



THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2009 THE KOREAN WAVE AS

*This booklet is a collection of 40 articles  
selected by Korean Cultural Service New York  
from articles on Korean culture  
by The New York Times in 2009.*

# THE KOREAN WAVE

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## As Viewed Through the Pages of The New York Times in 2009

First edition, July 2010

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# The 2009 Korean Wave: Cultures Shaping Cultures

By WILLIAM C. HARLOW



I like to think of the **Korean Wave** in the plural sense. The wave is not a tsunami sweeping all before it. Tsunamis are rare. Rather, the **Korean Wave** is a never-ending series of waves varying in size and influence. These waves of culture impact and shape other cultures around the world just as returning waves impact Korean culture. If you ever doubt the power of never-ending waves, just look how the ocean has shaped the coast of the Korean peninsula.

The sociological definition of culture is “the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.” In this publication, the “total of ways of living” is divided into seven categories: **Movies, Music and Fine Art, Dance and Theater, Food, Lifestyle, Sports, and More.** These sections contain a variety of articles that illustrate the Korean way of living and the impact its culture has on others. Since the articles are from the *New York Times*, it is fitting to talk about the unique relationship that exists between Korean and American cultures.



## FOREWORD

**William C. Harlow** is a military and economic historian who specializes in U.S. History in Asia during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A graduate of the Virginia Military Institute with a B.A. in History, he also has a Masters of Military Arts and Sciences from the Command and General Staff College and is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College. He has lived in Korea for over six years at various times covering the last 32 years.

Welcome to the 2009 edition of the **Korean Wave**. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of a series that uses selected articles from the *New York Times* to give a sampling of Korean cultural events occurring in the United States and around the world. Charles K. Armstrong, in the 2007 editions, explains the term **Korean Wave** and how it has been used to describe the growth and influence of Korean culture around the world. In the 2008 edition, David R. McCain has compared the wave to particles reflecting the “energy source that sets it in motion”. While both are excellent ways of describing the growing influence of Korean culture, I like to think of the **Korean Wave** in the plural sense. The wave is not a tsunami sweeping all before it. Tsunamis are rare. Rather, the **Korean Wave** is a never-ending series of waves varying in size and influence. These waves of culture impact and shape other cultures around the world just as returning waves impact Korean culture. If you ever doubt the power of never-ending waves, just look how the ocean has shaped the coast of the Korean peninsula.

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America’s relationship did not start with the Korean War. First, there were early contacts with the “Hermit Kingdom” by American adventurers; some contact resulted in conflict (Korean Expedition of 1871). Eventually these early contacts culminated in the opening of Korea to the west. If you go to the Freedom Park in Incheon (also called Jayoo Gongwon or MacArthur Park), you will also see the monument commemorating the May 23 1882 Treaty of Amity and Commerce.

While trade and cultural exchange were limited during Japanese occupation, the U.S. still showed support for Korea. One example took the form of a postage stamp. Korea was the only Asian nation included in a series of stamps expressing American desire for freedom from oppression and support for underground resistance movements. It was the first U.S. stamp to show the **Taegukki** (Republic of Korea Flag). During and after the Korean War, the United States and South Korea have remained strong allies in the defense of freedom. Demographics clearly illustrate this closeness. Outside the Korean peninsula, more Koreans live in the United States than in any other country.

You can see elements of this cultural closeness illustrated in the many articles in this edition of the **Korean Wave**. Over the next few paragraphs, these articles will be highlighted, some personal anecdotes will be added, all to demonstrate how the waves of culture impact us all.

In the **Korean Wave’s** section on **movies**, the articles run the gamut from a remake of a Korean horror film, a Korean film on the loneliness of childhood, and an innovative Korean urban crime drama. The remake of the Korean film “A Tale of Two Sisters” to the new film “Uninvited” is discussed in the article “Cinema’s Sisterhood of Spookiness”. This article demonstrates the impact of the Korean film industry since imitation is often the sincerest form of flattery. Director Kim, So Yong’s “Treeless Mountains” is a film in a different genre. This film is a portrayal of two young girls growing up in the provinces after being left with relatives by their mother. “Treeless Mountains” is discussed in a film review and mentioned in the article “Real, Rough Life, in Front of a Lens”. Another review discusses director Na, Hong Jin’s urban crime drama “The Chaser”. This fast-paced action film is full of artful foot pursuits through the back alleys of Seoul. The impact of Korean films is worldwide. South Korea is discussed as one of the Asian film-producing powerhouses in “Asian Movies All Over the Map”. Film is just one of the art forms that the Koreans excel in.

Korea produces numerous superb talents in **music and fine arts**. Among these talents is the superb violinist Jennifer Koh. In a music review, Ms. Koh plays contemporary scores that are integrated with the various works by Hayden played by The Esterhazy Machine. In another review, Jennifer Koh's talent is again highlighted as she performs Bach in the Miller Theater at Columbia University during a lunchtime program. Korea has also been known for centuries for its fine arts. In the art review "Treasures at a Korean Crossroad", the art of the Korean Renaissance (1400–1600) displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is discussed. This exhibit covers a limited number of art pieces from a transformative period in Korean culture. It was during this period that the Korean writing system was developed. Great advances were made in art, science, literature. The waves generated by the Korean Renaissance spread Korean culture throughout Japan and Northeast Asia. Korea's geographic location between China and Japan, while unfortunate for strategic regions, did result in the cross fertilization of cultures throughout Northeast Asia. Korea has done much to recover and protect its art treasures from this and other eras. The exhibit in New York is just another wave from Korea sharing this part of its culture with the world. However concert violinists and displays of antiquity were not the only areas where Korea shared its culture with New Yorkers.

In the field of **Dance and Theater**, 2009 was a busy year. Ms. Kim, Yoon Jin and Mr. Dean Moss collaborated to interpret Korean poems from the Kisaeng (Korean Geisha) through dance. In "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Courtesan", the inspiration and development of the program unfolds to the reader. The same dance program is then reviewed in another article. In an interesting twist that shows the influence of the Korean wave in theater, a show being developed for theater in the United States will get an early try-out in Korea. John F. Breglio's remake of "Dreamgirls" was tried first in Korea with a Korean cast before making the move to New York. With Korean partner Shin, Chun Soo, the production of this musical is outlined in "For 'Dreamgirls', Pacific Overtures". Other articles and excerpts cover the world of dance and the contributions made by Korea performers. Of course, culture means much more than just the arts already discussed. Many people's favorite aspect of culture is food.

Korean **food** has a lot going for it. It tastes great, it's fun to eat, and it's very healthy. One of the first Korean foods people think of is kimchi. Of course there are as many types of kimchi as there are people who prepare

it, yet one thing that all types have in common is great taste and health benefits. As a Korean staple, it is no wonder that there are several articles concerning this delicacy. One talks of kimchi tacos. Another talks of a small United States based kimchi manufacturer who uses his mother-in-law's recipe. "Not So Slick, But Still Tasty", talks of Brooklyn's Unfancy Food Show where Oh, Kheedim sells his home made kimchi.

To promote Korean cuisine, the Korean Government has a Korean Cuisine to the World campaign. Its goal is to make Korean food one of the top five cuisines in the world by 2017. Besides kimchi and tacos, the bulgogi burger integrates an American staple with Korean spices and flavor. In Julia Moskin's article "Culinary Diplomacy with a Side of Kimchi", she relates how during the recent visit of Korean President Lee, Myung-bak and his wife and first lady of South Korea, Kim, Yoon-ok took time to cook Korean pancakes for Korean War veterans and to promote Korean cuisine. The article goes on to tout the great variety and popularity of Korean cuisine, the fusion of western and Korean cuisines, as well as aspects of more traditional Korean cooking. This article shows how the waves of culture continue to impact and shape the way we eat. Other articles include delicious recipes for Korean pancakes (Pa Jun) and Korean fried chicken. New York is a great city for Korean food; however, food is just one part of people's lifestyles where the Korean waves influence cultures around the world.

Korea is a modern first world country with the complex and diverse **lifestyle** to prove it. In this section there are articles on the impact of the economic down-turn on Korea and Koreans. Whether the reduced demand for plastic surgery, the unemployed turning to manual labor jobs, or the struggle for retirees to find work to supplement their incomes, Koreans find ways to deal with difficult economic circumstances. In a different vein, but in the medical field, South Korean parents use stretches and oriental and western medicine in an effort to increase the height and hopefully the future success of their children.

Two other articles take different approaches to the struggle of students preparing for exams. One talks about the use of a Korean-style "cram" school as students prepare for the Hunter College High School admissions exam. Another article talks about an innovative use of the internet to prepare students for different exams in Korea. Both show innovative ways to improve student learning. Other varied articles include: "Midtown's Hidden World", detailing a perfect

evening on Korea Way (32<sup>nd</sup> street); "The Roar of the Crowd, The Taste of Dried Squid", about a sports bar in Koreatown; South Korean bull fighting; and Koreans drinking maple sap.

My favorite article in the lifestyle section is Andrew C. Revkin's "Cities Peel Back Pavement to Expose Watery Havens." In Mr. Revkin's article he discusses the city of Seoul's restoration of the Cheonggyecheon. Like many cities, Seoul covered many of its streams with concrete structures during its rapid development. This article describes the project and the favorable environmental impacts of bringing this stream back to life. I remember walking the Cheonggyecheon during a recent visit to Seoul. I was impressed by the beautiful restoration. There are walking paths on both sides of the stream, stepping stones to allow you to cross over at spots (makes you feel like a kid again), and detailed photographic displays showing the stream before it was covered by the expressway, the construction of the elevated expressway, and the restoration project back to a stream in the center of Seoul. It creates an oasis in the middle of the city and is a delightful walk. Koreans love to walk, exercise, and stay in shape. That's why many excel in sports.

In the **Sports** section of the *Korean Wave* are articles on golf and figure skating. In the world of golf, female golfer Oh, Ji Young used skill and accuracy in the short game to win the LPGA's Sybase Classic. On the male side, Yang, Y. E., ranked 110th in the world, staged an upset victory over Tiger Woods to win the PGA championship. Korean excellence in sports also continued in the world of figure skating. In a victory that foreshadowed Olympic gold, Kim, Yu-na won the world figure skating championship. As the Korea(n) waves impact the world of sports, they also impact and shape the world in other ways.

The **&More** section of the *Korean Wave* contains those articles that don't fit neatly into the other categories. Among these articles is one about Mr. Luke Song's Detroit Millinery where this innovative entrepreneur creates stylish hats such as the one Aretha Franklin wore to President Obama's inauguration. Other articles are more in the political vein. "An Old and Faraway Dispute Goes Home with the Cleaning" gives the history of the dispute between Korea and Japan over a cluster of small rock islands known as Dokdo. The article gives a history of dispute and how Korean protests, including the dry cleaning bags advertisement, caused the United States to reclassify the island's designation back to "undesignated sovereignty".

Besides the article on a book written by a Korean political prisoner are two articles I found very interesting. The first is on the exporting of the Korean alphabet. Very few cultures have developed writing. Korea is one. King Sejong realized that there were drawbacks to Chinese writing and directed his scholars to develop a simpler system. By 1446 the scholars' work was done and the result was the Korean alphabet called **Hangul** (the written language not the spoken one: **Hangukmal**). The article's primary focus is the development of **Hangul** and its use by some tribes in Indonesia to establish a written form for their language. However, the impact of **Hangul** is far more reaching. I remember visiting King Sejong's tomb near Yaju and looking at all his accomplishments during the early years of the Korean Renaissance. One of my main thoughts was what an advantage **Hangul** was in the modern age. Think how it simplified computer key boards compared to Chinese-based characters. No wonder the Koreans were the first to develop movable type for printing.

