Is Multicultural Korea a Feasible Vision for the Future Korean Society?
Questioning the Korean Multicultural Model of Immigrant Incorporation

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Ⅰ. Introduction: Korea as a New Multicultural Country in Asia

Korea is normally seen as a relatively homogenous society in terms of history, language, and cultural heritage. However, as Korean society has opened up, and especially as it has become more prosperous and its economy internationalized over the past few decades, the increasing influx of foreign migrants and their settlement results in greater ethno-cultural diversity. According to the Korean Ministry of Justice (2007), in 1980 the number of long-term foreign residents who remained in Korea for more than 90 days was 40,519, accounting for only 0.1 percent of Korea's total population. However, by the end of 2016, the number of foreign residents (*ch'elyu oegugin*), both long-term (1,530,539) and short-term (518,902), stood at about 2,049,441, making up 3.96 percent of Korea's total population (51,695,516) (KIS, 2017).

Growing ethno-cultural diversity is bringing about significant changes in many aspects of Korean society, including public attitudes toward foreigners, the development of new government agencies and civic organizations dealing with the living conditions of foreign residents, new academic research on immigration and incorporation, and the birth of new migration-policy initiatives at the level of both central and local governments. In addition, the increase in diversity is also challenging conventional notions of national identity, citizenship, and belonging, reflected in immigration, citizenship policy and nationality law. Remarkably, in March 2009 an amendment of the Nationality Act to officially acknowledge dual citizenship was introduced, and in December 2009 the Korean Cabinet approved a bill that permitted dual citizenship to Koreans as

well as to foreigners. In April 2010 the National Assembly voted to allow dual citizenship under the name of multiple nationality, which took effect on January 1, 2011. Although this new citizenship law is aimed mainly at attracting prosperous overseas Koreans currently living in affluent developed countries (Kim 2013) and highly skilled foreign talents, this regulation is a remarkable step toward a more flexible approach to citizenship, a recognition that was hitherto based mainly on descent. Amid the challenges and changes as its consequence in Korea, xenophobic movements have also started to appear, particularly in cyberspace, albeit slowly and on a small scale. Given that the migratory process is now self-sustaining (Castles 2000,106; Castles and Miller 2009, 29), it is not difficult to predict that, as in many other industrially advanced nations, tension between immigrants and local inhabitants will become a major source of conflict.

Especially during the past decade, there has been much discussion, as well as misunderstanding, of the Korean term *damunhwa* (multicultural). As of 2012 there were two hundred central government-funded multicultural centers (*damunhwa sent'ŏ*) nationwide, and more and more local and municipal governments are considering ways to internationalize so as to boost their local economies, often by holding multicultural festivals. Since 2014 EBS, the national educational TV channel, has been broadcasting a TV show entitled *damunhwa kopuyŏlchŏn* (literally "multicultural mother-in-law and daughter-in law story"), featuring conflict and reconciliation between a Korean mother-in-law and her foreign daughter-in-law. The cultural differences they face are highlighted in a visit by the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law's country to stay with her family, during which she begins to understand their cultural differences and to sympathize with the daughter-in-law's struggle to live in Korea. Similarly, since 2005 KBS, the Korean national public broadcasting organization, has been broadcasting a weekly show entitled "Love In Asia" to raise awareness about foreign residents, particularly Asian migrants who married Koreans as well as their families.

Korean filmmakers and writers have also become interested in the presence of foreign residents, in particular dealing with issues of foreign migrants, marriage migrants, and multicultural families, including their emotional struggle, identity crisis, and narratives derived from their new settlement in Korean society.[1] Foreigners have also started to appear in public life. In 2009 a

German-born naturalized Korean citizen, Mr. Lee Charm (German name, Bernhard Quandt), was appointed to head the Korean Tourism Organization, making him the first naturalized Korean citizen to hold such a high-ranking post in a state-run organization. More notably, the Philippine-born Ms. Jasmin Lee became the first naturalized Korean to become a member of the Korean National Assembly, winning a seat for the Senuri Party by proportional representation in the election of April 2012.

Despite its importance and despite the fact that the incorporation of immigrants has become one of the salient policy issues in Korean society, the issues of immigration and incorporation have not yet become politicized. Considering the frequently divisive consequences of the politicization of immigration in most Western countries that receive immigrants, Korea is fortunate. However, there is a lack of public awareness of the problems of immigrant incorporation, particularly in relation to multiculturalism.

Ostensibly, the Korean government actively promotes a multicultural society and implements the incorporation of immigrants under the label of *damunhwa*. However, a careful scrutiny of the current policy for incorporating immigrants reveals that the policy is not intended to pursue the inclusion of foreign immigrants in all spheres of society without an expectation that they give up their cultural characteristics. Rather, it is essentially designed to help immigrants to successfully assimilate into mainstream Korean culture. Meanwhile, the adjective 'multicultural' is used solely by the government, and this use has nothing to do with the concept of multiculturalism. It is doubtful, in reality, that the Korean government will pursue a multicultural society. It seems that there is deliberate avoidance of the term 'multiculturalism' in order to sidestep any clarification of the goal of the current policy on incorporating immigrants.

