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HERITAGE TOURISM
Emotional Journeys into Nationhood

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Abstract: This paper is primarily concerned with discussing ways in which heritage tourism experience acts as a symbolic mechanism through which national belonging can be reconstructed and communicated. The discussions appropriately explore the view of heritage as cultural production and its fundamental role in maintaining national solidarity. Substantial focus is placed on contextualising ways in which shared memories of the nation's past are subjectively perceived and re-appropriated during visits to Changdeok Palace, South Korea. This study utilises ranging ethnographic approaches including in-depth interviews and friendly conversations with domestic tourists and palace staff. The importance of individual interpretations and unofficial narratives in articulating and affirming nationalist sentiment is emphasised, especially in relation to the emotional and subjective nature of heritage encounters and experiences. **Keywords:** heritage tourism, national identity, Changdeok Palace, cultural homogeneity, ethnographic approach. © 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

As integral part of culture, heritage is an essential element of national representation with the potential to perpetually remind nationals of the symbolic foundations upon which a sense of belonging is based. A sense of national belonging, grounded in the collective memories, myths and symbols of a nation and its people, lies at the core of maintaining the existence of a nation and fortifying national sovereignty. Appropriately, Macdonald (2006, p. 11) identifies heritage as a ''material testimony of identity'', which is primarily interpreted as a ''discourse and set of practices concerned with the continuity, persistence and substantiality of collective identity''. However, heritage is not just a tangible asset of the past represented as artifacts and sites. Intangible heritage manifests diverse symbolic meanings and spiritual embodiments, often grounded in the material and tangible remnants of the past. From this debate, it may be asserted that heritage tourism is inextricably bound up with experiencing both material (tangible)

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and socio-psychological (intangible) remnants of the nation's past. Therefore, heritage can be better understood as both a material and socio-psychological testimony of identity.

Heritage is a sign and symbol of people's ethnicities, nationalities and identities but subject to different meanings and multiple interpretations. Academic literature significantly concerns the fundamental reasons as to why and how heritage represents social identities, especially the implicit function of heritage institutions playing an official and formal role in representing and enhancing national identities (Bandyopadhyay, Morais, & Chick, 2008; Lowenthal, 1998; Pretes, 2003). What is also essential, however, is to examine the role of unofficial and informal mechanisms of national identity formation via heritage tourism experiences. Therefore, the socio-psychological dimensions of heritage are of paramount importance in understanding how personal perceptions, individualised meanings and subjective sentiments concerning collective social memories contribute to the long-standing tourism appeal of heritage institutions. These dimensions of heritage, rather than its physical assets, render the application of heritage in a given culture and society as timeless and enduring. This issue is also closely linked to a reasoned emphasis concerning the pertinence of intangible assets, subjective accounts and individual narratives involved in the socio-cultural contextualisation of nations and national identities.

This ethnographic study focuses on assessing the conceptual and symbolic interrelationships between heritage tourism and national identity. The work is based on a case study of Changdeok Palace in Seoul, South Korea (Republic of Korea). Changdeok Palace, interpreted as the 'Palace of Prospering Virtue', was originally built in 1405 under the reign of King T′aejong. It was the eastern detached palace of Gyeongbok Palace, which was the main palace of the Joseon Dynasty. Changdeok was initially known as 'East Palace' and was the most favoured residence by subsequent generations of the Joseon Dynasty. King Sunjong, the last monarch of the Joseon Dynasty from 1907 to 1910, mainly resided in Changdeok until his death in 1926. Changdeok Palace was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1997 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) on the grounds of an outstanding example of 'Far Eastern palace architecture and garden design'.

Since 1979 Changdeok Palace has run the tour guide system. Tourists were only allowed to explore the palace as part of a guided tour until 2006 when the palace announced that every Thursday tourists can freely visit the palace on an independent basis. The palace also operates English, Chinese and Japanese tours and the tour lasts for approximately one hour and twenty minutes, involving site visits to six different buildings and the Huwon garden. The guides provide a brief introductory explanation concerning the history of Changdeok Palace and the general itinerary of the tour at the beginning of the tour. The narratives of the tour guides are more or less similar, mainly based on official and objective interpretations of the sites concerned. A sustained emphasis is placed on highlighting Changdeok Palace as an authentic and original presentation of a Joseon royal palace pertaining

to the power and legitimacy of the 'majestic Royalty' and 'Confucius tradition'.

This study employs a multi-method (qualitative) approach: ethnographic interviews with domestic tourists and palace employees; observational accounts derived from ''systematic lurking'' situations; participatory techniques through active involvement in guided tours; utlisation of friendly conversations; and evaluation of written narratives. Multiple research strategies could counterbalance the biases or flaws arising from the employment of a single method of design and analysis. The friendly conversations, for instance, serve as an active means to facilitate informants' involvement in directing knowledge development and negotiating issues to discuss, particularly in terms of what they deemed to be appropriate. The current ethnographic study involves an interpretive focus and aims for the production of ''thick description'' (Geertz, 1973) in which truth or reality can be re-conceptualised and re-embodied through the various articulations of individual experiences and personal interpretations. This paper is thus primarily concerned with examining the conceptual and symbolic interrelationships between heritage tourism and national identity, as well as to understand how domestic tourists and site employees within the heritage setting of Changdeok Palace subjectively and contextually perceive elements of shared social memory and nationhood.

