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State and Food in South Korea : moulding the national diet in wartime and beyond

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Chapter Seven

The Food and Economic Policies of the South Korean Government

Turner observed that the growth of systematic knowledge coincides with the extension of power-relations, especially with the exercise of state social control over people's bodies in the social space. Scientific advance, according to him, does not liberate the body from external control, but rather intensifies the means of social regulation (Turner 1982a: 23). As a vehicle in which such a disciplinary mechanism functioned, formal education systems in modern states have played an important role in shaping people's eating practices by offering nutritional education that keeps people fit and healthy in an efficient way (Smith and Nicoloson 1995; Akiyama 2008).

As the Japanese colonial authorities had relied upon education to keep Korean people healthy and productive, and to train them to manage their diet rationally to fit with the state's policies, so the South Korean government attached great importance to education for reforming the eating habits of Korean people. This chapter will attempt to explore the intensive involvement of the South Korean government in reshaping the diet of its people through various instruments within education. I will pay special attention to the influence of economic and political issues on the policies of food education in schools, which ultimately aimed to alter Korean children's eating habits. Each of the following two sections addresses the programmes of food education implemented as an important part of school education in Korea for several decades during the latter half of the twentieth century.

As earlier chapters have discussed, Korea was a rice – the most preferred staple – deficit country until the 1970s, and self-sufficiency in it remained an important national goal (Kihl and Bark 1981: 47). Foreign food aid, which was initially started to ease the food shortage in post-colonial Korea but continued for more than two decades, changed the dietary habits of the Korean people. In particular, the vast amounts of American-produced surplus wheat led to a major transformation in the Korean diet, in combination

with the state's economic policy (Kong C. U. 2008: 143). Food aid gave the Korean government the opportunity to promote the consumption of wheat-based foods and to discourage people from eating rice as a staple. This strategy enabled rice to be saved, which in turn was very beneficial for the South Korean economy.

The school lunch programme, which will be dealt with in the first section of this chapter, was one of the major educational tools used to inculcate new eating habits in Korean children. Originally initiated as a relief project, the lunch programme provided pupils with meals in accordance with the larger forces of state food policies rather than the recipient's nutritional needs. This was highly political matter – as noted by Susan Levine who has researched American school lunch programme in the book *School Lunch Politics* (Levine 2008). Later on, the focus of this chapter will shift to the campaign of *honbunsik changnyŏ* (encouraging the eating of barley and wheat-based foods), a nationwide government movement which forcefully penetrated school education and directly affected children's eating habits. In this chapter, I will argue that food education within the formal school system in Korea was a political apparatus carefully designed for the purpose of the economic development of the country, and was crucial in the formation of Korean eating habits in the twentieth century.

7.1 The School Lunch Programme

From Powdered Skimmed Milk to Bread-centred Meals

One of the most remarkable results attained from the implementation of the Self-supported School Lunch Programme³⁰⁶ of last year was that children's habits of eating only what they want [*p'yŏnsik*] was corrected. By making children eat foods, such as bread and milk, which had been avoided by them thus far simply because the foods did not suit their taste, we were able to ensure the pupils' nutritional improvement. Children were taught table manners, how to eat quickly, and came to have sense of hygiene through washing their hands before having meals. The programme proved to be very popular among parents because they did not have to prepare lunchboxes for

³⁰⁶ A type of school lunch programme initiated in 1972 in rural Korea.

their children. This successfully aroused parents' interest and led to their active involvement in the lunch programme.

(Vice Principal of Taesa Primary School in Kimhae county Kwŏn H. G. 1975: 131)

On 14 January 1977, the South Korean Ministry of Education enacted fundamental policies for the implementation of the school³⁰⁷ lunch programme in the Rules of the School Lunch Programme (*Hakkyo kūpsik kyuch'ik* 學校給食規則). The establishment of these comprehensive rules took place more than two decades after the school lunch programme was initiated in 1953. Making it clear that the lunch programme was part of school education, the 1977 Rules set the overall tone for the Korean government's school lunch policies. They also laid the foundation for the 'School Lunch Law' (*Hakkyo kūpsikpŏp* 學校給食法), an independent and comprehensive legal basis for the school lunch programme, promulgated on 29 January 1981 (Kim and Yang 2002: 12-13). The aims of the school lunch programme, as described in the 1977 Rules were to

- a. promote the correct understanding of nutrition and inculcate good eating habits in the daily diet
- b. build good human relationships and create a spirit of collaboration by making children's school lives better
- c. promote the rationalization of eating, nutritional improvement and health enhancement
- d. contribute to the implementation of state policies of food consumption by giving pupils an appreciation of the production and distribution of food resources
- e. run it as a part of *Saemaül undong*³⁰⁸ with the cooperation of parents and local communities in order to achieve a self-supported school lunch system [rather than relying on the government's support]

(*Hakkyo kūpsik paeksŏ p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe*³⁰⁹ 1978: 275-276)

Over a decade since the school meals programme began, the principle aim of Korean school lunch programme was to improve physical and mental well-being of children.

³⁰⁷ This section only deals with the school lunch programme that operated in primary schools in Korea, since middle schools which had school meals programmes were extremely limited until the beginning of the 1990s. Hereafter, I will use the terms 'schools' and 'children' to refer to 'primary schools' and 'primary school children'.

³⁰⁸ The issue of *Saemaül undong* is discussed further in section 5.2.

³⁰⁹ HKPP'W

However, the fourth article cited above clearly shows the frame under which school children's health was to be improved: it suggests that the school lunch programme served as an opportunity to teach pupils about state economic policies. Such a strategic aim for the school lunch programme was very different from its initial intention – relief – when it was introduced in the early 1950s.

The Korean school lunch programme was initiated supported by food aid from abroad, to ease malnutrition and starvation among children after the Korean War (1950-1953). Children from destitute families and remote areas were offered lunches prepared in their school facilities free of charge. Until 1956, powdered skimmed milk from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was provided as the school meal. Cornmeal was included in the food donation in 1961 courtesy of the Cooperative for American Remittance to Everywhere (CARE), which gave the Korean government food between 1957 and 1966 (Ibid.: 99). In principle, a cup of reconstituted powdered milk (containing 35 grams of powdered milk) was supposed to be offered to each child. However, due to insufficient kitchen facilities and the cost of labour and fuel, not all schools were able to prepare the lunches (Ibid.: 63). Many children were given uncooked milk powder, which often led to diarrhoea when eaten without being dissolved. Thus, the milk powder gained a bad reputation among the children and their parents, and frequently ended up as livestock feed. Circumstances did not much change after cornmeal was provided since it also needed to be cooked before serving. Although cornmeal gruel was a welcome addition for many children, the difficulty of preparing it remained (Söng K. H. 1972: 47-49).

The introduction of bread, which could be mass-produced in factories, into school meals was the perfect solution to dealing with the problem of cooking in schools. Mass-produced bread was first made successfully in Pusan in 1963. It was distributed to 95,000 children in 66 schools, and was considered a groundbreaking event in the history of the Korean school lunch programme. The provision of school lunches using mass-produced bread was copied by 359 schools in eighteen cities, including Seoul, in the following year. By June 1966, 1,456 schools throughout the country had introduced the new system and were providing 1,252,000 children with bread for lunch (HKPP'W 1978:

97, 116). Between 1963 and 1966, the number of children who ate factory-produced school meals in Seoul more than tripled, from 65,874 children at 52 schools to 223,000 at 140 (Söng K. H. 1972: 48). By 1966, school children in nearly every city in Korea were provided with a piece of bread weighing 124 grams for their lunch. The bread was made from 62 grams of cornmeal, 40 grams of powdered milk and one gram of sugar, and was supposed to provide each child with 308 kilo calories.³¹⁰ Lunches were provided on ten to twenty days per month.³¹¹ Although the lack of fermentation meant that the cornmeal bread hardened quickly, to the extent that it was known as ‘stone bread’ among children, the success of the mass production of bread created the basis for the dissemination of the school lunch programme in Korea (Söng K. H. 1972: 48).

The true development of the Korean school lunch programme was made possible by the delivery of wheat flour. This was donated by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which took over from CARE in 1966, and continued to provide food for Korean school children until 1972. The newly provided wheat flour and vegetable oil, specially provided to produce better quality bread, definitely improved the quality of school meals: white bread replaced the previous cornmeal bread (HKPP’W 1978: 147-148). The use of wheat flour enabled more children, especially those living in impoverished remote areas, to eat meals at their schools. From 1968, pupils at schools which had neither cooking facilities nor proper methods of transportation to deliver children’s meals on time were provided with factory-produced hard-tack (*könp pang*) which kept longer than white bread (Ibid.: 67). Between 1966 and 1970, the annual supply of wheat flour from USAID increased from 11,043 metric tons to 35,906, gradually replacing cornmeal (Pak C. G. 1986: 18).

Wheat flour donated by America not only transformed the food on the children’s lunch trays but was also enormously influential in shaping the school lunch system in Korea. Although America’s food donations to foreign countries were based on the humanitarian grounds of helping those in need, there were also economic and political

³¹⁰ ‘Kyölsik adong-e sikppang nae 10-put’ö K’ea wönjo 缺食兒童에 食糧 來 10 부터 케아援助’, *Kyöngnyang sinmun* 京鄉新聞, 29 February 1964, p.8.

³¹¹ ‘Örinidül-e simgakhan ch’un’gung 어린이들에 深刻한 春窮’, *Kyöngnyang sinmun*, 26 April 1963, p.7.

motivations behind such aid. The delivery of agricultural products to America's occupied nations after the Second World War was part of a strategy to expand America's future international trade options. Wheat flour was shipped to Korea on the basis of Public Law 480 (PL 480) of America that aimed at expanding the future export market for US agricultural products, as I will discuss further later in this section.

School lunch programmes were a primary vehicle for absorbing US food imports in indigenous countries. There were two main reasons for this. First of all, it was vital to create future customers for American food in Korea (HKPP'W 1978: 98). Secondly, according to Solt, this US strategy was essential to creating the healthy workforce needed for recovery in the occupation zones, which would reduce America's burden of supporting the countries, and become bastions against the expansion of the communist Soviet force (2010: 191, 193). In this respect, South Korea was strategically a very important area as it was in direct contact with the communist enemy in North Korea.³¹² Thus, the US authorities saw the South Korean school lunch programme as a serious matter in terms of their own economic and political interests.

After 1966 the US government made concerted efforts to complete the setting up of the school lunch system in Korea before the aid programme came to an end in 1972.³¹³ In the agreements on food assistance made in 1966 and 1968 between the Korean and US authorities, it was agreed to promote the lunch programme as part of the national agenda of the Korean government, and that all Korean children would be school lunch recipients by 1972 (HKPP'W 1978: 196, 202). These contracts included detailed promotion plans for the Korean government, including the yearly budget allocation for the programme, the reform of school lunch administration, the development of new school meals schemes, and a plan to expand the number of recipients (Ibid.: 212, 222-223). American provisions were to be delivered to Korea on the condition that the Korean government fulfil its duties (Ibid.: 57). Whatever the reason behind the aid policy of the US government, it

³¹² In pursuit of the political and economic stabilization of the southern part of the Korean peninsula, the US authorities paid special attention to the management of food resources during the years of its occupation of southern Korea (1945-1948) and after the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948. See 1.2.

³¹³ 'Kyölsiga küpsik chungdan wigi 飢食兒 급식 中斷위기' *Tonga ilbo* 東亞日報, 9 April 1968, p.7.

was important for the Korean government to receive food assistance to feed its undernourished children, who numbered 1.2 million or 20 per cent of the total number of Korean children by 1969 (Ibid.: 219).

