Politics of Geumgansan Tourism: Sovereignty in Contestation

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Focusing on the role of Geumgangsan tourism in North and South Korean relations, this paper attempts to test a widely accepted belief that tourism contributes to peace and reconciliation among nations, specifically, peace and reconciliation of the Korean peninsula. I will show that what many tourism researchers say about tourism as a diplomatic barometer of the closeness and affinity among nations is just one side of the story. In fact, tourism in international diplomatic relations is an arena of contestation and cooperation where different states compete, negotiate, exchange, manipulate, and maneuver cultural meanings and representations to find its place in the complex and changing international political order.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze how divided states, North and South Koreas, use the structure of tourist control found in Geumgangsan tourism to fight over the nature of the nation in an attempt to reposition each other's existence as sovereign states in the transitional post Cold War period. This study is an attempt to engage in political anthropology of tourism which considers tourism as a complex and multi-layered process or practice of culture contact that influences much broader social processes that bring about social, cultural, and political changes in both host and guest societies. Specifically, this paper focuses on tourism's role in the process of coherence building carried out by a dual political organization, one nation divided into two competing states. The very fact that two rival states are engaged in the process of redefining the constitution of its meaningful subjects, one nation or people, reveals a contradictory relation of contestation and cooperation.

Using the ethnographic data I collected during my doctoral field work in 2003-2004, I attempt to explain how divided states, in a framework of tourism, articulate their own sovereignties through exercising control over the territory and the tourists. The discussion begins with an investigation of the political and historical background of Geumgangsan tourism and its politico-cultural signifi-

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cance; it then analyzes the structure of tourist control where the principle of territorial sovereignty is most vulnerable, therefore frequently violated and at the same time most transparently asserted as necessary. In Guemgangsan tourism, the contestation of sovereignty over the tourists and site is carried out in two levels of tourist control; institutional and practical.

Keywords: Geumgangsan tourism, dual political organization, North-South Korean relations, tourism and state, contestation of sovereignty

Introduction

For many people, tourism, especially, mass tourism, is a synonym for "fun," "play," and "vacation." It is far from being serious. Tourism is what people do to get away from it all where the "it all" being ordinary mundane life, particularly work, which includes the workplace and housework (Graburn 1989: 11). In other words, tourism is travel, moving from one point to the other, or crossing borders for international tourism.

However, we find a clear distinction between tourism and travel in many academic writings. Travel belongs to the past when "adventure," "discovery," "exploration," and other forms of "real" traveling existed while tourism belongs to the present when tourism is about a world discovered (or even created) by entrepreneurs, packaged and then marketed (Nash 1989; Urry 1990; Leed 1991; Boorstin 1992 [1961]; Chambers 2000). Boorstin (1992 [1961]) summed up the difference between travel and tourism when he defined travel with its etymological connection to the notion of work and tourism with the apotheosis of the pseudo, where passivity rather than activity reigns. Travel is encountering the Other and, in turn, finding about one's true self whereas tourism is a form of experience packaged to prevent real contact with others.

Perhaps due to such understanding, tourism is yet to be taken seriously or treated as a respectable analysis in social and political sciences. The history of academic writing on tourism is an oscillation between two extreme myths; tourism as a godsend and tourism as evil (Crick 2002 [1989]: 16). Especially, in anthropology, despite some anthropologists' remarks about the commonality between anthropologists and tourists, anthropologists have traditionally refused to dwell on the comparison.

But Malcolm Crick asserts that tourism has a profound importance in the

contemporary world according to a number of criteria (Crick 2002 [1989]: 17). One is that tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world.[1] Tourism also represents perhaps the largest movement of human populations outside wartime. As a modern form of acculturation, tourism should receive extensive attention by anthropologists concerned with "culture contact" and social change.

Aside from these criteria, tourism, as MacCannell and other scholars studying tourism have argued, has much cultural significance. For MacCannell, tourism is the quest of modern man, whereas the tourist is post-industrial man paying ritual obeisance to an elaborate and experientially fragmenting division of labor that requires the search for authenticity in other cultures (MacCannell 1999 [1976]). Another significance is that of tourism's potential contribution to global peace and understanding. To some scholars, tourism is seen as a social practice that can contribute to knowledge of other places, to empathy with other peoples, and to tolerance that stems from seeing the place of one's own society in the world. To them, tourism is a force for peace and reconciliation (D'Amore 1988; Kim and Crompton 1990; Higgins-Desbiolles 2003).

But other scholars concerned with the political dimension of tourism argue that tourism is used by a state as a policy for the legitimization of the state system and the integration of the nation (Richter 1989 [2000]). Just in Asia alone, examples using tourism for political credibility could be found in the Philippines, where ex-President Marcos blatantly used tourism policy to "sell his martial law" to home and abroad, the two Koreas, and the Republic of China (Ibid.)

The view that a state uses tourism to integrate its people is related to a perspective of tourism that emphasizes tourism's role in identity making, in particular national or collective identity. If tourism facilitates ethnicity or cultural cohesiveness then it can also contribute to political socialization or to use Benedict Anderson's concept, "imagining" of national or ethnic community, or belonging.