NATIONAL IDENTITY, NATIONAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

It is essential to recognise that nationalism and national identity is a historical and cultural entity which is not necessarily fixed but changeable in differing contexts and varying situations. There is a general lack of agreement concerning the conceptual understanding and application of 'nationalism' and 'national identity' due to their complex and multifarious characteristics (see Hutchinson & Smith, 1994; Kedourie, 1994). Nonetheless, in order to understand this conceptual debate, attention is drawn to two contrasting accounts: the ''modernistic perspective'' and the ''primordial perspective''. The modernistic perspective (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Nairn, 1997) identifies nations as products of modern historical developments and processes. Substantial emphasis is placed on the construction of the state and the creation of a collective (shared) identity by all nationals in defining and maintaining newly-formed, industrialised nations.

In comparison with this, the primordial perspective (Geertz, 1973; Smith, 1991, 1994) places significant focus on the antiquity of nations and the socio-cultural implications of ethnic ties. It focuses on people's perceptions and beliefs concerning the ''assumed givens of social existence'' (Geertz, 1973, p. 259), including a unique national culture and heritage. Here, national identities are understood as bounded and organic formations where innate cultural characteristics are deeply grounded. Importantly, the belief that individual's culture and nation is sacred and special lies at the core of understanding the essence of cultural primordialism. As Smith (1994, p. 376) recapitulates:

> It was and is the members of ethnic communities and nations who feel their communities are primordial, existing almost 'out of time' and having an 'ineffable' binding and almost overpowering quality. It is no part of this approach to suggest that such communities are primordial, only that members ***feel*** they are (emphasis added).

However, it should be also noted that national memories and identities are reconstructive and reflexive representations, which change with varying contexts and situations (see Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 1991). The systematic analysis of national identity and its core attributes need to clearly reflect fast-changing norms and values of contemporary society and culture. Consequently, a systematic analysis of national identity requires a wider application of differing theoretical underpinnings and contextualisation of varying situational contexts.

Franklin (2003) regards travel and tourism as an integral part of national life through which people experience the idea of nationhood and collective past. In particular, heritage tourism arguably plays a pertinent role in the maintenance and promotion of the nation (Palmer, 1998). The view of heritage as symbolic cultural production plays a fundamental role in imagining an essence of national identity. Heritage can be viewed as a symbolic embodiment of past, reconstructed and reconstituted in the collective memories and traditions of contemporary societies rather than being perceived as a mere apotheosis of bygone times. Heritage can thus be regarded as part of a ''symbolic system'', what Geertz (1973) and Meethan (2001) believe to be the base for creating and recreating shared values in society. Furthermore, heritage is also recognised as a ''unifying sign'' (Bessière, 1998), which preserves and reconstructs the collective memory of a social group, thereby enhancing the group's social and cultural identities. Accordingly, Bessière (1998, p. 26) asserts:

> Heritage, whether it be an object, monument, inherited skill or symbolic representation, must be considered as an identity marker and distinguishing feature of a social group. Heritage is often a subjective element because it is directly related to a collective social memory. . .social memory as a common legacy preserves the cultural and social identity of a given community, through more or less ritualized circumstances.

Heritage tourism can therefore play a crucial role in providing certain ''ritualised circumstances'' through which shared social memory can be effectively inscribed and collectively communicated within specific heritage settings. People's experience of heritage tourism can be considered as an important medium in facilitating the maintenance of national imagination. Palmer (2005) notes that heritage tourism enables people to conceive, imagine and confirm their belonging to the nation. Visits to heritage settings are expected to encourage nationals to feel part of and connected to the nation's past in their national imagination. National heritage attractions including museums and royal palaces are often regarded as ''sacred centres'', places of spiritual and historical pilgrimage that reveal the nation's unique ''moral geography'' (Smith, 1991, p. 16). They are often perceived as symbolising ''national badges of high culture'' (Edensor, 2002, p. 15) representing an authoritative and official

version of history. However, the range and scope of these ''sacred centres'' should not necessarily be restricted to the presentation of heritage settings driven or imposed by an official ideology of high culture. It is thus essential to recognise that heritage tourism is not predominantly related to emphasising one dominant reconstruction and reinterpretation of collective memory, assisted by state-based and hegemonic forms of national sovereignty. Rather, it facilitates ways in which individuals variably position themselves in a broader context of cultural construction and symbolic embodiment of the nation and national identity.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND 'FELT HISTORY' IN KOREA

It is argued that Korea has historically embraced ethnic and cultural homogeneity (Cummings, 2003; Feffer, 2003; Park, 2002). In spite of numerous invasions and occupations (e.g., the Toyotomi Hideyoshi Invasion in 1592, the Manchus Invasions of 1627 and 1636, and the American Invasion of 1871), Koreans remained remarkably homogeneous with a single coherent ethno-history and culture determining Korean identity formations. Such nation's cultural characteristics as language, blood ties, shared history and national consciousness are the essential ''ethnic markers'' (see Smith, 1986), which have indeed provided a fundamental background to the formation and reformation of a unique Korean identity. The emphasis on the nation's cultural characteristics is inextricably bound up with understanding the primordial nature of nation and national identity. Feffer (2003) explains that a sense of ''Koreanness'' is primarily based on ethnic homogeneity and its coherent cultural manifestations. He strongly contends that:

> To be Korean, whether in the north or the south, is an ethnic assertion, not a civic one, for there are very few citizens of either Korea who cannot boast of a family lineage on the peninsula that goes back hundreds of years (2003, p. 21).