After the signing of the 1966 food aid contract with the US, the system of school lunches in Korea began to be consolidated. Organizational reinforcement began in July 1969 with the creation of the Department for School Lunches (*Kŭpsikkwa* 급식과), the first organization responsible for school lunch administration under the Ministry of Education (Kim and Yang 2002: 10). Thus far, the administration of the school lunch programme had involved two organizations, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education. All provisions, including wheat flour for school use, had first been handled and allocated by the former, with the practical operation of the meals programme supervised by the latter. The establishment of a separate department was intended to improve administrative efficiency as well as ensure the centralized management of the school lunch system. As a result of the creation of this new organization, by the beginning of 1970 full responsibility for the school lunch system had been entrusted to the Ministry of Education (HKPP'W 1978: 85). This reorganization shows that the school meals programme came to be officially recognized as an educational policy rather than as a social welfare project. Accordingly, the goal of school lunch programme expanded from so-called 'relief-feeding' (*kuho kŭpsik* 求護給食), to 'nourishing feeding' (*yŏngyang kŭpsik* 營養給食), which was not only intended for undernourished children but to provide many pupils with balanced nutrition to ensure their healthy growth (Pak C. G. 1986: 16).

The 'General School Lunch Programme' (*ilban kŭpsik* 일반급식) introduced in 1968 was one of the initial steps taken by the Korean government to introduce a self-supported school-lunch system in anticipation of international food aid coming to an end in 1972. This scheme was not free of charge, but all children qualified if their parents paid for their lunches. The lunch was either a piece of factory-produced (white) bread and/or a cup of (reconstituted powdered) milk (Kyoyuk injŏk chawŏnbu 2000: 228). This scheme was part of the various plans jointly designed with the US government for the

purpose of strengthening and expanding the school meals system in Korea (HKPP'W 1978: 254).

For the stable management and expansion of the system, it was imperative that the scheme was paid for by parents, enabling the government to draw operational expenses from it (Ibid.: 110). Even while foodstuffs were still being provided without charge from America, the Korean government's expenditure on the operation of the lunch programme had grown with the increasing number of recipients. Moreover, as the termination of food assistance approached, the Korean government was required to share the cost of the food aid with the US government. By 1972, for example, the Korean government had to cover half of the expenses for the delivery of the food from the US (Ibid.: 97).

Budget shortfall frequently prevented the smooth operation of the school lunch programme. For instance, in early 1968, before the General Lunch system was introduced, the existing free lunch programme was halted for more than six months in Seoul. This was because of protests from the bakers about the low price they received from the government: while the production cost of a piece of bread was 1.15 *wŏn*, the money paid for it by the government was just 0.98 *wŏn*.³¹⁴ To prevent the money shortages that caused such problems, the Korean authorities needed to secure financial backing through the paid-for lunch programme.³¹⁵

Starting in October 1968 in Seoul, the General School Lunch Programme was introduced to schools in Kyŏngsang-pukto in the following year. Within a few years, the system had spread to many urban areas where parents were affluent enough to be able to afford to share the cost of the lunches. By 1977 nearly 800,000 children were participating in the paid-for school lunch programme throughout the country (HKPP'W 1978: 110, 172). The programme using factory-produced bread continued to expand until 1977, when the scheme was suddenly abolished due to a food-poisoning scandal in Seoul in which one child died and more than 5,000 became seriously ill. Because of this

³¹⁴ 'Hoengsŏl susŏl hŭng ŭl seol' , *Tonga ilbo*, 29 June 1968, p.1; 'Kungmingyo kŭpsik ppang chungdan 국민교給食 빵中斷' , *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, 26 March 1968, p.4.

³¹⁵ 'Kungmingyo kŭpsik ppang yuryo-ro 국민교給食 빵 有料로' , *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, 31 July 1968, p.8.

incident, the use of factory-produced bread in school meals was prohibited. Only schools equipped with their own kitchen facilities were allowed to serve lunches to children. Thus, the number of pupils who ate school lunches declined sharply, from 1.2 million, or 22 per cent of school children in Korea, to 129,000 children, or 2.3 per cent (Kim and Yang 2002: 23-24). Despite this incident, the ten-year implementation of the General School Lunch Programme provided children with the opportunity to eat bread, and played an important role in children's acceptance of the new pattern of eating bread at meals.

Another step taken by the Korean government in preparation for its self-supported school meals operation was the establishment of seventeen experimental 'Model Schools' (*sibŏm hakkyo* 시범 학교) in 1968. With the aim of establishing a new type of school lunch programme supported by local communities and parents, the government distributed between 2.5 and 3 million *wŏn* per school in urban areas for the creation of cooking facilities (HKPP'W 1978: 122-3). Under this scheme, parents were required to contribute to the cost of the ingredients. This system did not spread because the General School Lunch programme was favourable for those urban schools without cooking facilities, but relatively substantial meals were offered that met government nutritional standards (providing 830 kilo calories per meal) and recommendations from nutritionists (Ibid.: 123, 125). For example, a lunch prepared at Chŏnnong primary school in Seoul consisted of a piece of bread accompanied by a bowl of soup, a cup of milk and an egg³¹⁶ (Pak C. G. 1986: 20).

The rural version of the Model School project was launched in 1972. Beginning with two schools in Kyŏnggi-do and Chŏllanam-do, the number of schools involved gradually increased to 55 by 1975 (HKPP'W 1978: 167, 170). As was the case with its urban predecessor, the costs of establishing cooking equipment were met by the government. A substantial difference in the schemes was the fact that in rural areas parents were required to help in the preparation of meals at the school facilities or to provide labour for school gardening, which was introduced with the aim of producing supplementary ingredients, such as vegetables, for school meals. Since production

³¹⁶ The source does not specify how the egg was cooked. However, considering the practicality of serving eggs to a large number of children, we may surmise that it was most probably hard boiled.

activities accompanied this scheme, this programme was referred as to the ‘Self-supported School Lunch’ (*chahwal kūpsik* 자활급식). A typical lunch menu in this scheme would include a wheat-based staple, such as a piece of bread or noodles (*kuksu*,³¹⁷ *sujebi*³¹⁸), and a bowl of soup accompanied by one or two side dishes, such as an egg or *kimch*’i, or by a glass of (reconstituted powdered) milk (HKPP’W 1978: 167-169; Pak C.G. 1986: 20).

The fact that staple foods provided under these newly developed schemes was bread denotes that the expansion of the scope of the Korean school lunch programmes closely related to the availability of bread for school meals. Food aid, especially wheat flour from the US provided under the PL 480 programme, had a considerable influence on the introduction of wheat-based foods as a fixed component within school meals.

School Meals, the Source of Nutritional Deficiency?

As shown at the beginning of this section, the concepts of ‘nutritional improvement’ and ‘health enhancement’ were clearly spelled out as two of the major principles behind introducing school meals in the ‘Rules of the School Lunch Programme’ promulgated in 1977. A government-edited home economics text-book published in 1979 describes the goal of school lunches as: ‘to raise the nation’s physical standards’ and ‘to provide children with supplementary nutrition which cannot be covered by only eating home-cooked meals’ (Mun’gyobu 1979: 10).

Indeed, the improvement of nutrition and health was the promotion statement of the Korean government which sought to expand the school meals system. Nutritional experts were also active in promoting the importance of school lunches as a source of enhanced nutrition for children. For example, Hyŏn Ki-sun, a former professor at Seoul National University, stressed that every meal eaten by children should be appropriately nutritious in order to foster their complete development, and that the aim of school meals was to achieve the perfect development of children (1972: 254). Supposedly, adequate nourishment was of primary importance in school meals.

³¹⁷ Noodle soup.

³¹⁸ Dumpling soup.

Yet, in contrast, the school meals actually provided to children were not nutritious. For example, under the General Lunch Programme, which started in 1968 and was prevalent by the latter half of the 1970s with approximately 800,000 participants, children were supposed to be offered a piece of factory-produced bread and a cup of (reconstituted powdered) milk, as mentioned earlier. However, from the beginning of the programme, only a handful of children received the milk. The majority of children were only offered a piece of bread and nothing to drink. As of 1975, the number of school lunch participants in Seoul who received milk (with bread) did not exceed ten per cent of the total number of school meal recipients due to the instability of the supply of milk.³¹⁹ The General School Lunch programme was a target of criticism in the Korean media for the lack of nourishment it provided.³²⁰

In terms of the children's nutritional requirements set out by the government, a piece of bread was short on nutrients. According to a study conducted by a research team at Yonsei University in 1967, school meals were less nutritious than lunchboxes prepared at home, not to mention the nutritional standards. The research report particularly emphasized the obvious inadequacy of the vitamins contained in bread for children's health, as table 7-1 shows (HKPP'W 1978: 68).

Table 7-1: The nutritional values of a school lunch compared to a typical lunchbox and the nutritional standard

	Calories	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Calcium (mg)	Vitamin A (IU)*	Vitamin B1	Vitamin B2 (mg)	Vitamin C (mg)
Bread/ hard-tack	534.9	17.3	8.385	197.55	210	0.383	0.23	1
Lunchbox	619	16	3.2	55	658	0.56	0.29	9.7
Nutritional standard (1/3 of a day)	830	25	11	300	600	0.4	0.5	2

*International Units

³¹⁹ 'Hakkyo küpsig-ün hwaktae twaeya handa 學校給食은擴大돼야한다', *Tonga ilbo*, 22 May 1975, p.5; 'Ajikto kil mön 'uyu masigi'아직도 길 먼 「우유마시기」' *Maeil kyöngje* 매일경제, 10 April 1972, p.7; 'Chüngnyang södunün wönyu konggüp 增量서두는 原乳공급', *Maeil kyöngje*, 28 June 1973, p.7.

³²⁰ 'Memarün ppang hana nanjöm mahnün kukkyosaeng küpsik 메마른 빵 하나 難點많은 國校生급식', *Tonga ilbo*, 31 October 1968, p.7.

Source: HKPP'W 1978: 68

Another more specific study of 2,130 children, 1,920 parents and 79 teachers at five Seoul schools in 1969 reveals similar results about the nutritional content of school meals and people's dissatisfaction with the food. While the calorific intake of children who brought lunchboxes ranged between 560 and 830 kilo calories, that of school-lunch eaters was only 465 kilo calories (Cho and Ch'oe 1969: 60-61). It was found that a large majority of those questioned in the three groups thought that a piece of bread was not entirely nutritious for a child's lunch. People thought that the lunch provided could hardly be said to be a meal, more a snack (Ibid.: 60). A mother who lived in Seoul complained about such school meals at a round-table talk of housewives. She referred to the bread served in schools as a 'great problem', saying:

I cannot understand why [the school lunch programme] is being managed so irresponsibly... for the hungry children [a piece of] bread would be better than nothing, but for the rest of the children it would be much better to bring a lunchbox. I think [children] should have something more [with the piece of bread], such as milk or even spinach *namul*.³²¹ Nutrient-enhanced bread is still better, but bread made with only wheat flour is pathetic.³²²

School lunches were also unpopular among children. In some schools, a piece of bread was provided all through the week without variation or consideration of the eater, who might be sick of being served the same meal day after day.³²³ Depending on the school, the meal might have been varied by including bread filled with cream or sweet bean paste; however, the food was still unattractive to children due to its bad taste.³²⁴ The unpopularity of the bread was proved by a test at a model school: no child or parent chose the school bread when they had choice of school lunch bread and ordinary bread (HKPP'W 1978: 129). Other than the low quality or nutritional inadequacy of school

³²¹ A side dish eaten daily by Koreans. *Namul* sometimes referred to all vegetables grown in the mountains or fields, and sometimes to side dishes made with vegetables. *Namul* might be served raw, fried lightly in oil or slightly boiled in water.

