

**A KOREAN COMMUNITY OF INTERNAL DIASPORA:
THE IDENTITIES OF WOLLAM'INS IN SOKCHO, SOUTH
KOREA ***

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Sokcho has a special history due to Korean Division. In fact it experienced two divisions, the first at the time of Liberation from colonial rule in Aug. 15, 1945, and the second resulting from the Korean War, so that the city was dominated by a socialist and capitalist state respectively. Quite a few families became separated during those periods, which spanned about 8 years. A great many natives also have dispersed families; that is, partial families who were displaced by the war. Sokcho itself largely consists of dispersed families, and it can be regarded as the city of dispersed families in modern Korean history.

INTRODUCTION

The Wollam'ins¹ are one group of several modern diaspora communities resulting from the division of the Korean Peninsula (1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953). The Wollam'in community in Sokcho, Kangwon Province represents the largest among all the Wollam'in communities within South Korea.

In recent years, the city of Sokcho in Kangwon Province has become famous as a tourist attraction. Historically, it had been a small village within Yangyang County, Kangwon Province, with few natural resources beyond its beautiful mountains, lakes, coastal area and hot springs. Kangwon Province had been within the jurisdiction of North Korea for a five year period since August 15, 1945. After the Korean War, Sokcho suddenly came to symbolize the Wollam'ins (Wollam'in refugees). Why did some Wollam'ins migrate to Sokcho? What were these migration patterns? How did this migration change the character of Sokcho? What was the construction of Wollam'in identities in Sokcho? What is the meaning behind these

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¹Wollam'ins are defined as "refugees displaced from North Korea into South due to the Korean Division and the Korean War." (Kim, Gwi Ok, 1999a; 1999b) For further discussion of the reasons for their displacement, see Kim 1999a and 1999b.

identities?

During my fieldwork in Sokcho, I researched a Wollam'in community, Chongho-dong, within the city of Sokcho and the factors leading to and resulting from this sudden identification of Sokcho with the Wollam'ins. I spent more than six months in Sokcho from Sep., 1996 to Feb., 1997. I conducted my research mostly in the Chongho-dong, a small village within Sokcho city which is known as the village with the largest concentration of Wollam'ins throughout South Korea. The Wollam'in people inhabiting Chongho-dong, largely made up of poor fishermen, colloquially referred to this village as "Abai Village²".

This paper represents findings published in my Ph.D. Thesis, several journal articles, and, later, a book on the Wollam'ins.³ Most of my findings were based upon participant observation and oral histories collected from forty in-depth interviews with members of the Wollam'in community in Chongho-dong. In addition, I used documentary analysis and a survey questionnaire.

I was fortunate to have conducted this research during a time when political sensitivity regarding the Wollam'in communities and other issues linked to North Korea was subsiding. During the 1980's and early 1990's, such research would have been impossible due to the strength of anti-Communism in South Korea.⁴ However, the post-Cold War climate of the late 1980's and 1990's created a political environment in the Korean Peninsula which led to a greater openness towards North Korean issues and, thus, a greater willingness by the Wollam'ins to document their experiences.

Since my initial research in 1996, I have returned to Chongho-dong Village once or twice a year. I have witnessed changes within Chongho-dong as well as within the larger city of Sokcho. The once thriving fishing

²"Abai" is a term originating in the Hamgyong Province in the North from which most of the Wollam'in were displaced. "Abai" is a friendly, familiar term used by a man to address one's father, a male older than oneself or an old friend".

³After a dissertation, I published a book enlarging it, and presented a few articles; "How has North Korea dealt with the problems of dispersed families?"(2001), "Another Piece of Lost Korean History: A Study on the Military Government of Kangwon Province during the Korean War"(2000a), "Wollam'ins in Sokcho and Kimje: toward a new study based on qualitative methodologies"(2000b), "Splitting Anti-community from the bottom up: through Oral History of Wollamin"(1999c).

⁴Korean McCarthyism, a Korean type of anti-communism, is said to have lasted much longer and resulted in harsher policies than that America counterpart's. Though McCarthyism, in the U.S. has gradually become weaker, it actually continues in South. Dr. Kwon told the state that anti-communism has been embedded in South Korean people broadly "inside anti-communist channel of my own"(Kwon, 1999).

industry of Sokcho has gradually gone to ruin and has been replaced by the tourist industry. As new immigration has been minimal, the actual inhabitants of Chongho-dong and Sokcho remain relatively unchanged. Although the Wollam'in community is aging⁵, the actual characteristics of the people have changed very little since the time of my research.

In the following chapters, I'll present the subjective and objective characteristics of the Wollam'ins in Sokcho and the construction of identity among the Wollam'in people.

THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS OF WOLLAM'INS TO SOKCHO

Fundamental characteristics of a society or an individual arise from social relationship and circumstances. In order to understand characteristics of Wollam'ins in Sokcho, we must first examine their process of immigration. First of all, I have divided this immigration process into three categories: period, type, and motivation.

Period of Immigration

I have classified the 40 Wollam'ins who immigrated to Sokcho into groups according to their displacement during the following periods:

- First: Military government Period(Aug. 1951~Nov. 1954) — 22 (persons)
- Second: Pre-Sokcho city Period(~Dec. 1962) — 15
- Third: Establishing Sokcho city Period(~present) — 3

First, more than half arrived in Sokcho between Aug. 1951 and Nov. 1954 that period was under the military government.⁶ During the Korean War, US-led UN forces and South Korean forces occupied seven counties, including those in Kangwon province and two counties in Kyunggi province since 1951. The occupied regions were significant as the first socialist territories which US had never occupied. They were given special status as areas

⁵Since my research in 1996, ten interviewees have died.