The concept of Korean (national) culture is mainly associated with traditional values and norms, particularly in relation to a strong belief in ethnic, racial and cultural homogeneity, the principle of '*tanil minjok*' (one homogeneous race). '*Tanil minjok*' is a rather mythical concept which is probably as old as the Korean nation. This concept has perpetuated Korean's belief in racial and cultural homogeneity which originated from '*tangun*' who was a mythological founder of Korea. The belief and pride in constituting a homogeneous nation played a decisive role in unifying Korean culture and identity, especially in the face of national crises and foreign invasions. It is strongly asserted that:

> few of the world's peoples live in a nation with no significant ethnic, racial or linguistic differences. Korea is indeed one of the most homogeneous nations on earth, where ethnicity and nationality coincide (Cummings, 2003, p. 25).

The belief that the Korean nation is special and sacred is relatable in recognising the primordial nature of Korean national identity. Self-consciousness also enables individuals to differentiate the Korean nation

from the outside world through particularistic-based constructions and reconstructions of nationhood and national identity. Specifically, it plays an essential role in maintaining an individual's awareness of national solidarity in the context of a modern nation-state. People's ''deep, horizontal comradeship'' (Anderson, 1983, p. 7) is thus more likely to arise from a level of self-awareness, facilitated by various mediums through which national solidarity is constantly reminded and communicated. As one definitive medium in this discursive process, heritage tourism arguably encourages individual tourists to construct, reconstruct and negotiate their sense of national belonging through a range of subjective and reflexive narratives (Park & Stephenson, 2007).

A critical understanding of nation and nationhood as primordially given has a decisive value for the national consciousness of South Koreans, particularly within the context of heritage tourism experiences. The primordial nature of the nation and nationalism acts as a firm foundation on which the national imagination is partly founded, reflecting the quintessential elements of nationhood sustained throughout Korea's fraught historical circumstances and political turmoil. In this respect, the Korean nation is better understood as:

> ... a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties; it is, from this perspective, the fully extended family... It is not chronological or factual history that is the key to the nation, but sentient or felt history (Connor, 1993, p. 328).

Both North Korea (The Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and South Korea have developed their own version of national identification based on differing ideological beliefs and experiences since the Korean War (1950–53). North Korea has been pertinently illustrated as a rather divisive 'national other' in South Korean nationalist discourses, educational agendas and populist narratives. Although the idea of peaceful coexistence with the North is becoming increasingly prevalent in South Korea since the articulation of the 'Sunshine Policy' in 1998, political conflicts between two nations remain largely unsolved. Therefore, it is essential to recognise the significance of shared national heritage as one distinctive medium to assert two nation's ethnic and cultural connections. Heritage tourism experience can play a proactive role in emphasising 'felt history' of two Koreas, thereby reassuring their ethnic and cultural homogeneity as '*tanil minjok*'. In this light, the concept of the South Korean nation and the related conceptualisation of national identity are grounded in natural affiliations and ethnic allegiances, attachments which transcend the geo-political contours of South Korea to culturally embrace the Korean nation as a whole.

An Ethnographic Approach

This current enquiry involves a qualitative approach based on the employment of ethnographic techniques and strategies. This approach arguably provides an appropriate methodological framework for revealing diverse meanings, opinions and interpretations of particular

social phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Huberman & Miles, 1994). Ethnographic research concerning the study of tourists and the tourism phenomena has not yet been proactively developed in South Korea, despite the fact that the merits of ethnographic research as an optimum tool in unraveling diverse social and cultural issues in tourism have been widely discussed (Bruner, 2005; Park, 2007; Stephenson & Bianchi, 2007). Such limited acknowledgement is partly attributed to an emphasis on developing structured research methodologies which are significantly concerned with developing favourable outcomes relating to developing economic activities and promoting product values based on tourism industry-led perspectives and policy-making procedures. There has been also less of an emphasis concerning ethnographic enquiries within heritage-related studies. Therefore, the systematic application of a long-term ethnographic study of a given heritage setting has the potential to unravel diverse meanings and interpretations of the investigated social phenomena, especially within the context of a specific social institution.

In order to comprehend social phenomena and to seek constant clarification of an emerging inquiry, it is arguably necessary to employ research techniques over a significant period of time. The study thus consists of five main fieldwork stages conducted over a five year period: stage one, April, 2002—January, 2003; stage two, December, 2003—June, 2004; stage three, March-May, 2005; stage four, December, 2005—January, 2006; and stage five, May—June, 2006. Initially, three different places of cultural and historic significance (Kyungju, Andong and Changdeok Palace) were selected, with the purpose of conducting a comparative analysis of heritage representations and interpretations. However, it was decided at the preliminary phase of the research programme that an ethnographic approach would be better situated within one specific localised setting employed over a significant period of time. Long-term immersion into specific social contexts seems substantially important in acquiring an in-depth and interpretive understanding of the personal opinions and value systems of the social actors themselves (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; McLeod, 2003; Park, 2007).