Anthropologists and sociologists interested in linking identity and international tourism point to two processes found in tourism which develop simultane-

1. World Tourism Organization figures show that the growth of international tourism arrivals significantly outpaces growth of economic output as measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In years when world economic growth exceeds four per cent, the growth of tourism volume tends to be higher. In the period 1975-2000, tourism increased at an average rate of 4.6 per cent a year. Size wise, tourism is the biggest service export in the world with a share of almost 30 percent in 2003 (Ibid.).

ously and which can seem to be contradictory. First, the spread of tourism in the world economy leads to extroversion, internationalization, and de-territorialization. Second, tourism works towards the retrenchment of identities in a territory, a system of filiation and patrimony. The former process is called globalization while the latter is called indigenization. But what seems to be double polarity in opposition cannot be seen as such. Instead of contrasting between unity and diversity, global and local, and identity and change, we must fasten on to the tension between these poles. In this context, tourism is a double-edged sword when it comes to identity. In India, Spain, Thailand, and Mexico, *inter alia*, it contributes towards repressing, marginalizing, and neutralizing autonomous or resistance movements. In other cases it allows ethnic minorities that have been cut off from international decision-making to claim and assert their identities (Lanfant 1995: 6).

Based on such perspectives and theoretical framework, this paper seeks to investigate the role of state, specifically the North and South Korean states, in a very peculiar and historic tourism called Geumgangsan tourism.[2] In turn, I attempt to test the widely accepted belief that tourism contributes to peace and reconciliation among nations, specifically, peace and reconciliation of the Korean peninsula. I will show that what many tourism researchers say about tourism acting as a diplomatic barometer of the closeness and affinity among nations is just one side of the story. In fact, tourism in international diplomatic relations is an arena of contestation and cooperation where different states compete, negotiate, manipulate, and maneuver cultural meanings and representations to find their places in the complex and changing international political order.

Geumgangsan tourism is peculiar and historic in the sense that it is the first

2. Although the naming is still in contention, especially in Korean, this paper follows the international political order and treats North and South Koreas as two independent states whose official titles are the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, respectively. It seems both states do not have a problem using the terms North Korea and South Korea as their short names. However, each state uses different names for Korea in the Korean language. In South, the word *hanguk* is used, whereas the North uses the word *joseon*. Furthermore, I have followed the American system where the North comes first whenever referring to the bilateral relationship of North Korea and South Korea. There has been a long contention between the two countries on which comes first in the naming in Korean. For example, North Korea insists that all documents must say *buknam*, which means North-South, whereas South Korea insists on *nambuk*, which means South-North. To resolve the problem of naming, North and South Koreas use two different versions of joint documents.

mass or modern tourism agreed upon by two rival states who consider the other as the primary enemy (*jujeok*), the opposite of "who I am" (socialism versus capitalism), and the target of annihilation. In this sense, Geumgangsan tourism can be considered as a prime example of peace and reconciliation tourism. Geumgangsan tourism is a rare example of how an extremely serious and complex project like the peace and reconciliation of the divided Korean peninsula can be connected to tourism represented as fun and play. It attests to the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of tourism.

However, just as the assertion that tourism fosters peace remains contentious in tourism studies, whether Geumgangsan tourism is indeed a stimulant for peace and reconciliation of divided Korea or not is still in question. For one thing, Hyundai Asan Inc., the tour operating company, is in serious financial difficulty after failing to attract the expected number of tourists and the pressure from the right wing opposition who strongly believes that the tourism fee payment to North Korea is being used to strengthen its military force. They argue that the continuation of Geumgangsan tourism will further destabilize the security of the Korean peninsula. On the other hand, some progressive intellectuals express uneasiness over the way Geumgangsan tourism is monopolized by a South Korean *jaebeol* (conglomerates) notorious for exploiting workers and colluding with past political powers thereby creating a contact zone within radically asymmetrical relations of power. It might be an oversimplification but some assert that Guemgangsan tourism is a peaceful territorial expansion of the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Others say that the Geumgangsan tourist zone is the meeting place of asymmetrical powers, advanced and global South Korea and backward and isolated North Korea. They point to the images of North Korean society and people produced and disseminated by South Korean tourists and writers where North Koreans are perceived as "poor" or "out of style" or "outdated" (Grinker 1998; Jeon Hyo-gwan 2000; Jo Hye-jeong 2001 [1996]). I am one of these people alarmed by the "Third World" images and discourses that have sprang up in the last decade in tension with the much weakened but still existing old Cold War images of North Korea. However, most existing criticisms seem to miss the very important fact that it is a process of culture contact and exchange. Moreover, the process itself is not linear nor one-way but one of interaction, contestation, negotiation, assimilation, and hybridization.

Therefore, focusing on the role of state and international politics of sovereignty, this paper attempts to analyze how North and South Koreas use the structure of tourist control found in Geumgangsan tourism to continue to fight over

the nature of the nation in an attempt to reposition and recognize each other's existence as sovereign states in the transitional post Cold War period.

