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

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Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The subjects of my research live in a society that is radically different from that of their parents and grandparents (who in turn had also seen great changes). To understand present-day Koreans in general and more particularly to understand how the practitioners of GiCheon, who mostly belong to modern urban middle class, live and use their practice strategically to improve their lives, some attention needs to be paid to these changes.

From the late 19th century onwards Korea has experienced a process of dramatic and almost continuous change in all sectors. The Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) came to an end with Japanese colonization (1910-1945), and after the devastating Korean War (1950-1953) the nation was divided into North and South Korea. In the 1950s, South Korea was one of the poorest nations in the world, with an income per capita of about 80 USD/year. Yet, Koreans were determined to succeed in the modern world. Per capita income grew to 1,342 USD in the 1960s, to 19,227 USD in 2008, and to 31,750 USD in 2011 (Long Le 2016: 253). Over a short period of time from the end of the Korean War to the late 1990s South Korea achieved rapid economic development, and significant social changes continue to come. The legal status of women became equal to that of men, and schools opened their doors to them. The population increased from around 20 million in the 1950s to 43 million in the late 1980s, and to around 51 million today.¹²² Accompanying this was a major population shift to the cities from the countryside, so that the rural population of about 18 million in the 1960s decreased to 8,8 million in 2015 in spite of a substantial general growth in population.¹²³ Such a shift entailed changes in occupation: production workers and manual laborers accounted for only 13% of the labor force in 1960, but their ranks increased to 22% by 1970, 28% by 1980 and

¹²² Statistics Korea, "Population Trends and Projections of the World and Korea," Statistics Korea, <http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/pressReleases/8/8/index.board?bmode=read&bSeq=&aSeq=347597&pageNo=1&rowNum=10&navCount=10&currPg=&sTarget=title&sTxt=> (accessed September 18, 2016).

¹²³ The World Bank, "Rural population," The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL> (accessed September 18, 2016).

35% by 1990. Professional, technical, administrative, managerial, clerical and sales workers made up only 20% of the labor force in 1960. Their numbers increased to 27% in 1980 and to 36% in 1990. By 1990, the huge increase in industrial labor during the mid-1960s to mid-1980s was giving way to the growth of a middle class of white-collar workers. Higher education also strode forward, illustrated by a rise in the number of tertiary students from 90,000 to over one million in 1990 (Wells 2015: 216, Lett 1998: 37-38) and 3,3 million in 2013.¹²⁴ In 2015, craft, machine operating, assembling and elementary workers amounted to about 35% of the labor force in the cities and 27% in the countryside, while professional, managerial, clerical and sales workers amounted to 58% in the cities and 34% in the countryside.¹²⁵

From the mid-1960s an outward-looking, export-oriented economic policy successfully drove the industrialization of South Korean society. Under Pak Chŏnghŭi's stern rule (1961-1979) South Koreans experienced the equivalent of Europe's industrial revolution in a matter of two decades. For South Koreans, economic growth was and still is not without its costs. For a time, during the 1970s and early 1980s South Korea had the highest industrial accident and death rates in the world (Wells 2015: 216). According to the findings of the McKinsey Global Institute from 2013, GDP has nearly tripled between the years 1993 and 2013, but this growth has become decoupled from the real wages of ordinary citizens, as the wages have grown by less than half this rate. By 2013 more than 50% of middle-income households were spending each month more than they earned. One of the reasons for this is because South Koreans invest more in private education than almost any society on earth,

¹²⁴ WENR: World Education News and Reviews, "Asia Pacific: Education in South Korea," WENR, <http://wenr.wes.org/2013/06/wenr-june-2013-an-overview-of-education-in-south-korea> (accessed September 18, 2016).

¹²⁵ Statistics Korea, "Characteristics of the Employed Persons by Industry and Occupation according to the Local Area Labour Force Survey in the Second Half of 2015," Statistics Korea, <http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/pressReleases/5/4/index.board?bmode=read&bSeq=&aSeq=354718&pageNo=1&rowNum=10&navCount=10&currPg=&sTarget=title&sTxt=> (accessed September 18, 2016).

which is related to characteristics of Korean society that will be dealt with below (Wonshik Choi, 2013: 3).

