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Body and Ki in Gicheon : practices of self-cultivation in contemporary Korea

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 *Ki suryŏn* as a contemporary phenomenon

In this dissertation I study the social phenomenon of *ki suryŏn* (氣修練 training related to *ki* – which I shall provisionally define as "life energy") as an invented tradition and examine how it functions within contemporary Korean society. Approaching *ki suryŏn* as a form of "self-craft", where the body as a subject applies a set of skills and techniques on the body as an object, I review how *ki suryŏn* trainees conceptualize their practice, asking what meaning and content this practice carries for them, with the larger aim of gaining a better understanding of present-day Korea. I argue that practitioners perceive *ki suryŏn* as a process of self-formation, where the self is simultaneously a subject of the desires, thoughts and actions of oneself, as well as an object of the desires, thoughts and actions of others. This approach emphasizes the relevance of *ki suryŏn* to the formation and development of contemporary subjectivity. As my point of departure I take Michel Foucault's concepts of "technologies of self" (1988, 2001) and "subjectivation" (1994a: 223).

I suggest approaching Korean *ki suryŏn* within a context of similar Korean and East Asian re-constructed traditions, understanding them through "subjectivation" – the construction of a subject – occurring in response to and within the space of modernity. I am studying *ki suryŏn* as a living tradition that is currently in the process of formation in present-day Korea. The terms "reconstructed tradition" and "living tradition" echo of course the famous study *The Invention of Tradition* by E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger *(*1992 [1983]), but Adam Chau notes that any tradition is invented and constructed. Because of this, he suggests, it is necessary to adopt a dynamic, processual and site-specific understanding of tradition within an actual social context (Chau 2001a: 3). This is precisely the ethnographical approach I intend to apply in this study.

My investigation was carried out through a case study of GiCheon (氣天 McCune-Reischauer: *Kich'ŏn*), one of the *ki suryŏn* practices developed in Korea in the 1970s. As a set of exercises intended to transform the body and mind-heart, GiCheon belongs to a group of practices which have been characterized as internal alchemy (*naedan* 內丹) and nourishing life (*yangsaeng* 養生).[1] In my research, I use a series of interviews conducted with sixty one GiCheon practitioners between September 2010 and April 2011 in South Korea.[2] Additionally, as a scholar-practitioner myself, I utilize my own sixteen years long GiCheon experience as an adept and an instructor, and the knowledge acquired therein. I also make use of GiCheon books and texts, written and oral legends and lore, and visual imagery, such as book covers, flyers and DVD images.

East Asian practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life come from ancient times and are techniques related to *ki.* These techniques are grounded in physiological, psychological and behavioural principles. They include gymnastics, massage, breathing, sexual hygiene, diet, healing, meditation and visualization, as well as rules of daily behaviour (Despeux 2008a).[3] Mapping the geo-temporal cultural space within which the practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life have arisen and existed, I focus on the re-inventing or re-discovering of these traditions for today's purposes. Nowadays, their contemporary Korean avatar *ki suryŏn* is one of the methods of dealing with the pressures of modernity. In contemporary South Korea, practices of *ki suryŏn* such as those taught by GiCheon and Dahn World (단월드 *tanwŏldŭ*, U Hyeran 2006a) have been integrated into the routine of urban

[1] The word *yangsaeng* (Chinese *yangsheng*) though referring to ancient East Asian alchemical and medical practices of immortality and nourishing life, also indicates a contemporary phenomenon in China.

[2] I use the terms "adherents", "adepts", "practitioners", "trainees" and "students" interchangeably.

[3] A particular practice of GiCheon on which I focus includes gymnastic, massage, breathing, healing, and meditation, but not sexual hygiene, diet, visualization or rules of daily behaviour.

daily life; thus to study *ki suryŏn* culture involves investigating the way urbanites live and relate to each other.[4] Studios and other training sites where practitioners come together create opportunities for social net-working and improving social status by getting to know people of higher standing – a striving for status that is encouraged by the competitive demands of modern society (Lett 2002). While social standing is not, of course, the sole motivation for practice, the "confirmation" of status, usually maintained and reproduced by social practices, is an important a matter of concern. Other reasons that attract men and women to practice include health concerns, seeking relief from stress, a longing for spiritual enlightenment, and the desire to leave the dusty city and spend some time in nature at the week-end retreats which are often organized for the adepts of different *ki suryŏn* groups.

Although scholars sometimes include *ki* practices among religious practices (Baker 2007b), the practitioners of *ki suryŏn* of both genders are drawn not only from different social classes and age groups but also from various religious persuasions. Often, individuals engage in more than one kind of *ki suryŏn*, and Christians and Buddhists join in *ki*-related training. Some Christian *ki suryŏn* practitioners believe that *ki* disciplines turn them into "better Christians": after starting the practice they pray more, listen to the priest with greater attention, and visit the church more frequently. Some Christians also pray to God during the training, to ask for forgiveness and express gratitude.[5] Buddhist practitioners state that *ki* exercises in the studio improve their concentration in Buddhist meditation.[6]

[4] Dahn World, or Dahn Yoga has recently changed its name into Noe Hohŭp (뇌호흡) (Brain Breathing) and Noe Kyoyuk (뇌교육) (Brain Education).

[5] Interview with Yi Sŏngdo, 08.12.2010, Pusan, South Korea. Yi Sŏngdo gave me explicit permission to use his real name. Interview with Kim Yŏnghui (not a real name), 05.11.2010, Seoul, South Korea.

[6] Interview with Yi T'aegyŏng, 09.12.2010, Pusan, South Korea. Yi T'aegyŏng gave me explicit permission to use his real name. In Chapter Three I discuss the extract from the interview with Yi T'aegyŏng where he talks about the relationship between Buddhist and GiCheon practices in detail.

But what is *ki suryŏn* more precisely*?* U Hyeran defines it as a *ki*-based practice directed toward moral and physical development of a person. *Ki suryŏn* is supposed to lead to harmonization of the mind-body and actualization of hidden potential of an individual in the context of a union with the universe. *Ki suryŏn* groups focus on bodily practice, while selectively appropriating elements of various Korean religious traditions. In the estimation of U Hyeran, *ki suryŏn* has spread beyond particular *ki suryŏn* groups, becoming a cultural product approachable to the majority of the population. As part of popular culture, the cosmology and values of *ki suryŏn* are interiorized by contemporary South-Korean society, among other things through internet computer games, animation and films. *Ki suryŏn* groups generally seem to be growing – though exact statistics are difficult or even impossible to obtain - and the terms *ki* and *ki suryŏn* are among vital keywords of contemporary Korean culture (U Hyeran 2006b: 71-73). Various *ki suryŏn* organizations inter-penetrate, borrow ideas and practices from each other; they also co-exist with Chinese forms of self-cultivation usually referred to as *qigong* (氣功) and with Indian yoga.

Contemporary adepts of *ki suryŏn* reconstruct this tradition on the basis of an age-old East Asian culture of mind-body cultivation, but the ways in which they experience and articulate this practice are informed by the present, by the concerns and questions of modern Korean society. Within the socio-historical context of *ki suryŏn,* important issues surround its relationship with modern western science. Some adepts consider *ki suryŏn* "anti-scientific" and adopt a partially confrontational attitude in placing it in opposition to modern science.[7] *Ki suryŏn* instructors, however, take pains to assert its scientific and systematic nature. The notion of "my body as my lab for conducting scientific experiments" is important in this

[7] Interview with Ch'oe Hyŏngsu of 10.11.2010, Puch'ŏn, South Korea. Ch'oe Hyŏngsu gave me explicit permission to use his real name.

respect.[8] Here the concept of contemporary science establishes the way *ki suryŏn* is perceived, experienced and narrated. These dynamics mirror similar developments in China (Palmer 2007, Despeux 1997), but on a much smaller scale.

Exact numbers of *ki suryŏn* trainees are difficult to ascertain.[9] When I asked official representatives of Kouksundo (*Kuksŏndo* 國仙道), one of the earliest *ki suryŏn* organizations, for the estimation of the number of their practitioners within South Korea, they reacted with suspicion and were unwilling to donate information.[10] GiCheon representatives, on the other hand, provided diverging estimations, ranging from a few hundreds to tens of thousands. These types of reaction might be related to the fact that the numbers are indeed difficult to calculate. In a dynamically changing South Korean society new forms of *ki suryŏn* appear almost daily, new leaders arise combining or shifting their diffuse organizational affiliations. New mythologies, contemporary legends and "histories of the movement" are produced for mass-consumption, both orally and in print. In such circumstances, whom should the headquarters count as "their" practitioners? How about new masters who proclaimed their independence and gave their own groups new names? How about the "rogue" sub-groups who challenge the authority of the headquarters claiming theirs is the "real" legacy? When this is the situation on the ground, caution and suspicion on behalf of the actors involved is understandable. I do not know exactly why the number of the practitioners is not made public, though it seems that the factors in play are complex and contradictory. On one hand, inclusion of the rogue sub-groups would heighten the numbers, thus contributing to the

[8] GiCheon teacher Kim Hŭisang has written a number of letters to me on this subject in the years 2010 and 2011.

[9] U Hyeran in her research published in 2006 states that at a time Dahn World had three hundred training centers in South-Korea and two hundred centers abroad (one hundred seventy centers in the US only), with totally around one million of practitioners in the world. This information was taken from the official site of Dahn World (2006a: 4). However, since then the information on the number of the practitioners was removed from the website.

[10] GiCheon and Kouksundo, as originating in 1970s, are among the first South Korean *ki suryŏn* groups (U Hyeran 2006b: 77 on Kouksundo).

prestige of the movement, on the other hand that might give those rogue sub-groups legitimation. Besides, the official representatives of the movement might worry that the numerical information they donate could be used against them by their competitors. Alternatively, tax concerns might be involved, as the numbers of the practitioners have a direct connection to the estimated income.

The teachers of *ki suryŏn* in South Korea face the same dilemma as their colleagues in India and China when they try to reconcile the image of a "disinterested teacher of a true way" with the social relevance of *ki suryŏn* – and undertake its marketing and commodification in a capitalistic contemporary society (Van der Veer 2007). Naturally, financial issues are central for the instructors who make a living out of it, and prompting the students to pay their fees is included in a subtle manner into the "explanations" accompanying the training.