Using the ethnographic data I collected during my doctoral field work in 2003-2004, I attempt to explain how divided states, in a framework of tourism, articulate their own sovereignties through exercising control over the territory and the tourists. The discussion begins with an investigation of the political background of Geumgangsan tourism; it then analyzes the structure of tourist control where the principle of territorial sovereignty is most vulnerable, therefore frequently violated and at the same time most transparently asserted as necessary. In Guemgangsan tourism, the contestation of sovereignty over the tourists and the site is carried out over two levels of tourist control; institutional and practical.

Before I move on to the main discussion, I would like to point out that the second aim of this paper is to recommend further research on Geumgangsan tourism from a (w)holistic perspective to understand tourism as a social practice and a multi-layered system including the involved states, political, social, economical, and cultural environments, along with tour operators, mediators, and tourists. By describing how two states cooperate and compete for full recognition of sovereignty through Geumgangsan tourism, I will briefly mention how tourists interact with the two states in cooperation, negotiation, tension, and resistance, which in turn will influence the policies and attitudes of the states involved. This shows that tourism research must incorporate a dynamic and interactive model of research where the state, tour operator or mediator, and tourists become the agents, who through interaction shape and construct the form and content of a process called tourism.

Background: Beginning of Geumgangsan Tourism

On November 18, 1998, an historical event thought to be impossible took place on the Korean peninsula. A cruise ship full of tourists and a media entourage was about to set sail on its maiden voyage from South Korea to the Geumgangsan (the Diamond Mountains) located in North Korea.

As shown in the map above, Geumgangsan is located near the east coast, towering above North Korea's side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Including the tallest peak, Birobong (1,638 m), the mountains stretch 40 kilometers east and west and 60 kilometers north and south covering 530 km^2. Geumgangsan is

divided into three main areas: Naegeumgang (the Inner Diamond Mountains) boasting the surreal view of Manpokdong Valley; Oegeumgang (the Outer Diamond Mountains) represented by the Manmulsang (the Stone Images of Ten Thousand Things); and Haegeumgang (the Sea Diamonds) with ancient pines perched on tall rock columns stretching out to an ocean-side lake and the East Sea.

Geumgangsan is known by four names corresponding to the four seasons and is the most celebrated among all the mountains associated with the Korean national identity.[3] In the national history of modern Korea, or Joseon, it is represented as a sacred place, a place where one discovers "real" Korea. To Korean nationalists fighting against Japanese colonial rule Geumgangsan was the spirit of the Korean people (Yu Hong-jun 2003 [2001]: 18).

But in contemporary Korean history, a history of national division, the war torn Guemgangsan area became an anti-imperial war memorial site that was later elevated to become a revolutionary historical site and the ideal natural border for North Korea. However, in South Korea, these once legendary and mythical mountains had to be erased from the public memory. Suddenly, touring or hiking around Geumgangsan became unthinkable. In fact, it was impossible for more than 50 years due to the division of the Korean peninsula. Moreover, for South Koreans, coming in contact with North Koreans is a serious violation of the National Security Act punishable by long term imprisonment.

In this sense, the situation of North and South Koreas, just like the former East and West Germanies from 1945 to 1989, is a prime example of a dual political organization.[4] The partition of the Korean peninsula began in 1945 with

3. Guemgangsan is the name used in spring. In summer when the forest is thick and green the mountains are called Bongnaesan (the Verdant Mountains). When leaves blaze with a crimson tint, they are called Pungaksan (the Autumnal Foliage Mountains). In winter when the rocks are bare, they are called Gaegolsan (the Skeleton Mountains).
4. A dual organization as it was called by Claude Levi-Strauss is created when two asymmetrical, complementary parts are created out of one social unit. According to Borneman (2005: 2), a national division can be understood as a formation of a dual organization through a process of continuous differentiation.

occupations by two foreign ideological opponents of the Cold War. The Cold War between the US and the USSR in the post World War II era precluded any chance of Korean reunification and inevitably, bipolarization of the two different political and economical systems emerged. The division that was thought to be temporary became a permanent system called *bundan cheje* (the System of Division) with the Korean War that started in 1950 and ended with a ceasefire in 1953. The Korean War demonstrated how either state's attempt to reunify the land could easily lead to military confrontation.

Having realized that any attempt or rhetoric to realize reunification of the two territories by either side was premised on the destruction of the opposite side, two states built one of the world's most fortified borders and contained its population by force in order to maintain the territorial division and ceasefire. Subsequently, the political-territorial division drew its justification from competing conceptual paradigms of social-cultural organization (socialism versus capitalism). East state tried to create its own cultural ideal in an interdependent process of mirror-imaging, misrecognition, hatred, and distrust (Borneman 1992: 4; Yi Jong-seok 1998: 33-37). For more than 50 years, North and South Koreas imagined themselves as one nation divided into two states, one true and the other false.