8.1 Striving for upward mobility and self-improvement

As indicated above, when the scale of the South Korean economy expanded, large numbers of people became wage or salary workers. Thus in the course of three decades leading up to the early 1990s a new urban middle class emerged. One of the defining characteristics of this class was a desire for upward mobility. New ways of asserting status have also emerged in the urban, industrialized society, but both old and new ways of acquiring and maintaining status involved occupation, education, material wealth, marriage strategies and lineage claims.

Traditional ways of asserting high status included, for example, lineage claims and the exemplary performance of ancestral worship. Most South Koreans claim today that they have descended from the yangban (兩班), Confucian scholar-officials and their descendants, the aristocracy from whom the state bureaucracy was recruited during Chosŏn dynasty.¹²⁶ The Confucian legacy of the yangban reemerges, sometimes in new and altered forms, as an active factor in contemporary South Korean life (Lett 1998: 31, 39; Asakura 1998: 198). Confucian influence has been diffused in Korean society and permeated all kinds of practices and religions. One example is the Christian modification of chesa (祭祀), a memorial ceremony for ancestors, commonly performed by most South Korean Protestant believers twice a year (Grayson 2009).

Probably as a consequence of its history, South Korea is a very status-conscious society, and the assertion of status has become an important element in both the formation and the definition of its new urban middle class, a project carried out by families rather than

¹²⁶ *Yangban* were the social, cultural, political and economic elite of Chŏson society (Lett 1998: 14-17).

by individuals (Abelmann 2003). Denise Lett argues that South Korea's contemporary urban middle class exhibits a culturally inherited disposition to seek high status. Lett sees the legacy of the yangban and their concern with high status as the driving force behind the development of South Korea's new middle class and the country's rapid emergence as a global economic player (Lett 1998: 1-2). Today, middle class status is built and maintained by families (Abelmann 2003), just as in the past the maintenance of the yangban status was a family affair. Today's middle class families, and those aspiring to become middle class, make great sacrifices trying to give their children a college degree. A university degree is a prerequisite for most jobs of middle-class status, including government officials, corporate managers and administrators, educators, doctors and lawyers (Lett 1998: 44).

Housing, dress, lifestyle, and behavior in general, along with literacy in Chinese, knowledge of Confucian classics, the passing of civil service exams to earn a degree, holding governmental offices, landholding, adherence to Confucian ethical norms, Confucian rituals and proper family behavior, an extended kinship system, intermarrying among elite lineages, the performance of lineage rituals, maintenance of genealogies, association with those of good social standing and a life of leisure rather than one characterized by labor were all marks of high status and culture in Chosŏn. Many of these behaviors, in more or less adapted form, are aspired to in South Korea, and constitute the marks of the contemporary middle class. The requirements to adhere to them are consuming and exhausting. While these behaviors demand investments of various kinds of economic, cultural and social capital, education is considered the key element to their achievement.

In South Korea education of individuals is funded and driven by families, but that is not the only reason for familial pressure. Urbanization often broke up the extended family structures, so that whereas 27% of families were living together as extended families in the 1960, by 1980 16.7% did so, and by 2000 only 7.9%. Yet although extended families were

thus physically separated, extended family culture remained reasonably strong in the sense that family authority, decisions about marriage, the naming and number of children, mutual support in times of difficulty, inheritance agreements, funeral arrangements and commemoration of ancestors to a large extent continued to follow extended family practices (Wells 2015: 240, Gyesook Yoo 2006: 60). Also significant is that income from salaries in South Korea has been insufficient to support a middle-class lifestyle. Thus for Koreans dependence on kin is not just a manifestation of the traditional culture of the extended family, but is essential if a family is to maintain middle-class status. Services such as day care for children and care for the elderly remain largely unavailable outside of the family. People live with their parents until they marry, and sometimes also after marriage (Lett 1998: 29, 39, 46-60, 80-81, 159, 182, 223). The cases of Ms. Sin and Mr. Kim from Chapter Five, both unmarried adults older than thirty years old living with their parents, are examples of this social situation.

The Korean obsession with education has not started in the modern era. During the Chosŏn dynasty, education, the hallmark of *yangban* status, was one of the means to achieve upward mobility. Commoners hoped to improve the social standing of their families by educating their children (Walraven 2007: 244). In the Chosŏn dynasty, education was mostly Confucian, run privately or by local officials, and consisted of village schools, local schools and Confucian academies. Following the Kabo Reforms of 1894, in 1895 a new Ministry of Education was established to reconstruct a state education system. A curriculum for new public and private schools included mathematics, geography, history, foreign languages and physical education. Reading and writing were stressed, but the first topic for both elementary and higher grades was *susin* (修身), self-cultivation in social mores. By the summer of 1910, just before the annexation by Japan, a state survey listed 10 state-run schools, 50 local primary schools and 2,082 licensed private schools that offered modern education. Under

Japanese colonial rule the number of students who received a modern education continued to increase. (Kyung Moon Hwang 2016: 170-176).