⁶Three US military governments have existed on the Korea peninsula. The first government was established to occupy and rule South Korea for three years after the unconditional surrender of Japan. The second governed North Korea for around 45 days from mid-Oct. 1950 to early Dec. 1950. The last is this (Kim, 2000). I have heard the military government of Yangyang many times through several interviewees. But I've authenticated a little the vague fact when I found out a field report which James Osborne (1952), an agent of Liaison Office, USIS, reported after touring Yangyang including Sokcho.

which belonged to neither South Korea nor North Korea for several years.

UN forces decided to govern only north Yangyang-county⁷ including Sokcho, allowing only that one county among them to be inhabited by Koreans for three years from Aug. 1951 to Nov. 1954. They prohibited ordinary civilians from dwelling in the rest of the area, which were placed under the martial law (Kim, 2000).

Second group arrived at Sokcho when military government ended in civilian government and before Sokcho town[Eup] became Sokcho city. And the last group came there after it became Sokcho city. The population of Sokcho, therefore, went on increasing by the inflow as well as by the natural rate of increasing until the mid 1960s. That time the main industry of Sokcho had changed the farming industry into the fishing completely.

See the trend of the population following a table <table 1>.

As we compare the population of mid 1960s with that of late 1940, we can find a six-fold increase in the growing rate of the population. It was a notable fact that the population was on the decrease or the stagnation in other country sites or small towns during the similar time (Kwon, 1977; Choi · Choi, 1993). And the population of Sokcho had increased till mid 1970s. But it had decreased in the late 1970s and have stagnated since then.

Returning to the main argument, Sokcho's population was around 11,100

TABLE 1. TREND OF SOKCHO'S POPULATION(unit: person)

year	household(A)	pop.(B)	B/A
1926*	-	5,784	-
1949**	2,321	11,406	4.91
1953***	3,661	16,213	4.43
1954**	4,841	20,599	4.26
1955****	5,350	23,699	4.43
1966	12,785	67,079	5.2
1976	14,801	72,042	4.9
1986	17,584	71,211	4.5
1995	25,792	80,709	3.13
1998	29,729	87,070	2.9

Source: Sokcho City, *Sokcho Statistical Year-Book* (yearly).

* Yangyang Gun Dochun Myon, *Myon Se Il Ram* [••••], 1926.

** Yangyang Gun, *Gun Se Il Ban* [••••], 1954a.

*** Yangyang Gun, *Reclamation Year-Book* [••••], 1954b.

**** Sokcho Eup, *Eup Se Il Ram* [••••], 1955.

⁷Yangyang county was divided into north and south by the Korean Division at the 38th parallel until the Korean War was ended. Later the boundary was replaced with the Armistice Line.

under the socialist North Korea just before the Korean War according to a few documentaries like as *Gun Se Il Ban* [• • • •] (Yangyang gun, 1954a). In 1954, its population increased in around 20,000 under the military government. The concept of population was confused in this statistic. Its population included not only 'native' but also 'displaced persons'⁸ and foreigners.⁹

As for native, about 2,000~3,000 of only native's population decreased for three years according to *Gun Se Il Ban*. Where did they go? I guessed that the missing persons were composed of many victims of slaughter, displaced persons to North Korea as well as draftees into South Korean military or North Korea (Kim Gwi Ok, 1999b: 124).

The number of displaced persons was 11,256 (Yangyang gun, 1954a), larger than the size of native. Who were the very displaced persons that were indicated in the documentary? Most of them were Wollam'ins and were displaced from North Korea to South Korea during the Korean War.¹⁰ They came into Sokcho under the military government. Why not? The result of this research revealed to me an interesting fact. Though the government restricted the ordinary civilians from coming into north Yangyang county including Sokcho, it permitted some Wollam'ins to stay here for a time. That was because they had to help soldiers as civilians, whether by draft or voluntarily. Though they feared the dangers of being at the front line, they came to Sokcho bordering North Korea and worked with soldiers because they hoped that would enable them to go back home to North Korea as soon as possible. Also they were very poor and needed a means to survive. When the military government ended, the freedom of passage was then permitted there (Kim Gwi Ok, 1999b).

Therefore, many Wollam'ins continued to enter Sokcho beginning in Aug. 1951¹¹ individually or collectively.

⁸Displaced persons were also found in Osborne's report. Later this term was used in Armistice Agreement formally. This concept is denote 'dispersed persons' during the Korean War (Kim Gwi Ok, 2001).

⁹The latter category apparently refers to Japanese who didn't return to Japan after Aug. 15, 1945.

¹⁰Wollam'ins can be divided into two groups. One was displaced from Aug. 15, 1945 before the Korean War. The other was displaced after the War had broken out. In the former case, the reasons for the displacement were several, but in the latter, mostly it was a war situation itself (Kim Gwi Ok, 1999a; 1999b).

¹¹Aug. 1951 was recorded as the date that Sokcho and north Yangyang were reclaimed or occupied by US and ROK Forces.

Types of the migration

The ROK government intermittently presented resettlement policies¹² for Wollam'ins because most of them had nowhere to stay during the three years of the Korean War or later during the postwar period. Most interviewees told me that they had wandered from place to place to search for food and work before they came to Sokcho. After trying their luck in several other places, they finally arrived at Sokcho. For the most part, such migration was carried out not collectively but individually. Its type generally resembled the 'chain migration'¹³ that is characteristic of foreign migrations.¹⁴ In the case of Wollam'in's individual migration, far more relocated while accompanied by family or relatives than those who migrated alone.

- the migrant types by Sokcho Wollam'ins (total 40 persons)

- single : 6
 - total family : 12
 - partial family : 22
 - chain migration : 27
- } total 40

This chain migration accounts for the several unique small villages in Chongho-dong. When people originating from various regions in Hamkyung province relocated in the same place, the small villages were named after their original hometowns in North Korea. Villagers in Chongho-dong still use these place-names, such as 'Shinpo Ma-eul', 'Jakochi Ma-eul', or 'Youngheung Ma-eul', et al.