Specifically, during the Cold War, the South Korean state used anti-communist ideology to represent the North Korean state and its people as the primary enemy (*jujeok*) and "bbalgaengi" (a pejorative word for communists, literally meaning "a red") who must be destroyed while its territory and nature were thought to be temporarily occupied by the anti-state entity (*bangukga danche*) and must be returned. For the ruling class and people in South Korea who based their national identity on anti-communism, such an understanding served as the definition of the word "reunification."[5]

On the relation of the nation to the state, South Korea considered that there is only one Korean nation into which one is born and that this nation needs and has

5. I use "reunification" for the Korean word *tongil* which literally means to unite several things or groups into one. Progressive intellectuals and activists in South Korea have argued that "reunification" is a much more historically accurate translation since Korea was divided by the Cold War superpowers and must be reunited. However, the South Korean government has always used the English word "unification" for the translation of the word *tongil*. I prefer to understand the word *tongil* to mean the unification of two independent states and reunification of two differently imagined communities that share a common discourse on the origin of the nation.

only one legitimate state, the Republic of Korea (founded on August 15, 1948). By stipulating that "the territory of the Republic of Korea shall consist of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands," Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea (established on July 12, 1948) obligates South Korea "to afford equal opportunities to every person and provide for the fullest development of individual capabilities in all fields, including political, economic, social and cultural life by further strengthening the free and democratic basic order conducive to private initiative and public harmony" by which is meant all Koreans in the Korean peninsula.

With the beginning of the post-Cold War period characterized by the collapse of the USSR and eastern European countries, the cold war international political order began to change worldwide. Although North-South Korean relations seemed unchanged, South Korea quickly followed suite with other western countries in normalizing relations with former "socialist" countries in Europe and eventually China who had previously been the strongest allies of North Korea. North Korea was quickly becoming isolated from the world that was no longer divided by opposing ideologies. Soon, the two Koreas joined the United Nations as two independent states on August 8, 1991.

Despite having become two independent states in today's international political order, the two Koreas were slow in trying to come to terms with their sovereign statehood and their peoples. Both still insisted on the formula of "one nation divided by two states, one true and the other false." Moreover, their sporadic attempts to bridge the gap between the two in the name of "national reunification" were mostly carried out for political reasons such as to legitimize authoritarian regimes and to overcome the internal political crises. Worsening of the relations between North Korea and the US also hindered any attempt of realizing national reunification as South Korea put priority on the maintenance of the US-South Korea alliance over national reunification. On several occasions, they came close to the point of starting a new war giving the impression that in the Korean peninsula, time seems to reverse itself back to the Cold War era. A South Korean political scientist, Yi Jong-seok (1998: 37-39), referred to such a phenomenon as the "non-simultaneity" of the post Cold War (*talnaejeongui bidongsiseong*).

In this context, one of the major breakthroughs is Geumgangsan tourism. Although a number of people and groups had tried to start Geumgangsan tourism, it was Chung Joo-young (Jeong Ju-yeong), former Chairman of Hyundai Group, the biggest multinational South Korean conglomerate at the

time, who succeeded in signing the contract for the 50 year lease of Geumgangsan from North Korean leader Kim Jong-il.[6] According to Chung, it took him more than 10 years to finally get the contract since he discussed the matter with the North during his first visit after the division in 1989.

But contrary to the popular belief that Geumgangsan tourism was a "deal of century" between two "great" men of vision, Chung Joo-young and Kim Jong-il, the tour enterprise is part of the Nambuk gyoryu hyeomnyeok saeop (South-North Exchanges and Cooperation Business) defined by the Nambuk gyoryu hyeomnyeoke gwanhan beomryul (The Act Related to South-North Exchanges and Cooperation). According to the law, anyone who wishes to do business with a North Korean or in North Korea must first register with the Ministry of Unification and be approved by the minister. Furthermore, the approved entrepreneur must apply for the approval of each and every business he or she plans to start. In other words, Geumgangsan tourism was possible because two states approved it and cooperated to provide the necessary administrative and practical tourism structure.

In this sense, the significance of Geumgangsan tourism is not just being able to visit the Geumgangsan, the most cherished mountains in Korea, but also the fact that bus loads of South Koreans are entering the North Korean territory not as an act of war but as an act of approved tourism. Its real significance was realized when Geumgangsan bus tourism began in 2003. Instead of a cruise ship, tourists traveled from the South to the North on tour buses along a newly paved road passing through the DMZ. Now South Koreans are able to experience the crossing of the military demarcation line. What was thought to be a symbol of division becomes real in Geumgangsan tourism. For the first time tourists are passing through, hitherto, the most impermeable border to meet the "other" Koreans.

Crossing of the highly fortified border between North and South Koreas by South Korean tourists alone is an historical and unexpected event. No ordinary

6. Tongil Group, affiliated with Rev. Moon Sun-myung (Mun Seon-myeong) of the Unification Church, also claims that they had an agreement with former North Korean leader Kim Il-sung who gave them permission to develop Geumgangsan into a tourist zone in 1991 (Kim Il-gon 2000). Such an assertion created quite a stir in South Korean society since Rev. Moon was a notorious anti-communist. Pointing to such an incident, some argued that the time has finally changed for the two Koreas. In other words, they are now belatedly moving from hostile confrontation towards cooperation and reconciliation.

South Korean, let alone a tourist, has ever crossed the border legally since the ceasefire of the Korean War in 1953. Moreover, the fact that a so-called socialist state that considered tourism as wasteful and unproductive is allowing a mass tourism gave a high expectation that North Korea is going through a significant change (KNTO 2000: 23). These two points make up the main lines of reasoning that Geumgangsan tourism brings about peace and reconciliation of Korea.