³²² 'Chwadamhoe ch'in'günhaejin sikppang-ül chöm handa 座談會 친근해진 식빵을點한다', *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, 7 April 1969, p.5.

³²³ 'Yŏngyang kyŏlp'ib-e 'puch'aejil'營養결핍에「부채질」', *Maeil kyŏngje*, 12 November 1968, p.3.

³²⁴ 'Kŏmŭn ppang' hakkyo küpsik(ha) '검은빵' 학교 給食(下)', *Kyŏngnyang sinmun*, 21 September 1977, p.7.

lunch bread, it should be clarified that bread itself, which became a permanent fixture as a staple on the Korean school lunch menu in the 1960s, was unfamiliar to most children. They had difficulties in adapting to bread-based school lunches since their home meals were all centred around rice (and barley) (Ibid.).

The rising standard of living during the 1960s³²⁵ in Korea led to a transformation in the pattern of food consumption, including an increased intake of meat. However, statistical data from the Korean government shows that people ate a lot of crop-based food, most of which consisted of rice, until the 1970s. During the periods 1962-1965, 1966-1970, and 1971-1975, Korean people's calorific intakes from crop-based food accounted for 95.7 per cent (2,188 kilo calories out of a total intake of 2,285.6 kilo calories), 94.4 per cent (2309.2 out of 2446.4), and 93.6 per cent (2424.4 out of 2591.4) respectively. The majority of the energy intake from crop-based foods was from cereals: 84 per cent, 83.4 per cent, and 82.8 per cent respectively (Ch'oe H. J. 1993: 66-68). Rice was the most eaten food among the grains consumed by Koreans (see table 7-2). These results indicate that boiled rice (with a certain amount of barley) was the major element of Koreans' staple consumption.

Table 7-2: Daily grain consumption per person in Korea, 1962-1975

Years	1962-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975
Total grain consumption	537.7g (100%)	565.9g (100%)	567.6g (100%)
Rice	337.7g (62.8%)	336.6g (59.5 %)	344.1g (60.6%)
Barley	129.0g (24.0%)	166.7g (29.5%)	142.6g (25.1%)
Wheat	55.2g (10.2%)	52.3g (9.2%)	71.7g (12.5%)
Others	15.8g (3.0%)	10.3g (1.8)	9.8g (1.7%)

Source: Ch'oe H. J. 1993: 44

Naturally, children's daily meals largely included rice and barley as the staple. A study into children's lunchboxes carried out in 1970 in Ch'ungch'ongnam-do and Ch'ungch'ong-pukto clearly reveals the pattern of meals for Korean children at that time. According to the study, only six children brought white or sweet potatoes or wheat-based foods as their lunches out of a total of 658 pupils. Instead, 416 children, or 63.2 per cent,

³²⁵ See 5.2.

had boiled rice mixed with barley, and 103 children, or 15.7 per cent, brought just boiled rice (Kim K. N. 1970: 365). In essence, these studies suggest that the school meals were not appreciated by Korean children, both in terms of nutritional need and the food preference.

Eating School Lunches for the National Economy and Defence

In a study of America's school lunch programme, Levine stated that the principle of school lunches is surely rooted in nutritional science and the idea of a healthy diet for children (2008: 2). However, she demonstrates how nutritional issues and the health of children have taken a back seat within the structural barriers created by political power, and how children's meals in the dining hall have been determined by 'external' – political and agricultural – influences. The same was true of the school lunch programme in Korea. Although it was initiated as a social programme to ease malnutrition among children, the school lunch programme was shaped under the powerful influence of national economic policies. The reliance on bread in school meals was determined less by the nutritional benefits of wheat-based foods than by the Korean government's desire to boost the consumption of wheat, the relatively cheaper substitute staple for rice, and to reduce the consumption of rice. The school lunch programme was part of national economic policy.

While rice has been the backbone of Korean agriculture for long periods and is most preferred by Koreans as the staple food, it remained a luxury foodstuff that only a limited number of the wealthy could afford to consume until only a few decades ago due to its high price and insufficient yields. By the 1960s, the shortage of rice became more conspicuous due to dramatic industrialization accompanied by urbanization: the consumption of rice per capita grew continuously throughout the 1960s (see Table 5-2), resulting in the self-sufficiency rate for rice falling from 100.8 per cent in 1960 to 81 per cent by 1969 (Kim P. T' 2004: 506), and annual imports of rice increased sharply, from 112,604 metric tons to 907,407 metric tons between 1967 and 1971 (Nongsusanbu 1978: 436). The enormous amount of money spent on rice imports posed a serious threat to the Korean government, which was aiming to establish export-oriented economic development (see 5.2). In these circumstances, saving rice became an important national

economic goal, and the school lunch programme was regarded as a huge potential opportunity to transform the eating habits of children, making them accustomed to eating other staples and breaking the habit of consuming rice.

The large quantities of wheat flour which had been delivered to Korea since the 1950s were hoped to be the new staple grain for the Korean people. After the armistice agreement of 1953, post-war reconstruction projects in South Korea were initiated that relied on aid supplies from international organizations and foreign countries. Between 1954 and 1959 \$1.44 billion worth of aid goods were delivered by the Foreign Operation Administration (FOA) and International Cooperation Administration (ICA),³²⁶ and \$122 million worth were delivered by the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) in the period 1951-58 (Yi T. G. 2002: 320, 327).

It was the aid programme based on PL 480 which became tremendously influential on the Korean government's policy of encouraging the consumption of wheat-based foods. The PL 480 law was created in 1954 in America as a solution to the surplus grain problem caused by huge stocks of American grain which could not be sold on the country's domestic market. To protect American farmers and grain companies from unprofitable business led by a decline in the price of grain, the US government set aside a sizeable market outside America without affecting its internal market situation. Setting one of its goals as 'to encourage economic development in the developing countries', the US government anticipated the expansion of US agricultural commodities to international trade (Wallenstein 1976: 285-286). While other aid programmes for Korea consisted of providing a variety of supplies or meeting development costs, such as materials and research costs for the mining and manufacturing industries, the PL 480 programme only provided agricultural products. The deliveries began as an aid project but gradually became a long-term loan after 1961, continuing until 1976 (Chöng H. G. 1988: 16). Starting with the introduction of raw cotton and leaf tobacco in 1955, more than \$164 billion worth of wheat, barley, rice, canned pork and cooking oil were shipped to Korea in just the 1950s (Table 7-3).

³²⁶ As a result of a reorganization in the US government, responsibility for Korean aid-administration moved from the FOA to the ICA from 1955.

Chapter Seven

Table 7-3: The value of agricultural products imported from the US to South Korea under the PL 480 aid programme, 1955-1959

(Millions of US dollars)						
Years	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	Total
<u>Grain (total)</u>		<u>35,149</u>	<u>18,758</u>	<u>49,978</u>	<u>25,228</u>	<u>129,113</u> (78.6%)
-wheat	-	7,504	2,504	31,590	24,564	66,162
-barley	-	12,783	4,276	14,805	-	31,864
-rice	-	14,862	11,978	-	-	26,840
-corn, others	-	-	-	3,583	574	4,157
<u>Raw materials (total)</u>	<u>14,839</u>	<u>3,097</u>	-	-	<u>7,748</u>	<u>25,666</u> (15.6%)
-raw cotton	9,991	448	-	-	7,748	18,187
-leaf tobacco, others	4,848	2,631	-	-	-	7,479
<u>Other foods (total)</u>	-	<u>8,668</u>	-	-	<u>804</u>	<u>9,472</u> (4.6%)
-canned pork	-	8,290	-	-	-	8,290
-cooking oil, others	-	378	-	-	804	1,182
	14,839	46,896	18,758	49,878	33,780	164,251 (100%)

Source: Yi T. G. 2002: 335

Between 1955 and 1959, grain accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total aided value of farm products. The total value of wheat was \$66,162,000,000, or more than half of the overall value. While the amount of wheat donated increased between 1955 and 1959, those of barley and rice, which had been generally consumed as staples by Koreans, fell. This illustrates that the grains originally eaten by Koreans were being replaced by wheat-based foods made from American wheat.

Moreover, the amount of imported grain exceeded the amount needed in Korea. For example, while the grain deficit in 1957 equalled 5,859,000 *sŏk* (approximately 837,840 metric tons), the amount of imported grain totalled 6,317,000 *sŏk* (903,330 tons). The ratio of grain supply was 107.6 per cent of the required amount. This situation continued in the following years: by delivering 1,890,000 *sŏk* (270,270 tons) in 1959, 3,512,000 (502,220) in 1969, and 3,451,000 (193,493) in 1961, the rates of grain supply equalled 172.6 per cent, 165.8, and 127.2 respectively (Song I. J. 1998: 11). In order to ‘get rid’ of the imported grains on the Korean market, the government had to encourage its population to eat wheat-based food, such as bread and noodles. The massive amount

of imported wheat flour even made it possible for the Korean government to export rice, the international price of which was higher than that of wheat: between 1959 and 1966, the volume of yearly rice exports (mainly to Japan) increased from five metric tons to 44 metric tons (Kim P. T'. 2004: 75, 506). The chief motivation behind the Korean government's strategies of saving rice and encouraging the consumption of wheat-based foods was closely related to the country's economic policy.

On top of that, the financial revenue from the sales of delivered food became a prominent source of income for the Korean government. The PL 480 agreement stipulated that supplied goods were to be sold to Korean civilians or private companies, except for those distributed for free for relief purposes. The revenues earned from the food had to be deposited and shared between the Korean and US governments. In the 1950s the Korean government used 85 per cent of the money deposited on averagely a year while the US government used fifteen per cent (Yi T. G. 2002: 337-8). Even though there was not complete freedom to use the money according to its own will, the Korean government was able to acquire a considerable amount of income from the sales of the food. In 1961, the secured money accounted for 48.4 per cent of the total national budget (Chang S. H. 2003: 927). The majority of the money was appropriated for purchasing arms from the US, and for augmenting the military based on the agreement with the US government. Because the Korean government was able to obtain food assistance under the agreement with the US on the condition that it would use the sales income only for the national defence budget. With this money, for example, the 570,000-strong military in 1953 had grown to include 720,000 men by 1958. The size of the military as a percentage of Korea's GNP ranked third in the world between 1957 and 1966 (Ibid.: 928).

If we consider that the Korean War had ended with a cease-fire, not the termination of war, securing defence spending was one of the most pressing matters for the Korean government. That is to say, the revenues from imported wheat were crucial to Korea's defence expenditure. Therefore, the Korean government wanted to import as much food as possible. It was said that there was even juggling of statistical data by the Korean government in pursuit of gaining more food from the US (Song I. J. 1998: 14). Under the complicated international relationship, Korean children functioned as an

important outlet for US surplus agricultural products. Moreover, by doing so, they actually supported the Cold War.

Many studies have revealed that school-lunch based food education had positive effects on attitudes and behaviour in both the short and long term.³²⁷ Kim Suk-hŭi and influential Korean nutritionists also stated that the school lunch programme was a highly effective educational tool in developing the habit of eating wheat-based foods. Through the programme, according to them, children would become accustomed to new practices which would not be easily altered (Kim S. H. et al. 1976: 129). Based on such idea, food education via school lunches drew Korean authorities' attention as a strategy to boost wheat-based foods. More consumption of the foods was beneficial not only for economic development but also for national security of the country.