The second article brought back memories. In Choe, Sang-Hun's "Amid Soldiers and Mines in the Korean DMZ, School is in Session", he talks of how elementary students are being imported to Taesung Freedom Village to keep the school open due to demographic concerns in the farming village. However, the article is more than that. It is a description of the DMZ around Panmunjom and the determination of South Korea to preserve its freedom. It brought back memories of my brief tour of duty on the DMZ in the 1970's. The article brought out the unchanging landscape inside the DMZ.

Korea is a wonderful blend of the modern and the old. As a leader in the modern world, Korea adapts cultural elements from around the world while keeping its own cultural identity. Korea continues to send out both large and small cultural waves. These waves are changing the cultural landscape around the world and in the United States. The change is rarely dramatic. However, just as waves continually hitting the shore change the shape of the land, so the waves of Korean culture change the cultures they impact. Korea and the U.S. have a long history together. The waves of culture enrich both nations. In this, the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Korean Wave*, I have tried to offer a small glimpse of how these waves have worked through selected articles from the *New York Times* published during 2009. However, like the waves of the ocean, the Korean Wave will continue on through 2010 and into the indefinite future.

# Cinema's Sisterhood of Spookiness

By TERRENCE RAFFERTY

# MOVIES IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

| FILM |

## Cinema's Sisterhood of Spookiness

By TERRENCE RAFFERTY

**H**ORROR has a special place in its icy little heart for strange girls: the sad girls, the lonely girls, the ones who feel invisible to others and often ghostly to themselves. (And most of them don't even get to hook up with hunky vampires.) The young siblings played by Emily Browning and Arielle Kebbel in Charles and Thomas Guard's "Uninvited" (opening Friday) are members of this rather exclusive sorority, but they'll be hard pressed to match the spookiness of their counterparts in the South Korean original, "A Tale of Two Sisters" (2002), which is one of the best, and most heartbreaking, weird-girl horror movies ever made.

In that picture, directed by the crafty Kim Jee-woon, the sisters Su-mi (Im Soo-jung) and Su-yeon (Moon Gae-young) live with their impassive father in a house that appears to be crawling with evil spirits—or at least extremely bad vibes. Their mother has recently died and been replaced, it seems, by a classically wicked stepmother, a hostile, beady-eyed, devious woman whose attempts to befriend the girls are transparently insincere. Su-yeon, the younger, mostly cowers and tries to remain inconspicuous, but Su-mi does a fair amount of acting out: she's apparently inconsolable, and we know from the opening that she has spent time in a psychiatric institution. Her father eyes her warily.

The movie has a hushed, apprehensive tone that gives way, at various points, to outbursts of hysteria: Mr. Kim's camera tracks and hovers in the well-appointed rooms and wood-dark corridors, then zooms alarmingly at those overexcited moments, as if it had been waiting for just the right time to strike. It's an odd and unsettling rhythm. There's a whiff of madness to it, and part of the film's suspense is that we're never, until the end, quite certain whose derangement this is. The director's? The stepmother's? Su-mi's? Or perhaps it's the house itself that is, as Shirley Jackson memorably described one such place, "not sane."

"A Tale of Two Sisters" supplies an answer, but the movie is so cunningly constructed—it's as tricky, in its way, as Alain Resnais's "Last Year at Marienbad" (1981)—that its mysteries linger anyway, nagging at the mind like a half-familiar face and a name you can't remember. What you may recall, though, from the dimmer recesses of memory, is the feeling this movie evokes, a feeling perhaps peculiar to (certainly most vivid in) adolescence: the sense that the world is almost unbearably charged with significance, electric with meaning. It's a state akin to madness, or possession. Every teenager's mind is a haunted house.



Emily Browning, far left, and Arielle Kebbel in "The Uninvited." Below, Yeom Jeong-A in "A Tale of Two Sisters," the South Korean film on which "The Uninvited" is based.



*Every teenager's mind is a haunted house. That's why the strange girls, friendless everywhere else, feel so at home in horror.*

This is the reason the strange girls, friendless everywhere else, feel so at home in horror. Their painfully heightened sensitivities make them ideal mediums for all the terrors of the phenomenal world: the long hours they spend alone facilitate brooding and, sometimes, dire imagining. They suffer from a constant and bizarrely eroded awareness that everything around them, animate or inanimate, is (or can be) threatening. "A Tale of Two Sisters" captures that uneasy state of consciousness as effectively as any movie since Roman Polanski's peerlessly disturbing "Repulsion" (1965), which peeps its young heroine's mind with so many demons that she can't, in the end, find herself there anymore.

What makes "Repulsion" so important—it's the "Birth of a Nation" of spooky-girl movies—is its unexpected empathy with its protagonist's insanity. Mr. Polanski's willingness to share her most irrational terrors, her deadliest delusions, Carole (Catherine Deneuve), a pretty Belgian living in a London flat with her older sister, has the remote, affectless manner of a somnambulist, and her halting French accent makes her seem more alien still, yet Mr. Polanski's direction is so inventively sensual, so attentive to the most intimate

Continued on Page 32



Horror has a special place in its icy little heart for strange girls: the sad girls, the lonely girls, the ones who feel invisible to others and often ghostly to themselves. (And most of them don't even get to hook up with hunky vampires.) The young siblings played by Emily Browning and Arielle Kebbel in Charles and Thomas Guard's "Uninvited" (opening Friday) are members of this rather exclusive sorority, but they'll be hard pressed to match the spookiness of their counterparts in the South Korean original, "A Tale of Two Sisters" (2002), which is one of the best, and most heartbreaking, weird-girl horror movies ever made.

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most vivid in) adolescence: the sense that the world is almost unbearably charged with significance, electric with meaning. It's a state akin to madness, or possession. Every teenager's mind is a haunted house.

This is the reason the strange girls, friendless everywhere else, feel so at home in horror. Their painfully heightened sensitivities make them ideal mediums for all the terrors of the phenomenal world; the long hours they spend alone facilitate brooding and, sometimes, dire imagining. They suffer from a constant and bizarrely eroticized awareness that everything around them, animate or inanimate, is (or can be) *threatening*. "A Tale of Two Sisters" captures that uneasy state of consciousness as effectively as any movie since Roman Polanski's peerlessly disturbing "Repulsion" (1965), which peoples its young heroine's mind with so many demons that she can't, in the end, find herself there anymore.

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And that's hugely different from the approach of previous strange-girl films, of which the most celebrated, perhaps, was Mervyn LeRoy's "Bad Seed" (1956): that picture's protagonist is a monster, a kiddie sociopath — Evil in anklets. The "Bad Seed" model has its attractions (primarily, you have to suspect, for those who find the entire female gender baffling and kind of scary), and the monstrous girls seem to have found a place for themselves, too, mostly in extra-chilly French thrillers like Claude Chabrol's "Violette" (1978) or François Ozon's "See the Sea" (1998) or Denis Dercourt's "Page Turner" (2005). Maybe the most interesting of these demonic young women, though, appears in a Japanese

film, Takeshi Miike's serenely horrifying "Audition" (1999), in which, despite the breathtaking cruelty perpetrated by its sweet-faced heroine, we are allowed to feel some small measure of sympathy for her. (We know she was abused.)

In general, sociopaths and embodiments of pure evil wear out their welcome pretty quickly. The horrors they practice seem too far outside us; the best horror works on what's inside, as "Repulsion" and "A Tale of Two Sisters" and "The Uninvited" aim to do, and as another popular Korean shocker, Park Ki-hyung's "Whispering Corridors" (1998) — in a way distinct from "Two Sisters" — also does.

"Whispering Corridors" is unusual in that it doesn't attempt to get inside the head of the lonely girl, Jin-ju, who is murdering the nastier teachers at her school. Jin-ju is the ghost of a student who committed suicide years before, and although we know that one of the current students is her reincarnation, we're not told which one until near the end. Even so, the facts of Jin-ju's life as they emerge in the course of unraveling the mystery tell a terrible story of teenage friendlessness and alienation, of the fears we felt when we were young and our senses were charged.

And those, of course, are the very fears evoked by the most destructive, and the most touching, of horror's weird girls, the poor telekinetic Carrie White (Sissy Spacek) of Brian De Palma's gleefully apocalyptic "Carrie" (1976), whose miserable high school experience ends, on prom night, in rage, blood and flames. Hey, we've all been there — at least in our adolescent fantasies, where paranormal powers and wanton, world-annihilating revenge tend to figure a lot more prominently than they do in the normal adult consciousness.

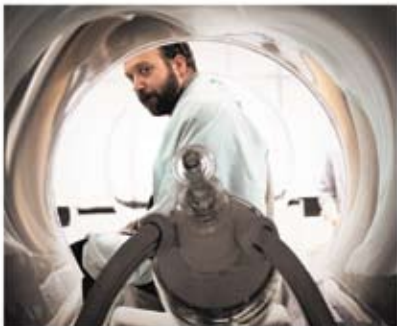
The strange girls of horror seem able, as the rest of us are not, to live in such fantasies, to inhabit fully their darkest, grimmest dreams, maybe just because they have so little else: not much love, not much companionship, not much solace in the real world, which is even more terrifying than the imagined world inside their heads. What the troubled young women of "The Uninvited" and "A Tale of Two Sisters" and "Repulsion" and "Carrie" know, to their sorrow, is that sometimes delusions are a girl's best friend.



# Real, Rough Life, in Front of a Lens

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

## Real, Rough Life, in Front of a Lens



Above, Paul Giamatti as an actor who plays his soul in storage in "Cold Souls," part of the New Directors/New Films series, presented by the Museum of Modern Art and the Film Society of Lincoln Center. Right, Nisreen Fawcett in "Amreeka," the opening film in the festival. Below, Catalina Saavedra in "The Maid," for which she won an acting award at the Sundance Film Festival.



A world of films about the battle to survive.



Below, Muna (Nisreen Fawcett), a Palestinian woman living on the West Bank who receives a green card and moves to the United States with her teenage son to live with her sister's family in a small town in Illinois. Their troubles begin at a Chicago airport where, after a humiliating interrogation, the tin of cookies in which she had foolishly stored all her money is confiscated.

Social realism is a term that makes some people queasy. On the one hand, it evokes propagandistic Soviet films wielded as oppressive motivational tracts; on the other, it can imply a condescending, conflict-denying, family-of-man sentimentality. But "Amreeka," the opening film of the 2009 New Directors/New Films series on Wednesday, reaffirms social realism's validity as humanistic art with an educational frisson.

The feature film debut of Cherien Dabis, a New York director and screenwriter born to Palestinian-Jordanian immigrants, "Amreeka" also sets the internationalist tone of the annual series, presented by the Museum of Modern Art and the Film Society of Lincoln Center. Most of the 25 films in this year's series, which has screenings through April 5 at the museum and at the Walter Reade Theater, were selected

from festivals from around the world, with Sundance the most important contributor.

"Amreeka" follows the odyssey of Muna (Nisreen Fawcett), a Palestinian woman living on the West Bank who receives a green card and moves to the United States with her teenage son to live with her sister's family in a small town in Illinois. Their troubles begin at a Chicago airport where, after a humiliating interrogation, the tin of cookies in which she had foolishly stored all her money is confiscated.

Because the movie is set during the onset of the war in Iraq, Muna, her son and her sister's Palestinian-American family must contend with anti-terrorist paranoia manifested in taunts and vandalism. Muna worked in a bank in Ramallah, but the only job she can find in the United States is flipping burgers at a White Castle; meanwhile her son, desperately trying to fit in, grimly makes his way through the American high school jungle.

