The New Woman and New-Style Weddings in Colonial Korea

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Wedding ceremonies of the early modern period became newly invented wedding "traditions" in a nascent form of transculturalism as Christian, Buddhist, and other "modern" wedding ceremonies, collectively called *sinsik gyeolhon* (new-style weddings), first emerged in the 1890s and became commonplace by the early 1920s. Some of the most noticeable changes in wedding ceremonies were the ways in which they became hybridized invented traditions, selectively choosing aspects of both "old" and "new" weddings. Weddings also became commercialized affairs, an emblem of urban middle- and upper-class culture in colonial Korea. When we examine all these aspects, we can see that weddings reflected not only social trends, but also the anxieties of the times. In addition to more recent works on weddings, I rely on primary sources such as newspaper and magazine articles as well as photographs from the colonial period to see how Koreans negotiated transcultural influences to produce weddings as invented traditions and how wedding practices became commercialized. By looking at hybridity and commercialization as closely related processes, this paper examines ways in which wedding ceremonies transformed in form and symbolism from the late nineteenth century through the colonial period.

Keywords: New Woman, weddings, marriage, ceremony, hybridity

Introduction[1]

Early Korean wedding photographs look quite similar. We usually see a New

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Consuming Korean Culture conference at the University of Hawai'i in October 2006. I am grateful to Laurel Kendall for her thoughtful comments through the various drafts. I am also indebted to John Duncan for his suggestions and encouragement.

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Woman[2] (*sin yeoseong*) bride in a white dress (*hanbok* or a Western-style wedding dress) and veil, holding flowers and standing stoically next to a groom in a dark suit. The photo documents the marriage as well as the guests, showing somber-looking wedding guests and two flower girls surrounding the bridal couple. As formulaic as they may seem, Laurel Kendall says such photographs served as evidence that a couple was married and moreover, had gotten married in a "new-style" (*sinsik*) wedding (Kendall 2006:8-9). A photograph of a new-style wedding, therefore, would have been proudly displayed by the newlyweds for all visitors to see.

Beyond the formulaic nature of the photograph or wedding, there was much more to new-style weddings than meets the eye, as they were complex, showed hybridity, commercialism, and underlying social concerns and anxieties. Hybridity is one way in which weddings of this time period were complex, melding old and new practices and often inventing new traditions that bridged the two. But hybridity was not new to Korea; even at the height of Joseon Confucianism, wedding practices had been hybridized, with weddings held at the bride's natal home as per Korean custom rather than at the groom's residence, as prescribed by the Chinese Confucian model followed by Joseon elites. In the early modernizing period, we see more hybridized customs with the adaptation of Western influences in formulating newly invented wedding traditions in a nascent form of transculturalism as Christian, Buddhist, and other "modern" wedding ceremonies first emerged in the 1890s and became commonplace by the early 1920s for the urban middle-class.

Wedding ceremonies reflected both trends and anxieties of the time. One of the most noticeable changes in wedding culture was the commercialization of wedding services as part of a larger rise in consumerism among the newly emergent urban middle-class. This change impacted not only the ceremony but the act of getting married, including the bride's hair and makeup, the attire of the bride and groom, wedding and reception venues, photography, and the honeymoon as well as gift-giving among the bridal couple, their families, and guests. In addition to more recent secondary scholarship on weddings, primary sources such as newspapers, magazines, and photographs from the colonial period show

2. New Woman (*sin yeoseong*) was the term used to denote a "modern" young woman, one who had an education and pursued a seemingly Westernized lifestyle. The label was adapted from the Japanese term *atarashii onna* (New Woman).

how weddings negotiated transcultural influences to become invented traditions, how wedding practices became commercialized, and how societal anxieties were manifested in these important social rituals.

Theoretical Considerations

By commercialization, I mean the changes by which goods and services become widely sold and consumed. Borrowing from Arjun Appadurai, I contend that weddings are guided by consumers' individual tastes and social norms, entailing both familiar and newly invented traditions regarding an important life ritual (Appadurai 1996:146). Commercialization also shows multiple levels of negotiation between the consumer and seemingly contradictory social norms and restrictions.

Furthermore, since traditions have to begin somewhere, they may be invented and contrived. Eric Hobsbawm says the invention of traditions happens more rapidly during times of rapid social transformation as old social patterns break down and produce new ones, "or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:4-5). Yet as traditions are invented, they may still be grounded in older practices, as seen with Korean weddings.

Mikhail Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha, and Robert Young have examined the complexities of colonial power and maintain hybridity is a product of the hegemonic exercise of power. As much as hybridity is seen as an aspect of colonialism, modernity and globalization, such cultural reformulation is not necessarily a modern phenomenon because pre-modern Korea participated in an active sphere of cultural exchange with its neighbors in northeast Asia and beyond. Wedding practices in pre-modern Korea have long been a hybridized negotiation between indigenous and imported Confucian customs. We can thus say that hybridity in the form of cultural diffusion began much earlier, but has been especially notable since the late nineteenth century.

Hybridity theories have received considerable criticism recently, partly because of the over-application of hybridity. Following Marwan Kraidy, I consider hybridity a fusion of different cultures or practices that are both familiar and dissonant. Hybridity can be seen as a process through which people adopt and adapt different practices in negotiating complex factors that are not always

binary opposites. For example, hybridity is useful to examine what has been retained or omitted from newly invented traditions. Kraidy's approach is helpful because he goes "beyond bipolar models of global against local, power versus resistance, imperialism contra hybridity, and focuses instead on complex processes at play" (Kraidy 2005:13). This perspective enables us to look at the multi-dimensionality of weddings as consumed culture.

