

Emerging Issues Leading Korea into a Dream Society

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What emerging issues can and might lead Korea into a dream society based on its preferred future? This study started from this question, which was followed by other inquiries for finding a preferred future for Korea. How is the situation in Korea now? What are the major driving forces shaping current trends? Are there any kind of emerging issues that can be inferred out of the major driving forces and history of Korea? If so, what kind of preferred future can Korea have in accordance with those emerging issues? To find answers to the questions, it is necessary to start with finding current trends and analyzing them.

Currently, besides in the area of business, Korea is mainly represented by three categories: K-pop, Korean food, and Korean Drama. These three are related to cultural aspects that can be split into two groups according to their characteristics. The first group centers on Korea's heterogeneous culture, which blends other cultural practices and references. K-pop and Korean Drama, which make the most use of Western cultures, can be labeled as the first group. Gangnam Style, which needs no introduction, is the best example of this grouping. The second cohort encompasses homogeneous culture, which was created and has evolved through traditional ways of thought. Korean foods, such as Kimchi, symbolize this category.

Common characteristics of first group can be summed up in two words: "light-hearted" and "empathetic." Everyone can, an apparently does, enjoy Gangnam Style without any prior knowledge about Korea, including its language. In addition, people can create their own style by not just watching it but by also participating in its re-creation process. From this phenomenon, it can be sensed that there is an empathetic point in Gangnam Style for many people to be eager to reflect their life in it and re-create their own versions.

As for the second grouping, Kimchi consists of a variety of different vegetables. If left alone, the combination of vegetables will not taste very good, and it is only through a process of fermentation that the vegetables are transformed into a flavorful food. The ingredients are mingled harmoniously with one another regardless of their different characteristics.

Regarding the origin of Korean culture, it has been suggested that all the aforementioned characteristics of Korean culture derive from Han-ism, which is the oldest traditional knowledge known in Korea. There are two main concepts in Han-ism. One is *ShinMyoung*, which means people's re-creating their own universe on their life with light-hearted act. The other is *HwaJaeng*, which means people's mingling with others beyond identities and differences. By applying these concepts to daily life in Korean, it was believed that

Hongik Ingan (Humanitarianism), a preferred status for Korea, could be attained. Considering these concepts and Korea's historically preferred status, there seems to be little connection between current Korean cultures and Han-ism.

To find out how Korea lost its connection to traditional ways of knowing, one must look at its history. Korea experienced cultural suppression during the Japanese forced occupation from 1910 to 1945, which was followed by the Korean War (1950-1953). As part of the rehabilitation following the war's dramatic devastation, the Korean government decided to follow the model of continued growth, which seemed to be successful path taken by most Western countries. While pursuing this model, Western cultures also became the desirable target to follow. During the course of pursuing this development plan, traditional culture began to taper off. Some Korean forms of cultural production transformed its appearance by combining itself with Western models and started to exercise a far-reaching influence over the world. The aforementioned examples of K-pop and Korean drama show s how the heterogeneous grouping successfully dispersed Korean culture.

Although Han-ism seems to have disappeared in the process of creating Korean culture, there remains a traditional knowledge that has permeated daily life for almost 5,000 years) in Korea. By using Causal Layered Analysis, it can be shown that the current Korean Wave can and must be connected to a restoration of Han-ism. K-pop, Korean drama and PSY's Gangnam Style are now warming up the litany level of Korean culture, which is located on the top of the iceberg representing Korea's culture. The so-called 'Korean Wave' phenomena , however, appears to melt the ice underneath it. In this process, traditional ways of thought that were suppressed during the Japanese colonial era oozed out of the surface from the level of causes and worldview.

This gradual warming-up and oozing-out process makes a route down to the myth and metaphor level of Korean culture. Therefore, Han-ism can reveal itself as an emerging issue of culture and, by extension, influences every aspects of life as a major trend in Korea. With the momentum of Gangnam Style, Korean culture is now transforming from an emerging issues into a trend. It took sixteen years (1996 – 2012) from the first Korean Wave, which was small and localized, to the emergence of Gangnam Style phenomenon, which is global in scope and has become the most watched Youtube video ever. Over the next decade (2013-2023), the center of Korean culture is expected to shift from heterogeneous to homogeneous, which means traditional culture can be recovered and arise as a public method for creating new ways of life in Korea. During this process, Han-ism can and must be fully recovered and applied as a driving force to lead Korea into a dream society of *Hongik Ingan* (Humanitarianism) which can be enabled by *HwaJaeng* and *ShinMyoung*.

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