The film is anchored in Ms. Faour's wonderful portrayal of a warm-hearted, self-reliant woman stretched to the breaking point who perseveres in the face of overwhelming obstacles. If the film offers a little too much rose-colored uplift for comfort, its essential integrity remains intact.

Given the economic vulnerability felt by so many Americans these days, the half-dozen or so films shown during the series's first week that have social- or neo-realist associations have a particular resonance. To New York audiences watching "Treeless Mountain," set in South Korea; "Ordinary Boys" (Morocco); "The Shaft" (China); "The Maid" (Chile); "Unmade Beds" (London); and "The Fly" (Russia), the characters' survival issues may not seem so remote.

Even the American documentary, James D. Stern and Adam Del Deo's "Every Little Step," which observes the casting of the 2006 Broadway revival of "A Chorus Line," portrays existence as a ferocious Darwinian struggle. The film is a self-reflecting mirror in which the show and the movie about creating the show become one and the same.

A dream of stardom that collides with reality also inspires one of the three connected stories in "The Shaft," Zhang Chi's eloquent movie about a father, a son and a daughter who live in a remote coal-mining town in western China. During this rigorously structured work, in which the camera regularly retreats to show a train bearing coal from the mine where the local men labor, the children's need to flee the nest (the son has pop star ambitions) conflicts with their sense of duty. The father, a stoic fatalist near retirement age, shows signs of terminal lung disease.

"Treeless Mountain," So Yong Kim's neo-realist gem, observes the world through the eyes of two sisters, ages 6 and 4, whose mother leaves them with their uncaring, alcoholic aunt while she searches for the husband who abandoned her. For all its poignancy, this study of childhood loneliness and uncertainty is no manipulative tearjerker. The resourceful little girls, whose aunt often forgets to feed them, turn to catching grasshoppers, which they roast and sell for pennies while clinging to the forlorn hope that their mother will return when their piggybank is full.

Daniel Hernández's "Ordinary Boys" observes a group of young men and one woman scuffling for a living in Tetuan, the northern Moroccan hometown of some of the terrorists responsible for the 2004 bombings in Madrid. The characters ponder the excruciating choice of whether to try their luck abroad, where they are not welcome, or remain in Morocco, where employment opportunities, outside of crime, are slim.

Alexis Dos Santos's "Unmade Beds" offers a romanticized vision of rootless bohemian youth from various countries converging in an East London squat. In "The Fly," a Russian trucker who has led a roustabout life learns from the deathbed letter of a fly-by-night lover from long ago that he has a teenage daughter. He visits the remote Russian town where she lives, takes a job as a gym teacher and tries to bond with the girl, an angry tomboy who vents her fury at the world through arson.

Three films from different countries with varying connections to social realism are more or less carried by their female lead performances. By far the best is Sebastian Silva's movie "The Maid." Its star, Catalina Saavedra, chosen best actress in the world cinema category at Sundance, plays a repressed, fiercely loyal housekeeper who loses her emotional balance when the middle-class family she has served for 23 years hires a second servant; she reacts to the newcomer like

a trapped animal. Just as "The Maid" seems about to cross the line into gothic horror, its stormy emotional weather turns sunny.

Gustave de Kervern and Benoît Delépine's absurdist farce, "Louise-Michel," stars the great French actress Yolande Moreau as an illiterate factory worker who appoints herself in charge of killing the boss of her company after it is suddenly shut down and the workers given a piddling severance. As she and the bumbling hit man she employs track their prey to Brussels and then to the Isle of Jersey, their inept campaign of assassination becomes a crude comedy of errors.

The strongest element of "Barking Water," the American Indian filmmaker Sterlin Harjo's two-character story of a dying man being driven to his Oklahoma birthplace by a former lover, is Casey Camp-Horinek's touching portrayal of the woman, whose compassion and forgiveness outweigh the bad blood between them. But "Barking Water" eventually chokes on its own nobility.

Laurel Nakadate's oddity, "Stay the Same Never Change," is the most alienating film in the series's first week. Made with amateur actors in Kansas City, Mo., this exploration of anomie among Middle American youth is as unfocused as its subjects.

The most likely art house hit, shown at Sundance, is Sophie Barthes's comedy "Cold Souls." In a movie whose concept is worthy of vintage Woody Allen, Paul Giamatti plays himself as a tormented actor rehearsing a production of "Uncle Vanya." He glimpses salvation from his angst in a New Yorker article about a process that enables people to shed their souls and keep them in storage.

Without thinking, he undergoes the process, which reveals his soul to be the size of a chickpea. Regretting his decision, he tries to reclaim his soul, only to discover that it is missing. "Cold Souls" turns into a delicious fable of international metaphysical espionage.

Arriving at a moment when smart, pointed humor in movies is in short supply, "Cold Souls" could never be described as social realist. It is simply flat-out funny.

*The New Directors/New Films series continues through April 5; (212) 875-5601, filmnlinc.com.*



# Two Children Are Cast Adrift in a World Without Anchors

By MANOHLA DARGIS



From foreground, Song Hee Kim, Hee Yeon Kim and Mi Hyang Kim in "Treeless Mountain," which takes place in Seoul and provincial settings in South Korea.

## Two Children Are Cast Adrift in a World Without Anchors

The adults in "Treeless Mountain" do not appear purposefully cruel, though they often appear as cold, remote and mysterious as the stars in the sky. The film, the second feature from the Brooklyn-based writer and director So Yong Kim, tells a quiet, carefully observed story about two young girls — 6-year-old Jin and her 4-year-old sister, Bin — who become orphans of a kind after their mother leaves them with relatives. Shot in South Korea, where Ms. Kim was born (her family immigrated to America when she was 12), it has the tang of real life, though this is realism that has been filtered through 60 or so years of world art cinema.

Ms. Kim, whose first feature was "In Between Days," a minimalist exercise about an emotionally isolated teenager, has chosen a more accessible subject for her new film: the desertion of two children. Her style also feels more approachable: the film opens with close-ups of Jin (the serious-eyed Hee Yeon Kim, making her film debut) attentively following a lesson at school, a cozy perspective from which Ms. Kim never budges. (For much of the story, she is the only grown-up watching over the girls.) Jin and Bin (Song Hee Kim) live with their worried-looking mother (Soo Ah Lee) in a cramped Seoul apartment until suddenly they don't, having been carted off to live with her sister-in-law, whom they call Big Aunt (Mi Hyang Kim).

A heavy drinker who directs the children to stack her empties, Big Aunt doesn't come equipped with a warm, enveloping maternal bosom. She is negligent, cranky, resentful and given to voluble complaint. She doesn't appear to want to care for the girls, which, in view of her dipsomaniac tendencies, seems reasonable, even wise.

It's a relief when, at the mother's prodding, she takes them to their grandparents' farm, partly because this development promises changes in scenery, tone and point of view, along with the promise of narrative tension. The scenery does change, but the tone remains unmodulated, the point of view claustrophobic, and no narrative tension emerges from the drift, prettily shot, repetitive images of the children navigating everyday life. The grandmother (Boon Tak Park, a nonprofessional) does prove kind.

Through her close attention to Jin's and Bin's habits, exchanges and tears, which she captures with a low-placed camera and hushed sense of intimacy, Ms. Kim quickly pulls you into this Lilliputian world. You see what they see, learn what they learn. The problem is that while the children are lovely because they are children, there is nothing inherently interesting about them or their lives. Their predicament is the stuff of melodrama, but from the loose (if linear) narrative and pockets of ambiguity (why did the father leave?) it's clear that Ms. Kim has positioned her film in a different tradition, one that borrows heavily from Yasujiro Ozu (specifically with the transitional shots tucked between scenes), Vittorio De Sica and other non-Hollywood masters, even as the story makes a beeline toward some unsurprising uplift.

MANOHLA DARGIS  
FILM REVIEW

### Treeless Mountain

Opens on Wednesday in Manhattan.

Written and directed by So Yong Kim; director of photography, Anne Misawa; edited by Ms. Kim and Bradley Rust Gray; music by Asobi Seksu; production designer, See Hee Kim; produced by Mr. Gray, Ben Howe, Lars Knudsen, Jay Van Hoy and Ms. Kim; released by Oscilloscope Laboratories. At Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, South Village. In Korean, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour 29 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Hee Yeon Kim (Jin), Song Hee Kim (Bin), Soo Ah Lee (Mom), Mi Hyang Kim (Big Aunt) and Boon Tak Park (Grandma).

### ONLINE: AUDIO INTERVIEW

So Yong Kim, the director of "Treeless Mountain," discusses her film: [nytimes.com/movies](http://nytimes.com/movies)

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# Asian Movies All Over the Map

By DAVE KEHR

## Asian Movies All Over the Map

Blissfully free from the constraints of good taste, the New York Asian Film Festival returns on Friday for its seventh annual edition. A true enthusiast's event, the festival is programmed by a collective of Asian film buffs whose eclectic tastes run from the wildest Korean shoot-'em-ups to the most restrained and contemplative Japanese dramas. With more than 50 features crammed into two weeks, it is one of the few festivals in the world that refuses to draw a line between lofty art-house fare and broad popular entertainment, a refreshingly open-minded policy that invariably results in one of the liveliest lineups in town — as well as one of the hardest to encapsulate.

Asia in this case largely means the eastern end of the continent, with a special emphasis on the area's three film-producing powerhouses: Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong. The opening-night presentation, "Written By," comes from the most fertile production company in Hong Kong,

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Milkyway Image, and stars Lau Ching Wan (of last year's favorite, "Mad Detective") playing a lawyer who dies in the opening reel but is brought back to life as a character in a novel by his grieving daughter (Kelly Lin). The elaborately structured fantasy was written and directed by Johnnie To's longtime writing partner Wai Ka Fai, who will be present for Friday's 9 p.m. screening at the festival's main site, the IFC Center at 323 Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village.

Other Hong Kong titles include Wilson Yip's "Ip Man," a biography



Yang Ik-june, above left, and Kim Gwi-hi in the South Korean drama "Breathless."

of the martial arts expert who taught Bruce Lee; Yu Lik Wai's "Plastic City," about a Chinese counterfeiter (the endearingly grizzled Anthony Wong) operating in Brazil; and Law Wing Cheong's "Comrades in Arms," the latest installment in the Milkyway police series "Tactical Unit" starring the suave, hard-working Simon Yam ("Sparrow").

One of the festival's real finds is the South Korean film "Breathless," a closely observed drama written, produced and co-directed by its star, the vividly talented Yang Ik-june. An enforcer for small-time loan sharks, Mr. Yang's character, Sang-hoon, has found a professional outlet for his violent nature, though he's hardly a becalmed spirit. He goes through life cursing and clobbering his co-workers and family until he encounters a high school girl even more foulmouthed than he is. Without editorializing, "Breathless" suggests that while South Korea may have moved beyond a militaristic, authoritarian culture, residue of the dark era — in the form of an interpersonal network of brutality and victimization — survives.

The resurgent Japanese cinema is strongly represented this year, both in this festival and in an affiliated one uptown: Japan Cuts, held at the Japan Society. Yojiro Takita, who won this year's foreign-language Oscar for his somber "Departures," is represented by two of his earlier works: episodes from the soft-core pornography series "Groper Train," released in 1984. The sex industry is also at the center of Masayuki Miyano's "Lalapipo," a dirty-joke variant on the intersecting-lives formula beloved by American independent films. The parade of lonely, pathetic, sex-obsessed characters includes a portly freelance writer, a nymphomaniacal housewife and a bleached-blond scout for massage-parlor workers, all of whom touch one other in unexpected and usually icky ways.



A scene from Sion Sono's "Love Exposure," about alienated Japanese youth toying with evangelical Christianity.