Weddings are fairly common events at the social level and most people have been to many weddings. But weddings are supposed to be once-in-a-lifetime occasions and therefore hold much importance to the bride, groom, and their families because marriage serves to unite not only two individuals but also two families. As such, weddings are sites of important statements about individual, family, geographic, gender, ethnic, religious, and social-class cultural identities (Leeds-Hurwitz 2002:28, 129). Weddings reveal complex negotiations, not only between the bride and groom, but also their respective families on factors such as time, place, culture, and religion.

This may be why Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz has said "[r]ituals generally display a tension between tradition (what has always been done) and creativity (a new invention)" (Leeds-Hurwitz 2002:26). Such tensions and negotiations result in hybrid forms reflecting individual and social anxieties. It is useful to think of traditions as inventions and to question how traditions come to be invented. For example, Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni says "what allegedly takes the guise of Japanese tradition is not always that old, and what wears the mask of the Western is not always really Western in origin" (Goldstein-Gidoni 1997:1). She looks at weddings as "a 'cultural product' whose 'traditional-Japanese' and 'modern-Western' images have been and continue to be reinvented" (Goldstein-Gidoni 1997:3). New wedding practices became codified through frequency, or as Arjun Appadurai says, "consumption leans toward habituation through repetition" (Appadurai 1996:67). Weddings thus show how commercialization, social norms, and invented traditions are interrelated.

Korean Wedding Ceremonies, Old and New

Because of variations due to time, place and social class, it is difficult to pinpoint just what constituted a "typical" wedding ceremony in Joseon Korea. Martina Deuchler says an elite wedding consisted of "the betrothal (*nappye*), the presentation of a wild goose (*chŏnan*), and the bride's entering the groom's house (*urye*

or ugwi)" (Deuchler 1992:251). Yet these were separate events that could be held years apart. Because the betrothal was carried out among male elders of the two families, the wedding ceremony could have been the first time the bride and groom met. First, the groom announced his upcoming wedding at his ancestral shrine and then left for the bride's house, accompanied by close relatives and servants. The groom presented a live or wooden goose to the bride's parents and went to the main courtyard, which the bride entered accompanied by an older woman. In front of a ceremonial table laden with special foods, the bride and groom exchanged full bows (*keunjeol*, four by the bride and two by the groom) and cups of wine. The bride then waited inside the house while the groom and his entourage, relatives and neighbors celebrated over a banquet (Deuchler 1992:255).

The bride's entry into the groom's household marked the final step of marriage. The bride, however, remained with her natal family after the wedding for a few days, few months, or even years. This delay has deep roots in Korean custom. Deuchler has said "[n]o native ceremonial rite in Joseon Korea more persistently resisted Confucianization than the wedding rite" (Deuchler 1992:244) because of the pre-Confucian practice of uxorilocal (where the couple lives with the wife's natal family) or duolocal marriage (where the wife remains with her natal family while the husband goes back and forth). Deuchler adds that royal examples and legal codes were unable to persuade people to adopt a more Confucian wedding format in which the wedding took place at the groom's home. *Yangban* weddings continued to retain former practices, incorporating select Confucian elements in what was "not a Confucianization of indigenous customs, but rather an indigenization of Confucian elements" (Deuchler 1992:251). This contradiction between Confucian models and Korean customs is an example of how Korean wedding rituals have long reconciled local customs with imported conventions, and local social practices with putatively universal norms.

The earliest departures from the traditional[3] Korean wedding ceremony appeared in the late nineteenth century with *hakgyo gyeolhon* (school marriages) arranged by Ewha hakdang between its older students and "modern" young men educated at other missionary schools, weddings of Enlightenment Club mem-

3. For lack of better terminology, I use "traditional" and "old-fashioned" to denote Confucian wedding ceremonies and "modern" and "new-style" weddings to mean non-Confucian weddings.

bers (Gyemyeong gurakbu) whose weddings combined traditional elements with new conventions like the reading of the Marriage Notice (*sanggomun*), (Kim 1999:94), and church weddings (*yebaedang gyeolhon*) which emerged from the 1890s. There are varying accounts on which was the very first "modern" wedding in Korea. According to one source, an 1888 wedding at Jeongdong church was the first (Yi 1999a: 235). In 1892, an Ewha student wore a veil with her *hanbok* while the Baeje-educated groom wore a Western-style "frock coat" (perhaps better known as a "morning coat"), marking what a 1928 article calls the first Christian wedding.[4] Another account says the first modern-style wedding was that of Lucella Kim in 1897 (Jeon, Byeon, Pak, and Kim 2004:198). A different source says the first modern wedding took place in 1907 (Kim 1981:323). According to photographs and accounts, most brides seem to have worn a white *hanbok* and veil, rather than a Western-style wedding dress through the first half of the colonial period. Regardless of what kind of dress she wore,[5] one of the hallmarks of being a New Woman was in having a new-style wedding and going on a honeymoon (Jeon, Byeon, Pak, and Kim 2004:198-9).

As seen in the following table, "modern" Korean wedding ceremonies (Christian,[6] Buddhist, Cheondogyo, and secular) were similar in format: 1) music to begin the ceremony; 2) officiant's message; 3) introduction of the bride and groom; 4) bride and groom's vows; 5) reading of congratulatory messages by a guest; 6) greeting by bride and groom; 7) closing music (Han, Kim, Yi, Yi, Sim, Hyeon, and Jeong 1933:40-6). The similarities as well as differences in these weddings further highlight the hybridity of practices.

As seen in the table above, while much of the Christian ceremony seems to follow Protestant weddings in the West, there were also unique elements emphasizing the role of the family. For example, the bride and groom presented flowers to their parents in acknowledgment of their parents' role. Additionally, the bride and groom bowed to their wedding guests; these bows were a half-bow (*banjeol*) in which the bride and groom would bow from the waist up, as is still the custom today.