After Liberation, modern education has spread in South Korea with disproportional speed. By the end of the Korean War (1950-1953) school enrollments in elementary, middle and high schools and colleges for respective age groups were 59.6%, 21.1% and 3.1%. By 1975 enrollment increased to 107,6%, 74% and 8,6% respectively.¹²⁷ Since the late 1990s, almost all Koreans of school age are able to finish high school.¹²⁸ Within two decades from 1980 to 2000 the proportion of males going to universities increased from 37% to 45%, while that of the female population increased from 17% to 58% (Wells 2015: 238).

In his book *Korean Spirituality* Donald Baker talks about the Korean tendency for moral self-improvement (2008: 6). I suggest that this tendency toward self-advancement and self-cultivation, which during the last six hundred years was primarily embodied in the Confucian institutions of the Chosŏn dynasty, stands behind the pursuit of status which Lett sees as a force driving the development of modern South Korea. I view personal self-improvement, the striving for status and for material wealth on the individual and familial levels as various expressions of this tendency for self-advancement. It also has a direct link with the modern Korean obsession with education.

According to the Confucian ideal, moral perfection stemming from self-cultivation on the levels of intentions, desires, thoughts and actions is expressed through the harmonious functioning of the family and productive service in the government bureaucracy. In Chosŏn, *yangban* aristocrats studied Confucian classics and tried to put into practice Confucian

¹²⁷ Children who are older than elementary school age are now also enrolled in elementary school, thus the percentage is over one hundred.

¹²⁸ StateUniversity.com, "South Korea - Educational System – overview," StateUniversity.com, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1400/South-Korea-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html> (accessed September 18, 2016).

principles. In order to obtain the position of a scholar-official, *yangban* men were required to demonstrate mastery of Confucian classics by passing the civil service exam (kwagŏ 科擧).¹²⁹ Education of today manifests the continuity of Korean tendency for self-improvement and aspiration to rise to a higher status. While Confucian education was pursued during the Chosŏn dynasty in order to be appointed as a scholar-official, the only suitable position for a *yangban*, a modern university education is pursued to obtain various white-collar jobs, all suitable for those concerned with status. As opportunities for education spread among the masses, any education, regardless of content, continued to confer status in Korean society (Lett 1998: 35-36). This pursuit of education continues to create more and more stress.

A study released in 1990 stated that 20% of all secondary students contemplated suicide due to university entrance exams pressure, and 5% actually attempted it (*Korea Newsreview*, January 13, 1990, 30, referenced in Seth 2002: 166). An article published in 2013 indicates that suicidal thoughts in youth aged 15-24 were steadily increasing from 2009 to 2010 and 2011 (Ch'oe Chŏngghyŏn 2013: 37). One study of 1996 found that 97% of all children reported being beaten by parents and/or teachers, treatment that was attributed to the pressure to do well in school (*Korea Newsreview*, January 27, 1996, 34, referenced in Seth 2002: 168). By the late 1990s, 93% of all South Korean parents expected their children to enter university or college, preferably in Seoul, as provincial universities provide minimal status advantages. Yet, there were only 300,000 student positions available for about 900,000 annual applicants for admission to an institute of higher learning (Lett 1998: 161, Seth 2002: 168, 170).

¹²⁹ The hereditary *yangban* elite consisted of career bureaucrats in the capital and local landlords, landowners in the countryside. Most *yangban* never passed the civil service exams, and even fewer became scholar-officials in the central government (Lett 1998: 21).

Preoccupation with the future job of their children is not the only reason behind the educational pursuits of parents. In consistence with traditional Confucian ethics that equate education with moral worth and ultimately with prestige and social rank, Korean parents see education as improvement of personal character and nature, a cultivation of the self. Various private academies and extracurricular classes that children are made to attend since very early pre-school age aim at academic excellence but also at culture- and character-building (Lett 1998: 161, 173). The obsession with education drains most of the family resources, constituting one of the major causes of stress in South Korean society.