Less broadly satirical but far more ambitious is "Love Exposure," a four-hour epic that finds alienated Japanese youth toying with evangelical Christianity, cross-dressing and the subtle art of upskirt photography. The film was a major commercial success for its director, Sion Sono ("Suicide Club"), who here shows real skill in keeping a wide range of tones and themes under control.

Japan's grotesque horror comedies, combining spurting prosthetic gore and computer-generated mutations, are a specialty of the New York Asian Film Festival. This year's roster includes Tak Sakaguchi's "Yoroi: Samurai Zombie," Minoru Kawasaki's "Monster X Strikes Back: Attack the G8 Summit" and a tribute to the reigning splatter king, Yoshi-

hiro Nishimura ("Tokyo Gore Police"), who will be present for a screening of his latest effort, "Vampire Girl vs. Frankenstein Girl."

Infinitely more tasteful, Hajime Kadoi's "Vacation" is a bittersweet drama about a middle-age prison guard who agrees to assist in an execution in exchange for a week's vacation — time he'll use to take a honeymoon with his new bride, a young widow he barely knows. Ryosuke Hashiguchi's "All Around Us" reportedly trumped "Departures" in the Japanese critics' polls; this leisurely feature traces eight years in the shared lives of a Tokyo couple, a commercial designer and a courtroom sketch artist, as they reconfigure their priorities after losing a child.

There's a lot more besides, including last year's top-grossing film from Taiwan (Wei Te Sheng's small-town comedy "Cape No. 7") and China ("If You Are the One," a romantic comedy by the mainland's commercial steamroller, Feng Xiaogang), as well as a black-and-white pastiche of Malaysian genre films of the '50s, Mamat Khalid's "When the Full Moon Rises," in which a hard-boiled reporter stumbles into a village populated by werewolves, dwarfs and Communists. It's actually stranger than it sounds.

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# Down Those Mean Streets of Seoul, on the Double

By MIKE HALE

## Down Those Mean Streets of Seoul, on the Double

True to its title, "The Chaser" includes several hot pursuits. Forsaking cars and motorcycles, they involve men running up and down the steep, labyrinthine streets and alleys of the Mangwon neighborhood in western Seoul. When the quarry — a frog-eyed serial killer whose preferred tools are a hammer and chisel — is finally brought to ground, his exhausted pursuers beat him more from irritation than any desire to see justice done.

The sweaty low-tech action and the emphasis on urban topography link the film, the feature debut of the director Na Hong-jin, to modern South Korean classics like Lee Myung-se's propulsive cop drama "Nowhere to Hide," and Bong Joon-ho's river-monster thriller "The Host." Mr. Na isn't operating at that high a level, at least not yet. But with "The Chaser" he's trying to chart a similar course between the poles of art-house pomposity and empty style that characterize so much of Korean moviemaking.

The result may be particularly appealing to American audiences: while many of his compatriots look to France (for cryptic game playing) and Japan (for glossy horror and violence), Mr. Na has his eye on Hollywood. "The Chaser" evokes both film noir, in its conflicted hero and its moody shots of nighttime Seoul,

### The Chaser

Opens on Wednesday in Manhattan.

Written and directed by Na Hong-jin; director of photography, Lee Sung-je; edited by Kim Sun-min; music by Kim Jun-seok and Choi Yong-rock; production designer, Lee Min-bog; produced by Kim Su-jin and Yoon In-beom; released by IFC Films. At the IFC Center, 323 Avenue of the Americas, at Third Street, Greenwich Village. In Korean, with English subtitles. Running time: 2 hours 4 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Kim Yoon-suk (Jung-ho), Ha Jung-woo (Young-min), Seo Young-hee (Mi-jin) and Koo Bon-woong (Meathead).



Kim Yoon-suk in pursuit of Ha Jung-woo in "The Chaser," from the director Na Hong-jin.

### ONLINE: 'THE CHASER'

A trailer:  
[nytimes.com/movies](http://nytimes.com/movies)

a narrow Mangwon street he literally runs into the bad guy, setting off the first of the grueling foot races.

We know that the women are actually being gruesomely killed by a diffident psycho, Young-min (Ha Jung-woo), and early in the film he admits as much to Jung-ho and the police. But that is just the starting point for a story that spirals out into a grimly comic farce of missed chances, incompetence and corruption.

As Jung-ho is clued in to the enormity of Young-min's crimes — and as he realizes that the most recent victim, an especially angelic prostitute (Seo Young-hee), may still be alive somewhere in the neighborhood — his motives shift, ever so slightly, from mercenary to something re-

sembling noble. But his desperate search for Young-min's hideout is hindered by the unfortunate coincidence of a malodorous public attack on the mayor of Seoul: the ensuing P.R. debacle hobbles the police, leaving Jung-ho and his doopey sidekick (Koo Bon-woong) on their own.

In the end, the depiction of official malfeasance and indifference, and the somber final twist, mark "The Chaser" as unmistakably Korean. Like so many other serious movies made in South Korea, it uses genre conventions to mask — barely — a story about a culture agonizingly divided over questions of violence, state control and the possibility of individual freedom. (Mr. Kim, as the cynical would-be hero, embodies the contradictions in his fine performance.) While it could stand to lose 20 minutes and several plot twists, Mr. Na's debut manages to be thought-provoking and adventurous while providing solid thrills.

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The result may be particularly appealing to American audiences: while many of his compatriots look to France (for cryptic game playing) and Japan (for glossy horror and violence), Mr. Na has his eye on Hollywood. "The Chaser" evokes both film noir, in its conflicted hero and its moody shots of nighttime Seoul, and America's most influential 21st-century cultural export, the television police procedural, in its straightforward storytelling.

Straightforward by Korean standards, anyway. Mr. Na and his co-screenwriters, Hong Wan-chon and Lee Shin-ho, mostly do without the mind-bending flashbacks, digressions and after-the-fact explanations that can make Korean thrillers seem fatally artificial to Western viewers. But their story does turn on several fairly astounding coincidences, the last abruptly shifting what had been a high-octane crime drama into a tragic key and dissipating much of the tension.

The chaser of the title is Jung-ho (Kim Yoon-suk), a former cop who was caught taking bribes and now runs an escort service. When he notices that his prostitutes are going missing after taking calls from a certain phone number, he sets off to find the caller, assuming that the women are being kidnapped and sold. On a narrow Mangwon street he literally runs into the bad guy, setting off the first of the grueling foot races.

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# MUSIC & FINE ART IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Peering Into Complex Cloud Formations and Finding Sunshine

By ALLAN KOZINN



PHOTOGRAPHED BY KONRAD FELSNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

### Peering Into Complex Cloud Formations and Finding Sunshine

Here's a peculiar but fascinating double bill: in a Movado Hour concert at the Baryshnikov Arts Center on Monday, the Esterhazy Machine, a period-instrument group, played three Haydn baryton trios, and Jennifer Koh, the violinist, played thorny contemporary works. And to keep it fresh, Ms. Koh and the Esterhazy Machine played their music in alternation.

Even by the standards of period bands, baryton trios are oddities, not least because you don't run into a baryton often. A bowed instrument, held like a cello, a baryton has added strings that vibrate sympathetically when the main strings are played. Kenneth Slowik, the group's barytonist, demonstrated its unusual resonance, a kind of lingering harmonic haze. His colleagues were Steven Dann, the violist, and Myron Lutzke, the cellist.

Haydn's works for this low-lying combination are courtly and danceable (most include a graceful minuet), if neither as virtuosic nor as colorful as some of the piano trios. The group played Trios in A, A minor and C (Hob. XI:71, 87 and 101), and if the performances were sometimes rough-hewn, they had an endearing liveliness. The ensemble was at



**The Esterhazy Machine** Top, the violin soloist Jennifer Koh; above from left, Steven Dann, violist; Kenneth Slowik, barytonist; and Myron Lutzke, cellist, at the Baryshnikov Arts Center on Monday night.

its best, in fact, when the music was unusually involved, as in the triple fugue that closes the C Major Trio. The juxtaposition of these pieces and the contempo-

rary scores that Ms. Koh played would have been wrenching not long ago, but now such style-hopping is so commonplace that a listener hardly has to adjust. If the

pianist Pierre-Laurent Almard can spend a recital moving from Bach to Elliott Carter and back, as he did at Zankel Hall last week, why should the smaller

**A period-instrument group takes on the challenge of a baryton.**

leap from Haydn to Mr. Carter be a problem?

Ms. Koh wandered in Bach's direction, indirectly, by way of Ornette Coleman's Fantasy for Solo Violin. An overtly tonal work with a gentle melodic core, the piece draws on melodic and rhythmic figures that seem to allude, however unspecifically, to passages in Bach's unaccompanied sonatas and partitas.

The Coleman was the third work in a set that began with Mr. Carter's "Statement — Remember Aaron" and "Riconoscenza per Goffredo Petrassi," the first two of his "Four Laments." These are tightly compressed, brashly assertive portraits, and Ms. Koh played them with athletic precision.

She did the same for John Zorn's "Goetia," in which vigorous sliding, plucking, buzzing and tremolando bowing, all evoking an electronic timbre, occasionally gave way to a pure, singing violin line.



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# Treasures at a Korean Crossroad

By HOLLAND COTTER



The Korean art gallery at the Metropolitan Museum is a trim, tall, well-proportioned box of light. But it's just one room, and a smallish one at that, reflecting the museum's modest holdings in art from this region and the still scant attention paid to it by Western scholars.

So no surprise that the expansive-sounding exhibition called "Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400-1600" is, by Met standards, a small thing too, with four dozen objects. Most of them — ceramic jars, lacquer boxes, scroll paintings — are compact enough to be stashed in a closet.



What the show lacks in grandeur, though, it makes up in fineness, and in rarity. All of the art dates from a period of cultural efflorescence and innovation in Korea. Experimental art was on the boil; utopian ideas were in the air. Yet much of what was produced then was lost in the series of invasions and occupations that began at the end of the 16th century.

In short, while the number of objects gathered here, more than half on loan from Korean museums, isn't large, it's a lot of what survives. And anyway, it makes for a comfortable display, ideal if you're in the mood for some close looking rather than a drive-through blockbuster sweep.

Change was the essence of the Choson dynasty, which was founded in 1392, around the time the Renaissance began in Europe, and lasted for more than five centuries. Choson means "fresh dawn," and the dynasty perceived itself as a broom sweeping the country clean of tired old ways, which in its early phase it did.

The end of the 14th century was a heady time in East Asia. In 1368 China finally rid itself of Mongol occupiers and established the Ming dynasty. In the process it revived neglected art traditions and asserted neo-Confucian thinking, with its concepts of philosopher-kings, government by scholar-officials and a code of ethics based on loyalty to state, community and family.

Three decades later a similar shift happened in Korea. An old governing aristocracy was pushed aside to make way for a state-trained bureaucratic elite known collectively as yangban. Institutional Buddhism, a political and spiritual force for the better part of a millennium, was officially suppressed in favor of Confucian secularism. As in China, traditional art forms were revived and revamped to convey new meaning.

But history is rarely cut and dried. As often as not, it's a story of coexistence, not replacement; of retreat, not defeat. So it was in Korea. Buddhism didn't go away. Like a pilot light on a stove, it may have been hard to see, but it kept burning, its flame sustained primarily by the ruling elite that had banned it.

And it is Buddhist art of the early Choson that gives the exhibition its flashes of color and spectacle. A large hanging scroll painting of the Healing Buddha, his skin gold, his robes purple, his throne wreathed by a tangle of celestial bodyguards, is especially magnetic. It looks both old and new.