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4. Gwangsangja 1928:79-83. This discrepancy between the bride's and groom's attire was typical of this era, as men had adopted Western clothing earlier than women did.
5. According to one account, it was the white veil that distinguished the bride. The bridesmaids might also be wearing a white *hanbok* but would not wear a veil.
6. Most accounts seem to equate Protestant with Christian weddings. There is little discussion of Catholic weddings although there most certainly were Catholics in Korea at the time.

Table 1 Comparison of Korean Wedding Ceremonies in the Colonial Period[7]

Protestant	Buddhist	Cheondogyo	Secular
	Ringing of the bell five times		
Opening remarks [by officiant]	Procession by families and guests to musical accompaniment; flower girl and boy lead in the officiant		
Procession by bride and groom	Flower girl and boy lead in the bride and groom; processional music ends; officiant introduces bride and groom	[Procession by bride and groom]	Entry by the bride and groom with 2-3 attendants
Hymn; prayer; reading of Bible passage	Officiant lights incense and recites *Samgwi uirye Samgwi uirye* in step 7, Chanbulgye in step 14, and *Saheung seowon* in step 17 (all are Buddhist chants that were recited at the appropriate moments while everyone rises and bows)	Ritual offering of pure water (*cheongsu bong-jeon*)	
	Bride and groom bow to the Buddha	Bride and groom bow to the altar	
		Bride and groom bow to each other	Bride and groom face each other and bow
	Officiant reads the wedding pronouncement	Reading of *Gocheonmun* ("announcement to Heaven," or wedding proclamation)	Reading of the wedding proclamation
	Bride and groom face each other and perform a half-bow (*banjeol*) to each other		

7. Adapted from Kim 1981:340-53. Bracketed sections are not mentioned in Kim, but have been included here.

Protestant	Buddhist	Cheondogyo	Secular
	Offering of flowers: groom gives a vase of five flowers to the officiant who puts it on the east side of the altar table, and the bride gives officiant two flowers which go on the west side of the altar table	Sharing of the pure water by the bride and groom	
Officiant's sermon or message			
Wedding vows (bride and groom repeat vows with their hands placed on a Bible)	[wedding vows come later in the ceremony]	Vows by the bride and groom	
[Exchange of rings]	Exchange of religious objects: Buddhist prayer beads	Exchange of gifts (rings)	Exchange of rings
		Bride and groom bow to each other	
Prayer [sermon comes before the vows]	Officiant's message to bride and groom and wedding vows	Officiant makes an offering on behalf of the bride and groom	Officiant's message
Proclamation of couple as man and wife	Recitation of *Chanbulgye*	Bestowal of good wishes by officiant with all guests standing in support	
Presentation of flowers of gratitude by bride and groom to both sets of parents; song of celebration; greeting from a family representative thanking God, the officiant, and guests; hymn of celebration	Congratulatory messages by guests; reading of congratulatory telegrams		Congratulatory messages from guests; congratulatory song and poem; reading of congratulatory telegrams; optional message of thanks from a family representative
Benediction	Recitation of *Saheung seowon*		
Greeting (bows) by the bride and groom		Bows by the bride and groom to guests	Bows by the bride and groom to guests
Recession	Closing of ceremony	Announcement of the end of the ceremony	Recession by the bride and groom

New-style weddings must have seemed quiet alien to many Koreans, and proponents of Westernized weddings would have purposely sought to distinguish them from traditional Korean weddings. Laurel Kendall says missionaries saw Christian weddings as antithetical to "heathen" weddings as the white wedding dress and veil stood out from traditional colorful bridal attire (reminiscent of Shamanism and Buddhism). Additionally, the bride spoke her vows at Christian weddings, whereas the traditional Korean bride was silent, and the groom's vows to love and honor his wife also marked a notable change (Kendall 1996:63-5). As such, Kendall has said "the roots of the new-style wedding are to be found in early-twentieth-century Korean confrontations with 'modernity,' in colonial period intellectuals' disillusionment with the past, and in the reconfiguration of work, marriage, and family among an emergent colonial elite" (Kendall 1996:22, 64). Some people saw Western-style weddings as a hallmark of "modern" lifestyles, so even non-Christian weddings have elements that seem familiar to Western eyes.

Buddhist weddings are said to have begun in Korea in 1907, becoming popular by the 1920s. The most important aspect of Buddhist weddings is that they were an "invented tradition" which became popularized in response to Christian weddings.[8] Buddhist wedding ceremonies did not exist prior to the twentieth century, and as an invented tradition, they are a clear example of hybridity. There are Buddhist elements such as the lighting of the incense, recitation of Buddhist chants, and ritual offering of flowers as well as the incorporation of Western elements such as music, spoken vows, and the officiant's message. The exchange of prayer beads is an interesting hybridized twist on the exchange of wedding rings. There were other elements common to new-style Korean weddings, such as the role of the officiant, congratulatory messages by select guests, and the inclusion of a flower girl and boy. The bride and groom would wear *hanbok*, or a Western suit for the groom was also acceptable.

Kim Jongmyeong says Cheondogyo weddings were also common during the colonial period. Donghak (Eastern Learning) of the nineteenth century had a renaissance in the early twentieth century as Cheondogyo (Church of the Heavenly Way), a syncretic Korean religion earlier known as Donghak or Eastern Learning which emphasized the unity of man and God, and advocated human equality. Quite a few of the leading intellectuals of the time were

8. The similarities between Buddhist and Christian weddings may be compared to the ways in which Buddhist services in general came to resemble Christian ones.