Given that the stark reality of growing immigration-driven diversity is irreversible, Korean society needs to seek a new vision of national identity. A dilemma arises, however, between Korean society's desire to maintain its strong tradition of ethnic homogeneity and ethnic nationalism on the one hand and on the other, the wish to celebrate diversity as part of the country's national identity. In this situation, the Korean government chooses to promote a type of "boutique multiculturalism" (Fish 1997) or "cosmetic multiculturalism" (Morris-Suzuki 2002), which helps to restrict the ideology of multiculturalism to a

symbolic and descriptive level.

As is the case in Japan, a type of cosmetic multiculturalism (Yamanaka 2008) is uncritically perceived in Korean society as a new national identity, and the ideal model is one of immigrant incorporation rather than of multiculturalism. Simply put, contemporary Korean multiculturalism works as a new form of nationalism; while maintaining the national identity based on blood, other cultures are simultaneously celebrated and appreciated as objects of consumption. The Korean government attempts to spread the illusion of the peaceful and equal coexistence of diverse cultures. At the same time, the quasi multicultural-labeled policy conceals the continuing existence of inequality between the dominant Korean majority and ethno-cultural minorities. In this situation, the Korean people seem to accept "multicultural" as an adjective only as defining enjoyment of multiculturalism as the object of consumption, such as exotic minority cultures and ethnic cuisines; but Korean society never defines exactly what a multicultural society represents and what it really stands for, nor what type of multicultural society Korean society is actually pursuing.

Against this background, this paper attempts to provide a critical review of the recent multicultural experience in Korean society with a specific focus on the Korean *damunhwa* (multicultural) model of immigrant incorporation. In response to Korea's growing ethno-cultural diversity, this paper also seeks to examine some questions of major importance for current and future Korean society. How will Korea continue to deal with the challenges of immigration and incorporation in future? Which model of immigrant incorporation works better or best for the current and future Korean society? Is there any alternative beyond the current quasi-multicultural model of immigrant incorporation, which is in itself an assimilationist model? Will Korea try to maintain its homogenous national identity, or will the nation attempt to create a true multicultural society?

Ⅱ. Immigration and Incorporation: The Contemporary Korean Reality

Goss and Lindquist (2000) divide the international movement of labor in the Asia Pacific region into three main historical periods: the age of indenture

(1830-1940), the period of guest workers (1940-1970), and the era of contract labor (from 1970 onward). For Korea, the age of indenture corresponds to the Japanese recruitment of Korean labor during the colonial period, until 1945. In the early postwar period, many Koreans moved overseas as guest workers, and notably, during the 1960s and 1970s, many migrated to West Germany and to the Middle East as contract workers. But as the Korean economy started to expand after the 1980s, the flow of labor reversed, and foreign workers began to arrive as guest workers in Korea. Throughout the 1990s, the number of marriage migrants—for the most part female spouses— increased dramatically, and the settlement of these foreign spouses has created a new category of ethnic minorities called "*damunhwa kachŏng* (multicultural families)"; this group is currently at the center of Korea's debate about multiculturalism.[2]

Whether they are labor migrants or marriage migrants, most of these newly arrived and arriving foreign migrants have come from less-developed countries within Asia, and a considerable number of them are becoming Korean citizens through naturalization by marriage. According to KIS (2017), by the end of 2016, Chinese nationals made up the largest group of foreign residents (1,016,607, or 49.6 percent) in a total of 2,049,441 foreign residents; this group was followed by immigrants from Vietnam (149,384 or 7.3 percent); the United States (140,222 or 6.8 percent); Thailand (100,860 or 4.9 percent); the Philippines (56,980, or 2.8 percent); Uzbekistan (54,490 or 2.7 percent). In 2009, the year with the highest recorded naturalization rate, among the total number of 25,044 foreigners naturalized, the significantly largest group gained citizenship through international marriage, accounting for 17,141 individuals, or 68 percent. Of the total, 19,512, or 78 percent, were female, many of them immigrant spouses. Only 56 became naturalized Koreans through the general naturalization process available to foreigners legally resident in Korea for more than five years (MOJ 2010).

Hence, we must view contemporary Korean migration within the context of the development of Asia-Pacific migration as a whole. Moreover, by accommodating various types of new foreign migrants—not only foreign workers and marriage migrants from Asian countries but also international students, refugees, and asylum seekers—Korea has become a more heterogeneous society in terms of ethnicity and culture.

A vivid example of the multicultural change is the growth of new ethnic

communities and ethnic enclaves in towns and cities throughout Korea. Foreign residents are mainly concentrated in urban areas, especially in the Seoul Metropolitan Area (SMA), which includes Seoul, Gyeonggi Prefecture, and Incheon City, where more than 60 percent of foreign residents live (MOSPA 2014). These ethnic communities are usually located in the vicinity of Korean neighborhoods, and thus the towns serve as venues for multicultural encounters and communication between foreign residents and local Koreans. However, it should be noted that, there is also increasing separation between two communities of newcomers: those from less-developed Asian countries, who are overrepresented in the lowest-paid segments of the labor market, and those from developed countries, such as the United States, Japan, and France, who hold more prestigious occupations and live together with more affluent and successful Koreans. The less-skilled Asian migrants, who make up the majority of Korea's foreign residents, are therefore starting to experience a process of segregation and ghettoization. A government report expresses concern about ghettoization, especially as it is driven by the concentration of undocumented foreigners in ethnic enclaves (KIS 2009, 81).