The motivations behind migration

Wollam'ins of Sokcho have said, "Because we wanted to go back home sooner, we came to Sokcho on the border of North Korea." But in this field-

¹²Department of Social Welfare proclaimed that large resettlement sites would be established in Choonchon, Kangneung, Yangyang, Kangwon province so that about 200,000 Wollam'ins could live according to *Dong A Ilbo* Feb. 23, 1954. These plans were never realized, without the explanation by the government.

¹³'Chain migration' is the kind that once one migrated and another was relative to one, another would migrate helping the information and the chance of gaining a new job from one (Lee, 1987: 501).

¹⁴For example, migrations achieved through invitations by Korean American relatives in the US. After family members settle there, they may apply to allow other brothers, sisters or relatives to immigrate also (Lee, 1997 [1989]: 110).

work, I discovered various motivations based on the period of migration. In the case of persons coming there in the 1960s, though they had the dream of going back home soon, one could argue it was not the real motivation because such aspirations were still unrealistic. Even if they had a stronger desire to return home during the war when there was little probability to realize these hopes, the military government prohibited entrance into Sokcho or the north Yangyang county except several conditions. Therefore, what was their real motivation for relocating to Sokcho or Chongho-dong?

- classified motivation of the migration

- a) I(We) came to Sokcho near North Korea because I wanted to return home sooner.
- b) I(We) came to Sokcho because I could obtain work helping the military of the north 38⁰.
- c) I(We) came to Sokcho because I wanted to join my friends who came from the same place and became a soldier of the military stationed at Yangyang including Sokcho, or worked as a conscripted person there.
- d) I(We) came to Sokcho in order to live together a friend of mine who had already settled in Sokcho.
- e) I(We) came to Sokcho because I expected that I could get a job as there might be many jobs in Sokcho which was rapidly developing as a fishing port.
- f) I(We) came to Sokcho because the fee of resettlement was comparatively cheap in Sokcho, especially, Chongho-dong.

Many Wollam'ins of Sokcho tend to say that their motivation approaches to a). When I collected their individual condition or motivation simultaneously, I came to the conclusion that their resettlement was attributable a complex combination of several motivations. I think that the most typical response would be a). Many people responded with the most plausible motivation among the several reasons (Fawcett and Gordon, 1982). Among them, the answers a), b), c), and d) belong mainly to the persons who arrived under the military government or from the mid 1950s to the early 1960s. They seemed to have strong hopes when they came into Sokcho for mainly two reasons. First, because they expected that they would go back home sooner once they arrived. Second, because it was rather easy to get a job as there were comparatively plentiful jobs in Sokcho then. Especially the latter was very important to refugees struggling to survive. Many job were related to the military(c). It was called "Military Public welfare work [Gun-Hu-seang Sa-up]". Those who took up such work, had to support soldiers or spies fighting in the mountainsides or along the coastline near Sokcho against the North Korean military. Sometimes the Wollamins themselves

were forced to become spies and had to return to their homelands in North Korea to scout secretly for intelligence. The military also needed more fishermen to support them, so many poor fishermen came from North to Sokcho, where the military occupation expanded the local market for fish.

As most of them had no friends in Sokcho, once a Wollam'in happened to join the military of Sokcho, other Wollam'ins followed suit (d)). By this chain migration, sometimes dozens of people originating from the same place in North congregated collectively in the same place of Chongho-dong, Sokcho. The sub-villages developed within Chongho-dong unexpectedly. At that time, Chongho-dong was an arid field which was barely inhabitable due to the lack of potable water. But with after successfully arriving to Sokcho, poor Wollam'ins were able to settle themselves there for nothing and were attracted to the very low cost of living f) (Kim Gwi Ok, 1999). The chain migration later grew into a kind of social network in Sokcho.

After the military government was replaced by a civilian government, Wollam'ins came with complex reasons, a combination of d), e), and f). Since the fishing industry had developed from 1950s, it exceeded the agricultural industry by almost twofold (Bang, 1971) in early 1960s. Apparently, the changed industrial structure gave the former Wollam'in fishermen an incentive to migrate into Sokcho except social network. Therefore they migrated by complex reasons, d), e), and f), not a) since the mid-1950s and early 1960s. d) among them seemed to be the most important.

Generally speaking, many Wollam'ins thought that they congregated in the hopes of going back home soon individually. But they managed to come to Sokcho by joining the military until the mid-1950s. They migrated in search of work in the 1960s. And they moved because they could find a job related to the fishing industry comparatively easily.

OBJECTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF WOLLAM'INS IN SOKCHO

Since Wollam'ins moved into Sokcho, striking changes have resulted. First of all, they transformed Sokcho from the traditional poor agricultural area into a famous fishing port. Also people from Hamkyung province have displaced those from Kangwon province as the majority of Sokcho's population.

Let's consider the condition under which this agricultural region was changed into a fishing port.

The farthest northeast fishing port in Postwar

Sokcho was one of traditional agricultural localities until the middle of the Japanese colonial period. According to *Myun Se Il Ram* [• • • •](1926) published by Dochonmyun¹⁵ of Yangyang county, the population of Sokcho was comprised of 68.1% farmers and 19.1% fishermen. In Sokcho, even if there were few large areas of arable land, the size of total land mass was the second largest following that of Tosungmyun in Yangyang county. The agricultural population was third in the county (Yangyang gun, 1954b).

Significantly, Chongcho lake, one of great natural lakes in Sokcho and neighboring Chongho-dong, was changed into a fishing port since 1930s. According to a local historian of Sokcho,

Since Chongcho lake had been developed into a port in 1930s, large sardine-fishing ships came in crowds at the fall season yearly. The lake was covered with these ships and they came in crowds in the sea nearest Sokcho.