The study utilises five main strategies for retrieving social data: (1) In-depth ethnographic interviews with domestic tourists; (2) Participant observation involving the researcher being covertly involved in palace tours; (3) Systematic lurking, employed around key areas of the palace (e.g., Huwon—the rear garden, souvenir shop and cafeteria); (4) Regular encounters and friendly conversations with palace staff (7 palace custodians and 12 tour guides); (5) Utilisation of particular narratives obtained from university-based essays concerning the personal descriptions of student visits to Changdeok Palace. These strategies are believed to be an efficient and proactive means of gaining an intimate insight into the intricate social world of heritage institutions, as well as understanding the diverse perceptions of both tourists and site employees. Importantly, multiple research strategies could counterbalance the biases or flaws arising from the employment of a single method of design and procedure. One effective participa-

tory tool of ethnographic research is to partake in a series of 'friendly (casual) conversations' (Spradley, 1979). This approach can enable researchers to approach people in more naturalistic ways and avoid imposing situations. Friendly conversations are effective in encouraging individuals to express their personal feelings and viewpoints, compared to more formal interview situations. In particular, friendly conversations can exert a significant impact on developing and sustaining an effective and reliable relationship with specific individuals, helping to acquire a deeper understanding of the social setting being investigated. These conversations arguably help obtain both explicit and tacit knowledge, information that is ultimately the hallmark of ethnographic research (Boyle, 1994).

Since qualitative research is mainly based on the theoretical and methodological principles of interpretive science, data analysis does not usually contain such quantitative measurement as the standardisation of research material or the application of mathematical techniques (Sarantakos, 1998). Furthermore, ethnographic data reflects ways in which subjects confer various meanings and diverse viewpoints on social phenomena under consideration. Here, it is crucial to recognise the role of the researcher as a controller and mediator in the interviewing process. There is a growing realisation that interviews are understood as ''negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place'' (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 663). In addition, Kvale's (1996, p. 5) metaphor of the interviewer as a ''traveler'' is appropriate in appreciating the researcher's negotiating role, whereby the ''interviewer-traveler wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered''. Accordingly, knowledge is indeed often socially (and politically) constructed and the task of the researcher is to assemble knowledge parts into a more holistic and coherent explication of the studied phenomena. The data can be fundamentally partial, subjective and discursive, subject to differing interpretations and diverse analytical processes.

Articulating Emotional Attachments to the Nation

In his study deconstructing the essence of English national identity, Kumar (2003) makes a clear distinction between the 'political nation' and the 'cultural nation'. It is maintained that a cultural nation can be perceived as a ''community of fate'' which individuals are born into as opposed to ''community of choice'' (Kumar, 2003, p. 24). Conceptualising the nation as a ''community of fate'' is clearly articulated in tourists' narratives, which mainly focus on the predestined and perpetual nature of nationality:

> Obviously, it wasn't my own choice that I was born in this country, as was the same with my parents. A sense of national belonging is, I presume, destined. It is the feelings of homesickness. . .people are bound to feel homesick as part of their nature. . . [man in his early forties]

> A sense of being Korean naturally flows in our blood. Until the heart stops beating, it will be inside us. . .we sometimes forget about its existence inside us. . .but I reckon this kind of feeling alarms us from time to time, when necessary. [woman in her fifties]

A coherent theme arising from these narratives is that a sense of national belonging is firmly grounded in understanding the nation as an organic entity that is predestined and naturally given. Korean nation in this context is conceptualised as a ''community of fate'' grounded in ethnic and cultural assertions. Such concerns are clearly summarised by Lim (1999, p. 6), stating:

> Korean nationalism is in a way manifested as a religion and social order inherent in individuals' everyday life. It serves as a social regulation and moral principle which history confers on Korean people. . . Korean nation based on ethnic and cultural assertions is the most powerful entity in the consciousness of Korean people, even at a time of such absence of political nation-state as Japanese colonisation. Racial and cultural characteristics of the nation serve as a mythical force in maintaining and consolidating Korea's national solidarity.

For some tourists, the task of conceptualising their national identity is perceived as a rather onerous endeavour. For instance:

> How can I put it into words? In conversations like this, I have a chance to remind myself that I am a Korean even though I am not particularly interested in nationalism or patriotism. . .because it is just part of my inner-self. . . whatever happens, you cannot change your nature. [woman in her forties]

> In the history lessons at school, I learned the historical facts and figures of our nation. Although I knew it was essential to know the roots of my country and to understand my culture, these factual accounts didn't give me much of an impression. When you think of your country and how you belong, it all comes alive through different senses rather than minds. I would kind of impulsively know the smells, colours and feelings that are specific and unique to Korea. . . [man in his thirties]

National identity is described in a way which indicates that national identification is founded on the establishment of irreparable emotional bonds. Focus is placed on illuminating that a sense of national belonging is a rather intuitive and emotive configuration. The following comments are illustrations of tourists' responses to general ethnographic questions concerning conceptualisations of national identity, indicating how national belonging can be envisaged:

> I don't think I have a really strong national identity. . . But I do feel a bond to my country. . .it is an inevitable fact. . .you cannot challenge that fact. . .that's impossible. [man in his early thirties]

> It seems that I've got a weak sense of national identity in general as I tend not to think about it too much. . .I think about my nationality at the most basic level. . .that I was born in this country and have always lived here. . .it is something natural to me. . .but why particularly in this country? It is your destiny, isn't it? [woman in her late twenties]

> I am a Korean. I was born as a Korean. I was just born into my nation... It wasn't my choice to belong to this country, nor was it to belong to my parents. I have never seriously brooded over the meaning of belonging to my country. It is so natural, like breathing, eating and sleeping. [woman in her forties]

Conceptualisations indicate that articulations of national identity are communicated intuitively rather than in a deeply logical manner. Moreover, a sense of national belonging is thus perceived as something that is not intentionally acquired but innately given. Definitions pertaining to national identification reflect affective expressions and sentient feelings rather than rational explanations. Kim, Jeong-hwan's student essay, for instance, states:

> People's national identity is about their feelings and emotions about their nation. Defining national identity is therefore very complicated. It is not so much what your nation actually is but what makes you feel that it exists, its existence, and how strong you feel about it.