As a college or university education has become one of the most important markers of middle-class status in Korea, education connects directly to marriage strategies. In Korea a suitable marriage implies marrying someone with the proper status. Marriageability is defined by education and occupation, occupation itself being dependent on education. In contemporary South Korea the number of arranged marriages has declined and nowadays marriages are often results of self-selection of one's partner. In the 1958, 62% of marriages were arranged by parents, in the 1980, only 18%. But the grounds for choosing one's partner have not changed greatly. Introductions are frequently made by parents or their agents. The traditional regional, occupational, financial and educational criteria of the arranged marriages remain decisive in most cases (Wells 2015: 241).

The new middle class of white-collar employees of the government bureaucracies and large business corporations developed in South Korea between the 1960s and 1990s along with urbanization and industrialization. These people enjoyed a guaranteed income without many of the anxieties connected to independent businesses and farming (Lett 1998: 2-3, 37-38), which allowed them to engage in activities for self-improvement. In the South Korea of the 1980s industrial growth and the development of the new middle class went together with increased consumption and leisure culture, and growing concerns with health and personal

self-cultivation. Accordingly mountain hiking, *sŏngin undong* (成人運動 sports for adults), and *ki suryŏn* for example, were on the rise.

8.2 Reactions to Westernization and modernization

The middle class matured in South Korea in the 1980s. Its development since the 1960s was accompanied by two seemingly contradictory phenomena, both of which constitute an expression of national culture. One is the *yangbanization* of the society, which affected almost the whole population (Asakura 1998: 200). The other phenomenon is the *minjung* (民衆) movement, which associated Koreanness not with the ruling elite, but with the culture of the poor, suffering under-privileged. The term *minjung* appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, referring to the masses as a social category. By the mid-20th century it had become more ideologically laden and defined as the wellspring of authentic Korean values assumed to be held by poor rural and urban laborers (Wells 2015: 218, 254). The supporters of the *minjung* movement, students and intellectuals, however, came from amidst a new middle class of South Korea. As a political movement, *minjung* populism gathered force and determination after the Kwangju Uprising in May 1980 (Wells 2015: 255) and ultimately contributed to the June 1987 protests of students and the new middle class that led to the declaration of the end of military rule.

Korea's independence from Japan was achieved without Koreans' direct participation, despite their persistent struggles, and for the South, liberation brought new forms of dependence on the United States. The particular path of modernization as rationalization and Westernization along with growing anxiety over South Korea's perceived neocolonial status gave rise to two overriding concerns among critical intellectuals: overcoming the colonial mentality and recovering or creating historical subjectivity. Within the *minjung* project,

which was a characteristically postcolonial phenomenon, intellectuals and university students critically reevaluated and reinterpreted major events in Korean history, identifying the *minjung*, the common people, to be the true subject of historical development and the true agent of social change (Namhee Lee 2007: 2-5). The ideals and aspirations of the *minjung* movement were defined in opposition to foreign powers, corporate conglomerates, and military dictatorship (Namhee Lee 2007: 6). The *minjung* movement was a nationalistic movement which opposed neocolonialism and the anti-democratic regime, contributing to toppling it and achieving democracy in the 1987. The Nationalist pro-Korean character of *minjung* movement connects to and/or is one expression of the intensified interest in Korean identity and history of the 1980s, which is visible in various aspects of life and culture (Asakura 1998: 198).

The revival of folk culture was a widespread phenomenon after WWII among newly independent countries. In South Korea the state initiated a series of projects and institutions that gave rise to the revival of folklore as an academic discipline and a popular project (Namhee Lee 2007: 189). During the Pak Chŏnghŭi regime of the 1960s and 1970s the government revived some elements of folk culture as a resource for national identity, while denouncing other traditional cultural elements as unscientific, irrational, impractical and thus a hindrance to modernization. Students and intellectuals who opposed Pak Chŏnghŭi saw these elements as embodiments of an indigenous Korean spirit, capable of resisting the negative impacts of modernization and Westernization. In the 1980s these elements came to be considered parts of valuable Korean cultural tradition (Lett 1998: 39, Namhee Lee 2007: 189). The rise of *sŏndo* culture and *ki suryŏn* in the 1980s is one part of this return to things Korean, in an attempt to realize and shape an alternative, non-Western modernity.