It is also important to point out that in recent years, growing ethno-cultural diversity has challenged the conventional notion of Korean national identity and sense of belonging based on descent; the traditional attitude seems increasingly at odds with the growing transnational identities of immigrants, especially among children from multicultural families.

A state-sponsored study, planned to be longitudinal, of children and adolescents from multicultural families was begun by the National Youth Policy Institute (Yang et al. 2012) among 1,502 fourth-graders (usually nine- to ten-year-olds) from multicultural families nationwide. A majority of multicultural children in the survey answered that they are Korean; 323, or 21.5 percent, identified as both Korean and foreign; and 45, or 3 percent, believed themselves to be are entirely foreign. Given that the longitudinal study was begun only a few years ago, and that preschoolers who are under six years old still make up the majority of children in multicultural families,[3] current findings from the survey may not clearly reflect how and to what extent the multicultural children and adolescents have been developing transnational identities in their everyday lives. Nevertheless, what is obvious is that the formation of transnational identity has recently been observed more strongly among those

children, opening a significant research topic in the study of the incorporation of immigrants in Korea. Observing the constantly increasing number of multicultural families, it is very likely that children in such families may more readily experience tensions or dilemmas about their national, ethnic, and social identity, in particular as the multicultural children grow older and pass through adolescence and young-adulthood.

As yet, no foreign migrants have made significant demands for political recognition of group identity, mainly because Korea has a relatively short history of immigration. However, considering that the current government's approach to multiculturalism is basically a policy of assimilation and that Korean society is beginning to see the emergence of anti-immigrant sentiment, albeit on a small scale, it is possible that with the presence of foreign migrants and the development of their transnational identities, in time the Korean state and society will view multiculturalism as a threat to the national identity.

At present, xenophobia and anti-immigration sentiments have largely remained in cyberspace. It is widely known that Korea is one of the most wired nations in the world, with the world's fastest Internet connection speed and high Internet penetration rates.[4] Considering such a highly internet-friendly environment, it is not difficult to predict that racism will be expressed more frequently on the internet and become a significant social problem in the near future. Given particular circumstances, such as a deeper economic recession, we have already witnessed "cyber-racism" (Daniels 2009), "virtual discrimination," and "virtual harassment" in the new digital age (Schmidt and Cohen 2013, 188-189).

Unlike the situation in Europe and other classical immigrant-receiving societies, far-right political parties, which have often adopted xenophobic or anti-immigration policies, and anti-immigrant politicians have not yet arisen in Korea; this condition is mainly due to the lack of politicization of immigration. Although so-called "moral panic" (Cohen 1972) is sometimes incited by the mass media in Korea — most often in the context of discussing the increasing crime rate involving foreigners [5] — it does not seem to be seriously generating public or political reactions to the presence of immigrants. According to some recent studies on the construction of immigrants by the Korean media (Kyung-Hee Kim 2009; Chae 2010; Cheong et al. 2011; Park 2014), relatively favorable and paternalistic attitudes toward immigrants have been dominant. Notably, the

news media most often describe immigrants as victims living under vulnerable conditions, while native Koreans are often portrayed as protectors who help and care for those same immigrants (Chae 2010). As Keumjae Park points out, when the Korean news media deal with foreign migrant workers, their presence is still not seriously depicted as a threat to domestic workers. This attitude results mainly from the fact that the majority of foreign workers are located on the bottom rung of the clearly segmented labor market as low-skilled workers.[6]

In response to growing immigration, the main focus of Korea's migration policies has shifted from immigration control to immigrant incorporation. Previously the presence of foreign migrants was viewed as a temporary phenomenon, and the Korean government focused primarily on controlling the entry and exit of foreigners into and out of Korea. However, in the past few years the Korean government has begun to formulate new policies toward foreign residents. In particular, during the Roh Moo Hyun administration (2003-2008), in 2006 new institutions, such as the Council for Protection of Human Rights and Interests of Foreign Nationals, were established, and in 2007 new legislation, such as the Foreigners' Treatment Act, was introduced, followed in 2008 by the Multicultural Families Support Act.