National identity is thus signified as an emotional construct, founded upon people's subliminal feelings and sentiments toward their nation. Intangible and subjective sentiments, including shared feelings and emotional bonds, are articulated as having greater significance in forming and maintaining a heightened awareness of national consciousness than objectively-conceived characteristics (e.g., territory, political alliance and religion). Some ethnographic narratives signify that national consciousness and related feelings of national belonging can be conceived as an extended form of emotional attachment to the family. For instance:

> Love for my nation is nothing different from love for my family...it is unconditional and indisputable... why do I love my family? Since it is my family...well...the same principle applies to loving your nation ...it is my nation...no one else's. [woman in her early twenties]

> My country is like my own family home. It is just an instinct, I would say. You really do not question your connection to your family, do you? It is the same case with our country, I reckon. I am just born into it and it is natural for me to be attached to it. [man in his forties]

> Sometimes, I find fault with my family or home. I do not feel I am 100 percent happy with it, but it is always there to be honest. When you think about your nation, it is fairly the same... it is a destiny imposed on my life, like my family... you just have to get on with it. [man in his fifties]

Despite scholastic attention from modernist perspectives concerning ways in which national consciousness can be achieved primarily through educational instruction (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990), some tourist narratives actually emphasise that the relationship between national belonging and education can indeed be tenuous. It is highlighted that:

> Loving your nation is in your blood. It is natural, not something that is just acquired at school...when education gets too much involved,

> your connection can be badly damaged. . .but it's all about instinct, I think. [Mr. Park, palace custodian]
>
> Think about all the pro-Japanese officials and Korean elites who committed horrible things to our country for their own good during the Japanese occupation. What they did to our country was unforgivable. . .but we, common people, who were not as educated and sophisticated as them, kept our country together all throughout the ordeals. . . Loving a nation is in people's nature. . .it does not happen in the classrooms. [man in his seventies]
>
> Well, my country is deep inside me, it is something that I know about through my own thoughts... When I was at elementary school I remember some textbook saying that North Koreans were as cunning wolves. . . But as you grow up you started to develop your own ideas about history and nation, don't you? [woman in her forties]

It is thus clear from the above narratives that national identifications conjure emotive-based expressions and sentimental connections to the nation. Ethnographic narratives are also replete with such expressed metaphors as '*sa-rang*' (love) and '*pea*' (blood), signifying natural associations with and connections to the nation. In the case of domestic tourists, recognition of the ineradicable nature of cultural affiliations are realised through spontaneous and unconscious encounters with the heritage setting of Changdeok, enabling individuals to think seriously about their cultural identification. The following comments illustrate this point:

> It makes my stomach churn to feel I am naturally connected with this place. I am part of it and it is part of me. [man in his late thirties]
>
> It just struck me that this place is one proof about my national identity. . .that is to say you can't share the culture and history without feeling attached to it. I think it is a strong bond really. . . [man in his forties]

In describing their heritage tourism experiences, tourists tend to implicitly or explicitly comment on ways in which the experience reflects an opportunity to think about their sense of national belonging, particularly expressing how shared memories can help re-establish a sense of national belonging. The two following narratives clearly typify this point:

> Knowing history and sharing history is completely different, I believe. I cannot exactly put it into the words. . . any foreigners can know our history but they would not be able to fully understand what it means, because they have not been a direct part of it. [woman in her forties]
>
> Reading a book gives you good knowledge of national culture and heritage, but it does not deeply touch on me. But here, you can feel and learn about what it was like to be Korean. [woman in her twenties]

Importantly, collective memories entail a sense of nostalgia mutually reciprocated and negotiated through intra-cultural communication, where the tourist experience can be understood as one form of communicating national memories. Tourists thus place a strong emphasis on the significance of shared feelings and emotions as key tenets of na-

tional awareness associated with the Changdeok experience. Importantly, long-established culture, primordial legacy and common history are thus perceived as constituting factors for upholding a strong sense of national belonging, as opposed to strictly civil forms of citizenship and/or political affiliations to the Republic of Korea (South Korea).

Reasserting Korea's Ethnic and Cultural Homogeneity: We Are 'Tanil minjok'

It is revealed that the main attribute of national identity is the belief that Koreans are '*tanil minjok*'. As previously emphasised, '*tanil minjok*' is understood as the core value of the seemingly homogeneous nation in the consciousness of Korean people, which is particularly relevant given the influx of foreign influences and patterns of immigration within contemporary South Korea (Cummings, 2003; Feffer, 2003; Park, 2002). The following comment indicates the personal importance of Korea's ethnic homogeneity and its coherent cultural manifestations as key constituents of national identification:

> We are one race... we are '*tanil minjok*'... I think that Koreans know this and try to take pride in it... I am not sure if other nations are actually like us...but this is what makes me think about my connection to my country [woman in her fifties].