A North Korea expert, Suh Dae-sook (1999: v), said "Geumgangsan tourism is not just an act of climbing a mountain, but also a visit to long-forbidden North Korea. Therefore it is a peace making project taking the first step toward reconciliation and cooperation between North and South Koreas." Indeed, Geumgangsan tourism, by nature, involves visiting North Korea, a place, a state, and a people considered to be the *jujeok*.

According to a survey done by a research institute specializing in North-South Korean relations in 1999, 62.8% of the total respondents including those who visited Geumgangsan and those who did not thought that Geumgangsan tourism contributed to the development of North-South exchange and cooperation (Kang Won-taek 1999: 7). In a more recent survey conducted in 2003 on 800 tourists, 48.6% of the respondents said their negative attitudes toward reunification have changed to become positive (*Hangyeoreh* January 6, 2004).

Nevertheless, such quantitative data do not clearly show whether Geumgangsan tourism is truly a force of peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. In fact, the structure of tourist control established in Geumgangsan tourism by the two states shows that it may be a cultural representation of peace and reconciliation, but in reality, is an arena of contestation where sovereignties compete for legitimacy. In Geumgangsan tourism, sovereignty is articulated and exercised through control of the tourists and the tourist site.

Structure of Tourist Control

In the pursuit of "romance," "freedom," and "fun," every tourist experiences some sort of state control whether for safety, security, environmental protection, or other reasons. International tourists need to pass through immigration control as they exit their country and as they enter their destination country. With heightened security against the threat of terrorism, all airline passengers must now give up some of their "freedom" and follow strict regulations. While touring the foreign sites, tourists will be guided, watched, and protected by the tourist industry,

local governments, and tourist mediators like tour guides. The degree and explicitness of control may differ depending on the characteristics and types of tourism.

Tour packages to the Caribbean Islands targeting young people make no bones about what they are selling: cheap fun and romance filled holidays in the sun. Tourists signing up for such packages expect that they will have complete freedom in their search for fun and romance. However, it does not mean that there is no control. In order to be free to pursue their fantasies, these young fun seeking tourists must endure a long queue at security and immigration control points before and after their international flights. Moreover, Graham Dann, a tourism anthropologist, has shown that holiday brochures are a deliberate construct setting out the rules of play before departure (Dann 1996, quoted by Burns 1999: 109). Contrary to popular belief, tourism is always socially and politically controlled and Geumgangsan tourism provides a prime example. From the very start when tourists are packing for the trip, Hyundai Asan Inc., the tour operator company, makes it explicit that the tour is highly controlled for political reasons.[7] Geumgangsan tourists are crossing the highly militarized border and entering the enemy territory of North Korea. Moreover, North Korea defines Geumgangsan tourism as an organized tour (*jojik gwangwang*) where every tourist must act in group, always follow the translator/guide, and remain in designated areas. In fact, tourists are not allowed to walk freely and move outside the tourist zone.[8] In this sense, Geumgangsan tourism has many similarities with what is called "socialist state tourism" or tourism in the economy of shortage (Golembski 1990; Hall 1990; KNTO 2000). Some of the common characteris-

7. Hyundai Asan Inc., a subsidiary company of Hyundai Group formed in February 1999 in order to consolidate the business that was jointly handled by three subsidiary companies of the group, is the main tour operator company. After serious financial difficulty, it went into joint partnership with the Korean National Tourism Organization (KNTO) who had an equal share of the business in 2001.

8. At first, tourists were surprised by the barbed wire fences that enclose the Geumgangsan tourist zone making it impossible for tourists or ordinary North Korean residents to meet freely. Some expressed discomfort and disapproval that the fences form another border line of the division. It would be interesting to analyze how the Geumgangsan tourist zone would change from a closed tourist bubble to an opened tourist bubble. A closed tourist bubble is similar to an exclusive resort area where tourists are "protected" from inconvenience, strangeness, and natives themselves. On the other hand, an opened tourist bubble is a tourist site where natives and tourist interact to a certain level that does not threaten either side's privacy or convenience. For more discussion see Jaakson (2004).

tics of Geumgangsan tourism with "socialist state tourism" are 1) pre-selection of tourists: for example, no reporter from the conservative daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* is permitted to tour, 2) rigid guidelines such as appropriate behavior, 3) prescribed itineraries: currently Geumgangsan tourism offers only two mountain climbing courses and one sight seeing course to Samilpo and Haegeumgang from more than 50 available tourist courses and straying from the designated course is strictly forbidden, 4) exclusive tourist accommodation (Geumgangsan tourists use only the accommodation operated by Hyundai Asan Inc.), and 5) use of designated transportation for foreigners, and 6) limitation or ban on individual exploration on foot, among others.

1. Institutional Tourist Control

I have identified two levels of tourist control, institutional and practical. Throughout the tour, tourists are controlled by both North and South Korean states in a contradictory way of cooperation and contestation. Both states cooperate as tourism authorities at a minimum level as any other state would in international tourism. For example, both countries make visa agreements to let tourists enter and exit the tourist area. They have partially opened air, land, and sea for both national transportation companies to use. The legal and institutional process for Geumgangsan tourism is no different from examples of other international tourism despite the two Koreas' insistence that Geumgangsan tourism is not international tourism but a peculiar form of (intra) national tourism as all South-North exchanges and cooperation are considered national transactions.