Subsequently, an ambitious First Basic Plan for Immigration Policy 2008-2012 (FBPIP) was announced in 2009 during the Lee Myung Bak administration (2008-2013), to address a variety of issues associated with the increased inflow of international migrants and to suggest policy directions in the formation of a multicultural society. Although the FBPIP urged a more flexible stance toward immigration, it focused mainly on the limited migration of highly skilled foreign professionals; this approach is in line with the administration's major policy objective of enhancing national competeiveness rather than suggesting a long-term policy for building a multicultural society. In response to the pressure of growing global competeiveness, as well as Korea's drastically low birth rate and rapidly aging population, it is certain that the Korean government will have to modify its migration policies, as in the Second Basic Plan for Immigration Policy, announced in December 2012 by the Korea Immigration Service (KIS) under the Park Geun-Hye administration (2013-2017). Currently the KIS is designing the Third Basic Plan for Immigration Policy with a specific emphasis on human rights of foreign residents and respecting diversity.

Ⅲ. Questioning Incorporation: Assimilation versus Multiculturalism? No alternative?

Traditionally, Korea has used *jus sanguinis,* or descent, as the basis of its citizenship, and Koreans continue to see national identity in terms of ethnic homogeneity and a single culture. The forces of globalization and international migration, however, have compelled the country to engage with the challenge of multiculturalism ever more seriously. On the one hand, this challenge has helped Koreans to develop a more flexible approach to citizenship; on the other hand, many still seem to be resisting the development of a genuine multicultural society.

Scrutinizing the First (2008-2012) and Second Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2013-2017) prepared by the Korea Immigration Service (KIS 2009, 2012), it is obvious that the Korean government clearly recognizes the rapid growth of immigration-driven diversity within society and, in response to the advent of a multicultural society, continuously emphasizes the importance of the successful social incorporation of foreign immigrants.. In this situation Korea is implementing its immigrant-incorporation policy with the label of "multicultural," which is commonly dubbed *kwanchutohyŏng damunhwachuŭi* (state-sponsored multiculturalism) and may be translated as multiculturalism initiated or sponsored by the state (Hui-Jung Kim 2007; Nam-Kook Kim 2009).

As a model of immigrant incorporation in Korean society, if the Korean government truly intends to develop a multicultural model, as the name suggests, the current model of incorporation, called "multicultural policy," should pursue the inclusion of immigrants in all areas of society, without an expectation that the immigrants give up their own cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics (Castles and Millers 2009, 247-248). In practice, however, Korea's goal for a multicultural policy is aimed at differential exclusion, keeping some categories of migrants out such as temporary low-skilled migrant workers and assimilating foreign residents who are admitted into mainstream society; the policy does not promote equal rights for the majority and for ethno-cultural minorities.

Striking evidence of the nature of Korea's multicultural policy is the fact that under the current immigration policy, in 2012 about 95 percent of the government budget allocated to the social incorporation of immigrants went to

marriage migrants (foreign spouses) and their children, that is to say, to *damunhwa kachŏng* (multicultural families) (KIS 2012). It is generally accepted that, as a policy that recognizes and promotes ethno-cultural diversity, "multiculturalism" can be defined as an alternative model to past policies that emphasized assimilation as the way to achieve cultural homogeneity (Leach 2009, 186). Unlike the label's designation, however, Korea's multicultural policy operates as an assimilation policy solely for immigrant spouses and their children. In this regard, Korean multicultural policy is largely cosmetic and symbolic and ignores normative concerns at the center of the debate over "multiculturalism," such as the protection of cultural rights and the political incorporation of immigrants (Parekh 2006).

It is certain that the term multiculturalism, as a heavily debated concept, continues to be a contested concept without a fixed or clear-cut definition. As Michael Murphy points out. (Murphy 2013, 12),

> There are so many multiculturalists, and so many different theories of multiculturalism on the market, that many are finding it difficult to say what exactly multiculturalism is and what it stands for.

Indeed, it is also not an easy task to define "what is the much-talked about multiculturalism" in Korea's multicultural context. Nevertheless, it is quite ironic that the Korean government is implementing and naming its policy of incorporating immigrants a multicultural policy without a formal definition of multiculturalism.[7] For practical purposes, in the Korean context, the term multiculturalism itself is mainly used to describe the extent of a growing migration-driven ethno-cultural diversity in society. Regarding various government policies, projects, and administrative measures given the name of *damunhwa* (multicultural), the term is still no more than an extension of the descriptive migration-driven multiethnicization process in society, in that there is no concrete policy or social consensus around multiculturalism; instead, central and local governments, using administrative decisions, have been implementing a variety of policy measures to deal with diverse problems caused by the presence of foreign residents.

In this regard, I use the term compressed multiculturalism to denote an

uncritical use of the concept of multiculturalism in a descriptive manner, without rigorous scrutiny of the abrupt development of a multicultural society brought about by migration-driven ethno-cultural diversity within Korean society.[8] The term is originally derived from the concepts of "compressed modernity" and "compressed development" in the context of the contemporary transformation of Korean society, in particular the Korean experience resulting from its rapid economic transformation (Chang 1999, 2010; Jung and Kim 2009). In this situation, three important questions arise concerning the current and future direction of Korea's incorporation of immigrants.

Q1: Will the Korean government and society continue to maintain the current model of immigrant incorporation?
Q2: Can multiculturalism be adopted as the basis of a policy of incorporation for Korean society?
Q3: If it cannot, is there any other way to manage ethno-cultural diversity?