Because 4 or 5 small fishing ships followed every a large fishing ship, when 400 large ships came, the number of small boats was more than 400 or 500. Therefore, the lake and coastline were covered with ships (Kim, Jeong-woo, 1997: 39-40).

A few sardine-processing factories sardines were established in Sokcho, especially in Chongho-dong which gained a reputation as one of many sardines ports in the East Sea.¹⁶ According to interviews with Sokcho natives, 5 factories were along the Chongcho lake before Aug. 15, 1945. Nevertheless, the area still remained quite rural.

Its nature was changed from rural to a mix of half agricultural and half fishing industries directly after the end of the war. We observe this pattern shown in table 2.

The fishing population was far larger than the agricultural sector in 5 districts within Sokcho town. On the one hand, the latter was three times as large as the others¹⁷ which were outside of Sokcho town. The dwellers were

¹⁵Till then Sokcho was a very small village [•] belonging to Dochonmyun, Yangyang county. But it was growing into the third large town in Yangyang county in the later Colonial Period.

¹⁶The extraordinary abundance of sardines were caught all along the East Sea coastline during the Colonial Period. But from late 1930s and early 1940s, they were said to disappear without exact cause(Kim, Jeong-woo, 1997).

¹⁷About 11 villages belonged to Sokcho except 5 districts then. A few parts of them survived, but the rest disappeared at the present day.

TABLE 2. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION ACCORDING TO A JOB WITHIN SOKCHO IN 1955¹⁸ (unit: person)

job	district of the administration	district 1 (present Youngrang -dong)	district 2 (present Dongmyung -dong)	district 3 (present Jungang -dong)	district 4 (present Geumho -dong)	district 5 (present Chongho -dong)	the others	total
total populaton	household	911	357	1,103	1,316	454	1,209	5,350
	total pop.	3,730	1,579	4,743	5,486	1,976	6,176	23,699
agricultural industry	household	28	23	29	25	°§	790	895
	pop.	97	91	186	101	°§	4,426	4,901
fishing industry	household	72	106	296	169	201	302	1,146
	pop.	288	530	1,480	845	1,005	1,518	5,666
	motor ship	2	5	50	68	30	1	156
	sailing-vessel small boat	10	27	42	34	33	120	211
		16	29	52	68	106	85	356

Source : Sokcho Eup, *Eup Se Il Ram* [•••], 1955.

almost all native farmers. But most Wollam'ins generally seemed to live within Sokcho town. Especially at Chongho-dong, the dwellers must have been virtually all Wollam'ins.

I came to deduce the fact that displaced Wollam'ins(refugees) and natives could be distinguished by occupation and place of residence. That is to say, most Wollam'ins worked in jobs related to the sea, i.e. fishing, drying fish or seaweed, making fishing tools, selling a fish or seaweed, and so on. This accounts for why they lived at 5 districts nearest the sea and along the lake.¹⁹ But because there were farming lands, fields and mountains outside of Sokcho city, the native farmers had lived there for a long time.

In the above table 2, we can see another interesting fact by analyzing the assets of fishermen. Comparing the 5 districts, the fishing population of district 3, 4, and 5 were roughly of similar size. In the case of district 5, present-day Chongho-dong, the rate of fishing was the highest(50.9%) among them²⁰ and the dwellers had far more small boats and sailing-vessels than motor ships. But people of district 4 and 3 had as many motor-ships as small boats and more motor ships than sailing-vessels. We can guess that

¹⁸That district of the administration was completely different from the district after Sokcho became a city in Jan. 1, 1963.

¹⁹US military units or companies concerning to the military, too, were built there by the same reason under the military government. Numbers of laborers(70~80%) were Wollam'ins working there and stayed near the town (Kim, G O, 1999).

²⁰The rate of district 3 was 31.2%, district 4, 15.4%.

the dwellers of district 5 might be the poorest among them. Several Sokchoians said to me that most dwellers of Chongho-dong had been very poor fishermen in the North. Was this true?

We need to check the past job of Wollam'ins. How many Wollam'in were fishermen in the North? What backgrounds in the North did Wollam'in of Chongho-dong have?

Among 40 interviewees in Chongho-dong, 25 (64.1%) were fishermen in the North. The rest were 1 farmer, 2 merchants, 5 public officials, 4 laborers, 1 middle school student, 2 housewives, etc in North. Once they moved into Chongho-dong, Sokcho, they got job related to fishing. Among them, 34 (85%) worked in such positions. In 2000, a social survey of 91 Wollam'ins by Sokcho Cultural Center asked, "What job did your father have in the North?" It found that those with backgrounds as farmers outnumbered those as fishermen.

I discovered that most Wollamin working in the fishing industry chose to do so not because they were all fishermen by trade necessarily but because the industry required various kinds of unskilled labor. Because of this influx of workers, Sokcho went on to become one of the most famous fishing ports in the East Sea in the late 1960s and the largest port for catching pollacks²¹ in South Korea.²² This trend in the industrial population is reflected in Table 3 below.

Sokcho, as previously stated, belonged to the North from Aug. 15, 1945 to Aug., 1951. Jumunjin, including in present-day Kangneung City, was another

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION BY INDUSTRY, IN SOKCHO(unit: %)

	Fishing	Agriculture	Wholesale/Retail	Service	Manufacturing	others
1955*	23.9	20.7	?	?	?	?
1962	32.1	16.4	12.5	7.2	2.9	28.9
1965	40.2	16.4	14.7	10.2	2.2	16.3
1968	41.4	13.2	22.3	11.8	4.6	9.3
1989**	16.5	6.1		73.1	4.3	-
1998***	18.4	8.8	34.2	25.1	7.0	6.5

Source: Sokcho City, *Urban Developmental Plan*, 1970.

* Sokcho Eup, *Eup Se Il Ram* [•••], 1955.