In South Korea and in other places people evoke their own childhood as a touchstone of cultural authenticity. A longing for a place of memory, or imagined memory, as a feeling

of loss and mourning is seen sometimes as an inevitable consequence of modern conditions. This longing is often for things “folkloric” and “traditional” (Kendall 2009: xviii, xxiv), and it actively contributes to constructed histories, mythologies and traditions. It has shaped and colored the lives of people of older generations who have lived through Korea’s dramatic transformation from a mostly rural society to an industrial one. Their yearning for the past, in which the “past” is idealized and imagined anew, is mentioned explicitly by Ch’oe Hyōngsu in his interview. He talked about *sinsŏn*, connecting his longing for the past to childhood tales about fairy mountain dwellers. The mountain culture I have discussed in the Introduction and at greater length in Chapter Seven, together with an image of rural “old Korea” in the minds of contemporary people, becomes a source of inspiration in constructing and re-inventing tradition in the spirit of nationalism.

In Chapter Seven I briefly touched on the notion of *pigwahakchŏk* (unscientific), which for Ch’oe Hyōngsu and for many others has become symbolic. This term is a code word for a particular attitude towards some elements of Korean traditional culture, which were considered unscientific during the Pak Chŏnghŭi era and before that during the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea. The invented traditions of *ki suryŏn* and GiCheon should be understood against this historical background. The creation and support of these invented traditions constitute a reaction against the way of thinking of the modernizers who were inclined to equate modern with Western, and against the sense of Korean inferiority implied in such a way of thinking. This reaction becomes a leading force in the creation of the building blocks of a new Korean modernity.

In South Korea modernization and Westernization came to signify economic prosperity of the new middle class. Prosperity and modernity, however, also brought with them the stress of urban life, augmented by the exaggerated pursuit of education and status. Korean traditional spirituality, in its old and new forms, has been mobilized to deal with the

stress of contemporary urban life. One form of spirituality new for Korea was Christianity. It quickly became one of the most popular religions, and one of the reasons for this lies in its assumed connection with modernization and Westernization.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the advent of modern times also stimulated the emergence of a number of new religions, such as Tonghak/Ch'öndogyo, Chŭngsan'gyo and Wŏn Buddhism. They resemble Christianity in the ways they define themselves, such as a unique god they worship or scriptures they alone hold sacred (Baker 2008: 78-91). These new religions emerging in the period when Korea entered a new era served as pillars to fortify Korean identity in times of change and crisis, and they continue to provide spiritual inspiration and support in contemporary times. The term the *minjok chonggyo* (民族 宗教 national religions) is used to describe such religions. *Söndo* culture theorists view these new religions as a part of *söndo* culture (Na Kwönsu 2012). Christianity and the Korean new religions popularized from the 19th century onward constitute innovative and recent forms of the Korean tendency for self-improvement and self-advancement. As elaborated upon in the Introduction, this tendency is expressed in even newer religious and spiritual movements that matured toward the 1980s. *Ki suryön* in general and GiCheon in particular are examples of these spiritual-social phenomena.

Social changes that came with industrialization, such as mass migration to cities, created a total change of environment that allowed free choices with regard to social life absent in a traditional village society. A great variety of facilities are offered in a city, such as churches, temples, clubs and gyms. Commercialization and competition between different forms of religious and spiritual life have intensified in the contemporary era. *Ki suryön* practitioners consider monthly payments required from them as natural as entrance fees to gyms and swimming pools, while many among them choose to follow several paths toward

self-improvement simultaneously, combining *ki suryŏn* for instance with Buddhism or Christianity, as I have mentioned in the Introduction.

Commercialization and branding bring both diversification and standardization. As mentioned in Chapter Two, GiCheon has contributed to a generation of a number of practices, some of which were marketed and promoted under names different from GiCheon. Such is the case, for example, with Haidong Gumdo (海東劒道 Haedong Kōmdo) developed by Kim Chŏngho and Na Hanil, two students of Taeyang Chinin, in the 1980s, on the basis of GiCheon positions. Also in the 1980s GiCheon itself got standardized, systematized and classified into practices of warming-up, static and dynamic disciplines, breathing techniques and decorum training, which helped greatly in teaching large numbers of students. Internetization and globalization lead to yet another stage in the development of *ki suryŏn*, with multi-lingual websites advertising various practices and promotion DVDs being sold to an international audience.¹³⁰

8.3 Social pressure and *ki suryŏn* as a mechanism of survival and method of self-improvement

In this dissertation I have analyzed the experiences of contemporary South Korean *ki suryŏn* practitioners, and the ways these experiences are conceptualized and articulated by them. How do the practitioners understand GiCheon, reviewed here as one example of *ki suryŏn*? How and in which forms does *ki suryŏn* alleviate the stress of the complex urban life?