Many *ki suryŏn* groups locate their origin in ancient, mythic times, connecting their legacy to East Asian beliefs in divine immortals (*sinsŏn* 神仙, Chinese: *shenxian*), Korean mountain cults, and Tan'gun, the legendary father of the Korean nation. I clarify these connections in the next section and in greater detail in Chapter Seven. Some scholars find the source of theoretic conceptualization of *ki suryŏn* groups in the teachings of the followers of Daoist practices in Chosŏn Korea (1392-1897) (U Hyeran 2006b: 74-75). This dissertation, however, approaches Korean *ki suryŏn* as a contemporary urban practice, which, similarly to Chinese *qigong* (Palmer 2007) and Indian yoga (Van der Veer 2007), is reinvented in modernity on the basis of ancient Asian traditions.

1.2 Immortality and nationalism in contemporary Korea

In their narrations, GiCheon adepts of the older generation mention such concepts as *sinsŏn* (神仙, Chinese: *shenxian*, divine immortal), *sŏngin* (聖人, Chinese: *shengren*, sage) and

chinin (眞人, Chinese: *zhenren*, perfected person). These terms are repeated numerous times in GiCheon books and texts. The *sinsŏn,* an important figure in East Asian practices of inner alchemy and nourishing life, is a category within a hierarchy of celestial beings. A *sŏngin* is a model of complete humanity, her or his divine powers result from her or his practices, she or he actively and mystically participating in the natural workings of life. A *chinin* denotes one of the highest states in the spiritual hierarchy. *Sinsŏn, sŏngin* and *chinin* embody immortality, often a goal of practices of internal alchemy (內丹, Korean: *naedan,* Chinese: *neidan*), and nourishing life (養生, Korean: *yangsaeng,* Chinese: *yangsheng*).[11] Immortality, in this context, indicates a process of personal purification and enhanced perception of reality, resulting from physical, moral-spiritual and cognitive development (Miura 2008a, Miura 2008b, Robinet 2008b, Kirkland 2008).

I will now briefly outline how the notions of immortality in GiCheon relate to nationalistic discourse in contemporary Korea, and to Korean mountain cults. This will help to situate *ki suryŏn* in general and GiCheon in particular within its cultural and historical context. I will start with introducing the concepts of *sansin* (山神 mountain gods) and *sinsŏn*.

The cult of *sansin* worship existed in Korea since ancient times. In the Three Kingdoms period, when Daoism came to Korea from China, Chinese concepts of immortals (*sinsŏn* 神仙) connected to the notion of Korean *sansin*. Today the depictions of male and female *sansin* and *sinsŏn* are found in shrines dedicated to mountain gods which are parts of

[11] This type of practices is often associated with Daoism. However, referring to grandiose, overarching traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism, which exist mainly as abstractions or fetishes, is not very useful for understanding the concrete practices. As I have mentioned in the beginning to this Introduction, Adam Chau suggests site-specific understanding of practices, looking at their unfolding elements and how they relate to each other in a concrete setting (Chau 2001a: 3), the approach I adopt in this dissertation.

Buddhist temple complexes, usually called *sansingak* (山神閣), or *samsŏnggak* (三聖閣).[12] They are also worshiped in separate shrines called *sansindang* (山神堂), which are not parts of Buddhist temples (Mason 1999: 97).[13]

Despite the fact that *sansin* and *sinsŏn* sometimes coexist and merge on the paintings in Buddhist temples and in other cultural spaces such as *sŏndo* culture discussed below or the GiCheon legends discussed in Chapter Seven, they are parts of different systems. The cult of *sansin* is widespread in Korea and manifests in many forms, as I elaborate in Chapter Seven. Korean shamans pray to *sansin,* as they are included in the shamanic pantheon of gods and spirits, with separate ceremonies held for *sansin*. While *sansin* is a very old and deeply rooted Korean folk culture, the *sinsŏn* tradition, usually identified as Daoist, was mostly favourite with upper classes, particularly during its introduction in Paekche and Silla. In Koryŏ and Chosŏn *sinsŏn* culture got gradually popularized, manifesting in the 19th century in such new religions as Ch'ŏndogyŏ (Na Kwŏnsu 2012).

The Chinese character *sŏn* (仙 Chinese: *xian*, immortality, immortals) is traditionally associated with East Asian Daoism. Early descriptions of the immortals are found in the *Shiji* (史記 Records of the Historian), produced around the first century BC (Miura 2008b: 1092). Yet, in contemporary South Korea the character *sŏn* has acquired a new nationalistic meaning. In modern times references have emerged to old Korean cults of mountain worship under the

[12] Sansin, Toksŏng (獨聖 Lonely Saint) and Ch'ilsŏng (七聖 Seven Stars God) are usually enshrined together in *samsŏnggak* (三聖閣 three saints shrine).

[13] Most of *sansin* are male, but there are also depictions of female *sansin*. See for example female *sansin* images in Ssanggyesa (雙磎寺) and Taewŏnsa (大源寺) Buddhist temples at Chiri mountain. *Sinsŏn* are often painted on outer walls of Buddhist temples, or as accompanying *sansin. Sinsŏn* are sometimes called *pisŏn* (飛仙 flying immortals) or *sŏnnyŏ* (仙女 immortal women) (Mason 1999: 37-38, 55, 81).

name of *sŏndo* (仙道 the way of immortality). *Sŏndo* constitutes a merger of *sansin* and *sinsŏn* cultures, a merging embodied, for example, in the figure of Tan'gun. Contemporary s*ŏndo* writings posit Tan'gun as central to *sŏndo* (Sondŏ munhwa yŏnguwŏn ed. 2006; Yi Sŭngho 2015), despite the fact that the *locus classicus*, the *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事 Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) calls him *sansin*, and not a *sinsŏn*.[14]

Sŏndo culture has grown and developed since the 1980s, and it is postulated to be an ancient and original Korean religion. New books on *sŏndo* are continuously published in South Korea, as for example *Han'guk sŏndo wa hyŏndae tanhak* (한국 선도와 현대 단학) (Korean *sŏndo* and contemporary *tanhak*) by Yi Sŭngho published in 2015, or *Han'guk sŏndo ŭi yŏksa wa munhwa* (History and culture of Korean *sŏndo*) by Sondŏ munhwa yŏnguwŏn (Research institute of *sŏndo* culture) published in 2006. They perpetuate and develop ideas of *sŏn* and *sinsŏn,* supporting their presence in the public consciousness. The proponents of *sŏndo* view *ki suryŏn* as one manifestation of *sŏndo*, and they usually refer to it as *sŏndo suryŏn* (仙道修練 learning the way of immortality) (Sondŏ munhwa yŏnguwŏn ed. 2006: 741, Yi Sŭngho 2015: 262). The importance of Tan'gun and notions of immortality in GiCheon reviewed in the next chapter should be understood in the context of this *sŏndo* culture.

Korean mountain worship is indeed ancient. Therefore *sŏndo* might be defined as a newly coined name for an already existing cultural and historical phenomenon. Alternatively, it can be argued that *sŏndo* is a newly invented tradition, growing out of ancient cults but taken up and developed in modernity. In its contemporary nationalistic meaning, *sŏndo* is a relatively new term. But the proponents of *sŏndo* in South Korea today project it backwards

[14] Tan'gun, a founder of a first Korean state, is recorded in the *Samguk Yusa* as a son of a bear who transformed into a woman, and Hwanung, a god who descended on Mt. T'aebaek from Heaven. Upon retirement Tan'gun became a *sansin* (Pak Chunhyŏng 2004: 88-89).

to Silla, Koguryŏ and Paekche (Sondŏ munhwa yŏnguwŏn 2006). They also view new Korean religions originating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Ch'ŏndogyŏ, Chŭngsan'gyŏ and Wŏn Buddhism, as expressions of *sŏndo* (Na Kwŏnsu 2012).

When discussing the history of *sŏndo* as a term, its propagators point out its connection to what the historians Sin Ch'aeho (申采浩 1880-1936), Chŏng Inbo (鄭寅普 1893-1950) and An Chaehong (安在鴻 1891-1965) called *sŏn'gyŏ* (仙教 the teaching of immortality). Hyŏn Sangyun (玄相允 1893-?) called it *sindo* (神道 the way of spirits), Yi Nŭnghwa (李能和 1869-1943) called it *sin'gyŏ* (神教 the teaching of spirits), and Ch'oe Namsŏn (崔南善 1890-1957) called it *kosindo* (古神道 old way of spirits) (Na Kwŏnsu 2012: 411, note 2).

Sŏndo culture has a direct connection to the cultural and social phenomenon of *chaeya sahak* (在野史學 oppositional history). The views of *chaeya sahak* are widely spread by its defenders, populist nationalist historians, and are accepted by many citizens of South Korea. *Chaeya* historians propagate and perpetuate the interpretation of Tan'gun which came up early in the 20th century, when Tan'gun was redefined as the ancestor of the Korean people rather than the founder of the first Korean state. The conflict between the advocates of *chaeya sahak,* who were at the time outside the academia, and the defenders of *kangdan sahak* (講壇史學 academic history), professional historians, escalated in the 1978, round the subject of depicting Tan'gun and Kojosŏn (古朝鮮) in children's history books for school. The proponents of *chaeya sahak* accused *kangdan sahak* scholars of promoting a colonial view of Korean history, instilled by Japanese scholars during the occupation. *Kangdan sahak*

scholars called *chaeya sahak* followers non-professional and accused them of falsifying historical records. The main points of disagreements between the two groups relate to Tan'gun, the sphere of his operations in historical/mythological time and geographical space, and reliability of various sources related to Tan'gun. *Chaeya sahak* see Tan'gun as a real historical figure, while the academic historians regard him as a mythological figure (Chŏng Kyŏnghŭi 2015: 155).

Some contemporary scholars appreciate *chaeya sahak* as a new mythology, which attempts to strengthen Korean national identity. Kang Tongu sees history and mythology as two sides of the same coin. He notes that in recent decades the conflict between *chaeya sahak* and *kangdan sahak* has lost some of its acuteness. Some claims of *chaeya sahak* were incorporated into the official version of Korean history, as demonstrated in contemporary history textbooks for schoolchildren (Kang Tongu 2000: 14). *Chaeya sahak* has been equally popularised through *sŏndo* culture and *ki suryŏn,* of which GiCheon is one example.

