motivational nexus which made possible the industrialization in the country. Indeed, emphasis on the perceived ethnic homogeneity of Koreans, along with the situational characteristics of small size, resource scarcity, and military threat played a key role in heightening nationalistic sentiments, which were useful in rallying a single-minded emphasis on workers' sacrifice for economic growth. The Korean case thus confirms the theory that for economically backward countries to develop, certain institutional innovations as well as specific ideologies that favour industrialization must develop (Gerschenkron 1952). These developments are necessary to overcome various cultural obstacles to industrialization, most notably the negative perceptions of industrial work and the individualistic nature of capitalism. In this sense, ideologies such as nationalism and religion, when articulated in association with work and industrialization, are sources of commitment to industrial norms and values (see Anthony 1977; Stokes 1974). As with South Korea, nationalism undoubtedly played a major role in the economic modernization of Japan (Marshall 1967; Fukui 1992) and, to considerable extent, in Taiwan.

Second, the Korean case affirms that cultural values such as Confucianism do play a significant role in economic growth. While Confucian values could not have initiated the rise of capitalism, as Weber rightfully pointed out, it is clear that certain Confucian values are hospitable to economic growth, as evident in Japan and the other NIEs of East Asia. Similar to an elective affinity between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, there seems to exist an affinity between certain Confucian values and economic development. As this study shows, however, Confucian values have been more important as a part of the work ethic rather as an entrepreneurial spirit, a fact which has been hitherto left largely unexplored. This fact has significant implications for the countries that are trying to implement the East Asian model of economic development. Confucian values were not propagated anew for development purposes in East Asia; in the industrialization process, these time-honored values were simply given an economic emphasis or direction. It goes without saying that this aspect of culture cannot be imitated or emulated elsewhere.

Third, this paper suggests that sociological analyses of ideology of work can provide crucial insights into the role of the cultural ethos in economic development. The uniqueness of the Korean case is that the workers' commitment to the process of industrialization was intimately linked to not only a pursuit of self-interest but also to cultural ideals and nationalist aspirations. This goes to affirm

that there are values other than individualism which are hospitable to industrialization and that we need to look at economic development in a more balanced way, i.e., as a matter of not only institutional factors but also cultural and social-psychological ones. In its process of industrialization, South Korea depended on more than effective economic policies since for state guidance, authoritarian management techniques and cultural ethos all played important roles.

Lastly, cultural factors are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for determining a nation's economic performance. In South Korea, as with other NIEs, the state's effective socio-economic strategies have played a more decisive role than culture itself in promoting industrialization. Indeed, industrialization in South Korea occurred only after it became more politically stable and after the government adopted effective economic strategies. This explains why the teachings of Confucianism took so long to be "utilized" for industrialization. It was only with the emergence of a "strong" or an authoritarian state that values of Confucianism were channeled into developmental means. This seems to have been true for Japan and other NIEs, and increasingly so for China as well. It answers the question of how the same Confucian culture, which at one time was the cause of stagnation, became the source of economic dynamism.

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