As briefly outlined in the Introduction to this dissertation, I approach *ki suryŏn* in general and GiCheon in particular as contemporary avatars of East Asian age-old practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life. In the context of South Korea, *ki suryŏn*, which is also referred to as *sŏndo suryŏn*, is a part of a larger *sŏndo* culture. The constructed tradition of

¹³⁰ As is the case with GiCheon DVDs released by Lee Kit'ae in 2002, and by Lee Sangwŏn and Kim Sanghwan in 2004.

1980s *sōndo* is projected back to such new religions as Ch'ōndogyo, Chūngsan'gyo and Wōn Buddhism (Na Kwōnsu 2012), to the ancient states of Silla, Koguryō, Paekche and even to Tan'gun (Sondō munhwa yōn'guwōn 2006). *Sōndo* culture has a direct connection to *chaeya sahak*, alternative versions of history promoted by populist nationalist historians. The representation of *sōndo* as the original Korean religion coming from ancient times constitutes one example of creating identity through history, and of historiography as a social activity involving attempts by social groups to formulate their own identity vis-à-vis others (cf. Walraven 2001: 157-158). History and historical records have always been important for Koreans as a kind of mirror within which good and evil competed. Anchoring their teachings in history is a common characteristic of Korean invented traditions, including *sōndo* culture and *ki suryōn* in general and GiCheon in particular.

As I have mentioned in Chapter Two, and briefly outlined in Chapter Seven, the contrast between “city” and “nature”, brought about by the industrial development and the rise of the middle class speaks to the health concerns of urban Koreans, manifested in the growth of hiking culture and a rising interest in *ki suryōn*. Indeed, health concerns are one of the major reasons that bring people to *ki suryōn* and GiCheon. Health concerns link to the stress of contemporary life. *Ki suryōn* and GiCheon provide important coping mechanisms for dealing with these issues.

The operational terms of the constructed tradition of GiCheon come from the ancient East Asian culture of internal alchemy and nourishing life. Yet, these terms are utilized by contemporary practitioners in a way that reflects the problems of modern times. As discussed in Chapter Three, when I asked Kwōn Kuho what *ki* is, his answers expressed his discontent and dissatisfaction with the Westernization of Korean society. As briefly outlined in this Conclusion, ideas of Westernization and the resistance against it have significant antecedents in Korean modern history. Kwōn Kuho found himself bound by Western ways of thought,

which left him unable to access and fully articulate the meaning of *ki*, an East Asian concept. He was only capable of explaining *ki* in terms of Western science, a fact he was unhappy about. An extract from the interview with Mr. Kwŏn quoted in Chapter Three exemplifies how this dissatisfaction with Western values and way of life is one factor attracting Koreans to *ki* practices associated with “Eastern culture”. Mr. Kwŏn is not alone in his negative estimation of Westernization.

Adepts construct GiCheon tradition through written texts and oral mythology. They also may incorporate Christian insights into GiCheon tradition. Kim Yŏnghŭi, whose interview has been discussed in the second half of Chapter Three, is another, and alternative, example of how contemporary Koreans perceive “Oriental thought” and *ki*. Ms. Kim explains *ki* in connection to God and the relationship between her GiCheon and Catholic practices.

The story of Kim Yŏnghŭi also demonstrates how GiCheon practice is woven into the texture of the daily affairs of the practitioners, and how the story of their training is actually the story of their life. In Chapter Four I have traced the meaning of *suryŏn* for the trainees. While they were talking about *suryŏn* their life values and attitudes surfaced in their narratives. As discussed in Chapter Four, the distinction between *suryŏn* and *undong* was important for many GiCheon adepts. For those close to the core of GiCheon community, GiCheon practice constitutes more than just *undong* (sports), and for many people it connects to their spiritual or religious progress, as Mr. Ha describes in Chapter Seven. Christian practitioners such as Ms. Kim from Chapter Three develop their Christianity through GiCheon. And it is through GiCheon that the Buddhist trainees briefly discussed in Chapter Four develop their Buddhist aspirations. Non-religious adepts find other ways to enhance their lives through GiCheon, as described in previous chapters. For those situated at the top of the GiCheon institution, such as masters and instructors, GiCheon itself provides a main route

toward spiritual enlightenment and self-perfection, the acme of happiness which Mr. Ha metaphorically situates at a mountain top in Chapter Seven.