In view of its effectiveness in forming new eating habits in children, it is not surprising that the Korean authorities took the expansion of the school lunch programme very seriously, often using heavy-handed methods. Both children and teachers had trouble fulfilling the school lunch *quota* ordered by the government. For example, in 1974, when 4,000 children in Chollanam-do were participating in the school lunch programme, the Ministry of Education set a goal of 10,000 recipients. In compliance with this directive, the teachers in Mokp'o city made eating school lunches almost compulsory for the pupils. While the number of children who wanted to eat school lunches was just 1,500, Mokp'o city government was determined to expand the meals programme to include 4,000 pupils, and instituted a quota for each school. At one school in the city, some 300 children, or two-thirds of the total school-lunch eaters, were forced to participate by their teachers. It was not uncommon for two coerced participants to share a piece of bread, as well as the cost of it. Children at another school in the city were forced to eat school lunches by rotation, with no other choice.³²⁸

On being ordered by Seoul City government to achieve a target of 25 per cent of all children eating school meals, a school in Tongdaemun ward made their children eat

³²⁷ For example, see Gordon et al. 1995; Templeman 1989; and Shōji Kondo et al. 1978.

³²⁸ 'Kangjero möginün küpsik ppang 強制로 먹이는 給食빵', *Tonga ilbo*, 27 May 1974, p.7.

school lunches on a weekly rotational basis until the goal was achieved. Teachers had to drink milk in front of the children to set an example and encourage their pupils to follow them, as many children were not used to drinking milk, especially reconstituted milk (Söng K. H. 1970: 141). One teacher said that he felt as if he were ‘doing a sales campaign’ when he was encouraging the children to eat more school meals.³²⁹ In addition to this edict from Seoul city government, teachers had to tell children to bring *kimch'i* as a side dish from home when the issue of the nutritional deficiency of school lunches emerged. However, it appears that many children were not accepting of the idea of bread as a meal. The coerced participants brought their own lunchboxes in spite of the lunches prepared at school. Uneaten bread was often taken home or thrown away. The parents of these children had to bear the expenses of both school meals and making lunchboxes.³³⁰ The school lunch programme was not welcomed by many Korean people, except for those children who could not afford to eat lunch without the provision of school meals.

The government’s efforts to encourage the eating of wheat-based foods proved effective after the school lunch programme had been in place for several decades. A fair body of research reports the ‘positive’ changes in school children’s food preferences in relation to school meal experiences during the 1970s and 1980s. Children’s increasing preference for wheat-based foods was broadly recognized in Korean society as an improvement in the diet and as a break from the old practice of rice-centred eating (Kim H. M. 1982: 43; Kim and Hwang 1984: 29). For example, in a survey of preferences among 594 children at four schools in Seoul in 1974, the majority of children gave positive responses about wheat-based foods. The preferred foods as the main element of meals among children were toast (63.8 per cent), white bread (53 per cent), and steamed rice (41.9 per cent) (Hyön K. S. 1974: 652). Another study of 400 school children carried out in Seoul in 1982 shows how the change in food preferences had progressed further. Of the participants, 165, or 41 per cent, preferred the combination of ‘bread and milk’ to ‘cooked rice (with other grains) and Korean style-soup’ for school meals, while just 95 children, or 24 per cent, expressed the opposing view (Kim H. M. 1982: 40). It was also

³²⁹ ‘‘Kömmün ppang’ hakkyo küpsik (ha) ‘검은빵’ 학교 給食(下)’, *Kyöngnyang sinmun*, 21 September 1977, p.7

³³⁰ Ibid.

shown that more than 85 per cent of children liked to drink milk (Ibid.: 38). The most common favourite food chosen by the children was milk (19 per cent), followed by bread (16 per cent) and instant noodles (15 per cent) (Ibid.: 42). Children's changing attitude towards wheat-based foods was not confined to urban areas. The results of a survey of pupils at a rural Model School in the neighbourhood of Taegu city in 1984 showed that there was little difference between the proportion of those who preferred rice-centred lunches and those who preferred wheat-based lunches (bread or noodles): 47 per cent preferred the former and 41 per cent the latter (Kim and Hwang 1984: 30).

The development of the Korean school lunch was closely related to the state's food policies. Despite the fact that it was the improvement of the diet and the health of children that the government held up as the major aims of the programme, it was, in a real sense, an economic policy carefully designed for strategic purposes. The dramatic change in the content of the meals caused by another problem – a surplus of rice – which emerged in the 1980s is clear evidence of this.

Surplus Rice and Rice-centred School Lunches

Ironically, all the efforts devoted for more than two decades towards saving rice led to a surplus of rice, which became a matter of growing concern for the Korean government. The issue of surplus rice emerged hand in hand with a general dietary change among Koreans that took place in the latter half of the twentieth century. Along with the steadily rising standard of living after the 1960s, the consumption of foods previously considered luxurious, such as meat, dairy products and fruit, increased, and there was less 'room' for rice in the Korean diet. For example, daily meat consumption per capita increased sharply from 13.2 grams in 1962 to 64.6 grams in 1990 (Han'guk nongch'on kyŏngje yon'guwŏn 2003: 43, 99). Moreover, as demonstrated by the example of the school lunch programme, the consumption of rice was deliberately restricted by government policy, which encouraged greater consumption of wheat instead. All these factors greatly influenced the decline in rice consumption. Between 1970 and 1989, the daily consumption of rice per capita dropped from 366.6 grams to 341.3 grams, while that of wheat flour increased markedly from 51.6 grams to 88.3 grams during the same period (Ibid.: 59, 79, and 97).

The increase in wheat consumption coinciding with the reduction in rice consumption shows that rice, the traditional staple of the Korean diet, was being replaced by wheat-based foods. In combination with the westernization of the Korean diet, the government's rice-saving policy created the new problem of a rice surplus.

However, it should be added that the decline in rice consumption alone was not responsible for the rice surplus. *T'ongil* rice, a high-yield variety of rice obtained as a result of the Korean government's great efforts to increase yields of the grain, caused an unexpected food problem. At first, the three years of continuously successful rice harvests from 1976, the so-called green revolution, made possible by *T'ongil* rice, was welcomed by Korean society. It was thought to be a solution for the longstanding rice shortage in the country, fulfilling Korea's hopes of self-sufficiency in rice (Kim P. T'. 2004: 76). But it was not long before it became a source of serious concern for the Korean government. Due to its unpleasant flavour, the price of the new variety was lower than that of the previous rice that had been eaten, and thus it was chiefly consumed by those on low-incomes. However, in line with the general rise in living standards in Korea, even the lower social strata came to be able to afford high-quality rice, and the *T'ongil* rice remained unconsumed. From the 1980s, the government made efforts to decrease the output of *T'ongil* rice and, by 1992, the variety had disappeared entirely from farms in Korea (Ibid.: 242).

By that time, however, large quantities of *T'ongil* rice had been already stockpiled in government warehouses as so-called 'government rice' (*chǒngbumi* 政府米). These stocks were increasing in volume every year due to the decrease in rice consumption. Government rice was secured through a dual-pricing system for rice (*ssal ijung kagyŏkche* 쌀二重價格制), in which the government bought the rice from farmers at relatively high prices, and sold it to distributors at market prices, which were often lower. By introducing this distributional system in 1969, the government was able to stimulate the production of rice by supporting farmers and maintaining a balanced market and the steady price of rice by controlling the supply (Ibid.: 76). Therefore, in principle, the government had to store a certain amount of rice. However, the increasing rice stockpile, much of which was *T'ongil* rice, was a big financial burden for the government.

As of 1991, the value of the rice stockpile equalled 3.7 trillion *wŏn*, the equivalent of fourteen per cent of the yearly national budget. Approximately 70 per cent of this stockpile was *T'ongil* rice produced between 1985 and 1990.³³¹

As a solution for the consumption of the stockpiled *T'ongil* rice problem, a project to reinforce the school lunch programme was developed by the government. In 1989, the Economic Planning Board (*Kyŏngje kihoegwŏn* 經濟企画院) adopted the school lunch programme as a core policy on the government agenda (Kim and Yang 2002: 15). The announcement of the detailed reinforcement plan was followed by an expansion plan from the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries in the following year. The plan was to increase the number of schools with the meals programme from the existing 765 to every school in the country in the coming years.³³² Following the announcement of the project, the revision of the school lunch programme was promoted with the definite aim of 'expanding the consumption of abundant rice'.³³³

During the years following the outbreak of the food poisoning scandal in 1977 which I mentioned earlier, a comprehensive institutional basis for the Korean school lunch programme was established. For example, dispatch of a nutritionist in charge of school lunches was mentioned for the first time in 1978. The following year, a directive was issued that specified that a school meal was to provide 670 kilocalories for a child in the lower years and 770 kilocalories for those in the higher years. The most noteworthy development was the establishment of the School Lunch Law in 1981, an independent law governing the school meals programme (Pak C. G. 1986: 31-32). In spite of these institutions, however, schools were not allowed to provide lunches to children if they did not have their own cooking facilities.

To boost the consumption of the government stock of rice, it was important to encourage more schools to get involved in the school meals programme, even if they did

³³¹ '3-chŏn 6-paengman kama chŏngbumi ch'anggo-sŏ natcham 3 천 6 백만가마 정부미 창고서 낮잠', *Chosŏn ilbo* 朝鮮日報, 12 April 1991, p.7.

³³² 'Ssal tambo yungjaje toip kŏmt'o 쌀 담보 융자제 도입 검토', *Maeil kyŏngje*, 12 November 1990, p.1.

³³³ 'Ssal makkŏlli, yakchu chuse p'yeji kŏmt'o 쌀막걸리, 약주 주세 폐지검토', *Chosŏn ilbo*, 23 November 1990, p.2.

not have a kitchen at the school. The first solution to this problem, introduced in 1992, was the Communal Cooking System (*kongdong chori* 共同調理): lunches for several schools' pupils were prepared at one central facility and then distributed to each school. This efficient system was experimentally introduced to nineteen schools in Kyōnggi-do and then expanded gradually to other areas (Kim and Yang 2002: 15-16). The School Lunch Outsourcing System (*wit'ak kūpsik* 委託給食) began in 1996, enabling schools to contract general catering companies to prepare lunches in the schools' facilities. Ready-made meals could also be provided for school lunches. The huge financial burden incurred by these promotional projects was shared by the government and the Association for School Lunches (*hakkyo kūpsik huwōnhoe* 學校給食後援會), which was composed of parents, interested corporations, and representatives of each school (Kyoyuk injōk chawōnbu 2000: 252). The Korean government's drive to bolster the school meals programme sharply increased the penetration rate of the programme: between 1991 and 2001, the ratio of school children who ate school lunches soared from 7.8 per cent to 90.7 per cent.³³⁴ As of 1999, 99.9 per cent of Korean schools provided lunches for children (Han'guk kyoyuk kaebarwōn 2002: 116).

It was in 1990, immediately after the government's ambitious project to expand school lunches was announced, that the rice in the government warehouses began to be distributed to schools. During the first ten years, the stockpiled rice was provided at half its market value (Im S. H. 1995: 64). The annual supply to schools increased dramatically from 19,000 *sōk* (approximately 2,717 metric tons) in 1990 to 270,000 *sōk* (38,610 tons) in 2000 (Yi and Kim 2002: 83). As a result, the size of the government stockpile shrank from 1,891,000 tons to 892,000 between 1990 and 2000.³³⁵

Throughout the 1990s, the government was frequently accused of distributing

³³⁴ During this period, the school lunch programme in middle and secondary schools in Korea was also expanded: the uptake in middle schools grew from 4.9 per cent in 1997 to 58.6 in 2001, and in secondary schools rose from 2.6 in 1997 to 64.3 in 2001 (Han'guk kyoyuk kaebarōn 2002: 116).