Cheondogyo adherents, as evinced by the fact that fifteen of the thirty-three signers of the March 1919 Declaration of Independence were followers of Cheondogyo (sixteen others were Christian and two were Buddhist). Cheondogyo, through its Gaebyeok press, also published some of the most influential magazines of the era, such as *Gaebyeok* (Creation, 1920-1923) and *Sin yeoseong* (New Woman, 1923-1934).

Just like Buddhist weddings, Cheondogyo weddings were a newly invented tradition incorporating aspects of new Western and old Korean wedding rituals. The pure water ritual listed in the table was unique to Cheondogyo, but we also see conventional Korean elements such as the bride and groom bowing to each other. This exchange of bows may have additional significance in Cheondogyo, which believes in the unity of God and man, therefore honoring each other was the same as honoring God. There were Western-style aspects such as the exchange of rings, wedding vows, and the importance of the officiant's role in the wedding. The bows by the bride and groom to the altar and the reading of sacred texts were common to Cheondogyo, Christian, and Buddhist weddings.

As mentioned earlier, secular ceremonies were, and continue to be, a popular alternative in Korea. A secular ceremony basically follows the same structure as religious ceremonies, the major difference being that the presiding official is a prominent secular person rather than a pastor, priest, or monk. Additionally, the bride and groom bow to each other and to the guests, and this exchange of bows can be seen as a remnant of older Korean wedding rituals.

We see common practices among all these weddings, such as the congratulatory messages, greeting by a family representative, and reading of the wedding proclamation. The role of the officiant is another common factor in all these weddings. Whereas in America, one needs special credentials to officiate a legal marriage, in Korea anyone can officiate, although women rarely do so even today. Additionally, it has been a common practice for the groom's family to seek out an illustrious officiant and wedding invitations today sometimes list the name of the officiant, lending further prestige to the nuptials. Yet this was not a completely new custom, as the officiant in Joseon era weddings would have been a prominent figure known to the bride's family. These serve as some examples of how old and new wedding practices merged in early modern Korea to produce hybridized ceremonies.

Hybridity

As seen above, weddings of the colonial period were neither fully old-fashioned nor new-style because weddings of this era were sites of negotiation between the two. Even if a wedding took place in a modern venue and the couple went on a honeymoon, other aspects were likely to be old-fashioned, showing a nexus of old and new customs. Laurel Kendall calls early Christian weddings "synthetic," citing a missionary account of a bride bowing four times, the groom twice, and the couple walking together to the chapel, hence retaining the bows from the traditional Korean ceremony (Kendall 1996:62). There were other aspects of hybridity. As mentioned earlier, brides in the first half of the colonial period tended to wear a white *hanbok* as wedding attire, combining elements of the traditional Korean dress with the Western white wedding dress. In a traditional Korean wedding ceremony, the bride had a female attendant help with the ritual exchange of bows and wine cups. This custom was partly replaced by bridesmaids and groomsmen (*deullori*), although not every wedding had an extended bridal party. The flower girls are another custom bridging old and new, as traditional weddings also incorporated young children as attendants. The custom of the bride being "given away" to the groom by her father also combined Confucianism and Westernization. While this was a Western convention, it meshed well with Confucian ideology, particularly the Three Followings (*Samjong*), in which a woman was expected to obey her father in childhood, her husband in marriage, and her son in old age (Bak 1990:29).

Additionally, some of the new wedding practices came from the West via Japan in a doubly mediated hybridization process. Bak Hyein says the wedding dress, tailcoat, floral arrangements, bouquet, and wedding rings were Western imports while the term for wedding reception (the term *piroyeon* [J: *hirōen*] replaced *janchi*), thank-you gifts to the guests, and invitations reflected Japanese influences (Bak 1990:93). She adds that during the colonial period, rice cakes (*tteok*) in the form of Japanese mochi were often given to guests as favors, and remained so through the 1960s and 1970s (Bak 1990:27). These examples illustrate how "traditional" and "modern" customs overlapped and became hybridized, sometimes in a two-stage process through Japan.

In the case of Japan, Goldstein-Gidoni says many "traditional" elements of Japanese weddings are invented customs. For example, the Shinto wedding ceremony was only introduced with the 1900 imperial wedding and did not become widespread until after 1945. According to Goldstein-Gidoni, couples ironically

choose a Shinto wedding ceremony because it is seen as "a uniquely traditional Japanese custom."[9] Goldstein-Gidoni calls the invention of tradition "playing' with tradition" because of the conscious construction of new rituals.[10]

These hybrid customs can arise from an attempt to reconcile divergent customs, but also because of inherent similarities. A 1938 article in *Yeoseong* (Woman, 1936-1940) pointed to commonalities between traditional and modern weddings. For example, the author said that in a traditional wedding, the bride and groom first bowed to the heavens, and in a modern church ceremony, the bride and groom prayed to God and said their marriage vows before the Holy Father, the Holy Son, and the Holy Spirit. And in a Buddhist ceremony, the bride and groom first confess to the Buddha and beseech blessings from the Buddha.[11] He also pointed out that there are elements of *Sarye pyeollam* (Easy Manual of Four Rites), *Juja garye* (Family Rituals of Zhu Xi), Catholicism, and Protestantism in both old and new weddings.[12] Although this brief article does not go into specifics, the author's argument further supports the hybridity argument.