1.3 Existing studies on *ki suryŏn* in general and on GiCheon in particular

Don Baker calls GiCheon a school of internal alchemy (Baker 2007b: 508). Besides Baker, previous research on GiCheon includes a number of articles by Kim Euiyeon, who conducted an experimental medical / psychological study of GiCheon by applying this training method in a hospital environment (Euiyeon Kim 2008a, 2008b). As to *ki suryŏn* in general, it is gradually receiving more attention in Korean academia, its psychological and social implications gaining greater recognition. South Korean scholars examine *ki suryŏn* within various frames of reference. For example, studies focusing on meditation and the martial art of Kouksundo address issues of quality of life (Yang Ch'unho 2000), Korean dance and philosophy (Ch'oe Miyŏn 2008), and sports and modern history (Yi Kwangho 2013). *Ki suryŏn* is approached in the context of stress management (Pak Misuk 2003), nationalistic

discourse and globalization (U Hyeran 2006a about Dahn World [단월드 *tanwŏldŭ*]). Personalities from the Chosŏn period such as Pukch'ang Chŏng Yŏm (北窓 鄭濂 1506-1549), the founder of a Tanhakp'a (丹學派 Tanhak school), are also evoked to construct the tradition of *ki suryŏn* (Chŏng Chesŭng 2001, Yi Hyŏnsu 2006) and of *ki.*[15] An article by Sin Hyesuk and Kwŏn Hyosuk examines how the experience of *ki suryŏn* acquires meaning within the context of the lives of concrete practitioners (Sin Hyesuk 2008). Similarly to my own study, it is based on the interviews. However, I utilize the narratives of my interviewees as a resource allowing access to this experience, while Sin and Kwon focus also on the process of construction of the narrative itself. [16] Study of *ki suryŏn* in South-Korean academia usually focuses on specifically Korean aspects, and does not place it within a broader framework of academic research focused on the "body".

1.4 Approaches to practices similar to *ki suryon*

The East Asian cultural realm is home to long traditions of the self-cultivation practices, in Chinese context commonly referred to as *qigong* and *taijiquan*, which have now spread globally. Extensive scholarship exists focusing on Chinese practices (Farquhar and Zhang

[15] The term *tanhak* (丹學 *tan* study) indicates internal alchemy also referred to as *naedan* (內丹, Chinese: *neidan*). The character *tan* (丹 Chinese: *dan*) meaning read color or cinnabar, became a generic term for elixirs or immortality (Daeyeol Kim 2000: 150) achieved externally or internally. The term *tan* (丹) is a part of a word *tanjŏn* (丹田 Chinese *dantian*, cinnabar field) located in a human body. Korean *ki suryŏn* practitioners widely use this terminology as discussed in Chapter Two. They also connect *ki* concepts to Confucian thinkers such as Hwadam Sŏ Kyŏngdŏk (花潭 徐敬德 1489-1546), whose work is regarded one of the cornerstones in the development of *ki* philosophy in Korea (Ten 2011a).

[16] This article strongly supports Brain Education and is written from the point of view of its ideology. It is published in *Noekyoyuk yŏn'gu* (뇌교육연구) (Journal of Brain Education), printed by Kukche noekyoyuk chonghap taehagwŏn taehakkyŏ (국제뇌교육종합대학원대학교) (University of Brain Education). Yi Sŭnghŏn, better known as Ilchi Lee, is a leader of Dahn World (Brain Education) and a president of this university and a number of related organizations (see note 4).

2012; Farquhar 2005; Utiraruto 2009; Palmer 2007; Torchinov 2007, 1998; Kerr 2002; Despeux 1997, 1981; Ots 1990, 1991; Abayev 1983, 1982). However, similar phenomena in Korea have hardly been studied.

When examining *ki suryŏn* and similar East Asian practices in academia we encounter a problem of how we tackle, study and classify them. What are they? And how do we acquire knowledge about them? Russian sinologist Abayev has introduced a new term, "psycho-physical culture" (Abayev 1983: 1). In his opinion, psycho-physical culture is an essential element of East Asian civilization. Psycho-physical training aims at cultivating, at "forming" a person toward a culturally defined "ideal" (Ibid). In Chapter Four of the present dissertation I discuss the notion of *suryŏn* (修練), which for contemporary South Korean practitioners carries precisely this meaning of "formation" or "cultivation". As I show in that chapter, the "ideal" toward which the formation is directed is different for each trainee. In psycho-physical culture, this process of formation includes different methods of the conscious, goal-oriented and systematic regulation of psychic processes, involving corporeal practices. These systems may include breathing and meditation, as well as martial arts, sexual techniques and medical practices, and serve (psycho-) therapeutic, prophylactic, moral and religious purposes. They are connected to various religious and philosophical teachings, most significantly Daoism, Buddhism (Abayev 1982: 244), Confucianism, and in the Korean context also to Christianity, shamanism and local mountain cults. Local mountain cults are particularly important for Korean *ki suryŏn*, as I elaborate in Chapter Seven.

In English language scholarship psycho-physical training systems have been approached under the separate rubrics of religious studies, traditional medicine, martial arts and folklore. Abayev, however, takes a comprehensive view of psycho-physical culture as a research subject of its own, and calls for its establishment as a separate field of study (1983). Recently the American anthropologist Judith Farquhar and the Chinese philosopher Qicheng

Zhang have conducted research on similar practices in contemporary China, referring to them as "life-cultivating arts" or "the art of nourishing life" (Farquhar and Zhang 2012, Farquhar 2005), as I recount in greater detail in section 1.9 below.

Catherine Despeux calls similar practices martial arts, techniques prolonging life, and gymnastics (1997: 267, 273-276). Her research on Chinese *qigong* demonstrates the invention of this practice as a contemporary tradition, which became popular in the 1980s. At the same period *sŏngin undong* (成人運動 sports for adults) and *ki suryŏn* became popular in South Korea, coinciding in time with the rise of middle class as I explain in Chapter Two and in greater detail in the Conclusion. Nevertheless Catherine Despeux traces the usage of the word *qigong* to Tang China (618-910) at least, testifying to the fact that this modern phenomenon is rooted in ancient practices. During the last few decades of 20th century, Chinese *qigong* was deliberately married to modern western science and attempts were made to match it to Russian research on parapsychology, with an emphasis on the possible deployment of the powers of *qigong* masters for military purposes. In the political discourse *qigong* is also utilized for the formation of modern Chinese identity (Despeux 1997: 267, 273-276). Similar developments and desires can be traced also in relation to Korean *ki suryŏn* as evidenced by contemporary Korean literature, see for example the national bestseller *Tan* (丹) by Kim Chŏngbin (1996 [1984]) which recounts a mythic history of Kouksundo, one of the earliest Korean *ki suryŏn* practices.[17]

Otehode Utiraruto in his article "The Creation and Re-emergence of Qigong in China" briefly summarizes how various scholars approached contemporary East Asian psycho-physical culture. For example, Hishida Masaharu (2000, referenced in Utiraruto 2009: 241) sees *qigong* as part of the broader emergence of new religions as communist ideology

[17] See note 15 on the meaning of the character *tan* (丹).

weakens and the value system diversifies. For Jian Xu, *qigong*'s re-emergence signifies the appearance of private spaces in urban China, the declining power of politics and growth of individual power. Besides, Jian Xu outlines a brief history of the body in East Asian tradition and its connection with modern western medicine and Maoist politics (1999). Utiraruto himself carries out a historical investigation of *qigong*, showing how its initial formation and modification have been intertwined with the state since its very founding. This scholar refers to *qigong* as originating from "traditional body cultivation practices", without any further elucidation. Utiraruto mentions though that after 1949 the names and interpretations of "indigenous body cultivation practices" were reformed and legitimized as methods of medical treatment and physical training (Utiraruto 2009: 241-242, 244). Nancy Chen enquires into the relationship between *qigong* and psychiatry, viewing the body as a site for resistance against political order (2003). These scholars mostly emphasise the role *qigong* played in Chinese society since the late 1970s. The ground-breaking *Qigong Fever* by David Palmer provides a comprehensive study on *qigong*, which is mainly historical (2007). Although these studies touch on the inner, individual significance of *qigong* as such, it is not at the focus of their interest nor do they directly inquire into the experiences of the practitioners. My study, however, investigates the modes of experiencing psycho-physical culture in immediate connection with individual perception and articulation, utilising the notion of "experiential modalities" introduced later in the text of this Introduction.

Thomas Ots names psycho-physical practices "techniques of health preservation and exercises prolonging life" (Ots 1994: 120) and calls on researchers to personally engage and analyse the concrete experiences and perceptions of their "lived-bodies" (Ots 1994: 134), hoping this empirical work might support the overcoming of long-lasting subject-object and mind-body dichotomies (1991: 43). The "lived-body", a new term Ots introduces into anthropological and phenomenological discourse (1991: 43), must be experienced before it

can be thought and talked of. Ots himself entered a qigong group as a follower rather than as anthropologist *(*Ots 1994: 134). For Merleau-Ponty, whose work provided inspiration for the analysis of Ots, it is this lived-body that constitutes our "being in the world", as the body is a "setting in relation to the world." Merleau-Ponty views consciousness as the projection of the body into the lived world; the world becomes an extension of the body. For Merleau-Ponty perceptions are "pre-objective", they start in the body and "end in objects". Thus perceptions are the preconditions for cognition and reflective thought (Ots 1990: 21-22, Merleau-Ponty 1945). Following Merleau-Ponty, and based on his study of Chinese *qigong* and traditional Chinese medicine, Ots calls on researchers to investigate the way mind and culture, as emergent objectifications of bodily experience, are shaped and constituted by the lived-body (1991: 48).

Following the example of Thomas Ots, authors such as Haruhiko Murakawa, Jaida Kim Samudra and Alberto Chiesa have engaged in the anthropological, psychological and philosophical analysis of the "lived body" in respectively *qigong* (Murakawa 2002), White Crane Silat (Samudra 2008), and mindfulness meditation (Chiesa 2010). They attempt to challenge old stereotypes and develop innovative attitudes. Csordas and Samudra call for employing the lived-bodies of researchers as tools for knowledge acquisition. When a researcher engages in the practice, her or his own body becomes a source of knowledge, accessible through registration of the bodily sensations (Csordas 2002: 251-253; Samudra 2008: 665).