Prototypes for it go back centuries in China and Korea, but details of the Buddha's persimmon-shaped face — the tiny slit eyes, the beanlike mouth — blend Choson and Ming styles, making the painting very much of its 16th-century time. It was of its time too in being both illegal and a royal commission, paid for by an avidly Buddhist dowager queen whose son was a neo-Confucian king.

It was China, rather than Buddhism per se, that provided Korean artists with an aesthetic template. Sometimes cultural differences are all but impossible to discern. A magnificent picture of a falcon, long attributed to the 14th-century Chinese animal painter Xu Ze, has recently been reattributed to the 16th-century Korean painter Yi Am, partly on the basis of a seal stamped on the picture's surface.

In a set of Korean hanging scrolls titled "Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers," the seasonal theme, the ink medium, even the landscapes are all classically Chinese. But the painter's elevated perspective, as if seeing the world from a balcony in the clouds, is not.

Drawn as it was to China, the early Choson dynasty was also intent on defining and promoting Korean-ness. In 1443, in the reign of King Sejong, a committee of court scholars invented and made public, for the first time, a Korean phonetic alphabet and script called Hangul, ending the country's long dependence on Chinese as a written language.

From that point, fulfilling a neo-Confucian ideal of universal education, reading and writing became common. An industry of books in Hangul flourished. In a beautiful painting of a Buddhist narrative in the show, lines of white-painted Hangul script trickle down like curtains of soft rain.

The tale depicted seems to be one invented in Korea, and certain forms of art are specifically Korean in content or style too. One type of painting — there are three examples in the show — is the equivalent of a class-reunion photograph of government bureaucrats who had taken their rigorous civil-service exams in the same year.

In each picture the men, often elderly, attending the reunion are portrayed enjoying one another's company in breezy pavilions, with their names, biographical updates and occasional sentiments (I'm still working hard, I miss so-and-so, old age is hell) written below in Chinese. Many identical paintings were made so that each scholar could carry home a souvenir.

The most distinctively Korean art forms were developed in ceramics, specifically in the stoneware now called buncheong. At the start of the Choson era buncheong was the luxury ware favored by an elite clientele. Its novel refinements are evident in the show in a set of funerary dishes, replete with an inscribed memorial tablet, covered with feathery white cross-hatch patterns stamped on a gray-brown background. On loan from the Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul, South Korea, the set is, for obvious reasons, registered as a national treasure.

After a few decades court-controlled kilns began to turn out a rival product, an exquisite white porcelain that quickly became, in aristocratic circles, the thing to have. Buncheong, its prestige diminished, passed into the general market.

Maybe because of its release from the restraints of class decorum, this stoneware became the fantastically zany art that it is. Based on squat everyday items like water flasks and baskets, buncheong forms tend to look squashed and bashed, their glazes slathered and splattered on, their surfaces dug-into and scarred with abstract scribbles like those in a Cy Twombly painting.

Buncheong was a hit, but by the end of the 16th century it had more or less ceased production. A lot of art started to disappear. In 1592 a Japanese army attacked Korea

and stayed to loot and pillage; Buncheong potters were shipped back to Japan to make tea-ceremony wares. Some 30 years later the Manchus invaded Korea for the first time on their way to conquering the Ming dynasty in China and setting up one of their own, the Qing.

For practical reasons the Choson court declared fealty to the Qing. At the same time Korean artists and scholars pondered, more intently than before, the lineaments of Korean culture — what it was, had been, could be — and turned their hands to advancing a national art.

The story of the later Choson exceeds the compass of the show but will likely be tackled later. The Met plans to mount a series of exhibitions over the next 10 to 15 years on the history of Korean art. Each show will be about the size of this one and accompanied by a catalog, the first of which — solid, slender and edited by the present show's organizer, Soyoung Lee, an assistant curator in the department of Asian art — has appeared.

Exhibitions of this scale could become a new norm for the Met in the years ahead. If so, great. When they are well done, small shows deliver everything a memorable art experience needs: beauty, history, unfamiliarity, deep research and fresh ideas. And they do something bigger shows cannot: turn major cultural encounters into intimate conversations.

*"Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400–1600" remains at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through June 21; metmuseum.org.*

# A Lunch Break With a Bach Partita as the Main Course

By ANTHONY TOMMASINI



Jennifer Koh, presenting the first of six programs of the Bach partitas, in Philosophy Hall at Columbia University on Monday afternoon.

## A Lunch Break With a Bach Partita as the Main Course

Word has gotten out about Lunchtime Concerts, the informal free performances of chamber works at the intimate reading room in Philosophy Hall on the Columbia University campus. The series, sponsored by the Miller Theater and Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, opened on Monday afternoon at 12:30 with the exciting young violinist Jennifer Koh playing Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor. And peo-

The next program in the series of Bach violin works is on Wednesday at Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th Street, Morningside Heights; (212) 854-7799, millertheater.com.

ple started arriving up to 45 minutes before the program began to get a seat.

About 200 people eventually crowded into the room, which is perfect for chamber music. Some sat atop desks lining the walls; others stood in the back. The programs are short, in keeping with the theme of enjoying some music during your lunch break, and only one substantial work is played. It was revealing to hear this astonishing Bach partita on its own. For all its greatness, the piece can get swamped when performed alongside the works for violin and piano typically played at a recital.

This was the first of six programs Ms. Koh will play presenting all of the Bach partitas. (The series will also offer Benjamin Hochman playing the Bach piano

partitas and Alisa Weilerstein playing the Bach cello suites.) Following the Lunchtime Concerts tradition, she first spoke to the audience about the piece. Bach, who was working in Weimar when he completed his six partitas in 1720, was surely influenced by the Weimar violinist Johann Paul von Westhoff, who had already published a collection of solo violin partitas.

Ms. Koh played the opening measures of the Allemande, Courant and Sarabande from a Westhoff suite, alternating the excerpts with opening measures of the corresponding movements by Bach. Westhoff's partitas fired Bach's imagination about ways to write for the violin. Bach took it from there. And how.

The Partita in D minor has a curious structure. After four

dance movements, which last 12 minutes together, the work ends with the monumental Chaconne, a set of rhapsodic variations on a stately triple-meter dance theme, totaling 15 minutes.

Ms. Koh conveyed the naturalness of the phrasing in the flowing Allemande and brought Baroque zest to the Courant. The gutsy way she played the chords in the Sarabande allowed the wistful melodic line to shine. And she balanced intensity and buoyancy in the fleet Giga.

Finally, she gave a deeply expressive account of the Chaconne, dispatching the challenges with such security that you did not notice the sheer virtuosity at work. The ovation was so ardent that Ms. Koh, who had been visibly engrossed in her performance, wiped away tears.

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# The Loneliness of the Long-Distant Courtesan

By GIA KOURLAS

## DANCE & THEATER IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

DANCE

### The Loneliness of the Long-Distant Courtesan

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AS Dean Moss knows from experience, it's lonely to be an artist. For his newest work, "Kisaeng becomes you," to be performed at Dance Theater Workshop starting Wednesday, he explores that isolation through the poetry of the kisaeng, Korean courtesans who were trained in the arts of entertainment, from the 10th to the 20th centuries.

In 2006 Mr. Moss, a New York choreographer whose travels had taken him to Korea (he was also dating a Korean woman at the time), found himself perusing the shelves of St. Mark's Bookshop in the East Village when his gaze fell upon a title, "Hwang Jin-i & Other Courtesan Poets From the Last Korean Dynasty." His curiosity was piqued. "I thought, who are these people and what did they do?" he recalled.

Highly educated and accomplished in the fine arts and poetry, the kisaeng, being courtesans, were relegated to the bottom rung of society, a circumstance that Mr. Moss, as a dance artist, found familiar. Above all, their poetry captivated him. "They're not sweet love poems," he said. "One starts out with: 'So, what is this love? Is it round or is it flat?' And it ends with, 'Mine breaks to a sharp edge within me.' That feels like my life and the kinds of things I've gone through. It feels modern."

In "Kisaeng becomes you," Mr. Moss and Yoon Jin Kim, a Korean choreographer who collaborated with him on the project, underscore the similarities between the kisaeng's poetry and today's social networking to explore isolation and connection with others.

"The kisaeng poems were also like diaries," Mr. Moss said. "Nowadays we write our diary on a blog, on Facebook. It's the same thing. It's just our contemporary style."

An impressionistic, multilayered work, "Kisaeng becomes you" intends to establish a feeling rather than tell the story of a courtesan. "We're relating the contemporary artist's life to the poetry of the kisaeng's life," Mr. Moss said. "It doesn't tell you how to think about it. It tries to allow itself to be seen in a number of different ways and to use these poems, which amazingly have within them a critical mind."

Mr. Moss met Ms. Kim in Seoul in 2006 when he was invited to present a talk at a Korean dance festival. "I saw her work, and it was the only piece that seemed to show an absorption of Korean culture, in that I did not understand it," he said. "I couldn't predict the rhythms, the actions, the relationships and the juxtapositions. I thought: Ah, this is Korean — this use of the breath and the traditional with a mix into modern. After I read the poems, I realized that I could work with her and bring a Korean cast to do this piece."

Ms. Kim, speaking with the help of a translator during an interview on Skype, laughed as she recalled Mr. Moss's proposal that



Left, Dean Moss and Yoon Jin Kim; above, from left, Mihyun Lee, Yuree Bae, Soyeoun Lim, Jiseon Kwon and Jeongeun Yang.

admit that involving a nonperformer is a risk — the production successfully captures the vulnerability of a kisaeng as she looks back at her life.

"There's an understanding that this is serious," Mr. Moss said of the audience participation. "We understand that the people who do this want to do it well, and we push them to do it well. Sometimes there's a real self-consciousness, a real lack of understanding and then, as a director, you get nervous. This is a big part of the piece. Getting the dancers to recognize when somebody's not comfortable and trying to make her comfortable is important, because the flow of the work depends on them having an interaction with the guest. The guest has to look good. She is the star."

a shadow. It's really a women's world, but they have a voice."

The two women chosen in the lobby highlight the sense of otherness that the kisaeng experienced. One participant is given a video camera to shoot the action, which is projected onto a screen in real time. The other is absorbed into the group, essentially becoming a part of the cast. The dancers place a wig on her head and instruct her in how to recite the poetry. When it all works — and both Mr. Moss and Ms. Kim

*To a choreographer, Korean poems are like diaries: 'Nowadays we write our diary on a blog, on Facebook. It's the same thing.'*

they make a dance together. "I cannot understand English very well but back then, it was worse," she said. "I couldn't figure out exactly what he was saying, but I could understand the depth of his idea, and I knew that I could add onto his ideas with my own. It was like we were connecting and melting through each other. In this project I realized a lot about my own identity. Dean talks about isolation and loneliness, but for me, as a Korean woman, I found inner strength."

"Kisaeng becomes you" features five female Korean dancers, three poems, music by the experimental composer Okkyung Lee and luminous projections of flowers, to represent the mute beauty of the kisaeng. Audience participation — the dancers select two women before the show to appear in the work — is integral to the production's choreographic fabric. "They also interview a man in the lobby," Mr. Moss said. "One of the dancers' first jobs is to interview a guy for three minutes about his past loves or some pain in his life. We project that as part of the video in the piece. So men are always like



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## Currents of Desire, With an Assist From the Audience

Who knows where Dean Moss ends and Yoon Jin Kim begins in "Kisaeng becomes you." The inner workings of the collaboration between Mr. Moss, an American choreographer, and Ms. Kim, a South Korean, is just one of the marvelous mysteries of this remarkable work, which had its United States premiere last week at Dance Theater Workshop.