It is readily apparent that most weddings incorporated both Korean and Western elements. For example, in a 1939 *Yeoseong* article, eleven young people said what kind of wedding each wanted. One woman said she wanted a secular wedding combining traditional flavors with Western modernism, and she said she wanted to wear a white *chima jeogori* (skirt and jacket of a woman's *hanbok*), white veil, and red flowers in her hair. A second interviewee stated a preference for a religious ceremony regardless of whether it took place at home, a church, or school. She also gave her opinion on cosmetics. A third person said she wanted a church wedding but that she would wear Korean clothes. A fourth interviewee declined to answer the question so no one could copy her idea (Choe et al 1939:34-5). It is uncertain whether this interviewee was being

9. Goldstein-Gidoni 2001:30. Goldstein-Gidoni estimates that the number of couples opting for a Shinto wedding ceremony has dropped considerably, from over 90% in the early 1990s to perhaps 50% in 1997.
10. Goldstein-Gidoni 2001:31-2. Goldstein-Gidoni also points out another "play" on tradition as some brides choose the *maiko* (young geisha) look for one of the costume changes on her wedding day, in a juxtaposition of wife and courtesan.
11. Yi 1938:28-30. The author says "*…Bucheonnim ege gobaek eul hago bok eul bineun geosida.*" I have translated *gobaek* as "confess."
12. Yi 1938:28-30. I am using Martina Decuhler's translations of these works. *Sarye pyeollam* was the Yi Chae edition of *Juja garye*, also known in Chinese as *Chia-li*. See Deuchler 1992:113.

humorous or was seriously concerned about having an original wedding, but even the humor suggests anxieties of the sort that will be discussed later.

Looking at weddings in the early twentieth century, it seems apparent that they were hybridized, not only in the adoption of Western customs, but oftentimes Western customs via Japan so as to be at once familiar and dissonant. Additionally, hybridity enables us to look at wedding practices in complex ways, as neither fully Korean nor fully Western, but at the ways in which they surpass binaries and are multi-dimensional rituals and practices showing both invented traditions and commercialization.

Commercialization

Although hybridization provides a useful tool for examining wedding ceremonies, we also have to consider commercialization to better understand the wedding day. Much of our current understanding of the commercialization of wedding customs comes through primary sources. There are few newspaper or magazine articles that refer directly to wedding costs, and while businesses generally did not advertise specifically to would-be brides, we see articles that indicate some of the ways weddings had become commercialized. Based on articles discussing wedding ceremonies, venues, attire and honeymoons, we can gain a better sense of how people were getting married. More importantly, as examined in the next section, we can also understand how certain trends such as lavish weddings were of deep concern at the time.

New-style wedding ceremonies typically took place at public venues rather than at the bride's house. According to a 1936 article in *Yeoseong*, weddings were held at home, in churches and Buddhist temples, in assembly halls of the *Donga ilbo and Chosun ilbo* newspapers, and restaurants like Sikdowon and Myeongwolgwan. The author said home weddings were best, but were not always practical and Seoul needed a dedicated wedding hall (Kim 1936:46-8). Other sources say weddings were also held at the Daeseonggung Shinto shrine on Namsan (Bak 1990:26) and the Numin-gwan Theater (which was Seoul's cultural equivalent to Tokyo's Imperial Theater). While there is no data on what percentage of weddings were held in these new public venues, anecdotal evidence indicates that they were quite common, at least for the urban middle and upper classes. Urbanization made it difficult to have large gatherings at home, not only because of the limited space, but also possibly due to the absence of the rural village support system.

A 1939 article in *Yeoseong* gives us some sense of wedding expenses. The author said the cost to rent various venues were: public assembly hall, 12 yen; restaurants, no rental fee beyond the cost of food; small hall at the Bumin-gwan, 6 yen; large hall at the Bumin-gwan, 12 yen; and *Chosun ilbo* hall, 11 yen (including use of the piano). Additionally, the author said the Bumin-gwan was reserved about two months in advance. For people opting for weddings at Buddhist temples, he cautioned readers about added costs, such as the 10 yen offering to the temple for use of the temple, and an estimated extra 45 yen to take guests by automobile to the temple (which often was not conveniently accessible). Additionally, the cost of the reception could range from 50 sen to 1 yen 20 sen per guest, with the average cost being about 1 yen. He said some people choose to give a gift of pastries (*gwaja*) to take home, which would cost at least 50-70 sen each. He said that since some pastries could cost 1 yen per person, it was better to serve food. But considering the additional cost of ferrying guests to a restaurant for the reception, he conceded that pastries might be a good choice (Ilgija 1939:92-3). While this article provides more details about wedding expenses than other sources, it does not tell us how many guests typically attended a wedding and how much was spent on a typical wedding.[13]

Goldstein-Gidoni also explains how weddings in Japan became commercial events, with a beautician, clothing rental shop, shrine, photographer, and reception venue all charging for their goods and services. She adds that as weddings moved from the home to the public sphere, they became more elaborate rituals (Goldstein-Gidoni 1997:34). There appears to be a direct correlation between urbanization and commercialization, and this is evident in Korean weddings as well. Furthermore, commercialization of the nascent wedding industry also meant catering to the bride-to-be's consumerist fantasies. For example, a 1933 *Chosun ilbo* article written by an employee of the beauty salon at the Hwasin Department Store (*Hwasin sanghoe mijangbu*) carefully explained to brides

13. The average teacher's monthly salary in 1937 was 105 yen for Japanese men, 79 yen for Japanese women, and 55 yen for Korean men, and 48 yen for Korean women. By contrast, the urban poverty level was 22 sen per day, and an issue of *Bipan* (Critique) magazine cost 30 sen in 1938. The official currency was yen and sen (100 sen equaled 1 yen) but many Koreans used the Korean terms won and jeon instead. I use yen/sen since it was the official currency of colonial Korea. See Sin 1999:310-1 and Yi 1999b: 19. Additionally, the 1939 yen-dollar exchange rate was an average of 3.7 yen to the U.S. dollar, according to historical data compiled by Global Financial Data, http://www.globalfinancialdata.com/index.php3?action=detailed-info&sampledata=true&id=4014. (accessed October 20, 2008).

how to take care of their complexion and apply makeup on their wedding day. The writer told readers which products and brands to use, with words like *ai shwaedo* (eye shadow) appearing in the text (O 1933:1).