However developing a holistic terminology for addressing these cultural phenomena remains a problem, and contemporary researchers often leave it unsolved, referring to the objects of their research as "bodily practices" (Samudra 2008) or "mindfulness meditation" (Chiesa 2010). Peter Van der Veer defines Chinese psycho-physical practices as "qi [ki] exercises, connected to cosmological concepts, bodily health, concentration of the mind,

meditation and quietness". He mentions that *qi* [*ki*] exercises were practiced in the name of a religion, a school of medicine, or martial arts, and often passed on by religious specialists organized in networks of training and socialization, such as monasteries and other institutions. While relating to these practices as *"*disciplines of the self", Peter Van der Veer connects them to "techniques of the body" by Mauss (*1966 [1934])* and "technologies of self" as articulated by Foucault (1988, 2001) *(*Van der Veer 2007). As to the analysis of the living psycho-physical practices of today, scholars such as David Palmer and Nashima Selim also mention the relevance of Foucauldian technologies of the self, but do not themselves actively apply his concepts in their analysis of qigong (Palmer 2007) or vipassana meditation (Selim 2011).

Adam Chau suggests five modalities for analysis of East Asian spiritual practices: relational, immediate-practical, liturgical, personal-cultivational and discursive/scriptural. According to this classification, Chinese psycho-physical practices and Korean *ki suryŏn* belong to the personal-cultivational modality, which Chau himself also calls "technologies of self", connecting them to the "care of the self" discussed by Foucault (Chau 2011b: 67, 72).

No comprehensive research exists in English focusing on the lived-body in contemporary Korean *ki suryŏn.* Attempting to fill in this lacuna, I study the lived body *i*n Korean *ki suryŏn* in the spirit of the work of Thomas Ots and Adam Chau. GiCheon, a part of Korean invented tradition of *ki suryŏn*, should be approached and comprehended on the basis of East Asian vision of the body as feeling and sentient. This vision of the body manifests in East Asian medicine and the arts of alchemy and nourishing life, and also in contemporary *qigong* practices studied by Thomas Ots. The body undergoing self-cultivation in GiCheon can be understood only as a lived-body, the body that includes the mind-heart, feelings and intensions.

1.5 *Ki suryŏn* as "technologies of the self"

Starting with a historical-philosophical analysis of such institutions as madness (Foucault 1961), illness (Foucault 1963) and criminality (Foucault 1975), in his later years Michel Foucault moved toward the questions of self-reflection, self-formation and self-constitution. In terms of subjectivation and objectivation, which mean transformation of a human being into a subject or an object, in his earlier work Foucault analysed contemporary construction of a subject in science and through practices related to the distinction of sick or healthy and the differentiation between sane and insane. His later studies focused on self-construction undertaken by the subject herself, for example through sexuality (1984, 1994b). The work of self-construction is deeply connected to Foucault's conception of the technologies of the self.

Foucault's concern with the technologies of the self began with an investigation into the practices he categorizes as *epimeleia heautou*, translated into English as "the care of the self". These activities, originating in ancient Greece, included practices of purification, concentration of the spirit/breath, techniques of retreat and practices of enduring pain and hardship (Foucault 2001: 46-47).

Foucault notes that self-care usually takes the form of practices in distinct, closed institutional groups that often imply exclusion. There are two poles to self-care. The first pole are popular, religious, cultic, theoretically unsophisticated practices. These practices are visible among less privileged classes. Here self-care is linked to religious congregations organized around a specific cult, often with ritualized procedures and prayers. The second pole are individual, personal practices of self-cultivation, often situated in a more privileged environment. It is constituted by sophisticated, elaborated, cultivated practices, much connected to personal choice, to cultivated leisure and theoretic research. These practices are often articulated as a sectarian phenomenon. The second pole of self-care implies a choice of mode of life, revealing a gap between those who can choose their mode of life and all others

(2001: 109-112). In his examination of the technologies of the self, Foucault focuses on the second pole of these self-transformational practices. The self-transformational practice of GiCheon, the subject of the present dissertation, is also closer to the second pole of the spectrum described by Foucault. As elaborated upon in Chapter Six, the pain of sustaining GiCheon positions serves as a demarcation, a dividing line between those who can be admitted into GiCheon circles and all others. As such, it contributes to the elitist character of GiCheon.

For Foucault, "care of the self" is a basic motif in a historical-philosophical discussion on subjectivity. In a vein similar to Foucault's, Pierre Hadot views care for the self as connecting directly to the care for the city and care for others, foregrounding Hadot's understanding of philosophy as a way of life (2002: 36-38, 279). However, other contemporary scholars view things differently. Charles Taylor, in his inquiry into the history of contemporary identity and subjectivity within the context of morality, notes that care of the self in ancient Greece was radically different from contemporary concerns with subjectivity (1989: 131, 176). Foucault, however, takes the "care of the self" as the starting point in his discussion on subjectivation – the construction of a subject. It connects to the technologies of self, which "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1988: 18). Foucault finds that the concept of the technologies of the self is equally relevant for ancient or modern times. There is no doubt, however, that different technologies of the self vary significantly in the geo-temporal space, creating different outcomes.

Foucault notes that in ancient Greece self-transformation was connected to *gnothi seauton* "know yourself", the third precept of the Delphic temple, where people came to

consult the oracle. Foucault clarifies that in ancient Greece the philosophical principle *gnothi seauton,* "know yourself", was often coupled with *epimeleia heautou* "taking care of yourself", but originally subordinated to "taking care of the self". It is in the context of "taking care of yourself" that you had to "know yourself" (Foucault 2001: 5-6, Xenophon 1966 [371 BC]: 390). You have to know yourself in order to transform yourself. In this context the object of knowledge is the old, "pre-transformed" self, modelled by the factors external to the self, and applied without self-awareness of this process, or contrary to the wishes of the self. Countering this is the intentional effort to realize and modify the self, a conscious process of activated self-modification, with a goal to create a "new self" in the world.[18]

Foucault discusses two approaches to philosophy: philosophy as the ontology of the world, and philosophy as experiencing life, elaborating a certain form and modality of life. In the former, the world is known and measured. In the latter, the world is something through which we experience, know and discover ourselves. It is also something starting from which, through which, and thanks to which we form and transform ourselves, advance towards our own perfection (Foucault 2001: 466-467, 2009: 118-119).[19] The later definition of philosophy connects directly to the technologies of the self.

The task of crafting the self relates to the ontology of the self. What is the "self" for Foucault? Foucault sees a human being as consisting of body and spirit. When an action is performed, it is the body that "does". But who/what operates the body? For Foucault the body cannot be the subject and the object of the action simultaneously. He concludes that the spirit is the subject which operates the body (Foucault 2001: 55). Foucault equates the self with the

[18] Foucault does not explicitly mention the terms "old self" and "new self". It is clear from his narrative, though, that the Delphic precept of "knowing yourself" relates to the "old self", and not to a potential "new self" one aspires to build (Foucault 2001: 5).

[19] I return to this point later in the text of this Introduction, in my discussion on craft and self-craft as experiential encounters between myself and the world.

spirit. This preference for the "spirit" manifests in the title Foucault ascribes to self-techniques of ancient Greece and Rome – he calls them "spiritual" practices.

In his analysis, Foucault does not totally neglect the body. When discussing operation of the body by the spirit, Foucault reviews the Greek word *khresthai* which means "to use", to operate, but also designates an attitude. It might be an attitude towards the gods, or an attitude towards one's horse. In the Foucauldian narrative, the care of the self includes an attitude towards one's body, and towards oneself (Foucault 2001: 55-58). The wide range of Greek and Roman self-techniques recounted by Foucault includes multiple techniques of the body. Yet, in his discussion the primacy is with the spirit, and the body occupies second place. Despite the fact that Foucault describes techniques of the body, he simultaneously disregards the body, calling the bodily practices "spiritual practices". Foucault's focus is on the history of thought and the mind. He asks why we think today the way we do, tracing the patterns of contemporary thought to ancient practices. Differently from Foucault, my focus is on the body, the bodily practices of today. The body I discuss is the feeling body, the thinking body, the acting body, the lived-body that includes within it a mind-heart. In my analysis this living body is both an object and a subject of action and practice. In other words, the subject and object, the mind-heart and body, are not distinguished one from the other, but bound together.

However, the aspect of Foucault's work that serves as a point of departure for my own research is his emphasise on the technologies on the self as undergone willingly by the individual in order to transform herself or himself. This formation of the self occurs on many planes and can be analysed from different perspectives. The scholarly community has approached and developed Foucauldian technologies of self in various ways which I will now outline.

Foucauldian technologies of self pertain to physical and moral cultivation, therefore relating directly to the question of ethics, autonomy and control. Recent research on

Foucault's ideas includes, for example, James Laidlaw's examination of self-formation in relation to freedom and self-discipline in the context of Marxist and psychoanalytic thought. Laidlaw explains that Foucault sees the desire, the self and ethics as historical. Laidlaw views Foucault's discussion on techniques of the self as a conceptual resource utilized within a historical-philosophical project, tracing the time when the self was not given and discovered by examining one's sexual desires, but instead was produced by the subject through active self-crafting. In Laidlaw's interpretation, Foucault saw ethics as consisting of the ways individuals make themselves into objects of reflective action, adopting voluntary practices for shaping and transforming themselves in various ways. The history of such self-transformative practices is the genealogy of ethics (Laidlaw 2014a: 26-30, 2014b).

In the Foucauldian view, self-creation or self-transformation is a creative activity of shaping the self, parallel to the way an artist designs and models her oeuvre. Not surprisingly, in a recent scholarly discussion on technologies of self, connections are drawn with contemporary art. Among the various self-altering techniques Foucault addresses, Paul Rabinow singles out the *melete* – "meditation", drawing a parallel between Stoic technologies of self and the work of the artist Gerhard Richter (Rabinow 2014). In similar vein, James Faubion compares the modern poet Constantine Cavafy to the ancient Greek Cynics – Faubion focuses on the practice of *parrhesia* – "speaking the truth", another technique of the self reviewed by Foucault (Faubion 2014).

Foucauldian technologies of self initially incited and continue to stimulate a lively discussion on the formation of the self in the context of subjectivation and religion, involving bodily experiences (Rüpke, ed. 2013; Alter 2013; Gill 2006; Brakke, Satlow, Weitzman ed. 2005; Shulman, Stroumsa ed. 2002), although sometimes Foucault's contribution to this debate goes almost unnoticed (Kohn, Wang ed. 2009). The notion of technologies of self also is engaged and implemented by Sonia Ryang, in a way very different from mine, in her

analysis of practices of "writing and reading novels" in North Korea. She examines reading novels as a technique for cultivating the self, as the novels assist in and direct the process of self-reform and self-discipline required of each citizen by the regime. The act of reading a novel is a technology of self, and additionally the novels suggest to the readers other particular technologies, such as self-reflection, self-exploration, and questioning one's motives (Ryang 2002: 23, 25-26).