I would argue that a more precise term would be inter-state tourism where two states, however hostile, belong to one nation. Two states compete with each other at different levels and the means of tourist control under a premise that South Korean tourists are entering North Korean territory, the Geumgangsan tourist zone, while the Southern state has sovereignty only over the tourists and the Northern state has sovereignty only over the territory.

This is most evident in the case of tourist documents. Since Geumgangsan tourism is considered an intra-national tourism, tourists are not required to carry passports but instead they must wear an identification tag that has two copies of their tourist card.

As shown above, this tourist card shows various personal information and must be presented at immigration control points at both sides of the border, also

called the CIQ (Custom, Immigration, and Quarantine) points. In this sense, the tourist card functions as a passport and a visa to enter North Korea, two tourist documents one cannot be without in international tourism. From a political aspect, they are a kind of diplomatic barometer indicating the level of closeness and affinity between the two states. Simply, complex visa requirements indicate a low diplomatic barometer while a no visa requirement would indicate a high diplomatic barometer. It is also a symbolic in that it serves to uphold a cultural definition of national identity.[9]

However, the Geumgangsan tourist card is different from other passports and visas in that it creates an arena of contestation of sovereignty or statehood. First, North Korea indirectly tries to articulate its statehood by encoding the word *hanguk*, a short name for Daehanminguk (the Republic of Korea), with the word *eichi*, a sound word of English alphabet "H." In the tourist card, every mention of the word *hanguk* is encoded with the symbolic word "*eichi*". Every tourist would be puzzled to read such a word in the name of his or her affiliation or place of work. For example, my affiliation is the Academy of Korean Studies (formerly called *Hanguk jeongsin munhwa yeonguwon*). But in my tourist card, it would say *Eichi jeongsin munhwa yeonguwon*. Here eichi has replaced *hanguk*.

North Korea also stamps its border control (exit/entry) stamp on tourist cards as to show its state identity (See photo above).[10] However, South Korea does not. In addition, compared to the high tech counterfeit proof passport with sophisticated and artistic designs that highlight national symbols and characteristics, the Geumgangsan tourist card is made out of plain paper. This can be interpreted that the South Korean government does not wish to recognize or even under-

9. O'byrne (2001) argues that the passport is not just a legal document. It is both a symbolic one which serves to uphold a cultural definition of national identity and a political one which may serve to legitimate process of exclusion.

10. The stamp mark clear shows the words Joseon and Geumgangsan. In particular, Joseon is a short name for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which South Koreans never use except referring to the ancient dynasty of Korea that existed from the 14th century to the early 20th century.

mine North Korea's attempt to demonstrate its statehood to the tourists.[11] Many tourists I have interviewed said to me that their tourist cards and North Korean border stamps felt childish and unnecessary.

However childish and annoying the tourist cards may be to the tourists, in the Geumgangsan tourist zone, the territory of North Korea, all tourists are constantly reminded by South Korean tourist guides (*gwangwang jojang*) to keep the tourist cards clean and always have them handy. Tourists are told that if the cards get lost, wrinkled, become dirty, or ripped, they will be fined heavily by the North Korean tourist authority at the CIQ point during departure immigration control. Aside from such a reminder, tourists are constantly reminded of more than dozen tour rules and regulations. Any violation of these rules and regulations may be met with fines ranging from $10-$100, or even detention.

Putting aside the really or perceived intention of these rules and regulations, often called environmental conservation fines (*hwangyeong bojobi*), the fact that North Korea can take any legal actionupon the tourists, however minuscule it might be, is a serious matter and becomes a controversy in South Korean society where the North Korean state is considered to be a false state.[12] Moreover, to the tourists who have been educated and controlled by anti-communist ideology for the last 50 years any thought of possible legal action by North Korea accompanies fear.

I clearly remember an incident where a woman in my tour group all of sudden panicked and was stricken with great fear when we were waiting in line to go through the departure immigration control on my first visit to Geumgangsan. She came with five other friends, all in their 40s, who met each other at a PTA meeting for their kids 10 years prior. Throughout the tour, they acted as a pack

11. There is no way to prove this. However, South Korean tourist guides who represent the South Korean state as discussed below carry a travel document very similar to the South Korean passport.
12. The Two Koreas are very slowly starting to recognize each other's legal systems. However, the formula of one nation divided into false states is still put into practice when it comes to dealing with criminal law. After an incident where a female tourist was detained by North Korean authority with a charge that she tried to convince a North Korean environmental police to defect, the South Korean government demanded an agreement on safety of tourists which would guarantee that any tourist found of wrong doing will not be tried or punished according to the North Korean legal system but will be deported immediately to South Korea where he or she will be dealt with the South Korean legal system. This clearly shows that the South Korean government does not recognize the North Korean criminal legal system. For more information on legal issues of Geumgangsan tourism see Asiasahoegwahakyeonguwon ed. (2000).

of young girls away from home feeling free and trying to enjoy themselves. Occasionally, they made fun of North Korean soldiers and environmental police for their awkward walks, speech, or dress. They did not hesitate to ask about North Korea to North Korean tourist guides whom they met while hiking up the mountain. They took pictures, shopped, watched shows, and took baths at a hot spring without inhibition, just like any other normal tourist would do in South Korea. For a moment, an observer might have concluded that these women had completely overcome the prejudice and fear of North Korea as the prime enemy constructed by anti-communist ideology.