In addition to beauty salons catering to brides, there was a growth in wedding-related businesses, such as those renting wedding attire (Kim 1999:94-5). The abovementioned 1939 article in *Yeoseong* helps us understand some of the wedding options and costs: groom's attire ("morning coat"), 1 yen to 1 yen 50 sen; attendants' flowers, 15 sen each; bridal bouquet, 30 sen; bridesmaids' flowers, 50 sen each;[14] bride's veil, ranging from 6 yen (synthetic) to 45 yen (satin); floral crown, 40 yen; potted plants, between 45 yen and 60-70 yen; flowers for strewing, 80 sen to 10 yen (depending on season) (Ilgija 1939:92-3). Oddly, the cost of the bride's dress is missing from this calculation. Additionally, flowers account for a large part of the wedding expenses, and must have been considered an important part of the wedding.

Honeymoons were another aspect of "modern" weddings. According to a 1938 interview with six different people in *Yeoseong*, four of the six couples went on a honeymoon, most typically for three days. Hot springs appear to have been popular travel destinations through the colonial period. Two of the couples went to Onyang *oncheon* (hot springs) and two went to Paekcheon *oncheon*. One couple reportedly did not go on a honeymoon because the parents had disapproved. Another couple was unable to go on a honeymoon, but they did not regret it (Yeoseong, 1938:22-6).

Perhaps because the commercialization of weddings in Korea by the 1930s had resulted in excessive outlays, the Government-General tried to restrict wedding expenditures and in 1934 issued *Girei junsoku* (K: *Uirye junchik*, Rules on Rituals), which stipulated that weddings should take place at the bride's home, shrine, temple, or church. It also stated that wedding attire could be Korean, Japanese, or Western. Additionally, the rules dictated that only the closest relatives should attend weddings in order to cut expenditures. Bak Hyein, however, says the real reason behind this order was not to improve the lives of the rural people, but was an attempt to erode village ties since weddings were communal celebrations (Bak 1990:27-9). Such governmental restrictions on consumption, however, were not limited to the colonial period, as the post-liberation South

14. There is no explanation why the bridesmaids' flowers cost more than the bride's.

Korean government also sought to curb extravagant spending on weddings through the late 1980s and even beyond.[15] Such concerted efforts by society and government to limit costly wedding expenditures evince some of the anxieties related to weddings, as discussed in the next section.

Social Anxieties about Weddings

Newspaper and magazine articles on weddings from the colonial period reveal much about social anxieties underlying wedding trends. Articles concerning weddings and wedding customs fall into four categories: wedding announcements; information; sensationalism (including unusual marriages, marriage fraud, and superstitious practices); and editorials. First, there were many newspaper articles that resembled wedding announcements. They generally appear to have been marriages between a New Woman and a comparably educated, elite man.

Second, there were many articles offering information about weddings and wedding customs in Seoul and throughout Korea. Newsworthy stories about foreign wedding customs were also published in Korean newspapers and magazines, such as a lengthy article on American brides' hope chests and bridal showers (Donga ilbo, August 30, 1927). We see newspaper accounts of brides and weddings in Poland and Paris (Donga ilbo, April 1, 1929 and November 16, 1929) and even a two-part article on aboriginal Canadian customs (Donga ilbo, March 6 and 9, 1925). There was also a brief mention of a Russian policy banning wedding rings (Donga ilbo, January 29, 1929). These articles about foreign weddings indicate that Koreans were interested in what was going on abroad. We can also presume that learning about foreign wedding customs may have helped Koreans define "modern" wedding rituals within Korea.

Third, we see many sensationalist human-interest articles describing unusual marriages, marriage fraud, and superstitious wedding behavior. Unusual weddings include those between unlikely couples, like those with very large age

15. The most recent effort was after the 1997 financial crisis when the government curbed mid-afternoon wedding receptions as wasteful given its time slot between the lunch and dinner meals. In an effort to encourage savings, this was one of the ways the government sought to reduce consumption, and may also have been a way of reducing social tensions by restricting conspicuous consumption by wealthy families who had not been as adversely impacted by the financial crisis.

gaps (Donga ilbo, July 9, 1929). While the topic of marriage fraud falls outside the scope of this paper, it probably was more common during this time because of the increase in love marriages and geographic mobility, making it easier for men (and women) to be deceptive about themselves. And although articles about the persistence of superstitions (*misin*) may have seemed like sensationalist stories, they also served to illustrate the outdatedness of such beliefs, thereby doubling as critical editorials. Such articles not only evince the press and the readership's fascination with the "erotic-grotesque-nonsense" but also reflect an underlying belief on the part of the writers that "modern" marriages should be contracted and conducted on the basis of scientific rationality.

Most useful here are the wedding-related editorials, commentaries, and critiques that were published. Because these articles were usually authored by males, they yield insight into some of the wedding practices causing so much consternation among male elites. We see some common themes about anxieties concerning disruptions to patriarchy, conspicuous consumption, and the loss of Korean customs in the wake of Westernization.