To answer the first question: It will presumably become increasingly difficult for the Korean government and society to retain a combination of differential exclusion and assimilation as the main model for the incorporation of immigrants. Migration, as a self-sustaining process, will continue to diversify the ethnic composition of Korean society and will lead to institutional change. More important in the long term, it is likely that the idea of Korean national identity will become increasingly blurred and problematic, particularly as transnational identities develop among the children of Koreans and marriage migrants. Moreover, since 2011, the Korean government has begun to allow Korean citizens to hold multiple citizenship, albeit conditionally. In the long run the changed situation may also significantly affect the notion of Korean national identity.

As for the second question: While recognizing the presence of ethno-cultural diversity in Korean society, the Korean government seems to continue to resist the development of a genuine multicultural society. According to Bhikhu Parekh (2006, 6), a multicultural society is one that includes two or more cultural communities. A multicultural society may choose one of two ways in response to internal cultural diversity: one way is to welcome and cherish its cultural diversity and communities and respect their cultural demands; another

approach involves an attempt to assimilate the diverse strains into its mainstream culture. As Parekh argues, while both are multicultural societies, the former is actually multiculturalist, while the latter is monoculturalist in its orientation and ethos. In this categorization, Korean society can be considered a multicultural society, but it is monoculturalist rather than multiculturalist, since the government continues seeking to assimilate its ethno-cultural diversity into the mainstream culture. In this sense, using Parekh's distinction between multicultural and multiculturalism, only the term multicultural as the existence of cultural diversity can be applied to Korean society, while multiculturalism as a normative response to the fact of cultural diversity has been steadily ignored by the Korean government.

Moreover, witnessing what is seen as the "failure of multiculturalism" in Western societies, the Korean government is primarily concerned with the negative outcomes of immigrant settlement. Thus, the rise of a multicultural society is viewed as an undesirable phenomenon, which the government must control and restrain. As a result, it is doubtful that multiculturalism can soon gain a foothold in public policy as a basis for incorporating immigrants.

Contemplating the third question: Given that the current quasi-multicultural policy is problematic, and multiculturalism is not politically acceptable to the Korean government, what is an alternative? Is it possible to devise a new model of immigrant incorporation that is more practically applicable to the Korean situation? Until the current stage of multiculturalization in Korean society, multicultural debates about immigrant incorporation in Korea have been unable to move beyond the dichotomy of assimilation versus multiculturalism. The Korean government—more specifically, the Korea Immigration Service under the Ministry of Justice–that supports the current immigrant policy is seriously concerned about negative outcomes from multiculturalism, particularly as such outcomes have been witnessed in Europe, while civil activists who advocate multiculturalism generally believe that more open immigration and the establishment of a multicultural society driven by the influx of foreign immigrants may help counter the strong belief in ethnic homogeneity and descent-based national identity. Some criticize Korea's current *damunhwa* policy for its assimilationist stance (Watson, 2012).

In this situation, beyond the stereotypical existing models of immigrant incorporation, why would the Korean government and society not begin to

consider some alternative models that might be more applicable to Korea and could help to overcome the tension between the assimilationist and the multiculturalist approach? Two alternative models come to mind: One possible new conceptual and policy framework is "interculturalism," or the "interculturalist approach," which is viewed as complementary to multiculturalism or even as a replacement for it (Meer and Modood 2012; Cantle 2012).The other is "transnationalism," or the transnational approach, which may be conceptualized as a different model of incorporation and a new paradigm for incorporation theories" (Faist et al. 2013).

Indeed, since both assimilationist and multiculturalist approaches have been called into question (Rodríguez García 2010), some scholars (Meer and Modood 2012; Cantle 2012) have suggested interculturalist approaches as alternatives. Dan Rodríguez García (2010) argues for an interculturalist model of socio-cultural incorporation that reconciles cultural diversity with social cohesion beyond the two dominant models of incorporation—assimilation and multiculturalism. As Michael Emerson (2011, 2-3) puts it,

> Interculturalism is a new term giving a name to attempts to find a compromise between the polar opposites of multiculturalism and assimilation. It is sympathetic and respectful towards ethno-cultural-religious minorities, and helpful with selected measures targeted at disadvantaged situations, yet it also aims at ensuring commitment to the values, history and traditions of the host nation. This may include the use of integration policies and efforts to water down excessive distinctiveness or segregation, for example in urban concentrations of minority groups. It is sympathetic towards people from immigrant families perceiving themselves as having a hybrid identity, who feel Anglo–Indian, or French–Algerian or German–Turkish for example.

Considering interculturalism in the context of the Korean multiculturalization process, an intercultural approach as a model of immigrant incorporation may be strategically examined and considered by the Korean government. Such a process would mitigate the conflict between the current government stance toward assimilating foreign immigrants, driven by its strong blood-based ethnic homogeneity, and pressure toward multiculturalism as a model of immigration

incorporation, driven by a growing ethno-cultural diversity within the society.