** Sokcho City, *Sokcho City History*, 1991.

*** Sokcho City, *Sokcho Statistical Year-Book*, 1999.

²¹A pollack is called "Book Au" by Korean. Book Au means "North Fish[••]", and has the origin that it used to be caught the most near Bookchong [••] county, south Hamgyong Province.

²²In Sokcho, 'Sorak Festival' is held yearly. One program is a contest to cut a pollack.

er port on the northeast coastline below 38⁰, but it was narrower than Sokcho. After 1951, because the Sokcho region included the Chongcho lake, it had far more favorable conditions as a port.

But as the manufacturing industry expanded through South Korean modernization in the 1970s, industries such as agriculture and fishing declined. Modernization effectively brought about the stagnation of the fishing industry in Sokcho. As table 1 indicates, the population decreased absolutely during the 1980s, but it is increasing gradually since the late 1980s. At the same time, the structure of industry has changed rapidly from its reliance on fishing to a 3rd industry, namely that of tourism and a service economy. That is to say, the rate of Sokcho's 3rd industry is higher than the total average of Kangwon province. Sokcho, therefore, has changed from 1st industry-centered city into 3rd-industry center.

Since Sokcho's transformation into a large port, it became the one located farthest northeast below the 38th parallel. During a future period of Korean reunification, Sokcho is poised to grow into one of the largest ports connecting South and North Korea.

Wollam'ins originating from Hamgyong province in North Korea

At first glance, Sokcho appears to be a city located in North Korea's Hamgyong province because Wollam'ins originating from Hamgyong province account for more than 60% of its population. It appears as if the hometown organizations related to Hamgyong province have moved their headquarters²³ from Seoul into downtown of Sokcho. In downtown Sokcho are located most branches of such hometown organizations, which are rooted to the administration districts corresponding to its counterpart province in North Korea.²⁴

To begin with, I shall confirm what percentage Wollam'ins occupy in the total population of Sokcho. When Kim, Hyong Jae(1988) researched the distribution of Wollam'ins in Sokcho 15 years ago, he used the statistic of Wollam'ins' distribution by municipality, or dong, which was published by Sokcho City. According to the statistic, the resident rate of Wollam'ins by dong was as follows: Kyo-dong 60.0%, Geumho-dong 60.0%, Dongmyong-

²³Headquarters is called '5 provinces of North Korea' in Seoul, South Korea. It was established in 1949 by some Wollam'ins. It has claimed to represent Wollam'ins and has supported anti-communist authoritarian government as a pro-governmental power for decades until the election of Kim Dae Jung's government.

²⁴Sub-organizational groups are established centered on provinces, cities, counties, myons individually.

dong 60.0%, Youngrang-dong 59.97%, Joyang-dong 54.97%, Jungang-dong 60.0%, Chonghak-dong 60.0%, Chongho-dong 65.3%. Generally speaking, they have occupied 60.0% of the population on the average. Especially in the case of Chongho-dong, they accounted for 68%, according to the 1996 Census.²⁵

What do Wollam'ins coming from south Hamgyong therefore represent among total Wollam'ins? They occupy 61%, and Wollam'ins coming from north Hamgyong 10.6%, according to a survey of Wollam'ins by Sokcho Cultural Center of 2000. In sum both south and north Hamgyong occupy more than 70%. In the case of my own social survey conducted in January 1997 among the 2nd generation Wollam'in of Chongho-dong, when I asked about the hometown of their parents', Wollam'ins coming from Hamgyong were in the majority by 76.3%. I gather that they occupied about 70%, and in the case of Chongho-dong, more than 75%.

Quite a few Wollam'ins came into Sokcho hailing from several provinces in North Korea other than Hamgyong province. Wollam'ins coming from north Kangwon province²⁶ are the second most populous in Chongho-dong. Wollam'ins coming from Hwanghae or Pyongan provinces are in the minority. Since Sokcho had developed into an important fishing port in the 1960s, a lot of internal migrants came from Korea's southernmost province of Jeju as well as 3 other southern provinces.²⁷ Sokcho, nevertheless, can be considered mainly an island of former Hamgyong residents within the surrounding region of Kangwon province.

BUILDING IDENTITIES OF WOLLAM'INS

We learned that Wollamins' general characteristics stemmed from two primary factors: one was employment in the fishing industry, and the other was coming from Hamgyong province. We wonder how this common background factored into their identities. I will consider the ways in which their identities connected with these facts, and what went into the construction of their identities.

During my field stay, I took great interest in the ways in which the dwellers named one another. One would say, "*This is a native,*" or "*That is a*

²⁵This result was that I was informed of a part of census surveyed by subdistrict officers within Chongho-dong, in late 1996.

²⁶Kangwon province is now divided into south and north by the Armistice line. Because Kangwon near the Armistice line became one of the most terrible fronts during the war, many Kangwon residents were forcibly conscripted (Kim, 1999).

²⁷The 3 southern provinces are Youngnam, Honam, Chongchung.

refugee," or "That is a person of Chongho-dong." The dwellers in the downtown area said to me that they could distinguish a resident of Chongho-dong from a non-resident among a group of many Wollam'ins.

One time I asked a taxi driver to take me to Chongho-dong from downtown Sokcho, but the driver refused to go there without explanation. I was greatly surprised, but later I realized that a non-resident of Chongho-dong would not go there if possible. First, I was unfamiliar with this discrimination towards people of Chongho-dong, and then I became interested in developing this fact further into an inquiry into the problems of their identities.

Generally speaking, when one distinguishes oneself from another person, the problem of self-identity seems to arise naturally. For example, one might simply say, "Who are you?" and the problem is to identify oneself subjectively. For example when I meet a foreigner or am abroad, I interrogate my own identity compared with him or her or its culture. I distinguish my identity from his or her identity according to nationality or national identity. In the case of internal people, we are going to distinguish one from another by province, class, gender, group and so forth.