> The fact that we are '*tanil minjok*' makes me feel so proud of my country... We share the same blood [Mr. Yoon, palace custodian].

Cogent emphasis on the concept of '*tanil minjok*' is also clearly demonstrated in a range of student essays, a frequently used term to emphasise how national identity is popularly perceived as uniquely exclusive. The following student statements selected from a broader set of illustrations reflexively signify that strong national sentiments are also deeply grounded in the belief and pride that the nation is perceived to be based on mono-racial lineage and mono-cultural roots:

> We are '*tanil minjok*'. This fact is of high importance in defining the idea of our nation and national identity. As one nation of common culture and single race, it is not surprising that Koreans are widely renowned for their strong nationalist sentiments. [Lee, Dong-seok]

> I think that the concept of '*tanil minjok*' is fundamental in forming and fortifying our national identity. I am very proud of the fact that our nation is very exceptional in terms of a single ethnicity and coherent cultural traits including language, food and so on. This fact makes our nation distinctive and unique. [Kim, Jin-ah]

Despite socio-historical transformations and the recent influence of globalised cultural processes affecting South Korean society, there is a tendency for some ethnographic narratives to relate the authenticity of Korean identity and culture to pre-modern, traditional virtues and traits. The strong belief and pride associated with a homogeneous race and unified culture is unmistakably articulated in the following narratives:

> It does not matter how different the world is now from the past... We are one people with the same roots. I do think that nobody can contradict this fact. I am very proud of our oneness, and the fact that we are one of the most racially and culturally distinct countries in the world. [woman in her forties]

> We are all very much alike each other in terms of race, culture and ethnicity. I think these are the most significant traits of our cultural and national identity. It is very important that we cherish this fact. [man in his thirties]

From an ethnographic perspective, national identities represent the quintessential features of national culture, ethnicity and tradition. In addition, some narratives indicate that social transformations and modern advances should not necessarily deter individuals from holding onto the fundamental and unified belief in what mainly constitutes 'Koreanness', for instance:

> Today's world changes so quickly. It is quite appalling to see it. People say that our identities should reflect those changes, which is quite sensible and true. But there should be an axis which we can stick to... something unchanged and unmovable. [woman in her forties]

> If we lose our true identity our country is in jeopardy. There are so many different colours abound in our present circumstances. However, in short, we should not lose our unique colour, whatever happens. [man in his seventies]

Regardless of the recent academic debates concerning an overemphasis on the view that the Korean nation is primordially constructed as 'one homogeneous race' (see Han, 2003; Lie, 1990; Yi, 2003), ethnographic narratives indicate that the concept of '*tanil minjok*' is of crucial significance in manifestations of (South) Korean national identification. Substantial focus is placed on identifying the significance of ''antecedent cultural ties and sentiments'' (Smith, 1994, p. 378). A considered recognition of the nation's cultural affinities is also yet pertinent in comprehending self-orientations concerning national identity. The following narrative potently indicates ways in which cultural elements are utilised to express forms of national belonging:

> When I listen to '*Arirang*' (a traditional Korean song) or '*Aekukga*' (Korean national anthem), it makes me feel solemn...and a bit sad... Now I can understand why Koreans who live abroad break in tears when these songs are played on certain occasions. I cannot define nationalism or national identity with much sophistication really. But national identity for me seems to be about this shared feeling of people touched by the national songs... Only Koreans would cry over Aekukga and feel attached to their nation by doing that... [man in his forties]

Moreover, the belief and pride in a homogeneous culture and race can reinforce articulations of an exclusive national identity, which can also potentially discriminate 'us' from 'others'. Cultural attachments can be emotively expressed and harnessed by the Changdeok vis-

itor experience. Interestingly, one Korean-American in his mid-thirties attempts to explicate his inseparable cultural affinity with Korea, crucially assisted by his visit to Changdeok Palace. He states:

> Despite living in a different country, we were never really detached from our roots in Korea... In my teens, I was quite confused with my dual identity... Although I became a US citizen, I felt I was Korean in blood. I ate Korean food and spoke Korean language at home... My childhood memory about Korea is not significant...but one scene strongly remains in my mind, it was at my grandmother's house that I once visited here in Korea...the colour, the smell... throughout the tour that old memory just sprang back up and haunted me all the way... I have visited a lot of heritage centres in the States, however, but I have never experienced this feeling...never...

His comments emphasise the emotional and psychological dimensions of national consciousness. As he feels comfortable and familiar with the representations embodied in Changdeok Palace, the visit plays a vital role in reconstructing his emotional and innate attachment to his ancestral homeland. Another young Korean-American, born in America in the early 1970s without particular exposure to Korean culture, exemplified by the fact that he could not speak Korean, is adept in unexpectedly recognising his sense of Koreanness provoked by his visit to Changdeok. He explains that:

> I've never been here before, but I feel like I have been, which is quite strange in a way... I've just been thinking of my parents, grandparents and their parents...I don't know what it is exactly...but this place does have something that makes me think all about this...it is very difficult to explain but I just feel something deep.