The author of a 1933 article mentioned that he had been to four kinds of weddings: Christian, Cheondogyo, secular (*sahoesik*), and traditional (*jaeraesik*). He added that while some people had Buddhist or Catholic ceremonies, he had not attended any. He criticized secular ceremonies as being too simple and leaving not only the bride and groom, but even observers, feeling that something was amiss. He said: 1) wedding halls look too similar and interchangeable, so they should be made to look fresh and unique; 2) the officiant has an important role and should be suitably attired; 3) the officiant should have the bride and groom clasp hands during the reading of the wedding vows to add meaning and solemnity to the occasion; 4) instead of just the groom putting the ring on the bride, the bride should also give a ring to the groom; 5) immediately after the exchange of rings, the bride and groom should each read a prepared message to "eternally commemorate the most unforgettable day in the union of these two people;" 6) the person making a congratulatory speech should be someone who knows the bride and groom, instead of choosing the most illustrious person possible; and 7) instead of a photo of just the couple, officiant, bridesmaids and groomsmen, and relatives, a commemorative photograph should include all guests so the bride and groom can remember everyone who had attended their wedding (Han, Kim, Yi, Yi, Sim, Hyeon, and Jeong 1933:40-6). Also, the reading of the couple's message to the audience is a means of giving voice to the bride and groom who had been silent throughout the traditional ceremony. In such ways, this particular

article was very detailed in its prescription of do's and don'ts for weddings. This writer may also have echoed some of the prevalent views of the time, as many later wedding photographs do show all the guests in attendance. In general, such articles served to further shape wedding customs and public discourse.

Similarly, there was considerable debate about what constituted an appropriate wedding. In one roundtable article, discussants debated different wedding and reception options. One discussant said guests should have the opportunity to sit down and celebrate the wedding, instead of being hurriedly sent away after a cup of tea. A few agreed that it was most "disgraceful" and "regrettable" to send off a guest clutching only a box of pastries *(gwaja)*. Someone else suggested that noodles were a good choice because of the Korean tradition of serving noodles at celebrations. Although one discussant said modern weddings were more lively, and another said that traditional Korean weddings had more flavor. Yet another discussant said that rather than using friends for the groomsmen and bridesmaids, people ought to have parents from both sides standing with the bride and groom. Some said that brides wanted a "grand" wedding because of vanity and a desire to do as their friends had done (Yeoseong, 1937:476-8). It is noteworthy that there were so many open debates about the topic of weddings, as they evince attempts by a newly emergent and self-consciously modern middle class to define a rapidly changing and important custom.

But perhaps the most common subject of criticism was the cost of Korean weddings. One discussant in the above roundtable thought there were many cases of people who had spent all their money on the wedding so they did not have money to set up a household, and lived instead in a rented room (Yeoseong, 1937:477). A 1927 newspaper article cautioned readers that even rich families should not be wasteful in wedding expenses. The author went as far as to suggest that receptions should be abolished, or that at the very least, invited guests should not bring their own guests who had no relationship to the bride or groom, alluding to the practice that no one be turned away from a household celebrating a wedding (Cheollian 1927:3).

A previously mentioned 1938 article in *Yeoseong* also advised readers to be frugal with wedding ceremonies. The author, Yi Hun-gu, said ceremonies should be simple and brief, not cost anything, and that the couple should legally register their marriage immediately. He said there was a trend toward grand ceremonies, especially among people having church weddings. He added that he himself spent five years in America but never saw anyone having a church wedding. He said many of his American friends had gotten married, and their wed-

dings mostly consisted of the bride and groom driving with some relatives over to the pastor's house to get married. He said the only cost of such a wedding was the five or ten dollars paid to the pastor. Yi added that there were no parties or receptions because the American economy was developed, and thus people were more likely to be frugal (Yi 1938:28-30). It seems to me, however, that it was probably the Great Depression, rather than a "developed" economy that accounted for the austere weddings that Yi saw.

These kinds of articles reflect how people were concerned about the excessive cost of modern weddings. It is, however, not known just how common such extravagant weddings were, and we can probably assume that this was mostly an urban, middle- and upper-class issue. On one hand, there must have been serious financial considerations, with some families anxious to keep up with their peers, exhausting their savings or even going into debt to pay for a wedding. But such extravagant expenses may have exacerbated social tensions among the haves and have-nots, especially given the rise of left-leaning labor and peasant movements and the activities of Korean Communist intellectuals in the late 1920s and 1930s (Gang 1994:108-9). And finally, there may also have been concerns (by nationalists as well as the Government-General) that expensive wedding costs were diverting funds that were needed elsewhere. All these articles try to sway readers to take a more pragmatic approach to weddings.

Concern over costly weddings, however, was not new. As Deuchler has pointed out, there were attempts in the late Goryeo and early Joseon periods to restrict extravagant spending on weddings. There was a 1394 restriction on the use of gold in elite weddings, prohibition of silver in the weddings of all rankless persons, injunctions against the use of silks and jade for all but the highest civil and military officials, strict limits on how many torches could be lit on the wedding night, and how much wine and food a bride could offer when she was presented to her parents-in-law. Deuchler posits that these were attempts at "straightening out the wedding rituals" to limit consumption, but it seems plausible that the elites were trying to retain a monopoly on lavish weddings (Deuchler 1992:245 and fn 50-52). Additionally, we can hypothesize that frugality in the form of restraint and proper social decorum was also rooted in Confucian values and Confucian disdain for commerce. At the same time, Laurel Kendall has pointed to the contradiction in rites as Confucian "vehicles of morality and affirmation of personal virtue" and has noted that "[a] thin line divides notions of doing the rites properly from doing them extravagantly, demonstrations of virtue from exhibitions of consumption (Kendall 1996:220).