What makes these identities? What makes the identity as a person of Chongho-dong? When we understand the consciousness of someone, class is said to be the most important factor. However, I think that there are other factors constructing identity besides class, such as objective circumstances, social relationships, and cultural factors.

While I researched this problem, I found that Wollamin identities were not monolithic, but various and increasingly complicated with the passing of time.

Factors building identities

The factors that influence identity-construction include not only social relationships but also cultural elements. Social relationships play an important role in building a way of life. Culture can be defined as a way of life and is to practice a meaning, to share a rule, a norm, a law, and a system with others(Williams, 1983; Warnier, 2000[1999]). As for Wollam'ins of Sokcho, the important factors for constructing social relationships are the geographical origin of one's spouse, the relationship with one's perceived neighbors, and participation with social organization of Wollam'ins, among other things. Cultural factors also play a meaningful role in building identities.

(1) Geographical origin of one's spouse

Among Koreans in general, one's own hometown holds tremendous significance. But in the case of Wollam'ins of Sokcho, as they gathered together mostly coming from Hamgyong province, it was the hometown of a spouse that played an important role in their building new relationships with others. Apparently, when two people from different cultures have been married for a long time, they often become more similar to each other. That is because they will share a common culture within the same community.

In researching 40 interviewees of Chongho-dong, 6 (17%) among them were displaced with their entire families when they took refuge into South, 16 (45%) were with a part of their families, and the rest were alone (Kim, 1999b: 245). More than 50% (21 persons) were forced to part with their partner or were unmarried, and these people eventually married or remarried in the course of resettling in the South during the late 1950s (Kim, 1999b: 309-310).

What were the backgrounds of these partners? 27 (67%) among the 40 came from the North, the rest came from the South, and 12 (30%) in particular were born of Kangwon province. But in the case of the 2nd generation, total 142 persons, 28 (20%) of these partners came from the North. The rest were Southerners, and 57 (40%) were from Kangwon province. Not a single member of the first generation was married to someone born in Sokcho, but among the 2nd generation, 17 (12%) were married to Sokcho natives (Kim, 1999b: 313).

From this assessment, I can deduce that the 1st generation sought out others from the same hometown region or at least from the North, not only as their own partners, but also in their attempts to marry off their children. Realistically, it was difficult for the 2nd generation Wollamins to find suitable marriage partners among themselves because of there were few younger people in the community who traced roots back in the North, especially to the same hometown region as their own parents. After graduating from elementary school in Chongho-dong, most 2nd generation left to attend middle or high school in Sokcho or elsewhere nearby. In the process, these young people became acquainted with people from all different parts of Korea, and most eventually married partners originating from other regions of the country.

Under these conditions, Northern culture mingled with the culture of Kangwon province, and then two cultures combined syncretically into a new culture.

(2) *Wollam'ins'* Relationships among Neighbors

Evidently, physical proximity creates a new social dynamic built on the

relationships between neighbors. This leads to the creation of local culture and the consciousness of a given area.

When I interviewed members of the first generation of Chongho-dong, I asked them to identify whom they considered their neighbors. 75% responded that they considered their neighbors to be other persons coming from North, while 65% of the second generation answered in kind.

Most first-generation Wollam'ins were over the age of 60, and they often socialized as members of the Chongho-dong branch of a senior citizens' organization called *Taehan Senior* [• • • • •]. They seemed to be on very friendly terms with one another. According to a statistics of January 1997, the members coming from North approximated 79% among the total members of the Chongho-dong branch (Kim, 1999b: 321). Consequently, despite their displacement, they maintained friendships with persons coming from the same hometown or the North all their lives.

In the past, few Wollamin pursued friendships with those born in Kangwon province. Yet, this has changed considerably, and the second generation is far more likely to socialize with persons born in Kangwon province than did the first generation. It seems highly likely that the descendants of Wollam'ins will continue to have broader social relationships and more complex social networks than their predecessors did. Therefore Wollamin culture will ultimately be mixed into surrounding local cultures and further develop in cultural complexity.

(3) Participant willingness and motivations for joining Wollam'in social organizations

Apparently, most Wollam'ins join social organizations concerned with the Wollam'in community. The central headquarters of these organizations is the "5 Provinces of North Korea," which includes various sub-organizations corresponding with the respective province, city, county, town[• Eup], *myon* [•, small town], or *li* [•, smaller than myon], in the North. The 5 Provinces of North Korea has branches in 6 metropolitan cities and 9 provinces throughout South Korea. Every branch connects in a hierarchical fashion with the headquarters in Seoul. The headquarters produces its own magazine and other publications, which it distributes to all South Korean provinces. Whenever the headquarters of Seoul makes a major decision, it advises all its members in the various affiliated organizations by publicizing the content of the decision (5 Provinces of North Korean, 1997). Because these decision are not mandatory ordinances, there is no guarantee that all members would observe it. Compliance is at the discretion of the individual Wollam'in.

Recently, a controversy has arisen over the issue of whether the nature of this central headquarters is that of a political organization or sheerly that of a social network. The administrative staffs of the headquarters have argued that it is playing a role as a political organization and that it will become an administration to rule North Korea in a future period of reunification (Lee, Kyungnam, 1995). But ordinary members seem to consider it as an organization through which they can meet socially and gather with old friends (Jung, 1993).

Most Wollam'ins of Sokcho also said they consider it primarily as a social organization. Their motivations for attending were mainly to see their friends or hear news about them. They seemed to be pessimistic about the prospect of the 5 Provinces of North Korea becoming a political organization in charge of northern territories after reunification. They thought that if North and South were unified, 24 (60%) among the 40 interviewees of Chongho-dong would like only to visit their hometowns, mainly to see dispersed family members or relatives (Kim, 199b: 354).