First, compared to the idea of multiculturalism, interculturalism places relatively greater emphasis on dialogue, mutual understanding, and interaction between the cultural majority and cultural minorities (Maxwell et al. 2012, 431-434; Cantle 2012, 157-158) and pursues the best interests of both the majority culture and minorities. It does not downplay the interest of the majority culture (Rodríguez García 2010, 261; Bouchard 2011, 438). In this respect, it seems that an interculturalist approach could produce more useful discussions of immigrant incorporation in Korea. Because the Korean government considers multiculturalism a threat to social cohesion and stability, its current *damunhwa* approach to immigrant incorporation separates ethnic minorities from the majority population rather than granting them equal rights and status. An interculturalist approach could help to overcome the present divide between the assimilation and multiculturalism models, taking into account the reality that Korea is still largely an ethnically and culturally homogeneous society despite the rapidly growing ethno-cultural diversity within it.

Second, as we examine the intercultural model of Quebec in Canada, we note that the core of that city's identity is cultural and linguistic, rather than ethnic. Linguistic assimilation through the use of French is crucial for the successful incorporation of immigrants in Quebec, and a similar approach may help Korean society to develop a new form of national identity, one based on culture and language rather than on ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. Korean national identity continues to be seen as mainly determined by ethnicity, and although non-Korean foreigners can become Korean nationals through naturalization, it seems impossible for them to be considered "pure" Koreans. For instance, although Germans born and raised in Korea may eventually decide to acquire Korean nationality through naturalization, they will not be considered "Korean" by other Koreans. In contrast, third-generation Korean Americans born in the United States as American citizens, who have never lived in or visited Korea and who are unable to speak Korean, will still be considered "Korean" because of their ethnic origin. Moreover, when parents formerly were Korean nationals, it is easy for their ethnic Korean descendants to regain Korean nationality through a naturalization process that grants priority to overseas Koreans. An intercultural approach would weaken the excessive ethnic nationalism that continues to determine who is Korean and who is not.

Third, an intercultural perspective can create a more productive environment in which to deal more practically with issues of multicultural education. Intercultural education is not a new concept in Korea: the idea of education for international understanding can be traced back to the 1960s, promoted by UNESCO. However, since 2000, the term multicultural education has been used to deal with various issues raised by the increasing number of minority students, most of whom are children from multicultural families (Stephanie K. Kim and Lupita H. R.Kim 2012, 243). Although the current multicultural education program in Korea outwardly emphasizes the significance of mutual understanding, in practice it does not stress the need for Koreans to learn about and understand the core values and cultural heritage of immigrants, not even those from neighboring Asian countries. Rather, the major emphasis has been on assimilating foreign immigrants into mainstream Korean culture.[9] Given that interculturalism emphasizes the interaction of different groups within a diversified society, education based on this notion may encourage both immigrant groups and the local population to participate in a two-way process of incorporation.

In addition to interculturalism, or an interculturalist model, transnationalism, or the transnationalist model, represents another alternative approach. This avenue is mainly based on the view that, unlike traditional beliefs about immigrant incorporation, today's migrants do not necessarily uproot themselves from their home societies. Many migrants settle and integrate into the society of their new country even while they tend to maintain their cross-border ties and networks with their previous homelands (Faist et al. 2013, 91).

> Transnationalization introduces a new perspective and a new area of study into research on international migration. In so doing, it also challenges the existing models of migrant incorporation. The transnational approach shifts the focus from concerns about the dynamics of migration, the origins of immigrants, and the latter's adaption to and incorporation into their new country, to the continuing ties migrants maintain across borders connecting the societies of both origin and immigration. [Faist et al. 2013, 88]

Again, it should be noted that in Korea, the majority of foreign residents,

particularly marriage migrants, are Asians who migrated from China and Southeast Asian countries. Among them, the co-ethnic Korean Chinese *Joseonjok* constitute the largest group of foreign residents. Most *Joseonjok* migrants live and work in Korea through the Visit and Employment System (VES), thanks to an ethnically selective immigration policy that allows these migrants to travel freely between Korea and China for a period of up to five years. A growing number of *Joseonjok* have become seasonal workers by moving between China and Korea,[10] though very recently the migratory patterns of *Joseonjok* migrants has increasingly changed from seasonal travel or short term visit to more permanent settlement in Korea.[11]

According to a government-funded study on how the introduction of the VES influences those migrants' lives (Jeanyoung Lee et al. 2008), the new policy may facilitate the development of transnational lives among *Joseonjok* migrants between China and Korea by enabling them to keep on engaging in various cross-border activities. At the time of publication, this research indicated that, according to interviews it had conducted, the expense of air travel impeded the free movement of *Joseonjok* migrants. More recently, however, the dramatic availability of much cheaper air travel by LCC (Low Cost Carriers) between Korea and neighboring Asian countries has been observed, and in this situation, *Joseonjok* and other types of Asian migrants, who used to find the two-way travel a financial burden, have been able to undertake the trip so much more easily and frequently.