This tourist's emotional attachment to his ancestral homeland is expressed in a rather spontaneous and unconscious manner. Although he could not rationalise his feelings or explain them in detail, his overall experience of Changdeok Palace enables him to feel connected to a country representing his ancestral roots. Here, the socio-psychological dimension of heritage acts as a powerful agent for perpetuating his emotional association and cultural affinity with Korea. The visit encourages him to construct a nostalgic-based narrative on the basis of his cultural and ethnic ties to his ancestral homeland. Research on tourism perceptions amongst diasporic communities draws critical attention to ways in which the nation can be imagined through cultural ties and social meanings, as well as being embodied in the homeland (tourism) experience (see Coles & Timothy, 2004; Duval, 2003; Stephenson, 2002).

Individual Interpretations of National Memory and Cultural Knowledge

In general, tourists are likely to strengthen their awareness of national belonging by sharing and communicating perceived national memories, as certainly inherent in the Changdeok experience. However, it is important to note that national memories are reconstructed and reinforced by individually selected recollections and subjective

interpretations of heritage during the tour. This issue is of particular relevance in understanding people's differing appropriations of national memory and cultural knowledge, especially in terms of reconstructing a sense of national belonging. Tour guide Mrs Kwon, expresses:

> We all have individual preferences and personal viewpoints on our nation's past and relate to certain aspects of the palace more than others ... When I explain certain historical facts and events relating to the different areas of Changdeok, visitors' reactions are all different.

In a friendly conversation with another tour guide, Ms Hong, similar sentiments are noted:

> Yes, people do react differently to the concerns encountered during the tour. I think that is normal. Although we share the same nation, it is evident that certain concerns will prompt more recollections, making certain things more appealing or unattractive than others... some identify with stone walls in Nakseonjae, some the indigenous trees and others the Korean wood furniture... Also, people can have different interpretations on the same memory... I do the same... The unique spirit of our nation obviously lives in this place but we understand and appreciate it in our own different ways.

The following comments by tourists further indicate that their national consciousness is facilitated by the process of individually appropriating and reinterpreting national memories provoked within Changdeok Palace:

> What I am impressed with is that I feel like I have been able to think about my nation in an individual way... I listened to the guide's explanations carefully and tried to remember things learnt at school or from watching the television and so on...But what I managed today was to have my own views on them...By doing that, I feel that I am definitely part of this heritage thing. [man in his forties]

> People say that Changdeok is our precious heritage which conveys the nation's legacy. This is an indispensable fact but the ways in which people perceive it are different. We all have individual preferences and personal viewpoints on our nation's past... [woman in her thirties]

It can be inferred from the above comments that memories induce different interpretations and represent various interpretive contexts. It is appropriate to recognise that collective memory is rather flexible and can be contextualised through differing subjective interpretations. The communication of national memories and shared recollections within the heritage setting does not necessarily mean there is a governing consensus on the nature of heritage interpretations. Rather, the heritage setting facilitates different and subaltern viewpoints concerning the relevance of national memories to individual's perceptions and experiences. It is also important to note that shared recollections of collective memory are fundamental in maintaining regional or local identity as well as national identity.

Informatively, those tourist narratives which represent the older generations tend to indicate ways in which the experience of Changdeok can evoke childhood memories, enabling tourists to familiarise themselves with the heritage setting through personal memories. The following anecdotes articulate memories of the past prompted by tangible and intangible significations of heritage:

> I feel so comfortable here...I grew up with things such as the '*Kiwa*' (traditional Korean roof) and stone walls...this is our story...story about how we have kept our nation and people. [woman in her late seventies]

> As I was born and bred in a '*Hanok*' (traditional Korean house) and feel I am very familiar with this kind of traditional heritage setting... Traditional wooden floors remind me of a particular moment when my grand mum combed my hair on a sunny day when I was just about 6 or 7 years old. I can remember it very vividly here... [woman in her late fifties]

> The air smells and feels so nice here... it reminds me of a little fishing village where I was brought up... This place gives a real feeling of what our old country was like... [man in his early sixties].

Nostalgic yearning for the past is intensified by means of reviving intimate memories and provoking individual remembrances. Visits thus potentially encourage people to reconnect with the past and reawaken intimate and long-forgotten memories. Importantly, feelings of comfort and familiarity facilitated by personal memories are pertinent in fortifying people's emotional attachment to the nation. By engaging with their own personal memories individuals may be more at ease in establishing an intimate sense of national belonging. Consequently, heritage tourism experiences at Changdeok enable tourists to sense and experience the nation in rather intimate, concrete and affirmative ways. National consciousness is invoked through interaction with comfortable and familiar surroundings expressive of the nation's symbolic characters. There was an interesting albeit brief conversation between two women observed in the Huwon, which exemplifies familial associations between aspects of the palace and home life:

> Woman 1: I feel like this is my home, don't you?... isn't it amazing to have this comfortable feeling right in the middle of Seoul?

> Woman 2: Yes, it is... I feel like I have been to here a lot, though I haven't... I just love it.