Among 40, approximately half said they attended meetings held by this organization. Among them, 15 (38%) of them attended often, and 9 (23%) sometimes. According to the survey by the Sokcho Cultural Center of 2000, 75% are said to attend often. Perhaps recent interest in the North-South Joint Statement of June, 15, 2000, influenced the survey results to some degree.

As Wollam'ins continue to join such social organizations, they receive more news about the North, and tend to be increasingly aware of their identities as North Koreans.²⁸

(4) retaining cultural factors of hometown

Regarding the lifestyles of the Wollamin in Sokcho, most said that they tend to follow the cultural style of their hometowns. For example, their accents or manner of speaking or eating habits often reflect their particular place of origin. In particular, the people of Chongho-dong claim to adhere to the lifestyle and cultural patterns of their hometowns, and this observation was also recognized by people of downtown Sokcho.

During the field research, 21(53%) among the 40 interviewees said they retained such influences from their hometown culture, while only 13(33%) said they continued to follow the eating habits of their hometown.

²⁸In generally most immigrant cases, too, when immigrants were young, they were busy resettling in an immigrant country and could not attend a social meeting to see persons coming from the same hometown or same country. After they got grown old, they came to join it. Gans called it 'symbolic identity' (Gans, 1975).

In the case of my questionnaire on 2nd Wollam'ins in Chongho-dong which I conducted in Jan. 1997, 60% said their manner of speaking and 26% said their eating habits recalled the way of life in their parents' hometown. In the questionnaire by Sokcho Cultural Center of 2000, 72% and 10% claimed to retain them respectively.

In the course of observing the way of life in this community, I discovered some interesting examples of cultural syncretism. Considering that women generally do the cooking and decide upon the recipes, and assuming that the wife of a Wollam'in is a person born in Kangwon province, such women cook a kind of "fusion cuisine" mixing the styles of Hamgyong province with those of Kangwon province.

I also heard a dialect that combined the dialect of Hamgyong province with that of Kangwon province. The accent was such that someone coming from Hamgyong could distinguish a Hamgyong dialect that was particular to Chongho-dong and different from the native dialect of Hamgyong. There is another interesting fact. It is notable that an ordinary dweller of Sokcho is able to distinguish a dialect of Chongho-dong from a non-dialect. The native dialect of Hamgyong is not monolithic, but differs somewhat according to the locality from which they originated in Hamgyong province. But a dialect of Hamgyong of Chongho-dong is likely to be a dialect in its own right. When I was in Chongho-dong and heard people speaking among themselves, I did not detect several different Hamgyong dialects. For example, a dialect of Hamheung city (Hamgyong province), was originally a little different from that of Danchon county (Hamgyong province), but when people from these different regions spoke with each other in Chongho-dong, the differences in dialect between them disappeared. I can conclude that after living in the same space and time for fifty years, they are fashioning a new dialect from several dialects.

(5) Objective conditions of poverty

Another factor influencing the construction of these Wollamin identities is the fact that objectively many people of Chongho-dong are poor. When they began to resettle in Chongho-dong in the mid-1950s, they were the poorest among the 5 districts, as indicated in Table 2 below. In 1994, Sokcho City called Chongho-dong a stagnated or economically depressed area, i.e. a kind of slum (Sokcho City, 1994).

The city has classified Chongho-dong in this economic category since the 1980s. Chongho-dong's lot area per household is 161m² and, comparing the population density, its density comparable to the downtown area of Sokcho (Sokcho City, 1996).

While Sokcho has changed into tourist area from the 1980s up to the present, Chongho-dong did not particularly undergo much change. That is, Sokcho as a fishing port was replaced with a tourist site, but Chongho-dong still remained primarily a fishing area. 61% dwellers of Chongho-dong are employed in a fishing industry. Many houses of Chongho-dong are comparatively small and shabby. Its street are very narrow. The primary reason for this economic stagnation has been attributed to the restrictions of the South Korean "Green-belt" policy as well as the continuing poverty of the dwellers.²⁹

Because of these conditions, downtowners of Sokcho seem to have discriminated somewhat against dwellers of Chongho-dong. Consequently, they have distinguished themselves from non-dwellers.

Finally, I must refer to the unique geographical characteristics of Chongho-dong. The region is not an island, but a quasi-island. It is located between the East Sea and the Chongcho lake and stands apart from downtown. These geographical conditions set up a broad gap between Chongho-dong and the downtown area.

Characteristics of Wollamin identities in Chongho-dong

Many people of Sokcho and especially Chongho-dong are employed in the fishing industry, and many have originally come from Hamgyong province, are familiar with the culture of Hamgyong province, and are friends with their those originating from the same province. These factors most likely influence their identities. Of course, I wish to avoid overgeneralizing their identities. During interviews and while observing them as a participant in their community, I found out a few common characters as follows.

First, they were very proud of surviving and overcoming great difficulties.

(.....) because there was no drinkable water in our village, we had to go across the [Chongcho] lake by boat to downtown. The downtowners looked down on us because we had no water. Since the 1970s, we managed to have a public well by sub-district within our village. And it was

²⁹When I asked persons of Chongho-dong the reason of being stagnated, both 1st and 2nd seemed to think that the reason is not because they were idle, but because there was no policy for local administration department to develop their area. They did not consider that their children continue to dwell there and to live poorly off. It is not obvious that there is growing "the culture of poverty" spoken by Lewis(Lewis, 1966) at Chongho-dong. Only 16.5% 2nd of 1st 40 interviewees remained living together their parents there (Kim, 1999b: 360).

hard for us to have no toilet in every house. It was a problem that many families lacked a toilet and had no choice but to use a public toilet at some sub-district within our village until now (Wollam'in interviewee 1).