How did they develop the idea of the kisaeng, Korea's answer to the geisha, with their intense and isolating training and lowly status, into a surprisingly natural metaphor for contemporary-dance artists? Which decided to roll the dice every night and gamble the entire show on several dazzling, sophisticated bursts of audience participation? Who selected the five striking Korean performers, and who thought, Aha! let's throw a Janis Joplin song into a mix that includes biting kisaeng love poems, original music by Okkyung Lee and what appear to be Korean pop songs?

You get the sense, while watch-

ing, that these choices were made on a gut level, such is the strength of the sensual logic governing this work, which draws us into a private, deeply female world of often unidentifiable emotional currents and desires. (Save for a brief video, in which a man describes an almost love affair with a woman from another culture, the only male desire we see is reflected in the action of these women.)

At one point the five women turn ragged little circles on their tiptoes. Their heads are thrown back, mouths hinged open and shut, like giddy grasping for sustenance at the water's surface. They are mute in their need, and inscrutable.

At other times they are vulgar, making suggestive use of a microphone, or rowdy, downing copious amounts of alcohol. They



**Kisaeng becomes you** A scene from Dean Moss and Yoon Jin Kim's piece at Dance Theater Workshop about the undercurrents of emotion.

screech at one another in excitement and anger and grief. These raw emotions and unpolished behaviors are placed against the seductive, perfected armor of the kisaeng, whose skill as the ultimate purveyors of fantasy is be-

lieved by the almost caustic loneliness threading through their poems. Both the strength and chinks in this armor are made clear when audience members (on Friday, first an elegant older woman, and later two very young women) are drawn into the work. At times they are completely protected, given ceremonial costume touches while their every word and action is coached, and filmed.

Elsewhere they are left vulnerable, without instruction, made to play roles they cannot grasp. On Friday something terribly fragile and beautiful bloomed within these awkward transformations. The gamble paid off.

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# For 'Dreamgirls,' Pacific Overtures

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea

Several months ago, when John F. Breglio told fellow New York producers that he was not only remaking "Dreamgirls," the 1981 Broadway hit musical based loosely on the career of the Supremes, but that he was also going to South Korea to do it, they were puzzled, to say the least.

"Then they really laugh," he said, when he told them "that it's in Korean with Korean actors."

Mr. Breglio, the executor of the estate of Michael Bennett (who directed and choreographed "Dreamgirls" and "A Chorus Line," among others), calls his venture an experiment. His \$6.7 million "Dreamgirls" opened to a packed theater here on Feb. 27 and has drawn good reviews.

What Mr. Breglio's company, Vienna Waits Productions, is doing with its South Korean partner, Shin Chun Soo, the president of the OD Musical Company in Seoul, is unusual for American theater producers, some of whom said they were skeptical that elements of a Korean production would transfer smoothly to an American stage. Nevertheless, Mr. Breglio plans to open the show, with a new American cast, at the Apollo Theater in Harlem in November.

Mr. Shin, representative of South Korea's new, voracious appetite for musical theater, bankrolled the production: royalties for American artists, a local cast, costumes and a \$1.5 million set.

The financial incentives for Mr. Breglio to go to South Korea were significant, coming as many Broadway producers are struggling to cover production costs. The fact that the set was made and financed here, and will be transferred to the United States for the run there, is a big savings for the American producers.

The South Korean side is also covering the lion's share of the entire tryout costs: wages and expenses for the 20-member American creative staff during its stay here (which ran from a month to 10 weeks), the Americans' lodgings and meals, the costs of choreography and stage and costume designs (though the costumes will be remade for American actresses). By the time "Dreamgirls" reaches the Apollo, Mr. Breglio said, he will need to have raised only around \$5 million, half of what it usually costs to put on a show in the United States. "This model is more important than ever because there is a real threat right now in the United States to getting these shows done," he said in an interview here. "Even without the crisis, Broadway has gone very expensive."

Economics are not the only reason for the strategy. In an era when "the Internet and YouTube does not allow you a great deal of time to develop and make mistakes," Robert Longbottom, the director of the production, said, "coming to Korea was about as far out of town as you could get."

If this works, other Broadway producers will follow suit, said Jack M. Dalglish, a New York producer who was not part of the "Dreamgirls" crew but helped to facilitate the partnership of Mr. Breglio and Mr. Shin.

"We are looking for new ways to develop musicals," he said.

Some longtime Broadway producers remain skeptical of the artistic value of transferring "Dreamgirls" — or any other production, for that matter — from South Korea to the United States, when the cast and language in Seoul will be different.



The main purpose of out-of-town tryouts is to have time to work with a cast and a creative team to perfect a show, and to fix weak parts of a production, based on audience response. Given that “Dreamgirls” will have an American makeover in the United States, the South Korean production seems less about rethinking the out-of-town tryout than about tapping a new market of investors.

“I don’t think South Korea represents a trend for Broadway,” said Emanuel Azenberg, a Broadway producer. “I think it represents a country where ‘Dreamgirls’ is happening. We went through this with Japan before — American shows had to go to Japan at some point. But I don’t know what you really gain aesthetically by trying out one version of a show in a foreign country first.”

For South Koreans, though, the arrangement is a matter of pleasure and cultural explorations. Many here are not especially familiar with African-American heritage. But the universal themes of the story — three young women struggling to escape men’s exploitation and make it on their own in show business, the power of sisterhood and redemption — made the 2006 Hollywood movie adaptation hugely successful in South Korea, a country with a new generation of assertive women moving from the margins of society to the center.

South Korea is a natural place for American producers to look: the country has 180 musicals already running or scheduled to go onstage in the coming weeks. Ticket sales for musicals grew 25 percent last year, according to Interpark, the country’s largest online ticket seller. “Dreamgirls” was leading the musical rankings this week.

Among the cultural differences the producers had to overcome were the hesitancy and even embarrassment that Korean actresses feel about expressing strong emotions.

“The women are not as confrontational as they are in the United States,” Mr. Longbottom said. “Pointing your finger at someone’s face and chasing them around the stage and yelling at them was something that didn’t come naturally to this group of people.”

Kim So Hyang, who played Lorrell Robinson, one of the three young singers, said she initially felt “resistant” to the American director’s demand for “what we Koreans considered overdoing it and exaggerated acting.”

Many Korean actresses hope to perform on Broadway one day. Like the African-American women of “Dreamgirls,” who rose from the fringe of show business to stardom, Korean musical performers have only recently begun enjoying a national following after years of being dismissed as crude imitators of a foreign art form.

Hong Ji Min, who plays Effie White, the show’s full-figured, gospel-voiced lead singer, said she struggled to render the deep vocal flavor of the character.

But working with the composer, Henry Krieger, whom the actresses called Grandpa, was their own dream come true.

“We cry after each show,” Ms. Hong said. “This has a story that feels so close to our heart. It’s about the show business. It’s about having a dream.”

*Patrick Healy contributed reporting from New York.*



OD MUSICAL COMPANY

This “Dreamgirls” has opened to raves in Seoul, but when it comes to the United States, it will have an American cast.

## For ‘Dreamgirls,’ Pacific Overtures

### A Revival Turns to South Korea for Its Tryout and Financing

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — Several months ago, when John F. Breglio told fellow New York producers that he was not only remaking “Dreamgirls,” the 1981 Broadway hit musical based loosely on the career of the Supremes, but that he was also going to South Korea to do it, they were puzzled, to say the least.

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The financial incentives for Mr. Breglio

*Continued on Page 7*



# SUMMER STAGES

By STEVEN McELROY

## SUMMER STAGES



**SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL** May 20-31. This multidisciplinary festival lost a sizable chunk of financial support from the city this year, so the sixth annual event was cut to two weeks from three. Still, a lot of innovation is packed into a short period. Theater highlights include the Cho-In Theater of Seoul, South Korea, presenting "The Angel & the Woodcutter," a wordless adaptation of a traditional Korean folk tale, and "Gobo.Digital Glossary," a surreal take on the Everyman story by the AKHE Group of St. Petersburg, Russia. The Bond Street Theater of New York and the Exile Theater of Kabul, Afghanistan, will present "Beyond the Mirror," a theatricalization of the personal stories of Afghans who have adapted their lives to survive in a war-torn country. (800) 838-3006, sfiaf.org.

# Duets Intimate and Separate, Sometimes in Post-it Notes

By ALASTAIR MACAULAY

## Duets Intimate and Separate, Sometimes in Post-it Notes

Calling their program of duets "Butter and Fly," the dancers Eun Jung Choi-Gonzalez and Guillermo Ortega Tanus don't claim that one of them is "butter" or the other "fly." The performances, which ended Saturday at the Joyce SoHo, were subtitled "Intends to Walk" and included four pieces interleaved with brief films. The films were a good way to fill the time needed to recover and change costumes; too bad they were campily absurdist.

Although Ms. Choi-Gonzalez and Mr. Ortega Tanus, who make up the repertory company Da-Da-Dance Project, often touched on both camp and absurdism at Friday's performance, they weren't trivial. As yet they aren't mature (their company was founded last year), and I can imagine them becoming both more funny and more serious. They keep showing, in different ways, how a couple may be intimate and separate.

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and to each other — suggested embarrassment and privacy. When those Post-it notes started to fall, the performers at first tried to replace them. But then the two danced more, achieving a new openness. It was to their credit that this didn't feel schematic.

In "Blueprint," with original music by Alban Bailly, they were plastic rainwear throughout. It's a thin sketch, but like every item here it showed, interminably at least, that Ms. Choi-Gonzalez and Mr. Ortega Tanus have some pronounced dancerly instincts: even when they moved like robots, the articulation of lower and upper body had its own vehemence.

Mr. Ortega Tanus's choreographic contribution was "Blood Orange" (2008). He began as Pygmalion singing "Love Me Tender" while he shaped Ms. Choi-Gonzalez into his Galatea. But she eluded him, and soon he was singing anxiously at top speed as he tried to keep track of her. The scene, with original music by Valentina González, went through several stages (they talk as well as dance), and at times the situation was reversed: she started to invade his privacy and to try to exert some control over him.



Da-Da-Dance Project  
Joyce SoHo

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“Ploy” (2009) and an excerpt from “Blueprint” (2008), the starting and closing duets, are the works of Ms. Choi-Gonzalez. “Ploy” (to music by Andrew Drury) is almost the story of Adam and Eve in reverse: the nearer to nakedness they go, the less shame they express. They entered with their torsos covered in innumerable Post-it notes (ranging across a spectrum of color), and their body language — to us and to each other — suggested embarrassment and privacy. When those Post-it notes started to fall, the performers at first tried to replace them. But then the two danced more, achieving a new openness. It was to their credit that this didn’t feel schematic.

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The duet “Tiny Voices” (2008), to original music by Jukka Rintamaki, is by the guest choreographer Helena Franzen. This was the most formal work of the program, and the two dancers rose to its challenge. First they moved, back and forth, on close paths that sometimes bisected, sometimes ran parallel: near neighbors who don’t quite meet. Later they overlapped and interlocked (memorably), though also pulling apart and establishing independence. Small details of footwork (low jumps) and upper body movement (each brings one shoulder back very precisely) became telling parts of the dance fabric.

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# Cheekily Stylish, Playfully Tacky

By GIA KOURLAS

## Cheekily Stylish, Playfully Tacky

State government doesn’t normally shut down for ballet, but you wouldn’t have believed it judging by the dignitaries who spilled into the Joyce Theater on Monday night. In honor of Tulsa Ballet’s first New York appearance in 25 years, those attending included Gov. Brad Henry of Oklahoma; his wife, Kim Henry; Mayor Kathy Taylor of Tulsa; and M. Susan Savage, the Oklahoma secretary of state. During intermissions a burly bodyguard lurked in one of the aisles. It was surreal — the whoops that erupted as the curtain was raised were a bit much — but it was also sweet to see such hometown pride.