1.6 Two vectors model

Foucault's notion of the technologies of the self serves as a point of departure for my analysis of *ki suryŏn* as intentional cultivation of body and mind-heart. However, I also deploy the Confucian schematic from *The Great Learning, sŏngŭi chŏngsim susin ch'ega ch'iguk p'yŏngch'ŏnha* (誠意正心修身齊家治國平天下 "authenticate the intention, rectify the mind-heart, cultivate the body, regulate the family, govern the country, bring peace to the world").[20] This prescription for self-cultivation suggests a wide-ranging approach towards the body, or the self. In East Asian traditions there has been no objectification of the physical body as separated from its mental faculties. The "body" in this sense and context is non-dualistic, encompassing not only breathing, ingesting and digesting, desiring, feeling, thinking and moving (Palmer 2007: 9), but also acts on the familial, social and universal planes. In my application of the Confucian scheme we might portray the self as live, busy, active movement. Like a ray of light, it bursts from the inside towards the outside, towards the world. Following the order of *The Great Learning* we could recount its progress as

[20] *Daxue* (大學 *The Great Learning*) (E-SKQS 1999). One of the four books of the Confucian canon, The Great Learning summarizes the process of self-perfection on the levels of the intention, mind-heart, body, family, country, and the world, then proceeding towards detailed explanation of self-cultivation on each level. Cultivation of the self here includes embodying virtue thus providing a personal example and a role-model for the others.

starting from intentionality and progressing towards emotion and cognition, further coming into actualized being on the personal, familial, social and universal planes. This is how the self unfolds, and how it both realizes itself as well as finds expression as an intentional, emotional, cognitive, bodily, personal, familial, social and universal self.[21] This diagrammatic strategy is repeatedly called for by GiCheon practitioners themselves when describing their experiences.

Active and universal as it is, the self is always already in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945). The moment we look at the self, we see how it is conditioned to this fact. The social, for example, is defined by the conditions of the universe (like climate and topography), but moulds the familial and the personal, while ways of acting, thinking, feeling and intending are shaped by bodily, familial and social factors. The self as active subject is simultaneously a passive object of external influences. This is the reality the actualized self finds itself in, seized by a dualism of forces and pulled into two opposite directions – one outward, from inside the self toward the outside world, another inward, from the outer world toward the inner self. The first force is subjective, directed outward, it is the projection of myself upon the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945). The second force is the influence of the world upon myself as an object. In my analysis I refer to these two forces as a pair of vectors. The first vector is intentional influence, the unfolding of the self towards the external. The second vector is the un-intentional influence through which the self is formed, from the external towards the

[21] Merleau-Ponty says that the presence and existence of the body in the world is like that of a heart in an organism: it animates and nurtures from inside, forming a single system with it (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 235). I perceive and know the world through my body. Without my body, my world does not exist, like an organism, which cannot exist without a heart. This worldview, adopted and developed by the author of the present dissertation, almost equalizes consciousness with life itself. Deep underlying intention, first and foremost a desire to live, shapes emotion and cognition, which define and direct actions and activities. This desire to live and to survive, which we share with other living beings, conditions our perception of the world and directs our existence in the world. In Confucianism and other spiritual traditions, this desire of life, or of the good life, is equated with a desire to give life, or give the good life, to others. This is how the bodily self extends towards familial and social selves. As to the universal self, *ki suryŏn* practitioners often talk about improved communication with nature, better perception of art, and experience of the "harmony with the universe" as a result of *ki* training. It is to these aspects of self-transformation I refer when talking about the development of the "universal self".

internal. My work investigates the experiences of Korean *ki suryŏn* adepts utilizing this two vectors scheme as a methodological tool. My two vectors scheme is developed on the basis of the Confucian self-cultivational schema and technologies of self elaborated by Michel Foucault.[22]

We can schematically portray the vectors as following:

the first vector:

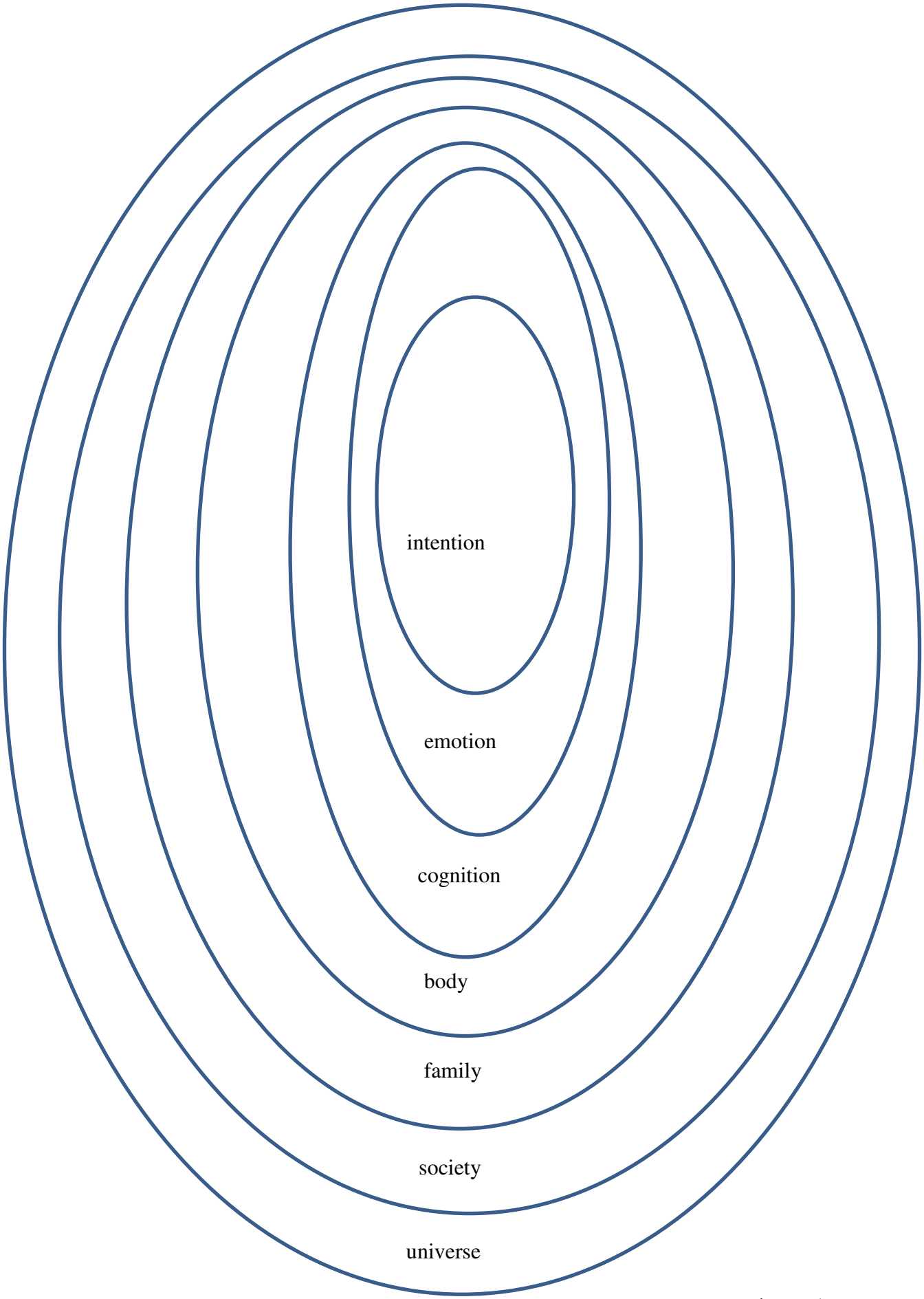
intention→emotion→cognition→body→family→society→universe

the second vector:

universe→society→family→body→cognition→emotion→ intention

(see picture 1)

[22] The connection between the Confucian prescript for self-cultivation and Foucauldian technologies of self has been noticed and insisted upon also by Hahm Chaibong. He dwells on the common points between Confucian practices trying for an ideal moral self expanding towards the universe and practices of "care of the self" originating in ancient Greece and Rome as described by Foucault. But Hahm's analysis as based on the texts of Confucian canon is purely theoretical: he does not investigate Confucian practices as applied in actuality (Chaibong Hahm 2001).


intention
emotion
cognition
body
family
society
universe

picture 1

The definition of the "self" in this schema is relational. Depending on the context, the self can shrink and swell, sometimes limiting itself to the intention or the physical body only, other times stretching toward the whole universe. The notion of "external" here exists mainly along the second vector. "External" are the forces applied on the self from outside, without an awareness or against the wish of the self. Alongside the first vector the "external" shifts. What is the perimeter of the willingly expanding self? If my self is my body, then my family is "external". If my family is my self, then the society is external. If I define my "social self" as "real me" – then other societies are outside it. But my self can also embrace the universe.

Within this framework of thought such terms as "external" and "internal" are relative, not absolute, and so are the terms the "core" and the "space" of the self. The core of the self on each level becomes the space, or the sphere of action of the self at the next level. If the intention, the emotion or the thought constitute the core of the self, then the body is the space of the self. If the body is the core of the self, then the family, society and the universe are the space of the self.

Examination of the technologies of self which operate along the vectors is essentially the study of self-crafting by the self. But as the self is always already in the world, already existent, this self-crafting becomes a question of re-making and re-modeling the "old" self, in order to achieve a "new" self in the world.[23] Within *ki suryŏn* this process starts in the body.

1.7 The body and the self as the crossroads of the vectors

In the early years of social and cultural anthropology, the body was considered an implicit, taken-for-granted background feature of social life. But since the 1970s it has become an

[23] Among many questions relating to self-narration addressed in autoethnography, the volume edited by Rhett pays particular attention to the question of transformation from an old self towards a new one (Rhett 1997).

explicit topic of ethnographic concern, requiring attention because of its cultural and historical mutability. Presently in anthropology and the humanities the body is seen as an opportunity for rethinking various aspects of culture and self (Csordas 1999: 172). It is no more considered as a natural self-contained entity with mechanically functioning internal organs, but as a contingent formation of space, time and materiality, to be comprehended as an assemblage of practices, discourses and images (Lock 2007: 1, 4).

In traditional western thought often the superiority has been assumed of the intentional mind over the intentionless body (Ots 1991: 43). Although the validity of such a mind-body dichotomy has been questioned, as embedded in spoken language this dichotomy continues to inform our ways of thinking. It alienates "us" from our bodies: it is the mind thinking of the body rather than the body perceiving itself. However, East Asian psycho-physical practices imply a different bodily sensibility and train adepts to "listen" within their bodies (Ots 1990: 22, 26). One of the manifestations of this bodily awareness lies in concepts of *ki*, which simultaneously embrace moral, emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and universal planes of being. In Chapter Three of the present dissertation I review different meanings infused by the contemporary GiCheon practitioners into the term *ki* (氣).