³³⁵ Government rice was also used for military rations, in prisons and state-run hospitals, and for relief aid and food assistance for North Korea. Since the actual distribution was entrusted to the municipal authorities, the central government does not have detailed end-usage data. The statistical data cited above was obtained through personal contact with a researcher at the Korean Rural Economic Institute (Han'guk nongch'on kyōngje yōn'guwōn) on 21 August 2008.

old rice for school lunches. For example, the rice distributed for school lunches in Seoul in 1994 included 1,549 tons of old rice, 57 per cent of what was distributed, which included rice that had been stored for two years, and even fourteen tons of rice that had been stored for four years. The amount of old rice provided to the pupils in the city equalled 2,625 tons or 80 per cent of the total rice provided by the government in 1996.³³⁶ Even children in rural areas, where rice was produced, had no choice but to put up with old and flavourless rice. In a newspaper article a rural housewife who lived in Kohŭng County in Chŏlla-namdo expressed her anger at seeing old rice distributed when she visited her children's school to help with preparing the lunches. She was especially angry as she was engaged in rice farming and a certain portion of new rice produced by her was sold to the Korean government every year.³³⁷ To address this public dissatisfaction, in 2001, the government announced that it would supply new rice as far as possible for school use (Yi and Kim 2002: 83).

The problem of surplus rice led to a fundamental change in the content of Korean meals. This time, the basic structure of the school lunch menu was 'a bowl of steamed rice (mixed with other grains), a bowl of soup, side dishes, and a bottle of milk'. Emphasizing the importance of faithfully reflecting children's food preferences, balanced nutrition and eating habits, the authorities stressed the need to increase the variety in school lunches by using local specialities and surplus agricultural products, and by introducing traditional Korean dishes (Kyoyuk injŏk chawŏnbu 2000: 241). At a symposium called 'Let's learn about rice' (*ssar-ŭl alja* 쌀을 알자) held by the Korean Agricultural Cooperative in 1990, there was a lively discussion on the urgent need to provide rice-based lunches in schools in order to help children grow up in good health and to inculcate the correct eating habits before they became accustomed to the taste of Western food.³³⁸ The bread-based lunches of the past were forbidden in the face of the issue of surplus rice. In an analysis of over a thousand menus served between 2000 and

³³⁶ 'Sŏul sinae ch'odŭnggyo kŭpsik 2-yŏn isang mugŭn ssal konggŭp 서울 시내 초등학교 급식 2년 이상 묵을쌀 공급', *Tonga ilbo*, 22 October 1996, p.41.

³³⁷ 'Mugŭn ssal sayong hakkyo kŭpsik chedo kaesŏn tŭng noryŏk piryo 묵은 쌀 사용 학교급식제도 개선등 노력 필요', *Han'gyŏre sinmun* 한겨레신문, 4 March 1997, p.23.

³³⁸ 'Hakkyo kŭpsik chŏnmyŏn hwaktae haja 학교급식 전면확대하자' *Han'gyŏre sinmun*, 15 November 1990, p.9

2003 in two primary schools, one in Pusan and one in Ansan, rice boiled with other grains appeared as the staple at 95 per cent of the lunches at the school in Pusan and at 99 per cent of the lunches at the school in Ansan (Pak K. H. 2006: 3). This data provides clear evidence that school lunches in contemporary Korea are overwhelmingly rice-based.

Today the overconsumption of wheat-based foods, such as bread and (instant) noodles, is considered to be the source of a variety of health problems in children in Korea.³³⁹ The ‘westernized diet’ (*siksaenghwal-ŭi sŏguhwa* 식생활의 서구화), centred on bread, is discouraged by the government and dieticians, while the nutritional merits of a rice-based diet are promoted (Kim H. N. 2002; Yi Y. J. 2002). Eating a rice-based, Korean-style meal is perceived as beneficial not only for one’s health, but also from the point of view of preserving Korea’s traditional dietary culture. The ‘Guidelines for Dietary Life’ (*siksaenghwal chich'im* 식생활지침) developed by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2004, which aimed to improve the eating habits of Koreans, put rice-centred meals at the centre of the model menu. The guidelines encourage primary school children and adolescents ‘to eat rice-based meals more than twice a day’ (*haru-e tu kki isang-ŭl pab-ŭro mŏksŭmnida* 하루에 두 끼 이상을 밥으로 먹습니다).³⁴⁰

In her research, Levine saw the history of the American school lunch programme as a ‘crucial mirror into the variety of interests that continually vie for power and authority in American public life’ (2008: 2). This holds true for the Korean school lunch programme. The developmental process of the programme and the shift of the staple food in it – from bread to rice (mixed with other grain) clearly demonstrate that the policy of food education of the country has been shaped more by surplus food than the ideas about healthy diets. Korean school lunch programme has developed in a way that was designed to solve food problems which arose from the changing circumstances of economy of the country.

³³⁹ ‘Milkaru sobi churyŏ nagal ttae 밀가루 소비 주려나갈때’, *Tonga ilbo*, 28 August 1986, p.11; ‘Ssal-to kisul kaebal sŏdullŏya 쌀도 기술개발 서둘러야’, *Kyŏnggyang sinmun*, 18 May 1994, p. 9.

³⁴⁰ Pogŏnpokchibu 보건복지부, ‘Han’gugin-ŭl wihan yŏllyŏngch’ŭng pyŏl siksaenghwal silch’ŏn chich’im sŏlchŏng, palp’yo 한국인을 위한 연령층별 식생활실천지침 설정, 발표’. Electric document, available at http://epic.kdi.re.kr/epic/epic_view.jsp?num=68003&menu=1 (accessed 3 November 2011)

7.2 The *Honbunsik Changnyŏ* Campaign

The Incorporation of the Honbunsik Changnyŏ Campaign into the School Curriculum

The South Korean government's efforts to reform the dietary habits of children were not limited to the school lunch programme but included a variety of unique programmes to augment the educational effects of the school system. Not only the subjects of practical coursework (*silgwa* 實科) and home economics, but also every special opportunity related to the school life of pupils, such as writing and public speaking contests, was utilized for promoting the reform of dietary habits (Pak S. H. 2008: 63). Through such comprehensively planned educational programmes, pupils were encouraged to eat rice substitutes - wheat and barley - and to curb their consumption of rice, the major staple of the Korean diet. This strategy was part of the *honbunsik changnyŏ* 混粉食獎勵 (encouraging the eating of barley and wheat-based foods) campaign carried out on a massive scale in the 1970s in South Korea. *Honbunsik* is a compound of *honsik* 混食 and *punsik* 粉食: the former denoting 'eating grains (primarily barley) mixed with rice', and the latter 'eating foods made with wheat flour' such as bread and noodles. However, it was *punsik* that formed the core of the government's campaign (Kong C. U. 2008: 186).

According to Kong Che-uk, the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign can be traced back to the rice-saving campaigns and the improvement of daily life (*saenghwal kaesŏn*) campaigns promoted by the Japanese colonial government (Ibid.: 145). Due to Korea's important role as a rice supplier for Japan, controlling the rice consumption of the Korean people had been the core food policy of the Japanese colonial government in Korea. Emphasizing the rational management of the daily diet, the colonial authorities encouraged the economization of the diet based on scientific knowledge by eating cost-effective and nutritious meals, such as partly polished rice, or barley instead of white rice (see 4.1).

The stream of colonial campaigns stressing the importance of thrift in the diet was taken over by the post-colonial governments after 1945. Calling for austerity in its nation, the authorities emphasized the importance of saving rice which was in short supply.

Earlier Japanese methods of saving rice, such as the restriction on drinking of alcoholic drinks and a ban on serving boiled white rice at restaurants, were revived under the Campaign of Wartime Daily Life Improvement (*Chōnsi saenghwal kaesŏn undong*) initiated in 1951 (see 4.2). Thus, saving rice was nothing new for the Korean people, who had been experiencing a chronic shortage of rice for decades.

However, it was the Park Chung-hee government (1963-1979) that particularly tightened its control over people's rice consumption. Notwithstanding the rapid industrialization and export growth in the 1960s, domestic production could not meet the increased demand for rice. Hit by a rice crop failure in 1968 and 1969, the food supply situation deteriorated: from a yield of 3,919 metric tons in 1967, that of 1968 was just 3,603 metric tons, and this fell still further to 3,195 metric tons in 1969 (see table 5-2 in 5.2). The volume of grain imports in 1969 reached 2,389,000 metric tons, up 59.6 per cent from the previous year, with the falling self-sufficiency ratio hitting 73.6 per cent, a record low for the 1960s (Nongsusanbu 1978: 437). In an effort to address the food supply situation, the government became serious about implementing rice-saving policies. Following the example of the Japanese colonial food-saving measures, the Park government established 'no rice days' (*mumiil* 無米日) in January 1969, completely prohibiting the sale of white rice at restaurants between 11.00 and 17.00 on every Wednesday and Saturday. This marked the beginning of the government's strengthening of the rice-saving policy and the introduction of the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign that encompassed the whole of Korean society (Pak S. H. 2008: 42). All the restrictive consumption controls were exercised on the legal basis of the Grain Management Law (*Yaggok kwalliopŏp*) established in 1950 by the South Korean government modelled after the Japanese Foodstuff Management Ordinance promulgated in 1943 colonial Korea (Kim P. T' 2004: 484).³⁴¹

The school curriculum was also included within the scope of the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign. The Ministry of Agriculture (Nongnimbu 農林部) announced a new plan in November 1970 to strengthen the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign in schools by

³⁴¹ For more details on the Grain Management Law, see 1.2.

establishing a new subject, the ‘improvement of dietary life’ (*siksaenghwal kaesŏn* 食生活改善).³⁴² In accordance with government policy, saving rice and *honbunsik* education became increasingly important.

The *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign was an important part of the School New Village Movement (*Hakkyo saemaŭl undong*) initiated in January 1973. This, in turn, was part of the New Village Movement, a major development project which began in 1970 with the aim of dealing with rural poverty. Beginning in rural Korea, the movement spread throughout the country and among a vast number of urban dwellers, including students, civil servants and white-collar workers (Lee C. J. 1973: 98). The School New Village Movement was set up at President Park’s special instruction and stressed the need to enhance people’s motivation for strengthening national defence and security. It saw the education of pupils as a fundamental basis for achieving local and national development (Institute of Saemaul Studies 1981: 206). Under the instruction of local Education Committees and schools, pupils were entrusted with various tasks, such as research into local societies, and voluntary activities for the development and increase of income in localities. For example, pupils were involved in cleaning towns, helping farmers during the busy season, and in practicing thrift and saving (No K. W. 1985: 27-28). Saving rice was one of the most important points on the agenda, coming under the auspices of thrift and saving. In the name of saving food resources and the improvement of the diet, pupils were encouraged to eat more wheat-based foods and barley, instead of rice (Ibid.: 35).