If only the program, put together by the company’s artistic director, Marcello Angelini, had been worth the trip. The evening began charmingly enough with Kenneth MacMillan’s “Elite Syncopations,” a work from 1974 set to ragtime. In the end “Elite Syncopations” — presented along with works by Nacho Duato and Young Soon Hue — was the only actual ballet on the program. MacMillan’s lively dance is a portrait of America as seen through British eyes. It’s funny and stupendously tacky; Ian Spurling’s costumes are a happy assault of body-hugging spandex and dazzling color in which dancers, male and female, light up the stage like sexy sirens.

In so much contemporary ballet sexiness is a humorless arrangement of hard angles. But while “Elite Syncopations” is full

Tulsa Ballet performs through Saturday at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 242-0890, joyce.org.



Tulsa Ballet Members of the Oklahoma dance company performing Kenneth MacMillan’s “Elite Syncopations,” a 1974 work set to ragtime, at the Joyce Theater in Chelsea.

of attitude, MacMillan shows us something cheekily stylish and brimming with theater.

Part of the allure is that in this ballet classical steps are just as important as sauciness. MacMillan displays a range of scenarios, which play with male strength (the quartet “Hot House Rag”); physical opposites (“Alaskan Rag,” a comic number for a tall

woman and a short man); and love (“Bethena Waltz,” a pitiful pas de deux with Alfonso Martin and the supple Karina Gonzalez). In “Calliope Rag” the guileless Kate Odehiki, wearing a floral chaparral, sailed through the difficult point work with aplomb.

Mr. Duato’s “Por Vos Muero,” from 1996, displays a more airless side of sexuality. Set to 19th- and

16th-century Spanish music and recorded lines from a love poem by Garcilaso de la Vega (it ends, “for you I have to die, and for you I die”), the production dips in and out of images referring to formal court rituals. But Mr. Duato’s movement vocabulary is limited, and so is this work, which, for all its intimations of passion, leaves you indifferent.

In Ms. Hue’s amateurish “This Is Your Life,” created for the company last year and titled after the television show, dancers start out seated onstage, where they are prompted by a host (Joshua Trader) to talk about their lives. Included in the mix are a so-called perfect couple (a pas de trois reveals their marriage to be flawed) and a businessman (Ma Cong)

who shares his early dreams of becoming an actor.

After such a long-winded opening, it was hard to care much about the literal and contrived choreographic renderings that followed.

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A number of immigrants, representing a range of countries from almost every continent, kindly agreed to my request that I come to their homes for dinner, and as the most demanding of guests: I didn't want the family's fanciest; I wanted their go-to staples.

The Tibetans I met were generous in sharing their food, but had a very different sense of what "in a hurry" meant. Some continue to make momo — a steamed dumpling traditionally stuffed with yak meat and served in a hot meat broth — from scratch, although the process can take as long as two hours.

It is not something that one whips up after work.

Most families had been forced by necessity to come up with short versions of their cuisine. Many had settled on bastardizations of American classics. A popular dish, for example, is spaghetti and meatballs, but Koreans served it with kimchi on the side, while some Kenyans cut hot red peppers into theirs.

Just as intriguing are the national staples that have been subtly adapted to American groceries. A Korean family offered a steaming rice bowl with sliced nori (the seaweed paper used in sushi), bologna and a raw egg. Ji Yoon Yoo, who lives in Jersey City and often works late selling real estate, makes an Americanized version of pa jun, the Korean scallion pancake, several nights a week.

When she was growing up, Ms. Yoo's mother would cook oyster pa jun in the traditional manner: heating the pan until smoking so the batter would crisp quickly, but leaving the oysters damp and plump. Now Ms. Yoo prepares pa jun with whatever is left over in the refrigerator: roast chicken, uncooked vegetables, steak, etc. Her trick is to dice the vegetables finely so they can cook with the pancake. To add variety, she serves the pancakes with a different dipping sauce every night (soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil and peanut butter are common ingredients).

Hers is a modern, highly adaptable version of the immigrant kitchen, easily incorporating American and other influences. Other cooks who move to the city from abroad are purists.

Jennifer Gray-Brumskine, who immigrated from Liberia as a 19-year-old in the 1980s and now lives on Staten Island, does not stray too far from her native

cuisine. Every Sunday, her family eats Western foods like corn bread and collard greens, she said, because that was the custom in Liberia, a country founded by freed American slaves.

During the week she hews to African cuisine because, she said, it is healthier than American food. "My whole family is skinny," she explained. It's also because African cuisine is all her husband will eat.

Ms. Gray-Brumskine often makes fufu, a rib-sticking mash of potato starch and mashed potatoes from a box, a common American substitution for roots or yams that are used in Africa. She also makes cassava greens; she washes and grinds the leaves, then boils them in a pot with water and baking soda until they turn olive green — a process that can take two hours and often isn't done until 11 at night. Her husband will wait and eat them then.

But when she comes home late — she works as a community organizer in Stapleton, the Staten Island neighborhood — and wants fast, satisfying food for herself and her daughter, she often makes fish like red snapper or kingfish. She slices right through the whole fish, bones and all, to make fish steaks. She sprinkles them with garlic powder and black pepper and fries them in oil. When they are browned, she adds sliced hot peppers, tomatoes and water and boils until the sauce thickens, about 20 minutes. Fried red plantains are served on the side.

Likewise Renata Olah, who came from Hungary in 2000 at age 23, cooks only Hungarian food for her husband in their tiny Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, kitchen. Bubbly and outgoing, she is a natural hostess. To start a meal, she insists that guests take a snort of home-made plum brandy, "to whet your appetite."

"The Hungarian kitchen is about careful planning and simmering everything," Ms. Olah said. So she is partial to some of her grandmother's recipes that can take hours to make, like stuffed cabbage and smoky bean soup.

That's tough to do because she is juggling three different jobs: housecleaning, decorative housepainting and working as a personal chef to four families (she usually makes Hungarian food). That doesn't leave a lot of time to make dinner for her husband, a carpenter. (In Hungary, she explains, "a woman must cook to keep a man.")

In a rush, Ms. Olah turns to staples like cucumber salad and goulash, but not the creamy version known here. In her hometown, she says, the goulash is more like a soupy stew, and sour cream is served on the side only.

She also makes a tangy lentil dish spiced with mustard and sweetened with brown sugar that she serves with fried eggs. Another staple is lecsó, a savory stew of onions, peppers and paprika that she serves over hot dogs or rice.

Like many immigrants, she has secret suppliers. Her paprika is not store-bought, but hand-ground from peppers by her mother-in-law's aunt in Hungary. It is a rich rust color and smells enticingly smoky.

"Some things you just can't get in America," Ms. Olah said.

But being in the United States has some advantages, and one is that immigrants do not necessarily have to specialize in their native cuisines. Jabeen Ahmed, who was born in Pakistan, married a Palestinian man whose family immigrated from the Gaza Strip in 1988. The cooking in her Totowa, N.J., kitchen straddles the two cultures.

"To make up for the tragedy of him not having married someone from his own country," she said half-jokingly, "I've learned to cook Arabic." Her mother-in-law taught her dishes like cabbage stuffed with rice and lamb and a layered eggplant dish called makluba. But after 12 years of cooking for him, Ms. Ahmed has developed confidence in her own recipes.

She is proudest of her grape leaves, which she stuffs with lamb, rice and parsley and cooks with concentrate of pomegranate juice to add flavor. The dish simmers on her stove for hours.

But after a long day of work (she is a pharmacist), she often makes something that is much quicker: an all-white dish of chicken with yogurt served over rice. It takes 30 minutes from start to table. In fact, she feels so at home in the cuisine of her husband's ancestors that she now thinks of it nostalgically as her own comfort food.

## KOREAN PANCAKES (PA JUN)

Adapted from Ji Yoon Yoo

Time: 15 to 20 minutes

For the dipping sauce:

3 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 ½ teaspoons sugar, optional

Pinch of hot red pepper flakes.

For the pancakes:

2 teaspoons vegetable oil

2 large eggs

½ cup all-purpose flour or rice flour

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup very finely chopped vegetables (asparagus, broccoli, green beans, scallions) or chopped cooked leftover meat (chicken, beef, pork) or both.

1. For dipping sauce: In a small bowl, combine vinegar, soy sauce, sugar (if using) and red pepper flakes. Mix well and set aside.

2. For pancakes: Fill a pitcher or glass with ice and ½ cup or more cold water; set aside. Place a small (6- to 8-inch) nonstick or well-seasoned skillet over medium-low heat. Coat bottom with vegetable oil and allow to heat.

3. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs just until frothy. Add flour and salt and whisk to combine. Add vegetables or meat and stir to blend. Add ½ cup ice water and mix again to blend.

4. Fill a ½-cup measuring cup with batter; pour into hot pan. Allow to sit until browned and crispy on bottom, about 2 minutes. Flip pancake and cook another 2 minutes. Place on a serving plate and keep warm (or set aside to serve at room temperature). Repeat with remaining batter. Serve with dipping sauce, tearing or cutting off pieces of pancake to dip in sauce with fingers or chopsticks.

Yield: 2 to 4 appetizer servings (3 pancakes).

# For a New Generation, Kimchi Goes With Tacos

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER

## LOS ANGELES

AS the sun begins to sink behind the Santa Monica Mountains and the northbound traffic thickens on the 405 freeway, the hungry refresh their browsers.

After obsessively checking the Twitter postings of the Korean taco maker to see where the truck will park next, they begin lining up — throngs of college students, club habitués, couples on dates and guys having conversations about spec scripts.

And they wait, sometimes well beyond an hour, all for the pleasure of spicy bites of pork, chicken or tofu soaked in red chili flake vinaigrette, short ribs doused in sesame-chili salsa roja or perhaps a blood sausage sautéed with kimchi, all of it wrapped in a soft taco shell.

The food at Kogi Korean BBQ-To-Go, the taco vendor that has overtaken Los Angeles, does not fit into any known culinary category. One man overheard on his cellphone as he waited in line on a recent night said it best: “It’s like this Korean Mexican fusion thing of crazy deliciousness.”

The truck is a clear cult hit in Los Angeles, drawing more buzz than any new restaurant. A sister vehicle and a taco stand within a Culver City bar were recently added to quell the crowds, which Kogi’s owner put at about 400 customers a night.

Kogi, the brainchild of two chefs, has entered the city’s gastro-universe at just the right moment. Its tacos and burritos are recession-friendly at \$2 a pop. The truck capitalizes on emerging technology by sending out Twitter alerts so fans know where to find it at any given time.

Yet Kogi’s popularity and the sophistication of its street food also demonstrate the emerging firepower of this city’s Korean food purveyors.

In the last few years, second-generation Korean Angelenos and more recent immigrants have played their own variations on their traditional cuisine and taken it far beyond the boundaries of Korean-dominated neighborhoods. These chefs and entrepreneurs are fueled in large part by tech-boom money here and in South Korea, culinary-school educations and in some cases, their parents’ shifting perspectives about the profession of cooking. In the last year, new Korean restaurants have popped up on the powerhouse restaurant strips of Washington Boulevard in Culver City and Beverly Boulevard in West Hollywood. In an area of West Los Angeles dominated by Japanese restaurants, bibimbop has joined the fray.

“We thought Korean food was under-represented here, and we were right,” said Robert Benson, the executive chef of Gyeonari in Culver City, who has two Korean partners. “There is a certain mysticism to Korean food, and we have tried to make it more accessible.”