Other narratives also imply the importance of comfort and familiarity as integral to the Changdeok experience, for instance:

> This is my first visit here, but the palace appears so familiar... I don't know why... I just feel so natural and comfortable here. [woman in her thirties]

> It is very calm here and relaxing, especially walking in the Huwon. We have a park near where I live...outside of Seoul. Well, this place reminds me of my walks there with all the beautiful trees and the freshness... [man in his fifties]

Tourists tend to initiate the process of conceptualising an essence of national belonging through oral narratives focusing on personal memories and subjective experiences. They are likely to utilise personal memories as an effective means of consolidating their affinities with their country and home life, though not always in an overt nationalistic manner but in rather nuanced and subtle ways. Here, personal memories should not necessarily be perceived as self-indulgent recollections of lived experiences as they are instrumental in serving the purpose of imagining the nation's past and shaping it into a coherent and meaningful entity, which lies at the core of a collective sense of national belonging. Their function in familiarising the nation's past is profound in making the abstract and conceptual elements of national belonging more concrete and directly related to people's life experiences. Importantly, individual and subjective perceptions of heritage are closely related to experiential ways of articulating and enacting national consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Tourist and palace staff narratives clearly demonstrate ways in which felt history of the Korean nation is communicated through the medium of heritage tourism. It was highlighted that a sense of national identity is closely associated with emotional attachments to the nation rather than its external manifestations. People's emotions, feelings and sentiments clearly indicate Koreanness as a primordial construct, which is considered to be crucial in conceptualising and contextualising national consciousness. The ethnographic narratives presented in this paper suggest that that the main conceptualisations of national identity and national belonging during heritage tourism experience are indicative of cultural primordialism, which emphasises the ethnic/racial origins and innate cultural manifestations of the nation (e.g., 'blood ties', 'ancestral roots', 'common language', 'common soul', 'shared memory' and 'cultural affinity'). Therefore, cultural and ethnic connections with North Korea have come into focus as a fundamental element of Korean nationhood and national identity in various narratives. But it is important to clarify that this paper did not intend to systematically address and analyse the political issues concerning the two Koreas.

As Changdeok Palace is only one specific heritage setting in South Korea, it would be epistemologically problematic to claim that it represents the whole spectrum of the nation's heritage settings. Nonetheless, it stands as one definitive historical representation that augments national sentiment and nationalistic feeling in an era in which South Korea is beginning to redefine notions of national belonging and come to terms with its entrenched primordial associations with North Korea. Accordingly, a sense of national belonging and identity evoked and experienced in Changdeok needs to be understood as one particular (though crucial) mechanism in the (re)contextualisation of (South) Korean national consciousness. The heritage presenta-

tions and representations of Changdeok contribute to melding the nation's collective and shared memories of the past into the present context as a rhetorical manifestation of openly expressed and individually appropriated forms of nationalism. For South Korean nationals, Changdeok Palace could stand as a visual and symbolic testimony for sustaining national solidarity and legitimacy. Changdeok is also understood as a site of national nostalgia where the nation's past is commemoratively remembered.

As an area for future research, it would be insightful to comparatively analyse ways in which a sense of national belonging is evoked and collectively negotiated during heritage tourism experiences in different national contexts or ethnic and cultural groups. For example, Japanese tour groups are the biggest national group of visitors at Changdeok. Therefore, it would be beneficial to investigate ways in which Japanese nationals perceive this heritage setting and the Korean nation, and indeed their own nation's representation and its colonial past. There is also ethnographic scope in researching other national heritage sites in both South and North Korea, which would help further understand ways in which national identity and social memories are articulated. Finally, in future theoretical-based enquiries, the study of heritage tourism would benefit from a systematic analysis of newly emerging paradigms manifest in the study of heritage and citizenship, thereby opening up further discussions concerning the ethnic and cultural elements of citizenship embodied in national heritage settings.

In the overall context of this study, domestic heritage tourism is not just an act of touristic consumption of heritage artefacts but also a reaffirmation of national meanings and values. The socio-psychological dimension of heritage is thus important in understanding how the symbolic significance of heritage can enhance its long-standing appeal as a potent reminder of nationhood. Therefore, recognising the significance of the socio-psychological dimensions of heritage is essential in highlighting the interconnected nature of heritage and national identity. An essence of national belonging and sentimental connection to the Korean nation is illustrated by the way in which tourists relate to the site's key cultural attributes, particularly those that are perceived to be uniquely Korean. An emotional attachment to the homeland can be further facilitated by articulating intimate and personal memories. In a rather detailed and less abstract manner, tourists variously described their view of the palace as a place imbued with feelings of 'calmness', 'familiarity' and 'homeliness'. It is also clear that visits to Changdeok conjure emotive-based expressions of the Korean nation, illustrated through a range of such metaphors as 'love' and 'blood' expressed in an affective and emphatic manner.

From this study, it is significant to note that heritage tourism is not predominantly related to emphasising one dominant reconstruction and reinterpretation of collective memory, assisted by state-based and hegemonic forms of national sovereignty. Rather, it facilitates ways in which individuals variably position themselves in a broader context of cultural construction and symbolic embodiment of the nation and national identity. Heritage tourism experiences at Changdeok Palace

potentially facilitate individuals to either rediscover or reaffirm innate cultural connections to the nation. Individual narratives and subjective accounts concerning ways in which social memory is articulated in the heritage setting play a substantial role in discursively developing and broadening the dynamics of national identity formation and reformation. The sustainability of Changdeok palace as a setting for shared national heritage is inseparably related to its symbolic and socio-psychological role in enhancing a cognitive longing for cultural and ethnic continuity. Importantly, Changdeok serves as a symbolic agent encouraging the nation's felt history to be articulated, thus enabling South Korean nationals to maintain and fortify their sense of national belonging. A

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