It is also important to note that the recent introduction of the multiple-nationality law may facilitate the development of a transnational identity and a sense of belonging among the younger generation of overseas Koreans and children of multicultural families. With the 2010 Nationality Act amendment, the offer of *de jure* dual citizenship was officially acknowledged, albeit conditionally. In principle, the new law allows Koreans who reside overseas, talented foreign nationals, foreign spouses married to Koreans, and Korean adoptees residing overseas, to hold dual citizenship under certain conditions. However, given that the enactment of this law was mainly designed to attract global talents and prosperous overseas Koreans from developed nations, it is certain that upper-class Koreans, more specifically young Koreans who hold birthright United States citizenship owing to their parents' residence for study or work in the United States are the major beneficiaries of the flexible-

citizenship law (Kim 2013).

In the case of dual citizenship, the issues of identity and membership essentially entail the question of transnationality (Faist 2010, 1679). Most transnational migrants experience dual or multiple identities, marked by hybridity and heterogeneity (Wong and Satzewich 2006, 11-12), which may continue to provide a significant challenge to the Korean blood-based homogenous national identity. Although it is still too early to discover the type of transnational identity that can definitely be observed among those Koreans and foreigners who are eligible for dual or multiple citizenship, it is not difficult to assume that various forms of transnational identity are likely to be developed among these groups as well as among other types of foreign migrants. Indeed, many contemporary migrants can reasonably be considered transnationals rather than uprooted people (Glick Schiller et al. 1995). Therefore, contemporary migrants need not feel such strong pressure to become integrated into the new society in which they have settled because they continue to have access to their homelands and are able to maintain their earlier social networks; thus they belong to both their country of origin and the new host country (Bradatan et al. 2010, 171). It is certain that, as Korea's new multiple-citizenship law becomes more concretely institutionalized, the current assimilationist model of immigrant incorporation may effectively be unable to address what it means to be a Korean in terms of national, ethnic, and social identity.

There is no urgent reason for the Korean government and society to adopt one of those alternative approaches as the ultimate model for future immigrant incorporation. Korea is still at an early stage of the development of immigration, and the settlement of the first generation of newcomer immigrants is still an ongoing process. Hence, the Korean government and society still have time to develop strategies to cope with growing ethno-cultural diversity. As Castles (2007, 1) points out, there is still much room for "making informed choices about strategies to effectively shape patterns of migration and ethnic diversity." It is therefore important for the government to thoroughly scrutinize various models of immigrant incorporation and design its own more flexible model rather than rush to adopt either the assimilationist or the multiculturalist model as the basis of policy.

Ⅳ. Conclusion: Is Multicultural Korea a Feasible Vision for the Future Korean Society?

The Korean government continues to view multiculturalism as a problem rather than a goal for creating a more diverse society. The government is reluctant to deal with the process of facilitating a multiethnic and multicultural society, a reluctance that is clearly reflected in current migration policies. Korea's thinking about immigrant incorporation continues to be locked into the obsolete assimilationist versus multiculturalist dilemma.

Compared to the older generation, younger Koreans seem capable of embracing diversity, holding more open attitudes toward foreigners, although this stance does not reflect increasing public awareness, since cosmetic multiculturalism remains dominant and is even officially promoted. Young Koreans love talking about "diversity" as something they pursue and consume, but the meaning is often narrowly defined as cultural diversity, as in ethnic cuisine, music, fashion and arts, and a variety of other foreign goods and products. It does not mean that they accept multiculturalism as an ideology, public policy, or model of immigrant incorporation. Thus, although they may be willing to accept "diversity in unity," they are not yet ready to accept "unity in diversity." It is still uncertain how younger Koreans will interact with the second and third generation of immigrants as Korean citizens in the future, nor is it clear whether they can accept children of mixed-race backgrounds or non-ethnic Koreans as fellow Koreans, transcending the belief in ethnic homogeneity.

At this point, it should be noted that the development of an Asian perspective on immigrant incorporation also is one of the most important tasks for policymaking, research, and public education in Korea. As recent statistics invariably show, the majority of foreign residents in Korea have come from neighboring Asian countries, including China, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Mongolia. Hence, in Korea, the multicultural society is primarily Asian. Many of those Asian residents have become permanent settlers in Korea and may even become naturalized Korean citizens. Perhaps the next generation of Asian migrants may be seen as Chinese Koreans, Japanese Koreans, Filipino Koreans, Vietnamese Koreans, Mongolian Koreans, or Thai Koreans. It is therefore crucial for all Koreans, in particular policymakers, scholars, and educators to learn about and understand other

Asian cultures—their values, attitudes, and identities; they would also profit learning from the migration experience in other countries in Asia. Moreover, given that most Asian migrants are low-skilled workers and marriage migrants, they tend to be negatively stereotyped in contrast to foreign residents from wealthier countries. Coexisting in a multicultural society means not only overcoming the myth of ethnic homogeneity and embracing diversity but also overcoming prejudice toward Asian immigrants and embracing marginalized ethnic minority groups.