Nutrition within the Strategy of Science Promotion

While the strategy of nutrition-centred food management remained at the centre of the post-colonial South Korean authorities’ economic policies, as discussed in 4.2, the advocacy of the scientific improvement of the diet was further strengthened within *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign. Park Chung-hee’s government put the promotion of the general public’s understanding of science on the national agenda. During the first decade or so after his seizure of power, science was endorsed in terms of its technological applications that would support the development of light industry in line with the

³⁴² ‘Honbunsik kyuje chaegŏmt’o 混粉食규제 재검토’, *Maeil kyŏngje* 매일경제, 26 November 1970, p.7.

government's industrialization policy. In October 1972, Park proclaimed the establishment of the Yushin Constitution which marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic of Korea (1972-1979), Park's authoritarian state. In accordance with the radical political changes required by the Yushin Constitution, the Park administration consolidated control of the educational system to ensure that it effectively carried out its nationalistic educational policies (Chang Y. M. 2004: 447). The national strategy to reshape the eating habits of Koreans based on scientific knowledge was embodied in the educational goals as the 'promotion of science as a national movement' (*chŏn kungmin-ŭi kwahakhwa undong* 全國民의科學化運動) and the 'promotion of saving rice and eating barley and wheat-based foods as a national movement' (*chŏn kungmin-ŭi chŏlmi honbunsik undong* 全國民의混粉食運動) (Kangwŏn-do kyoyuk yŏn'guwŏn 1973: 66-67).

Eating barley and wheat-based foods was promoted as a method of practicing science in daily life, and the President Park was enthusiastic about the campaign. This is evident in the scheme of the 'Presidential order for effective education about the nutritional value of miscellaneous grains' (*Chapkog-ŭi yŏngyangga-e taehan hyogwachŏgin kyemong-e kwanhan taet'ongnyŏng chisi* 잡곡의 영양가에 대한 효과적인 계몽에 관한 대통령 지시) sent to the Ministry for Culture and Public Information (*Munhwa kongbobu* 文化公報部) by President Park in 1968.

The presidential order for effective education about the nutritional value of other grains

- A. The ministry for Culture and Public Information is responsible for making nutritional analysis reports about rice and other grains
- B. Munhwa kongbobu carries out the following projects in cooperation with newspaper publishers and broadcasting companies
 - a. organizes lecture for professionals, scientists and housewives
 - b. publishes round-table talks using the print media
 - c. has academics and professors of nutrition and home economics write for newspaper columns
- C. Munhwa kongbobu promotes film production [on food education] and screenings at every theatre
- D. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
 - a. shall create a comparative table of the nutritional information of rice and other grains and distribute them to restaurants to have them put on the

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walls

b. propagates [food education] with the family plan project³⁴³

E. The Ministry of Education

a. develops teaching materials which are to be used at morning meetings [*chohoe*] and during extracurricular activities at various schools. Children should be trained to influence their parents.

b. makes efforts to provide pupils with practical training in the improvement of the daily diet, including eating wheat-based foods and barley, through the curriculum of home economics and practical coursework

(Kukka kirogwŏn 1968, quoted in Pak S. M. 2008: 95)

Following the promotion plans elaborated by the government, the nutritional benefits of eating wheat-based foods were strategically disseminated. Such information was continuously demonstrated in government publications, academic journals and popular magazines. Since many of these articles included a scientifically based plausible explanation, the information was convincing enough to spread the notion that these foods were valuable sources of nourishment.

Nutritional analysis demonstrates that all other grains are richer than white rice in nutrients. It has been proven through biological testing that eating other grains offers greater nutrition [than eating rice]. According to the experiment's findings, the rice-eating group had a greater risk of developing hepatic steatosis than the group that ate other grains. This suggests that eating only rice as a staple food increases the risk of a fatty liver and heart disease...

(*Yŏsŏng tonga* magazine 1969, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 43)

Tangible scientific data was continuously shown to the public to emphasize the nutritional value of barley and wheat-based foods. Comparisons of the quantities of nutrients in rice, barley and wheat flour were very frequently seen at the time. Table 7-4 shows an example of the nutritional information published in a popular magazine and an academic paper issued in 1968. By comparing each nutritional component of barley and wheat flour with those of rice, it emphasizes the nutrients in barley and wheat flour and, at the same time, the deficiencies in rice.

³⁴³ Most probably, this clause indicates the campaign aimed at women. The campaign surrounding family planning is one of the Korean government's continuing educational programmes directed at women. It was included in the projects of the *Saemaŭl punyŏhoes* (New Village Women's Association). See 5.2.

Table 7-4: Nutritional content and a comparison of white rice, barley and wheat flour (per 100g)

		White rice	Wheat flour	Comparison with white rice	Barley	Comparison with white rice
Water (%)		14.1	11.0	+3.1	14.8	+0.7
Energy (kilo calories)		340	354	+41	332	-8
Protein (g)		6.5	11.2	+4.7	10.3	+3.8
Fat (g)		0.4	1.4	+1.0	1.9	+1.5
Carbohydrate (g)		77.9	74.6	-3.3	71.0	-6.9
Mineral (g)		0.5	0.9	+0.4	2.1	+1.5
Calcium (mg)		24	46	+22	40	+16
Phosphorus (mg)		147	220	+73	560	+213
Iron (mg)		0.4	1.6	+1.2	4.0	+4.0
vit am in	Vitamin B1 (mg)	0.1	0.28	+0.18	0.40	+0.40
	Vitamin B2 (mg)	0.05	0.07	+0.02	0.10	+0.10
	Niacin (mg)	7.5	3.0	+1.5	7.0	+7.0

Source: Kungnip pogŏn yŏn'guwŏn, quoted in Ku P. H. 1976: 4

When this kind of information was provided, the higher protein and vitamin content of wheat flour was especially emphasized. Supporting the notion that ‘wheat-based food is richer in nutrients than rice’, the nutritional information remained an important scientific source for encouraging the consumption of wheat-based foods (Song I. J. 1998: 44). This argument was partly a reaction to the Korean people’s unbalanced diet, which lacked an adequate intake of animal protein and vitamins in the 1960s and 1970s. As mentioned in 7.1, more than 90 per cent of Koreans’ calorie intake was from crop-based foods, approximately 80 per cent of which was supplied by grain. This high reliance on plant foodstuffs led to a deficiency in animal protein. Kim Chŏng-sun, a professor at Seoul National University, and other nutritionists demonstrated the nutritional problem of the Korean diet by analysing data collected from 1960 to 1977. According to their research, the ratio of animal protein to total protein consumption was seventeen per cent, far below the recommended 30 per cent, and the proportion of calories gained from fat intake was five to eight per cent, much lower than the minimum standard of twelve per cent. The

researchers also pointed out that vitamin deficiency was one of the major problems with the Korean diet.³⁴⁴

In this regard, wheat flour, which was relatively rich in protein, was seen as a more favourable staple than rice. Furthermore, the nutritional values of white bread, which was provided as primary school meals from the 1960s, appeared notable. Since animal products, such as eggs and milk were added in the bread-making process, the amount of protein and fat in the diet increased. However, such nutritional benefits were explained as if they came from the wheat flour and not from the animal products (Ibid.: 45). That the absorption rate of protein into the human body from rice is 70 per cent, while that of wheat flour is just 42 per cent, was never mentioned. This is de facto more important than the protein content itself (Ibid.: 44). The dissemination of false information on the digestibility of wheat based-foods and rice was also noted. While the digestive efficiency of 70 per cent milled wheat flour was 90 per cent, that of white rice was 99 per cent (Kong C. U. 2008: 176). However, such information was rarely provided to people or was misrepresented: the nutritionist Yi Soon-ae remarked that the rates of digestion and absorption of bread and noodles were much better than those of rice (Yi S. A.1961). Nutritional science was used selectively and strategically.

Moreover, the *honbunsik* promotion of the government included not only admiration for wheat-based foods and barley, but dissemination of the harmful consequences of eating rice as well. On the president's orders shown earlier, university professors and dieticians highlighted the possible physical and mental problems that could be caused by a high reliance on rice. According to Professor Yi Kil-sang of Yonsei University, the possible diseases that could be caused by a nutritional deficit from eating rice were beriberi, obesity, high-blood pressure, fatigue, malnutrition, and a deterioration in brain function, which would cause weakness of will, hypertension, delusion, auditory hallucination, anxiety, a sense of inferiority, jealousy, hysteria, neurosis, and even schizophrenia (1975: 28). These warnings issued by scientists were directly reflected in school education. For example, the teacher's manual for the practical coursework

³⁴⁴ 'Taech'ero 'k'alori' kyōlp'ip- pogōnhak kyōnji-sō pon Han'gugin yōngyang 대체로 「칼로리」 결핍-보건학見地서 본 韓国人營養', *Maeil kyōngje*, 12 June 1978, p.8.

curriculum issued in 1975 by the Ministry of Education echoed the threat described above, stressing the nutritional deficiency of rice (Silgwa kyosayong chidosŏ 1975, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 37).

The knowledge of nutrition is, according to Coveney, is highly influential in changing the dietary practices of people since it served as the basis of food choices (Coveney 2000: 1). The findings of nutritional research became to wield influences on outside the laboratories in the form of the discourse of ‘good nutrition’, the view about food and health promulgated by experts such as scientists and doctors (Crotty 1995, quoted in Coveney 2000: 18-19). In Korea, the dissemination of the nutritional benefits of wheat-based foods substantially contributed to intensifying the *honbunsik* campaign among Korean people. According to a survey conducted in 1973 of 65 children, 62 parents and the teachers at a primary school in Pusan, the majority of all three groups gave ‘nutrition and health’ as the primary reason when asked about the main reason for eating barley and wheat-based foods (Cha P. C. 1973: 91-92). A study of 688 Seoul citizens in 1975 showed a similar tendency. More than 95 per cent of the citizens surveyed answered that they mixed in other grains when they cooked rice, with the largest group choosing ‘nutrition’ as the biggest reason for this (Yi C. G. 1977: 14-15). As the involvement of scientists in the implementation of in modern societies took place coincidentally with the rise of the political concern about the diet of people, the Korean scientists were enlisted by government to promote food policies (Teich 1995: 213).

Consuming Wheat-based Foods, a Symbol of Patriotism and Modernization

Consuming less rice and eating other grains were given the moral symbolism of acts of patriotism. As discussed at the beginning of this section, the crop failures of 1968 and 1969 caused the implementation of the Korean government’s *honbunsik* campaign. In the 1970s, the situation of the food supply in Korea became increasingly worse. Korea imported grain, including rice, worth \$200 million in 1970, \$460 million in 1973, and \$740 million in 1975 (No S. K. 1976: 48). The increasing foreign exchange expenditure on food imports was a crucial factor in the need to save rice, as it impeded the economic growth of South Korea, when the authorities was fuelling an export-oriented economic

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growth of the country. In this regard, saving rice and eating cheaper grains instead, which could reduce the outflow of foreign capital, were glorified as acts of patriotism. The government presented the imports of huge volumes of rice as ‘shameful’ and as hampering national development (Mun’gyobu 1970, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 39). The importance and meanings of the campaign formed by the government were reproduced and strengthened through the media which, in turn, had a great impact on shaping the *honbunsik* campaign throughout the country.

Have you heard the saying ‘*paengmi mangguk*’ [白米亡國, white rice destroys the country]? If the whole nation eats only boiled rice three times a day, even though we have a bumper harvest currently, it will undermine our health and the country’s economy day by day. We should banish this evil custom that should only be seen in backward countries, and eat other economical and nutrient-rich grains. Let’s save and export millions of *sŏk* of rice by striving to eat other grains so that we can earn precious foreign currency and, at the same time, achieve the improvement of the entire nations’ health.

(*Chubu saenghwal* 1959, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 39)

Another point emphasized by the Korean media when promoting substitute foods, especially wheat-based ones, was westernization. By linking consumption of wheat-based foods with the developed western societies, it efficiently disseminated the notion that eating bread was the ‘civilized’ diet. Such images were spread among the Korean people, as shown below:

It is said that if the nation does not eat bread as a staple food, the country will not be civilized. It would be difficult to introduce such practices in a short space of time; however, if we consider that it could bring civilization and economic efficiency, eating bread-centred meals would be ideal for us housewives.