The body we discuss here is a body with feelings and perceptions, or *Leib* in German, a word etymologically connected to the English word "life" (Ots 1994: 116). Thomas Csordas emphasizes this in his theory of embodiment, stating that human cultural experience is always bodily. Starting from the methodological postulate that the body is not just an object to be studied in relation to culture, but also a subject of culture, or the existential ground of culture, Csordas follows Merleau-Ponty, for whom the body serves as the origin of perception and intentionality (Csordas 2002: 2, 58-62; Merleau-Ponty 1945).

Recognition of the body as comprehending more inclusive dynamics by the anthropologists and sociologists of the 20th century can be identified as starting with the

terminology and conceptual framing of "techniques of the body, transmitted through imitation and education", introduced in 1934 by Marcel Mauss as a part of his discourse on *habitus*. *Habitus* is an acquired habit; and techniques of the body in his view are those ways in which people in different societies use their bodies, bodily attitudes varying across types of education, social status, decorum and fashion (Mauss 1966 [1934]: 365-369). When we look at it from the vectors perspective, Mauss concentrates on the point of the social shaping the physical of the second vector. But Mauss evokes also subjectivity and intentionality by stating that the body is the first instrument of the human being and the first object of techniques of the body (Mauss 1966 [1934]: 372). This is the first vector, the intentional self employing the bodily-self as both means and object. But only later in the history of social science the body itself was upgraded to the status of "object and subject simultaneously" (Csordas 2002: 241).

Marcel Mauss was aware of the importance of diverse techniques of the body varying across cultures, such as techniques of birth, sexual techniques, techniques of child-rearing, walking, dancing, sleeping or eating. He called on the researchers to study them as complex psycho-physical-sociological acts, a research that should be very concrete and site-specific. In particular, Marcel Mauss emphasized the significance of self-cultivational techniques of the body in East Asia and India. He called them "biological means of entering into the contact with the Divine" (Marcel Mauss 1966 [1934]).

Following Mauss, Pierre Bourdieu further developed the concept of *habitus,* in which practical sense and social necessity having become one's nature are transformed into motor schemes of corporeal automatism. For Bourdieu *habitus* consists of unconscious individual and collective habits and modes of behaviour, produced by conditioning associated with particular classes or groups (Bourdieu 1980: 87-91, 116). Bourdieu states that the social order prescribes thoughts and instills sentiments through organized practices and regulated

dispositions of the body. He suggests writing a list of values that became bodily, operating through implicit pedagogy, infusing a whole cosmology, ethics, metaphysics, and politics through such minor regulations as "sit straight" or "do not hold the knife with your left hand". In his opinion corporeal disposition is a realized, incorporated political mythology which has become permanent, durable manner to hold oneself, to talk, to walk, and thus - to *feel* and *think* (Bourdieu 1980: 116-117). The analysis of Bourdieu here unfolds along the second vector: society → body → cognition and emotion.

Also the earlier work of Michel Foucault mainly followed the second vector. He studied how society forms subjectivity prescribing particular routes of expression such as madness, illness and criminality. However, the later writings of Foucault testify to a shift in his interest. Foucault's discussion on the technologies of the self emphasizes the intentional self, designing schemes for self-formation. This is the first vector. However, the project of Foucault is a historical one, an attempt to draw a history of contemporary subjectivity, to unravel the historicity of the ways of our thought and behavior today. When Foucault turns to concrete practitioners and writers of antiquity, and we follow him, we witness their insights and personal experiences as the unfolding of the first vector "for them". They voice their original ideas as enacting their self-expression. For "us", however, their perceptions and awareness have already been integrated into the fabric of culture, which influences us as our cultural given, the second vector. This constant integration of the first vector into the second vector, of the personal insights of oneself into the cultural given for others is an important dynamics in the formation of subjectivity. The subjectivation Foucault talks about can be found in revising this process, and recovering our own voice, the first-hand experience of the world, and an ability to transform it. I argue, that for Korean *ki suryŏn* practitioners this process starts not with the intellectual pursuits, as it was for Michel Foucault, but with bodily practice.

The work of Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu related mostly to the second vector, and the later work of Michel Foucault to the first. My own study focus on the self as a junction, an intersection of the vectors. I observe the work of the two vectors in Korean *ki suryŏn,* an East Asian technique of the body directed at self-cultivation and subjectivation. My research is concrete and site-specific. I attempt to trace the work of the two vectors on the intentional, emotional, cognitive, familial, national and universal planes of the self in the context of personal life-stories, examining how are they articulated and narrated.

In line with the direction suggested by Pierre Bourdieu, I also attempt to "decode" what bodily stances of GiCheon mean to the practitioners and what are the values incorporated within them. How does GiCheon practice mould the self? What is the direction and the form of this modification? Here I would like to introduce the notion of "experiential modalities", which show the working of the two vectors on different planes of the self. As outlined in the next section, experiential modalities demonstrate that different planes of the self are continuous.

1.8 Experiential modalities as a framework to analyse GiCheon experience

I began my research on GiCheon with the goal of inquiring into the experiences of the practitioners and the ways these experiences are articulated, narrated and understood. During the span of about eight months I have interviewed sixty one persons; some were old friends with whom I had already spoken many times, some were strangers whom I met for the first time for an interview that lasted a couple of hours. The trainees and teachers I met correspond to various points on a spectrum connecting the two poles of "friends" and "strangers". I recorded more than one hundred hours of interviews and filled ten notebooks. Afterwards, as I was listening to the recordings and reading the notes, I searched for a method to navigate through this sea of information. I noticed the repetition of particular notions, phrases and

words as they appeared in the narrations of a number of people. I started focusing on these notions and phrases, often terms from GiCheon vocabulary, and later started using them as focal points round which my analysis could evolve. I noticed that the words *ki*, *suryŏn,* pain and mountains came up again and again in the narratives of my informants.

The articulations of GiCheon practitioners, including myself, are generated and influenced by approaches theorized within GiCheon ideology, and the terms *ki* and *suryŏn* are used frequently. In addition to that, the experience and its articulation have their grounding and locale in the physical stances of GiCheon. It is not unexpected therefore that although each person experiences and narrates GiCheon differently, there are common points. These common points are created and strengthened in the formal and informal exchanges with other practitioners and teachers in the GiCheon community.

As emphasized by Thomas Csordas (2002) and other ethnographers of the body, the life of the body and the body itself are deeply cultural. Ruth Barcan (2013: 224) notes, for example, that in contemporary socio-cultural approaches to the body it is almost axiomatic that dominant conceptions of, metaphors for and experiences of the body are formed in relation to the economic, technological, ideological, symbolic and social parameters of any society. In this dissertation I argue that the way in which GiCheon trainees experience, understand and articulate the body and the self follows the traditional East Asian view of the self and the universe as interrelated and continuous, and the universe itself as living and sentient (see for example the account of Kim Yŏnghŭi in the Chapter Three). The narrations of Korean Seoul GiCheon practitioners hold this in common with their Chinese counterparts practicing *yangsheng* in Beijing (Farquhar, Zhang 2012), as I explain in section 1.10 of this Introduction. The intermediate (though not always necessary) links between the body and the universe are the family and the society. I suggest that following similar changes and processes along the first vector of emotion→cognition→body→family→society→universe

helps us in identifying the self as continuous with the universe. I refer to these similar changes and processes as "experiential modalities".

The term "experiential modalities" was introduced by Thomas Csordas in his conceptualization of our bodily existence, or embodiment. The range of potential experiential modalities consists of the ways or the modes to perceive and classify culturally conditioned sensations, emotions and impressions (Csordas 2002: 59, 219, 261). As discussed in this Introduction, the concept of the self I develop in the present study is multiple, unfolding through various "levels of the self" along the first or the second vector. My interviews with GiCheon practitioners show that particular manners of being, attitudes and forms of reflection occurring at the initial levels of the self are developing into similar processes at the outer levels of the self, thus forming chains unfolding along the first vector. The narrations of GiCheon adepts convey phenomena and experiences related to the intentional, emotional, cognitive, bodily, familial, social and universal self in clusters of sensations, feelings, impressions and ideas. These clusters can be recognized as experiential modalities. One example of such an experiential modality is constituted by the experiences of "warmth" discussed in detail in Chapter Five, on the basis of the interview with Ms. Sin. On the corporal level it manifests itself as warmness of the body, on the emotional level it appears as warm feelings, on the levels of the familial and social self it unfolds as warmer relationships with the surrounding people.

Identifying particular modalities of experience in different contexts reveals the connection between different levels of the self. In case of warmness of the body and warmer relationships between people the connection is evident, because similar words are used. But in the case of pleasant feelings in the body developing into happiness and joy evolving into a desire to dance, as described in the narration of Ms. Sin in Chapter Five, the connection is less evident, as different words are used for experience arising in different selves: bodily,

emotional and cognitive. The concept of experiential modalities provides a challenge to the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy as it posits intention, emotion, cognition, body, family, society and universe as continuous.

However, various planes of the self cannot always be neatly classified as bodily, familial, social or universal. The case of Kim Wŏn'gyu (not a real name) also reviewed in Chapter Five shows that an experiential modality of "lack" can show on the economical plane as a lack of money and on the educational plane, as a lack of system. In Kim's narrative this modality of experience manifests on an intellectual level as a lack of interest in the explanations of the teacher, on a spiritual level as a lack of advancement, on a bodily and emotional plane as a lack of feelings.

Experiential modalities can be individual or culturally imposed, or culturally established. Such notions as *ki* and *suryŏn* are vital cultural notions, key words that generate images, feelings and experiences. These fruitful words are like soil on which different things can grow. They are cultural frameworks of meaning that prescribe and form experience, suggesting particular ways of its articulation and formulation. Both *ki* and *suryŏn* are "power words" that generate experiences of the intentional, emotional, bodily (or individual), familial, social and universal self. These cultural notions mold and modulate individual experience, creating what I call "culturally advised experiential modalities". I discuss the power words *ki* and *suryŏn* and culturally advised experiential modalities generated by them in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

Mountains come up repeatedly in the interviews. The word "mountain" is reviewed in Chapter Seven as another key word, which has the power to generate culturally recommended experiential modalities. In Korea, mountains surround us physically and topographically, but also culturally and spiritually. Mountain worship and the cult of *sansin* (山神 mountain gods) are among the central features of the Korean cultural landscape (Mason 1999). The word *san*

(山 mountain) figures in many Korean proverbs in various meanings (see Chapter Seven). Images of mountains, or of ascending a mountain, can generate modalities that define and condition experience. Of particular importance is the notion of the body of a mountain, and its interaction with the body of an individual. These two bodies are connected physically and metaphorically. Another key word generating an experiential modality is pain, a subject I discuss in Chapter Six. Pain is always present in GiCheon practice, but dealt with and conceptualized by the practitioners in different fashions.