Cho Chinsik, the first protagonist of Chapter Four, described the stress of contemporary South Korean life as his perceived need to constantly create a good impression with others. He felt that to some measure GiCheon practice helped him to free himself from this compulsion of impressing others, allowing him to live for himself. GiCheon practice also had a similar effect on Kim Yŏnghŭi, as discussed in Chapter Four. She was under very strong familial pressure to act in certain ways. Through practicing GiCheon she started conceiving of her own desires and goals, separate from those dictated by her family. As for Pak Kyŏngae, the third protagonist of Chapter Four, she used GiCheon practice not as a means to liberate herself from social and familial pressure, but as a method to make peace with it. Social and familial duties are heavy, and GiCheon helps her to deal with them successfully, to become an efficient worker and member of the society. Ms. Sin from Chapter Five also felt pressed to perform the duties of a “good natured daughter”. She used GiCheon as a technique which helped achieve that.

The stress and competitiveness of contemporary South Korean society are also reflected in the story of Kim Wŏn’gyu from Chapter Five. Though Mr. Kim does not mention them directly, it is clear from his narrative that he experienced strong social pressure to show his worth. It is in pursuit of this socially required self-worth or self-image that he has undertaken and continued his GiCheon Odyssey. This competitiveness is also clearly manifested in the words of Ha Tongju from Chapter Seven, for whom spiritual progress became almost like a contest or a sparring match.

As a technique for self-perfection, self-development and self-craft, GiCheon belongs to a wider culture of similar practices, which I have conceptualized on the basis of the technologies of self developed by Michel Foucault. On the basis of Foucault’s technologies

of self and Confucian self-cultivational schema I have developed the concept of the self as entailing multi-layered dynamics, unfolding into two opposite directions, which I have called vectors. The direction of the first vector is intention, emotion, cognition, actions and activities on the personal, familial, social and universal planes unfolding from inside the self toward the outside, toward the world. The direction of the second vector is from the outside toward the inside, as the outside world forms and transforms the self.

In a narrow sense, technologies of self mean formation of the self undertaken by the self. In a wider sense, technologies of the self include formation of the self by others. In the text of the present dissertation I have focused on technologies of the self in the narrow sense. I suggest that *ki suryŏn* in general and GiCheon in particular constitute subjectivation – that is the transference from the second vector to the first, by virtue of developing a strong self capable of withstanding outward pressures. The examples of most GiCheon practitioners described in this dissertation demonstrate the ways they utilize GiCheon in order to withstand and/or adapt to the pressures and stress of the contemporary Korean family and society.

When Cho Chinsik, Kim Yŏnghŭi, Pak Kyŏngae and others talk about their GiCheon *suryŏn* in Chapter Four, their narratives show activation of such motifs as the intervention of the Other, returning to the source, freedom, hardship and purification. These elements, common to many spiritual traditions of the world, are important components in the constructed tradition of GiCheon, as lived and experienced by the practitioners. In my vectors model, they are the mechanisms activating the first vector of progression, strengthening the self against external influences.

I suggest that my two vectors scheme can serve as a useful tool for social science research in general, and for the research on technologies of the self in particular. It can be utilized by other researchers in different forms and to different ends. First of all, existing research can be classified into following either the first, or the second vector. I have

attempted this kind of classification in the Introduction. I suggest that the late work of Michel Foucault (2001, 2008), and the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) and Thomas Csordas (2002) follow mostly the first vector, as they focus on the creative input of a man upon himself and upon the world, a man projecting himself onto the world. The earlier work of Michel Foucault (1961, 1963, 1975) and the work of scholars such as *Marcel Mauss* (1966 [1934]) and Pierre Bourdieu (1980) follow the second vector, as they study the way an individual life is shaped by society. This type of classification can facilitate an understanding of a great variety of research projects in the social sciences and assist in their comparative analysis.

Secondly, my two vectors scheme can be utilized in the philosophical discourse on the self. To which degree does the self manifest outward movement of intention, emotion, cognition and action? To which degree is the self constituted by familial and social influences? Which one is the real me – the one who imagines, hopes and desires? Or the one who accepts, submits and gives in? I suggest that application of the two vectors scheme in the study of various anthropological material and in philosophical discourse may further develop our understanding of the self, forming a link with the continuing history of subjectivity of which Foucault speaks.