It is generally agreed that immigration can be a valuable national asset if it is effectively managed, particularly if a receiving society can accomplish the successful incorporation of newcomers. We also know, however, that if incorporation is incorrectly managed, it can generate tensions and harm social cohesion. In the next few years, the number of children of new immigrants to Korea will increase, and how these children fare in mainstream Korean society will be a critical question in evaluating the success of immigrant incorporation. Will immigration be a great boon to Korea, or will the growing influx of newcomers result in social aches and pains? Although I would like to be optimistic, it is too early to tell. However, what is clear now is that the choices made by the Korean government and the Korean people will greatly affect the nature of the outcomes for future Korean society.

Notes

(Endnotes)

1　Korea JoongAng Daily (March 23, 2012). "Korean writers imagine the immigrant experience." Retrieved from http://koreajoongangdaily.joinsmsn.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2950320.

2　The term *damuhwa kachŏng,* or multicultural family, usually refers to a family made up of a Korean citizen, a foreign spouse, and any children they might have. Recently, however, the term seems gradually to have come to refer to a broader category of foreign residents and their families in Korea, including foreign migrant workers' families and even including families of North Korean refugees.

3　As of 2012, children from multicultural families were 138,583 in total. Among them, children under 6 years of age were 104,694 (62.1 %) and those between 7 and 12 years were 40,235 (23.9%). It shows that the majority of children from multicultural families are in large part preschoolers or elementary-school students (Yang et al. 2012, 3).

4　CNET (July 16, 2012). "Getting Online In Super-Wired South Korea." Retrieved from http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-57473480-1/getting-online-in-super-wired-south-korea/

5　The Korea Times (May 28, 2012). "Crimes by Foreigners," Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2012/05/202_111887.html ;
Chosun Ibo (2013, June 24). *"Oekukin pŏmchoe chochik, tŏ simkakhaechiki chŏne ppuli ppopaya"* (Eradicate organized crime gangs before they get worse). Retrieved from http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/06/23/2013062302125.html.

6　Park also points out that, influenced by the legacy of Korea's long struggle for democratization, the development of collective consciousness about human-rights norms, and a strong traditional labor movement seem to enable Korean society to more easily view foreign migrant workers living and working in poor conditions as victims of exploitations and human-rights violations (Park 2013, 14-16).

7　In the Second Basic Plan for Immigration Policy (2013-2017), the Korean government admits in a self-confessed manner that the term "multiculturalism" has been used recklessly for the implementation of various multicultural policies and projects (KIS, 2012: 17).

8　Oh Kyung-Seok (2007, 29) argues that the term compression is a keyword that characterizes the modernization of Korea. Given the current nature of Korean society, Korea's multiculturalism may be described as a modern phenomenon. Compared to the migration experience of most advanced industrial nations, Western societies, and other East Asian countries, Korean society has been experiencing migration issues in a fairly compressed way and at a very rapid pace.

9　Jee Young Lee (2013, 18-19) analyzed significant features of Korea's multicultural education based on two major studies on multicultural education programs. The findings show that Korean multicultural education aims at assimilating students from multicultural families into mainstream Korean society.

10　For example, *Joseonjok* who work as teachers in China come to Korea to have temporary job opportunities during school vacations and return to China when school resumes. Most of the many male *Joseonjok* migrants who are engaged in the construction sector usually return to China during the winter, when the demand for

their work is lower, and return to Korea when they can see better work opportunities there (Jeanyoung Lee et al. 2008, 47-48; Hye-Kyung Lee ,2010, 571).

11 See a *"Kuknae chosŏnchok 70man hankuk chŏngch'aki taese"* (700,000 *Joseonjok*, permanent settlement in Korea becomes the general trend), a special article about recent settlement trends of *Joseonjok* migrants in Korea. *Yonhap News Agency,* Feb. 4, 2015. Retrieved from
http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2015/01/30/0200000000A KR20150130110700372.HTML?input=1179m

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Abstract

Is Multicultural Korea a Feasible Vision for the Future Korean Society?
Questioning the Korean Multicultural Model of Immigrant Incorporation

Daesung Kwon

Over the past two decades, the greater ethno-cultural diversity driven by migration is bringing about significant changes in many aspects of Korean society which has been usually seen as a relatively homogenous society in terms of history, language, and culture. Ostensibly the Korean government is actively promoting a multicultural society and even implementing its immigrant incorporation policy under the label of "damunhwa (multicultural)". However, in many ways the government seems to continue to resist the development of a multicultural society, and it is doubtful that the government and society truly want to pursue a genuinely multicultural immigrant society. Against this background, this paper attempts to provide a critical review of the recent multicultural experience in Korean society with a specific focus on the Korean multicultural model of immigrant incorporation. In response to Korea's growing ethno-cultural diversity, this paper also seeks to examine some questions of major importance for current and future society. How will Korean society continue to deal with the challenges of immigration and incorporation in future? Which model of immigrant incorporation works better for the current and future Korean society? Is there any alternative beyond the current quasi-multicultural model of immigrant incorporation, which is in itself an assimilationist model? Will Korea try to maintain its homogenous national identity, or will the nation attempt to create a genuinely multicultural immigrant society?

Key Words

論　文