Power words like *ki* and *suryŏn,* mountains or pain, produce and shape experience. Different people use similar words as the agents of a particular culture; they bear, implement and actualize this culture. Yet as individual agents they shape different experiences with the same words. I refer to these experiences as "culturally recommended experiential modalities". The key words come from the culture, but individuals apply them strategically, filling them with meanings which vary according to the need and social circumstance.[24] This articulation of the experience, an attempt to make sense of it and to harmonize it with the self-image of an individual is a part of self-modification undertaken in GiCheon and similar disciplines. It can also be formulated as "self-craft".

[24] The concept of cleanliness in South Korean Christianity discussed by Nicholas Harkness in his book Songs of Seoul can serve as an example of a power word which can generate modalities of experience. Nicolas Harkness does not refer to the concept of experiential modalities. Nevertheless, I find that his argument exemplifies the meaning of culturally advised experiential modalities which mold and modulate experience. Christian cleanliness is a notion that generates a modality of experiencing life as a struggle for cleanliness or to get rid of uncleanness. Similarly to *ki* and *suryŏn*, the key terms of GiCheon, cleanliness which is a central to Korean Christian discourse, implies and requires self-transformation on multiple levels. Cleanliness operates on several modalities of psychological, material and social life: the imperfect voices, the heart-minds and social relations of Christian adepts should be cleaned. The members of the Church interviewed by Harkness and the Church leaders in their sermons experience and articulate this process of cleansing on various levels. They try to cleanse their vocal cords from extra vibrations and their voices and mind-hearts from sadness. They attempt to clean their social relations from hierarchal remnants of the Korean past, striving toward an enlightened egalitarian brotherhood or sisterhood in Christ. This cleansing is often an axis around which they conceptualize, and on the basis of which they articulate, their practice (2014: 136-137, 148, 228). This practice, a practice of singing, is at the same time the practice of Christianity, as Nicolas Harkness shows in his book. Similarly to the concepts of *ki* and *suryŏn* I discuss in the present dissertation, the term cleanliness carries a substantial ideological weight within a particular social institute. In the case of *ki* and *suryŏn* the institute is GiCheon, in the case of striving for cleanliness the institute is the Church.

1.9 *Ki suryŏn* as self-craft

In modern society mediated experiences often supplant direct contact with the world. Digital technology reduces tactile interaction, contributing to the alienation from the body and the self. Subversive alternatives to industrial dominance and hegemony, the processes and practices of art and craft generate intimate experiences, cultivating our subjectivity through tactile familiarity, connecting us "back to ourselves" (Fariello 2005).

Recent studies on art and craft emphasize their experiential, body-based and creative aspects (Fariello and Owen ed. 2005). However, an action of crafting can be directed not only toward an inanimate object, but equally toward one's body. In this case one's body as a subject applies a set of particular skills and techniques to one's body as an object. The body also serves as a means, a medium through which this process occurs. I suggest categorizing this type of activity as "self-craft". Self-craft is an empirical knowledge system arising from personal experience, which alters my self and the world around me. It can be compared to the notion of *malleation* in sculpture, carving, polishing and other ways of alteration of the object and reshaping it in a new form, as Lobetti has done in his study of ascetic practices (Lobetti 2014: 124). An irregularly shaped log becomes a plank, a rough block of stone turns into a statue. In many spiritual traditions around the globe the work on the self carried out by the self is metaphorically compared to the work of the blacksmith. The self is like a piece of hot metal, shaped into a sword or a dish. This metaphor portrays the work of transforming the body and mind-heart as the craft of a blacksmith. Self-craft as an idea is an additional source of inspiration for my analysis of Korean *ki suryŏn* in the present dissertation. *Ki suryŏn* is a technology of the self in contemporary Korea, and I ask what kind of technology it is, how it works, and what are its outcomes. But *ki suryŏn* is also a self-craft. From these perspective

my research questions can be formulated as "what kind of the self is crafted in *ki suryŏn* and how?".

Contemporary theories view craft as a way of knowing the world. Recent feminist critiques of philosophy and science have incorporated the activated knowledge that is craft within the field of academia: not passive, detached and "objective", but subjective, responsive and responsible. This knowledge is a tactile engagement with the world – a process mutually transforming and enriching both myself and my world – this is my knowledge of the world and the world's knowledge of myself (Hardy 2005). This vision of craft as experiential, bodily, emotional as well as cognitive knowledge accords well with the idea of *ki suryŏn* as self-craft.

One's action upon the world, the effort to engrave the stone, to carve a wooden block into a statue, is the projection of the self upon the world (Merleau-Ponty 1945), the first vector. The resistance of the stone or the wood, the cuts and calluses on my fingers, are the actions of the world upon myself, the second vector. Philosophy as experiencing, knowing and discovering myself and the world (Foucault 2001: 466-467, 2009: 118-119) occurs at the moment of my encounter with the world. As an act of transformation of myself and of the world it leaves marks upon myself and upon the world. The world and I come into contact at the moment of creative action, an artistic expression, and the two vectors intersect. When my craft is my self-craft, when I craft my body and my mind-heart, when I am the subject and the object of the transformation, the two vectors intertwine in me.

1.10 *Ki suryŏn* in the context of the East Asian crafting of the self

The Chinese parallels of contemporary Korean *ki suryŏn* are *qigong* and *taijiquan*. These and other practices such as folk dance, walking, mountain climbing, badminton, choral singing, water calligraphy, poetic writing and keeping pets are the subject of a study by Judith

Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang (2012). These practices are referred by contemporary residents of Beijing as life-nurturing activities (Chinese: *yangsheng* 養生). Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang joined in such life-nurturing activities in Beijing between the years 2002 and 2004, and conducted interviews with other practitioners (Farquhar and Zhang 2012: 7, 211, 237). In their study Farquhar and Zhang draw on Foucault's explorations of the care of the self, and also relate to these practices as "craft" – they call them "craft of living", "craftwork of the well-formed life", "craft of everyday life", "craft of health and happiness", and "active crafting of the times and spaces of life" (2012: 16, 19, 126, 142, 176, 185).

The idea of "life as craft" resonates with the ancient East Asian approach to life as constant generation and regeneration at every level of reality, including its ecological, social, physiological and psychological dimensions. In this worldview, culture is a refinement from natural resources, not a separate entity. And the patient crafting of life by man follows and is a part of a larger cosmological process of life-unfolding, formulated in the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (黃帝內經 *Huangdi Neijing*) as "heaven and earth mingle their qi [*ki*], limit its span, and call it man".[25] Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang find that this traditional view on life as a process of unceasing genesis and transformation is alive and well in contemporary East Asia (Ibid: 10, 179, 217, 228, 268, 284).

Farquhar and Zhang define *yangsheng* as a contemporary invented tradition, the forms of which arise within urban conditions. Nevertheless, this living tradition manifests continuity with ancient East Asian ways of life and thought articulated in the *Book of Changes*, *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (黃帝內經 *Huangdi Neijing*), *Dao De Jing* (道德經) and the *Analects of Confucius* (論語 *Lunyu*). *Yangsheng* as witnessed in today's

[25] *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor*, *Plain Questions* (juan 8: 25), quoted in Farquhar and Zhang 2012: 256, 268.

Beijing is an expression, embodiment, and re-creation of these writings (Ibid: 28, 50, 140, 237). A long East Asian tradition of self-cultivation (Chinese: *zixiu* 自修) forms a historical setting for contemporary *yangsheng*. The term *zixiu* itself is ancient (Ibid: 13, 17), but its contemporary meaning as embracing and defining a whole range of various activities is a new phenomenon of the 20th and 21st centuries.

In his discourse on invented traditions, Dipesh Chakrabarty states that ideas acquire materiality through the history of bodily practices (Chakrabarty 1998: 295, referenced in Farquhar and Zhang 2012: 31). The efforts of *yangsheng* practitioners to balance and harmonize their lives constitute a historically based form of embodiment that can never be fully articulated in words (Farquhar and Zhang 2012: 235).

Yangsheng-related literature connects to medical and psychological knowledge, and moral, legal, hygienic, aesthetic and recreational aspects of life. Yet the common motive shared by *yangsheng* narratives is the impulse to improve. Authors of these books argue that health and well-being manifested in eating well, sleeping well, digesting and breathing well are a personal responsibility, requiring deliberate effort, regulation and cultivation (Ibid: 131, 151-152). What emerges from the accounts of *yangsheng* practitioners, is the experience of a body fortified from within, defended against pathology by the systematic generation of positive, wholesome and personally powerful forms of *qi* [*ki*] (Ibid: 217).

But *yangsheng* is more than individual self-cultivation. For many practitioners it is also a form of contribution to the cultural form and life of the community, the city, the nation and even humankind as a whole (Ibid: 59, 176, 220). Older *yangsheng* practitioners quote Mao Zedong's slogans "Serve the people", and "Great public with no private".[26] They also quote the Confucian traditional virtues of respecting the elderly and cherishing the young, considering the needs of others and modestly yielding to others. A way of thought that

[26] Acting only in the public interest, not for private interest.

inclusively embraces morality, nurturance of life and political commitment is characteristic of *yangsheng* culture. The cultivation of morality is inseparable from spiritual and physical health. *Yangsheng* gives life a wholesome form, prolonging it toward personal satisfaction with "moderate well-being", toward more harmonious integration with family, community and nature (Ibid: 190-192, 237).

In the spirit of Farquhar and Zhang's work, the present dissertation approaches Korean *ki suryŏn* as a contemporary urban phenomenon, which draws upon old East Asian traditions of self-cultivation. If *yangsheng* is a newly invented East Asian tradition of nourishing life, then Korean *ki suryŏn* is a part of this tradition. As elaborated upon in the following chapters, the practitioners I interviewed articulate their aspirations toward self perfection as embracing their family, community, and sometimes even nation and humankind, and they practice GiCheon in seeking to do so. They yearn for, and at times succeed in achieving greater harmony with themselves and nature.