(.....) People could not live here. We brought soil out of Chongho-dong, and changed a sandy beach into arable and inhabitable land for ourselves without the help of outsiders, not even an administrator (Wollam'in interviewee 2).

As they were displaced from their hometowns during the war with empty hands, they inevitably faced many difficulties while resettling in the South. Most Wollam'ins were very poor, and people of Chongho-dong were much poorer than ordinary Wollam'ins or Wollam'ins of downtown Sokcho. Though it was a sand-field originally, and had virtually no support facilities, they had to resettle there. They changed it into an inhabitable space for themselves. They took a great pride in that they made a poor and small village, Sokcho, into a famous fishing port for themselves.

Secondly, they seemed to remain self-conscious about being "a rolling stone" or "a refugee," and this awareness still remained embedded within them. This consciousness helped build a collective spirit, or community mindset.

When I was unmarried, a friend of mine tried to introduce me to his sister-in-law. When he told his father-in-law this idea, he was angry. Because he was born in Kangwon province and did not like North Koreans, he refused me permission to marry...Finally, however, I did eventually marry her (Wollam'in 3).

When we went across the lake to downtown bringing drinking water, we often would fight with native downtowners. At that time natives did not like us because we were too tough and diligent but they were not. After we went to fetch water much earlier than they did, they sometimes were too late to get water of their own to drink. We women coming from North bonded together and were friends with one another (some Wollam'in 2).

I've heard that after they [Wollam'ins] became residents of Sokcho, they became economically dominant because they were tough and diligent. I think that it exaggerated their own sense of self-importance. Look at Chongho-dong, which is a community of Wollam'ins. It's still a slum (native interviewee).

Many Wollam'ins would sometimes clash with native residents in the early settlement period. Natives felt a kind of competitive spirit with

Wollam'ins at that time, and this sentiment lingered to some degree until recently.

There remains this latent competitive spirit between first-generation Wollam'ins and natives. In contrast, 2nd-generation Wollam'ins and their offspring are making broader relationships than their predecessors. This should mitigate the boundary between Wollam'ins and natives in the future. Moreover, attitudes of mutual discrimination between them are declining.

Third, members of the first generation speak to a relatively disenfranchised 'consciousness of Home Lost,'³⁰ while members of the second generation assume a more empowered position of strength built on a 'consciousness of Resettlement'. Most of the first generation have strong feelings of nostalgia and harbor ardent hopes to visit their hometown, although they do not generally expect resettle back there. They seem to understand, however, their differences with the 2nd generation and express hopes that their descendants will assimilate successfully into the mainstream way of life in South Koreans, and eventually become successful in the wider world.

This attitude seems to be manifested by the consciousness of adhering to a North Korean way of life at Sokcho. The consciousness seems stem from their pride as North Koreans. They expressed much more pride in being North Korean than being people of Sokcho. When I asked 'Why do you take pride in being a North Korean?', most of them told me the reason that they had were relatively well-off in the North but they faced many difficulties while resettling in the South.

If we compare these responses with those of younger Wollam'ins, 51% of the second-generation claimed to identify themselves as being from Sokcho, but only 39% felt similarly about being North Korean. Most of them said they considered North Korea as a their parents' home. They thought that because they were born and grew up in Sokcho, they naturally developed a loyalty to the region, along with a sense of belonging to Chongho-dong or Sokcho. The second generation and future generations of Wollam'ins, therefore, consider themselves as pro-active subjects in constructing the future of Sokcho, effectively indistinguishable in this respect from Sokcho natives.

South Koreans generally tend to think that most Wollam'ins hope to go back home to the North. As mentioned above, the Wollam'in interviewees

³⁰The consciousness of *Home Lost* has 'the consciousness of *Home-Coming*' as a conqueror to defeat an enemy. On the consciousness of *Home Lost*, many elite Wollam'ins, who are representative of ordinary Wollam'ins by power, seem to have this very strong consciousness. Several elites sometimes wrote that they had to go back to North, and should occupy and administer it in a magazine of their own making. This expression was likely to become the justification of their activities for anti-communism (Kim, 1999b).

expressed a desire only to visit the North, contrary to our expectation. Apparently, they came to think of Sokcho as a second home and already became familiar with living in Sokcho, but they considered North Korea as a kind of idealized home, which they could only imagine but to which they could not truly return.

CONCLUSION

Most Wollam'ins of Sokcho tend to consider themselves as survivors and as people of Sokcho who have undergone a resettlement, while at the same time, they still think of themselves as victims of "Home Lost," or as refugees. Although the attitudes of the 2nd generation are more empowered than that of their parents, both 1st and 2nd generations seem to assume a certain consciousness as residents of Sokcho. Notably, the first generation claims to feel that they are not real Sokcho-ites, yet neither can they become North Koreans again. The reason they do not want to live back home may well be explained by fear. To borrow a concept from Stuart Hall (Hall, 1990), the nature of their identities can be called 'in-between' identities, or third identities.

A few subjective and objective factors have built into these identities discussed above. Without the war, some persons or some cultures would have never met in Sokcho. When Sokcho natives encounter people coming from Hamgyong province and live in the same community or even the same family, new social relationships and a new culture arises and develops. The culture, or way of life, is a little different from the original culture of Sokcho and Hamgyong. The annual Sorak Festival, held by Sokcho City, is an exemplary space in which two heterogeneous cultures meet and transform into a new culture.

Sokcho has a special history due to Korean Division. In fact it experienced two divisions, the first at the time of Liberation from colonial rule in Aug. 15, 1945, and the second resulting from the Korean War, so that the city was dominated by a socialist and capitalist state respectively. Quite a few families became separated during those periods, which spanned about 8 years. A great many natives also have dispersed families; that is, partial families who were displaced by the war. Sokcho itself largely consists of dispersed families, and it can be regarded as the city of dispersed families in modern Korean history.

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