Nationalist (or perhaps xenophobic) concerns also appear in a 1926 *Byeolgeon-gon* (Another World, 1926-1934) article that says English words such as "bride," "bridegroom," "veil," "wedding *ui* ring," "frock coat," "morning coat," and "—color necktie" were so common that the only Korean words one heard at a wedding were the names of the bride and groom (Wedding tebeul saeng 1926:77-86). This writer used sarcasm to show his disapproval of the growing Westernization of weddings, and we also see how his attitudes reflect anxieties about changing social practices. This sense of nationalism was echoed in a *Sin gajeong* (New Home, 1933-1936) article in which the writer said it was "nonsense" to rent a morning coat from a florist instead of wearing Korean clothing (Ju 1924:22-9). This statement also reiterates anxieties about hybridization and about retaining a Korean identity in the face of Westernization.

There were also writers who argued against having marriage ceremonies altogether. In a 1933 issue of *Sin gajeong*, writers cautioned readers against various wedding mistakes. Some advised couples to hold simpler, less expensive weddings. For example, one writer argued traditional weddings and the custom of inviting guests should be abolished in favor of the bride and groom just registering their marriage and returning to either of their homes to have a simple dinner with relatives (Han, Kim, Yi, Yi, Sim, Hyeon, and Jeong 1933:40-6). Another writer said one should not go into debt to get married, and he added that "church-style prayers in wedding ceremonies" and "swearing to share a fresh new life at the marriage ceremony" was "nonsense" (Han, Kim, Yi, Yi, Sim, Hyeon, and Jeong 1933:40-6).

As part of a series on marriage published in *Sin yeoseong* in 1924, Ju Yoseop voiced his disapproval of wedding ceremonies, particularly religious ceremonies and, judging from his description, he was most critical of Protestant ceremonies (even though he was from a Christian family). He argued that the couple's happiness or unhappiness was unrelated to the kind of ceremony, and that a man and woman who loved each other should just declare themselves married. He said if people really want to publicize their union, they could take out a newspaper advertisement announcing "Man So-and-so and Woman So-and-so have promised to begin their married life together from this day as long as they love each other and continue to share the same ideals, so we ask everyone to share in the joy of this happy day" (Ju 1924:22-9). This was certainly an interesting departure from both Confucian and Western norms that marriage was "forever, until death do they part."

We can gain some sense of what motivated these opponents of weddings if we look at 1920s and 1930s articles that bemoan marriage practices and the institution of marriage itself. There we can see two major issues - first, concern for unhappiness and misery brought by loveless marriages, and second, how the institution of marriage subjugated women. Worries about loveless marriages often focused on traditional marriages contracted between elite families in which children were betrothed in their childhood and married in their early teens. We can also see how certain aspects of wedding ceremonies seem to have been designed to address the problems of loveless marriage and marriage as subjugation. These include the vows between bride and bridegroom to honor and love each other and the symbolic equality between husband and wife expressed in the bowing rituals. Undoubtedly there were instances in which the forms of the new wedding ceremonies reflected more loving and equal relationships between husband and wife, but the bleak view of many colonial-era writers suggests that perhaps the new ritual was not always seen as an effective way to inculcate new inner values (Ju 1931:28-30; Kim 1925:14-22; Kim 1931:27-9; Sin 1931:11-16).[16]

Conclusion

An examination of Korean weddings in the early twentieth century yields fresh insight into a variety of issues. We see how an important life ritual hybridized into newly invented traditions incorporating local as well as Western customs, and how it became commercialized along with other aspects of urban, middle-class culture. Through weddings, we can also see how people coped with larger societal changes as weddings were sites of negotiation between opposing and overlapping social and cultural interests, resulting in continuous reformulation of wedding customs.

Christian, Buddhist, Cheondogyo, and secular wedding ceremonies all show how people sought to negotiate supposed binaries such as old-fashioned vs. new, rural vs. urban, Korean vs. foreign, and younger vs. older. On one hand, people associated traditional Korean weddings with outdated social customs, yet we continue to see traditional elements in new-style weddings as customs became

16. Laurel Kendall (1996) has also examined questions of marriage and modernity in *Getting Married in Korea*, especially in chapter 3.

adapted and hybridized to better suit conflicting desires and demands. The hybridization was due in part to people's attempts to negotiate and reconcile these contradictions, in that hybridization may also have been a coping mechanism by which the bride and groom appeased parental expectations and social anxieties about their wedding. Finally, hybridity may have also arisen as the couple tried to define their identities as both new-style and Korean.

As weddings moved into public venues there was an accompanying commercialization as well. Wedding attire, bridal hair and makeup, flowers, photography, receptions, wedding favors, and honeymoons were some ways in which weddings were well on their way to becoming an industry. Furthermore, the anxieties caused by this commercialization are especially important in understanding society.

Based on both primary and secondary materials, we see much concern and debate over extravagant weddings. Many people advocated restraint in wedding costs for various reasons: to minimize conspicuous consumption by the rich in the wake of rising class tensions; modesty as an honorable Confucian virtue; criticism about materialism of modern weddings; or as one more aspect in which Koreans were subject to colonial surveillance and control in the Government-General's promulgation of regulations regarding weddings. In these ways, we can see how seemingly opposing power hierarchies such as class, nation, and perhaps even colonial rule may have shared similar goals and intersected in wedding customs.

Finally, in examining the bigger picture of why there was so much debate about wedding ceremonies, it becomes apparent that some people were very concerned that not only weddings but also marriages be transformed from Confucian patriarchal institutions into more egalitarian partnerships between husband and wife, undoubtedly arguing against more conservative elements in colonial Korean society. One reason for the perpetuation of this debate was because there were no clear-cut solutions, as human relationships are fallible despite the best of intentions. Additionally, it is apparent that these efforts to change weddings and marriages involved hybridization of both Korean and imported values and customs.

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