(*Yŏsŏng tonga* 1958, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 42)

Why are the westerners tall and healthy? Because they eat bread made with yeast.

(from an advertisement for yeast in *Chosŏn ilbo* 1963, quoted in Song I. J. 1998: 43)

Weatherall observed that the media in contemporary societies have exerted a powerful influence on people's eating habits by creating a consumer culture related to food choices (1995: 179). A specific example of such a role of the media is stated by Cwiertka. According to her, periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s in Japan was crucial in shaping housewives' desires to modernize their diet by providing information and recipes that embodied the new westernized ideals of home cooking, eventually contributing to the development of post-war home-cooking practices (Cwiertka 2006a: 99-100). The same could also be said of Korea, especially in the 1960s and 1970s when the slogan of the modernization of the country (*choguk kŭndaehwa* 祖國近代化) was vigorously expounded by the Park regime. Persistent media influence led to a creation of the myth of eating wheat-based foods: eating bread was broadly accepted as an 'improvement in nutrition' (*yŏngyang kaesŏn*) and 'balanced diet' (*kyunhyŏngsik* 均衡食) (Chŏn S. G. 1975: 34). Combined with the patriotic notion, the consumption of wheat-based foods carried strong connotations of modernization (Kong C. U. 2008: 174).

This aggressive attitude towards introducing a western diet was also observed among nutritional scientists. Even though the professionals' thinking was not exactly the same as the vague aspirations that appeared in the mass media, in the respect that they called for the changes in Korean eating habits, they shared their viewpoint with the media. For example, the main features of the diet in the developed countries observed by Korean nutritionists were the lower levels of grain eaten and the greater consumption of animal products (i.e. eggs and meat). In terms of increasing the variety of the Korean diet, the introduction of western-style foods was attractive to Korean dieticians. They were aware of the increasing globalization of food, through which the many merits of foreign food could be introduced. For instance, the Japanese began to consume more jam and butter instead of soy sauce and soybean paste as part of the westernization of their diet. In contrast, however, they could see how the Korean diet 'lagged behind', with an extremely limited number of urban dwellers eating bread for their breakfast, and rural people still tied to traditional eating patterns based on fermented food, such as *kimch'i*, soybean paste and pepper paste. Emphasizing the need for a comprehensive reform of the Korean diet, they warned that the 'poison' (*haedok* 害毒) could even be found among the rich Korean

people who could afford to indulge in eating what³⁴⁵ they wanted (Kim S. H. et al. 1976: 6-7). They called for a change in the traditional Korean diet and the reduction of rice consumption through the acceptance of a western diet.

The transformation of the Korean diet advocated by many Korean people was accompanied by the denial of their own eating habits, especially the tradition of rice-centred meals. Koreans' preference for rice and dislike of other grains was said to be outdated and evil (Han'guk toro kongsa 1973: 17). Represented by the terms *chusik* 主食 (main dish) and *pusik* 副食 (side dish), Korean dishes at meals were sharply divided into two categories, and rice, which belonged to the former, was considered especially important. It is only recently that rice has come to be available to everyone in Korea due to the insufficient supply and its relatively high price, but it has always been deeply-ingrained in the Korean psyche that rice is the sole staple and other grains are nothing but substitutes. Having rice on a daily basis remained an unattainable dream for the majority of the population until the 1970s.³⁴⁶

While the clear distinction between main and side dishes is regarded as one of the unique features of Korean food in research since the 1990s,³⁴⁷ the opposite view was held by many Koreans in the 1970s. This was embodied in the call to remove the idea of separate food categories at meals in order to dispel the practice of placing a high value on rice (Kim S. H. et al. 1976: 68; Chu C. S. 1975: 26). Food experts advised people to break the practice of ranking foods, and to reduce rice consumption and eat every available foodstuff as much as possible in order to attain a balanced diet (Hyŏn and Mo 1974: 111; Kim and Hwang 1964: 21). Furthermore, nutritionists emphasized that food preferences were merely psychological, and by no means related to the nutrients absorbed. All of the moral meanings of *honbunsik* and nutritional information propagated by the

³⁴⁵ Most probably, this refers to eating white rice. The term 'poison' (*haedok*) was frequently used to explain the nutritional disadvantages of eating rice at that time. For example, in their articles written to encourage the eating of wheat-based foods and barley, a professor at Yonsei University, Yi Kil-sang, talked of the 'poison brought on by eating white rice ...' (1975: 29), and the vice-principal of a primary school, Kwŏn Hyŏn-gu, mentioned the 'poison of white rice' (1975: 128).

³⁴⁶ For more details about the symbolic meaning of rice and Korean people's preference for it, see the major example detailed in 1.1.

³⁴⁷ For example, see Kang I. H. 2000: 171.

government were incorporated into the programmes of the *honbunsik* campaign in schools.

A Comprehensive Project for Honbunsik Changnyŏ : Lunchbox Inspections

Among the various *honbunsik changnyŏ* schemes implemented in schools, the inspection of lunchboxes was one of the most common. Under the supervision of the government, the project enabled the Korean authorities to become directly involved in the modification of the eating habits of school children, as well as those of their parents. Along with the school lunch programme, which was essential to reshape the eating habits of Korean children, the inspection of lunchboxes assumed a crucial role in promoting the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign.

The lunchbox inspection is vividly described in a report on a one-year *honbunsik* education project carried out between March 1972 and February 1973 at Ch'ojang primary school in Pusan. This was an aggressive *honbunsik* project designed to target not only the pupils, but also their parents. Lunch-time was selected as the prime time to encourage children to actively participate in *honbunsik*.

There was an urgent need to change children's thinking about rice and other grains. As explained earlier in this section, despite the fact that only rich people could eat pure boiled rice and that it was normal to boil rice with other grains for reasons of economy, there was broad recognition that barley and other grains were a poor man's food, even among children (Ch'a P. C. 1973: 89). To break the habit of feeling ashamed to eat barley and instil the idea that eating more of it was good for oneself as well as for the country, teachers carried out the inspection of children's lunchboxes.

In order to trigger a boom of *honbunsik* among children as the first step, teachers regularly praised children who practised exemplary *honbunsik* – those who brought boiled rice mixed with other grains or only other grains without rice – in front of the class. The praise proved to be very effective: soon the notion that 'eating only white rice without other grains was shameful' prevailed in the school and almost all the pupils voluntarily practiced *honbunsik* (Ibid.: 99). Within two months of the project starting, the

idea of feeling embarrassed about eating barley and wheat-based foods had been banished and instead an atmosphere of being proud of eating them became common among the children at the school (Ibid.: 94).

Pupils also participated in a contest for writing, drawing posters, giving public speeches, creating slogans and writing songs about the merits of *honbunsik*. The results were displayed at the school, and some excellent examples were sent in to the nationwide contest. The rest of the work was made into a book, which circulated among the parents of each class, before being returned to the pupils. The teachers recommended that the children put their own work up in their homes. These activities were evaluated as beneficial in terms of drawing the attention of children to practicing *honbunsik* (Ibid.: 96). The children's changing thinking and attitudes towards *honbunsik* were well expressed in their essays.

I opened my lunchbox wondering what was in it. I first opened it covertly so as not to be seen by Suk-hŭi who was sitting next to me. There was my favourite *ojingŏ t'wigim*³⁴⁸ in my lunchbox. I threw it open. There was black *kkongdang poribap*!³⁴⁹ Suk-hŭi also had *kkongdang poribap*! Suk-hŭi and I looked at each other and smiled. We began to use our chopsticks. I chewed it well, and then it smelled nice, as my teacher told me so. The teacher began to inspect our lunchboxes. 'Chong-hwa, you need to have more barley!' Chong-hwa went red in the face. But I did not need to worry about mine. Today, there were four people who did not have *punsik* and *honsik*...

(Ibid.)

One of the remarkable results brought about by the *honbunsik* project was that it influenced the changing attitude of parents towards eating staples and contributed to the consumption of less rice in meals. Circulating the children's work among the parents was one of the carefully orchestrated measures aimed at educating parents. Each parent was required to sign after reading the children's work and pass it on to the next parent. Since

³⁴⁸ Pieces of squid deep-fried in batter.

³⁴⁹ Literally, 'pure boiled barley'. Rice was often boiled with barley, millet or other grains, but in the consciousness of most Koreans it was still considered 'boiled rice' (*pap*) and referred to as such. Since the staple food mentioned above consisted of only barley, the writer called it *poribap* (lit. 'barley rice').

the children's work was collated based on neighbourhood, some parents, who already knew each other, organized special meetings at which the children read their essays in front of other people. By doing so, the school reported that a 'double effect' was achieved, which denoted the educational impact not only on the children, but also on the parents (Ibid.: 100).

Separate educational programmes for parents were also developed by the Ch'ojang primary school in Pusan. A nineteen-page document entitled *Improvement of Dietary Life* (*Siksaenghwal-ŭi kaesŏn* 食生活의改善) was distributed among the parents. It was made up of three parts: the basis for the improvement of diet, the government's food policies, and the human constitution and food (Ibid.). Special lectures for parents were also held. For example, at 'Parents' Class' (*ŏbŏi kyosil* 어버이교실), 171 parents listened to a lecture on *honbunsik* and were taught how to put it into practice when they prepared home-cooked meals. Teachers made home visits to their pupils to meet their parents. All occasions at which parents gathered, such as the enrolment ceremony, meetings of the Improvement Association (*yuksŏnghoe* 育成會)³⁵⁰ and sports day, were utilized to promote the campaign. Another notable method of encouraging *honbunsik* at home was the record card programme. Nine hundred and seventy-eight parents were given a card on which they were to record how they practised *honbunsik* at the three home-cooked meals for 50 days. Parents were directed to make an honest self-assessment, and to rank themselves using a three-level grading system. The cards were to be brought to the school every Monday to be checked by the teachers (Ibid.: 100-101).

One of the most distinctive features of the 1973 project at Cho'jang primary school in Pusan was the education of parents using their children's influence. The reason the school focused on the children's role in transmitting what they were taught at school was that the parents were those who actually practiced *honbunsik*. The indirect education of parents through their children was the most effective way to gain successful results, as the testimonies below show.

Ch'un-hŭi, sitting next to me, also had white rice. Everyone else had brought

³⁵⁰ A parents' organization that supported the school management.

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bread or *poribap*. I could not open my lunchbox. As soon as I returned home, I cried to my mother. ‘Mum, why did you put white rice [in my lunchbox] today? It was so shameful.’ ‘I could not buy barley. I will buy it right away’, my mother replied.

(Ibid.: 97)

Chŏng Hyang-hŭi received all of her family’s love as an only child. Insisting on feeding her white rice, her mother cooked only this for her at home. However, her mother had no alternative but to prepare *poribap* for her daughter’s lunch since she [Hyang-hŭi] was adamant that she should eat it [at school]... When the poster painted by Hyang-hŭi was passed to her parents, there was an argument between the mother and daughter. While her mother wanted to put the poster on the wall of the other room to keep it clean for longer, Hyang-hŭi persisted in hanging it on the wall of the kitchen, saying that it must be there so that it would stop her mother from cooking only white rice...