1.11 Autoethnography as method

This dissertation is largely based on the analysis of interviews with GiCheon practitioners, which I recorded and took notes of. These notes served as a guide indicating what material is available and which interviews are most relevant to my research. In the text of the dissertation, I focus on the interviews of the practitioners that express more clearly what other trainees also say. However, as a scholar-practitioner myself, I also utilize my personal diary, documenting my daily GiCheon training, and my own GiCheon experience.

Therefore, my work fits the classic model of autoethnography as conceived of by David Hayano in 1979. Hayano was one of the first anthropologists who brought the term "autoethnography" into wider usage. For him it meant a researcher writing an ethnography of her "own people", while fully identifying herself with this group, and enjoying a full

membership in the group, as recognized both by the researcher and the members of the group (Hayano 1979: 99-100).[27] My case meets these criteria, as for the last sixteen years I have been a GiCheon practitioner and teacher. Besides the knowledge gained through years of teaching and practice, in this dissertation I also use information acquired from co-trainees, instructors and friends during formal sessions, semi-formal gatherings and informal conversations.

The notion of autoethnography has evolved since its introduction by Hayano in 1979, and according to more contemporary classifications my research also falls under the categories of embodied knowledge and personal experience, reflexive ethnography, narrative ethnography and self-ethnography. The questions of self-construction and self-narration are relevant for autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 734, 740-742, 746), thus connecting the notion of autoethnography to the concept of technology of self.

A diversity of genres in writing the self is apparent in the ethnographic literature. These works differ in the voice given to the narrator, and the manner in which the ethnographer inserts herself in the text and comments on the words of others (Brettell 1997: 225). Some anthropologists decide to alternate between the third person and the first person in the text, the approach I adopt in my study. The purpose of this is to portray the collaborative and interactional nature of the research and to reveal the relationships between the researcher and the interviewed (Gmelch 1991: 21, cited in Brettell 1997: 225).

The tension between creativity and restraint in the act of self-narrative is the central theme of the volume *Re-writing the Self* edited by Deborah E. Reed-Danahy. As this book shows, anthropologists are increasingly explicit in their investigation of links between their own autobiographies and their ethnographic practice, re-thinking the relationship between ethnography and autobiography. The concerns emerging here are those of identity and

[27] While the classic definition of autoethnography is the ethnography of a group of people to which the ethnographer belongs, the term "self-ethnography" usually indicates the ethnography of the ethnographer herself, the study conducted on the individual by this individual.

selfhood, of voice and authenticity, of cultural displacement and exile. The autoethnographer is a boundary-crosser, a role that can be characterized by dual identity. Stressing multiple, shifting identities, autoethnography foregrounds the multiple nature of selfhood. Who speaks and on behalf of whom? Who represents whose life, how, why and by what means?

As anthropologists increasingly engage in their own "self-documentation" through autobiographical writing, the line between ethnography and autoethnography becomes increasingly faint. What is the relationship between ethnographic representation of others and self-representation? Ethnography in general is autobiographical, and autobiography reflects cultural and social frames of reference (Reed-Danahy1997: 8-9). Many an ethnographer is an insider and outsider, embedding the elements of her own life experience in the stories she writes about others. Many biographies shelter autobiographies within them, many ethnographies shelter within them autoethnographies (Brettell 1997: 245).

Ethnographer Motzafi-Haller explores in her work the questions of multiple identities through her own experience of being both a "native" and an "outsider" anthropologist, a Mizrahi Jewish woman struggling to get accepted into an academic world dominated in Israel by Ashkenazi Jews. She attempts to problematize the categories of "native" and "outsider", examining some of the personal and epistemological questions of writing within and moving between, these two positions. This also evokes questions of authorship and representation that underline much of critical discussion within anthropology. She writes about inner conflicts, personal and epistemological issues relating to the project of autoethnography, and about the difficulty of finding her own voice (Motzafi-Haller 1997: 196-197). Motzafi-Haller writes within the blurred lines of "native" and "outsider" anthropologists, of "self" and "other", of subject and object. She notes that her ability to shape her own identity and that of others is closely linked and works within the powerful objectification of such identities in a particular social and historical moment. At a particular instant, because of her newly earned credentials,

she was invited into the privileged hegemonic club of established western academics. Accepting that, she simultaneously resented the moment that transformed her from the subject of those professional researchers into a member of the group who made their careers by writing about "Others".

There is always a connection between the researchers' positioning in society, their history, and the kind of research agenda shaped by their personal background (Motzafi-Haller 1997: 204-216). I started my PhD on GiCheon in the year 2010 at Leiden University, the Netherlands. I began my GiCheon practice and teaching in the year 2001 in Seoul, South Korea. Being a GiCheon practitioner always was and is more important for me than being a researcher. Like Pnina Motzafi-Haller and many others, I am an "insider" and an "outsider", a researcher and a "research subject", a participant and a scholar. Like her and many others, I have to deal somehow with complex and confusing problems of identity, representation and articulation. How did my interviewees and I, the interviewer, perceive each other? For them I was a fellow GiCheon practitioner on one hand, and a scholar representing a "non-Korean, foreign world" on the other hand. For me they were co-practitioners, sometimes old friends and acquaintances on one hand, the "interviewed" on the other. Here trust and suspicion, feelings of alienation and unity, together with mutual stereotypes, sometimes growing or receding during the meeting, came into a complex play. Some of them tested me, others perhaps felt that they were tested.[28]

After starting my GiCheon practice in 2001, within a very short time I found myself at the heart of the GiCheon hierarchy. My teachers and friends Lee Kit'ae and Kim Hyŏnt'ae were the two main followers of Lee Sangwŏn (Yi Sangwŏn). My account of GiCheon weaves my words with those of my teachers, also because my life had become deeply intertwined

[28] One example of such a complex dynamics was my interview with Kim Pohŭi (not a real name), a student in her early twenties (interview of 08.11.2010, Seoul, South Korea). I felt that our interview was her chance to voice her anger and dissatisfaction with GiCheon practice, forced upon her against her will by her father, at the tender age of thirteen. I review this case in greater detail in Chapter Five.

with theirs. On one hand, the GiCheon community accepted me completely and unquestionably. At the same time, as a non-native Korean speaker born outside Korea, and of only partial Korean ethnicity, I always have been and always will be an outsider.

The account of an anthropologist Pnina Motzafi-Haller was an inspiring one for me, as is the story of Caroline Brettell who wrote a book on her mother Zoe Browne-Clayto Bieler. Both the daughter and the mother, the subject of the book, are writers. The book itself reconstitutes the journey of the daughter through her mother's life. The mother/daughter writing genre often blurs the traditional line between academic scholarship and personal narrative (Brettell 1997: 229). My own writing shares these specificities. For me and for many people I interviewed, GiCheon is a profound life-shaping experience that reaches down to the deep planes of the self. This experience is made possible through the guidance and assistance of the Other – the teacher. The instructor guides the student through hard and painful stances, evoking feelings of renewal and regeneration afterwards. The relationship between the student and instructor is intense, requiring a strong degree of trust. It also involves mutual identification, and the student often perceives the instructor as a "door-opener", who shows the student a new way, almost giving her or him a new life.[29] This is why I find it appropriate to compare the teacher-student relationship in GiCheon to a mother-daughter relationship, drawing inspiration from this mother/daughter genre.

Lee Kit'ae and Kim Hyŏnt'ae are my GiCheon teachers and I am a GiCheon teacher myself. It is hard and sometimes impossible to define where their understanding of GiCheon finishes and where my own thoughts begin. To which degree the metaphors I use to articulate my GiCheon experiences are the continuation and the development of what my teachers told me? Where within the continuum of which "student" and "teacher", "me" and "Other" are the poles do I find my writing? Caroline Brettell encounters similar dilemmas when writing

[29] See the account of Cho Chinsik, Chapter Four. He elaborates on his relationship with his teacher Kim Hŭisang.

about her mother Zoe. Caroline writes also from her personal memory, recounting her own (Caroline's) life and childhood. Caroline's words about her mother – whom do they belong to? Are they Caroline's or Zoe's? (Brettell 1997: 230).

Caroline Brettell mentions that her mother Zoe Browne-Clayto Bieler was "writing cultures" as she wrote about herself and others: Zoe engaged the world through her own experience as a participant and an observer (Brettell 1997: 230). Caroline does the same in her texts, as do I and many other scholars. As a scholar-practitioner, I am simultaneously a scholar writing an academic text, and a practitioner and a teacher of GiCheon. Most of the current text is written from an academic viewpoint, that of a "scholar". At times, however, I will slip into a "practitioner and teacher" mode in order to share with the reader my personal GiCheon experience – or the lack of it. Almost an "ideologue" of GiCheon, and trying to be aware of that, I will likewise relate some of GiCheon theory and philosophy. I will try to make a distinction between these two roles, despite the fact that in actuality they merge and intersect, continuously informing each other.

1.12 The structure of the dissertation

After outlining the previous research and my methodology in the present Introduction, I will proceed toward briefly introducing GiCheon and its history in Chapter Two. The concepts of *ki* and *suryŏn* are central to GiCheon. In Chapters Three and Four I start discussing what they mean to the practitioners, and this discussion continues throughout the following chapters. Chapter Three reviews the various meanings ascribed to the term *ki* in vernacular Korean and in the narratives of GiCheon trainees. Chapter Four examines the concept of *suryŏn* and how it is understood by the practitioners. *Suryŏn* is a common concept of East Asian culture, yet each trainee explains it differently. This very personal view on *suryŏn* connects to a "narrative direction" or "narrative inclination" of each GiCheon adept. Chapters Three and

Four will present to the reader the processes and techniques of self-perfection in GiCheon to show the diversity and variety of individual experiences. This diversity will be further explored in Chapter Five. The purpose of Chapter Five is to clarify the theoretical frame of "experiential modalities" by focusing on those experiential modalities which are personally colored. Chapter Five will also prepare the reader for the contents of Chapter Six, showing that the pain of *naegasinjang*, the central GiCheon position, is fundamental to GiCheon and colors the narrative of most of my interviewees. Chapter Six studies the pain of *naegasinjang* as an essential characteristic of the practice. Chapter Seven which preceeds the Conclusion, will lead the reader back from the intimate experiences of pain toward a more general context, elaborating on the cultural background of GiCheon as a part of mountain traditions of Korea. My conclusions will be presented in Chapter Eight, outlining the place of GiCheon within contemporary Korean society.