However, the fear I saw in her pale face at that moment would suggest otherwise. Shortly after, every one in the tour group found out why she was in so much fear. Her tourist card was slightly torn along the folded edge. All her friends started to worry that she would get into trouble for this. To the female tourist with the predicament, North Korean immigration control agents who happened to be army officers were no longer tourist agents but agents of the North Korean state, the enemy. The anti-communist ideology based on fear and demonized images of North Korea became real as she was about to come face to face with the North Korean state. The North Korean state was no longer a false state but a real one that would exercise its authority, however mediocre it might be acting as a tourist authority. Although in the end she was not fined, which I will come back to later, for a moment the possibility of being fined by the North Korean tourist authority coupled with the unintended consequence of anti-communist ideology gives a strong impression of North Korean state authority to South Korean tourists. In other words, enforcing tourism rules and regulations stating that "tourists shall not deface or lose the tourist card," North Korea attempts to exercise some form of authority or statehood upon South Korean tourists.

Another place where tourists encounter North Korean state authority is at the first phase of the North Korean CIQ control, immediately after the buses cross the DMZ and stop for on-board inspection by the border guards. Almost every tourist experiences fear and tension similar to that described above as they encounter the "enemy." However, interestingly, I have heard many stories from tourists I interviewed that they saw people making fun of the North Korean border guards by mimicking their robot like faces and strong North Korean dialect phrases spoken by the soldiers. Some even admitted to having done it. This is one of many examples found in Gemungangsan tourism that shows that two competing states policies and intentions are not always realized as planned. Instead, as seen here, they are negotiated and contested by the tourists.

2. Practical Tourist Control

Now I would like to finish the story I started earlier. The female tourist whose tourist card was torn did not have to pay any fine. She went to our tour group leader, called *gwangwang jojang* (South Korean tourist guide),[13] and explained her predicament. The guide first scorned her for not being careful but soon tried to calm her by saying he would see what he could do. He then walked up to the North Korean immigration control agent and started to talk with him. There were some exchanges of words which we could not hear. A few minutes later, the guide walked up to us and smiled saying the problem had been solved. He told the female tourist that the North Korean agent would overlook the torn tourist card. She just walked through as though nothing had happened.

This scene shows how the tourist control of two states is carried out in practice. At a practical level, the tourist control is carried out by the North Korean tourist authority such as immigration control agents including border guards and environmental police (*hwangyeong gwalliwon*) representing the North Korean state and tourist guides (*gwangwang jojang*) representing the South Korean state. The purpose of the *hwangyeong gwalliwon* is to maintain tourist order and protect Geumgangsan's natural resources along with war and political memorials from pollution, destruction, or abuse using fines fees for such violations. Although this could be seen as a normal way to maintain safety and environmental protection of the tourist site, in reality it is much more complicated.[14] The list of violations includes not only environmental violations but also political violations.

Tourists are not allowed to point a finger at the monuments or writings on the rocks. Furthermore, tourists are discouraged to mention the word "*hanguk*," "*namhan*" (the South Korean word for South Korea) or "*bukhan*" (the South

13. In all my trips to Geumgangsan, I heard tour guides explaining why they are called *gwangwang jojang* because the term sounds awkward for contemporary South Koreans who are used to the word *gaideu* which transliterated the English word guide. They explain that North Korea, being so nationalistic, insists that we use Korean words instead of *gaideu*, which has a foreign origin. This is just one of many examples of how North and South Koreas cooperate to strengthen the existing but highly ambiguous national identity.
14. Some progressive intellectuals and activists in South Korea believe that such a strong measure to protect the environment can be an alternative model for today's third world tourism facing serious environment destruction caused by overdevelopment by the tourist industry and carelessness of "well to do" first world tourists.

Korean word for North Korea).[15] Such is considered to be a political provocation marking disrespect to the sovereignty of North Korea. Of course, in vice versa, South Koreans think in a similar fashion. In fact, the environmental police are protecting the North Korean war and political memorial site, a sacred "socialist" place, from the "invasion" of foreign "capitalist" South Koreans.

On the other hand, South Korean tourist guides stand in between the environmental police and tourists. Aside from guiding the tour, the main job of the tourist guides is to constantly watch over the tourists and prevent them from violating the rules and regulations. Even in the case of a violation, it is the tourist guides who mediate between the environment police and the tourist. In a certain sense, the role of tourist guides is very similar to the role of diplomatic consulates in foreign countries protecting their nationals.