(Ibid.: 100-101)

Kim Myŏng-bae, a pupil from a destitute family of an uneducated single parent and two younger brothers and a sister, used to miss his lunch every three days. His mother did not have a regular income since she made the family’s living through day labouring. Yet, when she did manage to get some money, she would spend her earnings on white rice. Accordingly, sometimes Myŏng-bae brought lunches of entirely white rice and sometimes he did not bring any lunch at all to school. His teacher bought a piece of bread for him when he came to school without lunch so that he did not miss a meal. Almost every day, the teacher tried to persuade the boy to eat other grains instead of only white rice (and told him to tell this to his mother). On the following day, the teacher would ask the pupil about his mother’s reaction. During the first week (from 21 to 28 March), the teacher found that the mother’s view was that whatever people said, white rice was the best, and even though her family could not afford to have good meals all the time, they at least deserved to eat white rice when the situation allowed. Thus, the teacher taught the boy about the nutritional and economical benefits of eating barley and wheat-based foods, and told him to convey only a piece of this information to his mother each day. During the two weeks after this second step was taken, the mother allegedly remained silent. In the meantime, the boy began

to take his lunch more frequently...and began to bring *poribap*. This started on the twenty-eighth day after the teacher set about convincing the mother (through the boy)...

(Ibid.: 99)

The report from Ch'ojang primary school reveals that 97 per cent of the 978 parents actually practiced *honbunsik* at home following the school's instructions (Ibid.: 102). This school's programme can be regarded as a successful example. As seen in the case of Kim Myŏng-bae above, teachers made every endeavour to encourage pupils and their parents to save rice and eat other grains. As practical trainers of *honbunsik*, teachers held the key to educating both children and their parents.

Teachers and Moulding Dietary Habits

Honbunsik education in schools was not limited to checking children's lunchboxes, as seen in the programme at Ch'ojang primary school, but extended to ensuring children developed a specific understanding of *honbunsik*, that they would eventually carry out themselves (Yi K. H. 1976: 198; Kwŏn H. G. 1975: 130). An article in the periodical *Suŏp yŏn'gu* 授業研究 (Class Research), which included teaching guidelines and advice on educational activities for teachers, shows that a vast range of responsibilities was entrusted to teachers concerning food education. Teachers were advised to pay special attention to the content of children's meals. They encouraged their pupils to consume enough of the five major nutrients, with a special emphasis on eating more protein by eating barley, millet and soybeans mixed with rice. Following dieticians' advice, teachers taught their pupils not to distinguish between main and side dishes at mealtimes. Teachers also changed the children's conventional view that wheat-based foods were not a meal but rather a snack and that they were a poor man's substitute for rice (Yi K. H. 1976: 198). Teachers endeavoured to make their pupils understand that the country's rice production was far from sufficient to meet the growing demand for it, and to recognize that all Korean people would have to pay back the cost of the imported rice for many decades to come (Ibid.: 199).

Detailed instructions on how to inspect children's lunchboxes were given to

teachers. There were standards by which to evaluate the lunchboxes, according to the proportion of other grains mixed with rice and the type of staple foods. For example, a lunch with boiled rice mixed with more than 30 per cent of other grains was given a circle mark; wheat-based foods were given a triangle mark; other staples, such as potatoes equalled a square; and all others received crosses. Inspections were carried out twice a day, the first in the morning by the children's peer group, and the second by teachers (Ibid.: 200). The results of the school inspections were reported to the government, and schools achieving good results were rewarded. For example, Haesŏ primary school in Taegu city received a certificate and a cash prize in 1973 from the Minister for Agriculture for its 98.7 per cent achievement of *honbunsik*. The money was used to buy a bread-carrier for school lunches (Chang Y. T'. 1973: 83).

Teachers were also advised on how to better consider children's feelings. For example, they were instructed not to scold a child who did not follow the *honbunsik* rules at lunch-time so as not to give him an upset stomach: instead, the pupil should be spoken to privately after school, and gently admonished about bringing lunches containing at least 30 per cent of grains other than rice. When there were children who did not bring lunchboxes, teachers were advised to ask why, and to try to find a solution in a way that would not make the pupil feel inferior (Yi K. H. 1976: 198-199).

However, many schools set stringent standards for lunchbox inspections, and took forceful measures to implement the campaign. An article in the *Tonga ilbo* newspaper of 1976 featured the extremely coercive controls used by schools, with examples of the actual conditions at several schools in Seoul. For example, a girls' junior high school in Tongdaemun ward set a standard of at least 50 per cent of other grains mixed with rice, higher than the 30 per cent standard set by the Ministry of Education. Pupils who broke the rule were made to clean the toilets as punishment, and their parents were summoned to the school and forced to give written pledges that they would never disobey the rule again. Another girls' junior high school in Sŏngdong ward reflected the results of the lunchbox inspection in the grades of the subject of morality (*todŏk* 道德).

The regulations were even stricter at primary schools. A primary school in

Tongdaemun established a ‘no rice-day’ twice a week, and made all its pupils eat bread and milk for their lunches. The food was bought by the school with money collected from the pupils – 630 *wŏn* per pupil per month. Another primary school even confiscated children’s lunchboxes when the school’s standard of a 50 per cent minimum mixture of rice and other grains was not kept. Even worse, the children who did not bring lunch because their families could not afford to provide it were also considered to be ‘acting contrary to the rule’, and special research into their home environment was conducted.

Parents clearly showed their dissatisfaction with the schools’ coercion. One housewife who had children at primary school complained that she had to cook twice every morning because she had to put more barley in her children’s lunches than was eaten at home. Another housewife complained about the school policies because her children frequently left the food she had prepared for lunch because they found the boiled barley to be tasteless. The following example depicts the scene of a thorough lunch-time inspection.³⁵¹

The greatest concern of our class teacher was neither our education nor our health. He paid attention solely to our lunchboxes... the country was promoting a campaign, the so-called *honbunsik changnyŏ*, then. There was even a song called ‘there is no weakling if we eat barley and wheat-based foods’... When the lunch-time bell went, all the children opened the lids of their lunchboxes, and waited for the teacher’s inspection. The lunch had to include at least 30 per cent of grains other than rice. In fact, our lunches looked coal-black. The lunches of children from wealthy families who lived in town had a thin covering of boiled barley over white rice. They only brought boiled barley to pass the inspection. Wŏndu did not need to [do this] since he was already used to eating [boiled barley] at home. It was Chin-yong that was the problem. His family could not afford to prepare lunches for him. Thus, he had no choice but to raise his palms upwards when the teacher approached him. When mixed grains or wheat-based foods were not brought it was the rule that the pupil would be beaten on the palms. The brilliant *honbunsik* campaign ended with the teacher practicing what

³⁵¹ ‘Haksaeng tosirak honbunsik kwaing tansok, sŏngjŏg-e panyŏng, ch’ŏbŏl kkaji 學生도시락 混粉食과잉단속 成績에 反映, 處罰까지’, *Tonga ilbo*, 12 June, 1976, p.7.

Chapter Seven

he preached – having noodle soup delivered as his lunch. On top of being starving, Chin-yong was forced to prepare his lunch, following the specified mixing ratio. But he was beaten because he did not obey the rules. Before the inspections started, nobody cared about his lunches. For Chin-yong, the *honbunsik* campaign was a campaign of being beaten on his palms. We could not help feeling intimidated by such a school.

(Söng 2004, quoted in Pak S. H. 2008: 80-81)

It seems that teachers, who were responsible for making sure that their pupils obeyed the lunchbox rules no matter what, also had trouble carrying out the campaign. They had to devote considerable time and energy to the inspections, to the extent that they had a detrimental effect on classes. Notwithstanding these difficulties, teachers were obligated to report the performance of pupils to their superiors. On top of this, schools were visited by groups of observers, including government officials, on a regular basis and sometimes unexpectedly. According to a newspaper report, on one occasion the children's lunch-time was delayed for hours while waiting for the officials to visit for an inspection.³⁵² Chöng Kũn-yöng, a retired school teacher who was in post in the 1970s, described one of his experiences:

It happened when I had just become a school teacher at the beginning of the 1970s. At the time, there was a great fuss throughout the country about saving rice...We checked pupils' lunches. By presidential order, teachers were directed to prepare a 'lunchbox inspection report' and to record the results of every inspection in it. But the government seems to have been untrusting [without the direct involvement of their own inspectors]. The authorities frequently mobilized all higher educational officials, and sent them to schools to monitor the inspections. One day, an official visited our school. He went through the inspection reports. After checking the reports for my class, he became angry. He called me up and rebuked me: 'I do not think you can be carrying out the

³⁵² 'Tosirak chömgöm, sop'ungbi, hakkyo chöch'uk tũng 'kwaing silch'ön'-e hakseng-ün koeroptta 도시락點檢, 소풍費·學校貯蓄等 「過剩實踐」에學生은 괴롭다', *Tonga ilbo*, 13 September 1976, p.7.

instructions of the principal, as you don't even obey the president's orders.'

(Chŏng Kŭn-yŏng, quoted in Pak S. H. 2008: 79-80)

The teacher's statement above clearly shows his displeasure with the government's coercive *honbunsik* campaign carried out in schools. However, even if the policy was thought to be unreasonable, there was often nothing teachers could do but obey the government. If schools received poor audit marks, the people in charge of monitoring were severely punished as well as the teachers. For example, after it was discovered that the *honbunsik* performance was not very good at a primary school in P'yŏngt'aek town, the school's principal and the local chief education officer were forced to transfer as punishment for the situation. The teachers' lunches were also checked by government officials when there was an inspection. One primary school teacher in Taegu was forced to submit a written apology to officials when the boiled barley in the teacher's lunchbox was deemed less than the minimum standard of 30 per cent in the eyes of the observer (Pak S. H. 2008: 80).

It was in 1977 that the Korean government ended the *honbunsik* campaign by abolishing the 'no rice day' which had marked the official beginning of the campaign in 1969 (Nongsusanbu 1978: 689). This was made possible by the successful harvest of *T'ongil* rice, a high yield variety which was established after the considerable efforts of the Korean government. This revolutionary crop brought great self-sufficiency in rice in the three-year period beginning in 1976 (Kim P. T'. 2004: 93), and stopped the Korean government from propagating the *harmful* consequences of eating rice and the nutritional benefits of wheat-based foods (see 7.1).

A Korea scholar Moon states that Park Chung-hee's regime saw the public school system as an effective network for social control. According to her, schools functioned as a mechanism for reshaping individual thoughts and attitudes, and for normalizing individuals as members of the state (Moon 2005: 35). This argument is especially true for the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign, which aimed to modify and reshape the eating habits of Korean children through schooling. The utility of the formal school system enabled the Korean authorities to successfully control the diet of pupils and further extend its

influential power to the home-cooked meals of the people. Definitely, the issue of good nutrition had remained at the core of the *honbunsik* campaign. However, the campaign was a strategically-designed governmental project aiming at moulding new eating habits among Korean people so that it was beneficial for the country's economic policies rather than healthy diets. It is important to bear in mind that it was in schools that the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign was most systematically executed, revealing the Park regime's authoritarian nature.

Scholars have pointed out that President Park, who had been an officer in the Japanese Kwantung Army before 1945, revived the totalitarian state system in post-colonial Korea by resurrecting the Japanese colonial ruling structure through his social mobilization strategies (Cumings 1984: 479; Moon 2005: 23; Shin and Han 2000: 96). The intense involvement of the Park regime in the food consumption practices of its people resembled the Japanese colonial methods of food control during the Second World War. Both of these control methods combined the moral symbolism of nationalism and nutritional science as the rationale behind the call to save food resources, and both systematically imposed state food policies on people through the education system. Through the *honbunsik changnyŏ* campaign, Korean children were forced to have their meals at a 'radical and violent lunch table' – in Pak Sang-hŭi's words – designed by the authorities, and to put into practice the state's economic policies by eating boiled rice mixed with barley or wheat-based foods.



Above: Primary school children eating school lunches (bread, a bowl of soup and a cup of milk)

Below: The prize-giving ceremony of a contest for writing, drawing posters, creating slogans for the *honbunsik* campaigns (1967)