While such can be seen as contestations of sovereignty, we also find cooperation between environmental police and tourist guides. As tourist mediators, they both share tourist information and the role of creating a staged tourist site. In other words, similar to tourist employees at a theme park who must show utmost hospitality and cheerfulness to the theme park visitors, environmental police and tourist guides display a relationship of closeness and harmony. In doing so, they become a symbol of Korean reunification. They are often the center of attention among the tourists and the media. Several older tourists I have interviewed said they were very hopeful and happy to see North and South Koreans working together instead of showing hostility and distrust as in the past. Young tourists, especially college students, said they envied tourist guides who are able to work together with North Koreans. Even some tourist guides I spoke to said their work is very tiring and hard but they feel a sense of pride and privilege to be the few who work with North Koreans.

Interestingly, the practical structure of tourist control is changing due to the prevailing condition, the low number of tourists. As mentioned above, the current situation of Geumgangsan tourism is in crisis. Financially, Hyundai Asan Inc. is in heavy debt. A major problem is the low number of tourists and the main reason for this is Geumgangsan tourism is too expensive and too restrictive. South Korean tourists used to western style mass tourism are complaining

15. To avoid misunderstanding and emotional debates on the proper usage of the nation's name, Hyundai Asan recommends using words "namcheuk" and "bukcheuk" when referring to South Korea and North Korea, respectively. The purpose is to avoid using "one-sided" names of Korea.

that Geumgangsan tourism with its limited tour courses lacks attractiveness, choices of leisure activities, and services. Too many "don'ts" are also an important reason South Koreans are turned off. As a response to the complaints, the North Korean tourism authority has now relaxed many of its rules and regulations. Environmental police are now fewer in number and many of them now work as tour guides.

Conclusion

John Borneman, an American anthropologist who conducted an ethnographic study on belonging in the divided city of Berlin described that city as the ultimate postmodern space as "it enjoyed a shifting, heterogeneous population, a discontinuous and ruptured history, old communists, young right-wing neo-Nazis, aging Red Army sympathizers—and [...] four foreign occupation armies" protecting two opposed political and economical systems (Borneman 1992: 1). If so, then perhaps Geumgangsan located in the southeast corner of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is on its way to becoming a "postmodern" tourist site.[16] It could be said that the Geumgangsan tourist site is also occupied by a shifting, touring, heterogeneous populations misrecognizing themselves as one homogenous nation, a discontinuous and ruptured history, capitalists, communists, anti-communists, North Korean sympathizers, reunification activists, "separated" families, a multinational corporation, and two armies protecting two opposed political and economical systems. It is a place where "capitalist" tourists encounter "socialist" North Koreans and form a guest-host relationship in constant contestation and cooperation in the process of reconstituting meaningful subjects fit for a unified Korea in the post Cold War period. It is a place where military tension and complex political maneuvers are refracted and

16. I agree with an anonymous reviewer's comment that it is inappropriate to use the word "postmodern" to describe a tourism where two modern states are interacting to come to terms with their statehood and nation building. However, I have decided to use the word "postmodern" as a concept of periodization in the sense that the Korean peninsula has entered a transitional period toward the post-Cold War era. Some Korean scholars used the word *talbundan* (de-divisionization) to refer to the present period of the Korean peninsula. See Jo-Han Hye-jeong and Yi U-yeong eds. (2000) for further discussion. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all three anonymous reviewers for their insights and comments.

reflected in the structure of tourist control and the very acts of tourists in search for authenticity, "united nation," fun, and play, etc.

We live in an era of political instability when national and international political orders are unstable and disintegrating. From an international dimension, in the midst of what the current US administration calls the "War on Terror" that began shortly after the September 11 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, existing political alliances and orders have been questioned, realigned, broken, renewed, and created anew. In a national dimension, a sense of belonging in terms of "nationness," citizenship, and sovereignty of state are still in a struggle for articulation. One place where such international and national dimensions overlap is the Korean peninsula divided into North and South Koreas. Since the first historical North-South Summit in 2000, the two Koreas have been belatedly adjusting to the new international political order known as the Post Cold War period by changing their hostile relations to that of cooperation and reconciliation.

The most well known and significant example is Geumgangsan tourism. As discussed above, Geumgangsan tourism is a politico-cultural experiment carried out by North and South Koreas to belatedly come to terms with their sovereign statehood. In the Geumgangsan tourist zone, we find two levels of tourist control structured in a way that North and South Koreas "diplomatically," more precisely touristically, fight over the recognition of statehood or sovereignty. One level is institutional where the two Koreas try to assert their sovereignty recognized in the international political order in ambiguous ways only to show that they are still working out the details in tension to re-evaluate the long standing principle of sovereignty that has existed on the Korean peninsula, one nation divided by two states, one true and the other false. It is not clear yet according to the structure of Geumgangsan tourist control that the two Koreas recognize each other as legitimate states, thus recognizing Korea as a dual political organization. At a practical level, North Korean environmental police, praised as an alternative way for third world tourism to emphasize control for the sake of conservation, "Privacy," and rights of the locals on the one hand and criticized as having too much control by mass tourists, and South Korean tourist guides work in contestation and cooperation to reflect the current state of North-South relations. In this sense, Geumgangsan tourism is not a force of change, per se, but a reflection of the reality the two Koreas now face, highly fluid and contradictory.

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