Korean food has blipped on the radar of culinary trend watchers before, but it never seems to gain momentum. In part, Mr. Benson said: “It is because there is a misconception about Korean food. Japanese food is high protein, low in fat and is this very clean cuisine, where Korean food has reputation as being not healthy. So it has not taken off like it should, but I think it is going to. I can feel the groundswell. David Chang in New York” — the Korean-American chef

whose inventions include oysters on the half shell with kimchi consommé — “has helped that, too. I don’t think it will be long before we see a P. F. Chang’s-type chain of Korean food.”

At the same time, an increasing number of Korean chefs and restaurateurs here have aligned themselves with other nations’ cuisines, to great acclaim.

One of the city’s hottest hamburger spots, Father’s Office, is owned by Sang Yoon, 39, who immigrated to Los Angeles from Korea when he was a year old. He cooked at Michael’s in Santa Monica before taking over an old bar nearby, now packed with people willing enough to wait in line for an Office Burger, served with Mr. Yoon’s choice of accompaniments (caramelized onions, blue cheese, Gruyère, arugula), not theirs. A second Father’s Office recently opened in Los Angeles.

Scoops, an artisanal ice cream store in East Hollywood that whips up strawberry balsamic vinegar and brown bread treats, is run by Tai Kim, who came with his family to California from Korea as a teenager. Korean-Americans have made their mark in the frozen-yogurt trade, too. Pinkberry? Red Mango? Check, check.

“The first generation of Korean immigrants here mainly catered toward a Korean clientele, or made grocery markets catering to a minority clientele,” said Edward Chang, a professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, Riverside. “But more recent immigrants have ethnic and capital resources that enable them to branch out in the mainstream economy.”

## For a New Generation, Kimchi Goes With Tacos

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER

LOS ANGELES  
AS the sun begins to sink behind the Santa Monica Mountains and the northbound traffic thickens on the 405 freeway, the hungry refresh their browsers.

After obsessively checking the Twitter postings of the Korean taco maker to see where the truck will park next, they begin lining up — throngs of college students, club habitués, couples on dates and guys having conversations about spec scripts.

And they wait, sometimes well beyond an hour, all for the pleasure of spicy bites of pork, chicken or tofu soaked in red chili flake vinaigrette, short ribs doused in sesame-chili salsa roja or perhaps a blood sausage sautéed with kimchi, all of it wrapped in a

soft taco shell.

The food at Kogi Korean BBQ-To-Go, the taco vendor that has overtaken Los Angeles, does not fit into any known culinary category. One man overheard on his cellphone as he waited in line on a recent night said it best: “It’s like this Korean Mexican fusion thing of crazy deliciousness.”

The truck is a clear cult hit in Los Angeles, drawing more buzz than any new restaurant. A sister vehicle and a taco stand within a Culver City bar were recently added to quell the crowds, which Kogi’s owner put at about 400 customers a night.

Kogi, the brainchild of two chefs, has entered the city’s gastro-universe at just the right moment. Its tacos and burritos are recession-friendly at \$2 a

Continued on Page 2



Thus, “Korean-Americans have gained visibility since the unrest of 1992,” when riots targeted Korean-owned businesses, he said, “and over the last 10 to 15 years, they became much more visible. In terms of economic and political spheres, they are forces to be reckoned with.”

At the California School of Culinary Arts over the last two years, Korean students have been one of the fastest-growing immigrant groups, said Mario Novo, a spokesman for the school.

“One of our brand new students told me how excited he was to go to the school because in his culture the men do not cook and his mother was fighting against him,” Mr. Novo said. “Until they saw how serious he was. Now his mother is coming around.”

The Korean taco truck may be the ultimate outgrowth of the evolving Korean-American culture and inventiveness, inspired in part, like so many entrepreneurial adventures, by a bit of desperation.

This past September, the chef Roy Choi, 38, who began his career at Le Bernardin in New York and worked as the chef in several Los Angeles restaurants, including RockSugar, found himself out of a job and running out of cash. He had coffee with Mark Manguera, a former co-worker, who suggested that they operate a taco cart with a Korean twist.

At home that night, Mr. Choi said, the idea, which had sounded half crazy in the morning, began to make some sense. “I have always been searching for a way of trying to express myself,” he said. A business model with seven partners was quickly formed. The marketing plan included putting someone in charge of social networking, through which Kogi got its initial publicity when the truck first rolled out, two months after the fateful coffee date.

Then there is Mr. Choi, who called himself “the angry chef.” He works every night with about five employees who squeeze into the tiny, pristine space, clowns-in-a-car style, grilling meats and whipping up sauces for the crowds who wait, sometimes as long as two hours, for their tacos.

The idea, Mr. Choi said, was to bring his ethnic background together with the sensibility and geography of Los Angeles, where Koreatown abuts Latino-dominated neighborhoods in midcity and where food cultures have long merged. Former Mexican restaurants, now Korean, serve burritos, and Mexican workers populate the kitchens of Korean restaurants.

“We tried to marry two cultures,” Mr. Choi said, “with this crazy idea of putting Korean barbecue meat inside a tortilla. We have never tried to make it any more pretentious or different from that, and we wanted to be very simple but delicious.” To that end, Mr. Choi said, he buys from the meat purveyors used by some of the city’s high-end restaurants and scours the farmers’ markets for the best vegetables.

The whole operation is part culinary event — the delicious tang of pickled cabbage, the melt-on-the tongue caramel of seared meats, the bite of red chili flakes and jalapeños — and part party. Mr. Choi likes to park his truck at the U.C.L.A. campus and outside bars and clubs around town, to take advantage of the street theater.

This week, his team began leasing space in the Alibi Room, a lounge in Culver City, serving up kimchi sesame quesadillas (\$7) and hot dogs with kimchi sauerkraut and Korean ketchup.

“It has evolved into a socio-cultural thing for me,” he said. “It is my vision of L.A. in one bite.”

# Not So Slick, But Still Tasty

By INDRANI SEN

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THE people milling outside the East River Bar in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, on June 28 looked as if they could have been there for a rock show. A Pomeranian dog sported a faux hawk.

But up close, the scene took on a different aspect. A tattoo of a cupcake was on one woman’s shoulder. A quirky T-shirt exalted rice and beans, and a trucker hat bore the logo of Van Leeuwen Artisan Ice Cream. The rock stars of this party were cheesemakers, farmers, chocolatiers and pickle-meisters.

The UnFancy Food Show, Brooklyn’s answer to the Fancy Food Show at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, is now in its third year. Organizers estimated that 1,200 to 1,500 people showed up to mingle with like-minded gastronomes and sample the delicacies dished up by local food producers.

“It’s like a Brooklyn foodie nerd community,” said Nichelle Stephens, who blogs about cupcakes.

Kheedim Oh, whose homemade kimchi was selling fast, embodies this amateur aesthetic. Mr. Oh learned his Korean mother’s recipe for kimchi a year ago. He started producing his crisp, pungent daikon and cabbage kimchis at his friends’ urging. “They kept asking me for it, and it was cutting into my stash,” he explained. Mama O’s Kimchee is available at Marlow & Daughters, Foragers Market in Dumbo, and Jeffrey’s in the Essex Market.

Julie Powell, author of “Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen,” sipped white wine and munched on a beef hand-pie by Sweet Deliverance. “It’s excellent,” she said of the pie, which was in a

Grafton cheddar crust. Pointing to the ladies of Salvatore Bklyn Ricotta, who were serving open-faced ricotta, prosciutto and arugula sandwiches, Ms. Powell added, “Their smoked ricotta blew my mind.”

Another newcomer, Rachel Graville of Gerald Jerky, said this was her first time selling her peppery sticks of dried spiced beef



... OR NOT At the UnFancy Food Show.

the public. She sold out.

Ms. Graville, an event director, said the enthusiasm for her jerky gave her a much-needed boost. She will be selling it at the Brooklyn Flea in Fort Greene on Saturdays starting July 11.

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# A Hamburger the South Korean Way

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

## A Hamburger the South Korean Way

The American hamburger continues its world tour, picking up new flavors along the route.

A bulgogi burger, using ground beef marinated for a day in Asian seasonings — garlic, brown sugar, sesame oil — is now on the menu at New York Hot Dog & Coffee in Greenwich Village. The seven-ounce patties are then grilled and topped with Napa cabbage slaw, sesame seeds and, as options, cheese, kimchi or hot sauce. Crunchy cornmeal-dusted

fries can go alongside.

**GLOBAL FOOD SWAP** New York Hot Dog & Coffee is a chain of 200 or so cafes in South Korea, owned by Mi Kyong Choi. The New York branch, the first in the

United States, is managed by Mrs. Choi’s oldest daughter, Jayne. The Chois came up with the burger after noticing the popularity here of their bulgogi hot dogs, which are topped with strips of marinated seared beef.

Next, they plan Korean tacos, served with, yes, more bulgogi.

*The bulgogi burger is \$6.49, \$2 extra for fries and coffee or soda, at New York Hot Dog & Coffee, 245 Bleecker Street (Leroy Street), (917) 388-3742.*



CHESTER HIGGINS JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES

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# Culinary Diplomacy With a Side of Kimchi

By JULIA MOSKIN

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TALKING about food is built into the job for first ladies: cookie recipes, menus for state dinners and, now, organic farming are all in their sphere of influence. But Kim Yoon-ok, the wife of the South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak, seemed to go beyond the call of duty on Sept. 21 when she picked up a spatula to cook pajeon — savory pancakes stuffed with seafood, scallions and slivered red peppers — for a group of American veterans of the Korean War.

To the consternation of her bodyguards, and in a moment that seemed more inspired by Rachael Ray than by Michelle Obama, the first lady plunged into the rows of guests to hand-feed bites of her pajeon to some silver-haired veterans and their wives.

"I wanted to give them a new taste of Korea as something positive and delicious," she said in an interview afterward.



ward, her first with a member of the Western news media since her husband took office last year. (She spoke through an interpreter.) "From the war, they do not have many pleasant food memories."

Mrs. Kim, along with Jean-Georges Vongerichten, the chef; Moon Bloodgood, a Korean-American actress; and Salvatore Scarlato, a local war veteran with a flamboyant cooking style, were all taking part in the South Korean government's mission in the United States this week. While Mr. Lee met in closed sessions at the United Nations, his wife, 62, embarked on a new career in the field of culinary diplomacy.

The government's Korean Cuisine to

the World campaign began in April, with official goals that include quadrupling the number of Korean restaurants abroad and lifting Korean food into the "top five rank of world cuisines" by 2017. Putting aside that such a ranking system does not exist, the campaign shows how seriously food is now taken by many governments, especially in Asia.

As sushi has served as a kind of cultural crowbar, opening doors for Japanese tourism, culture and exports, the South Korean Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has high hopes for bibimbap and bulgogi.

Bang Moon-kyu, a ministry official who is leading the campaign, said that it has about \$10 million to spend in 2009, including grants and scholarships for South Koreans to travel and attend culinary school. The campaign has already established a research and development lab devoted to the popular street-food dish called tteokbokki, a garlicky, richly spiced dish of rice cakes bathed in red chili paste. Tteokbokki (pronounced duck-bo-key) got its own festival in March, spinning off from the larger annual Seoul festival of rice cakes, or tteok. "And tteokbokki is only the beginning," he said.

"First was Chinese food in the U.S., then Japanese and Thai," said Min Mon-hong, director of tourism for Korea. "Korean is the next big boom."

At least seven arms of government, including the military, were represented at the Sept. 21 event, which took place at Leonard's in Great Neck, a local venue for proms, weddings and bar mitzvahs. The catering, by the New York restaurant KumGangSan, was vastly more flavorful than the usual kosher fare.

As the cameras of the Korean news media clicked, Jean-Georges Vongerichten showed off his one-handed pajeon-flipping abilities. "I've been teaching him some sauces and marinades," said Mr. Vongerichten's wife, Marja, who is Korean-American. "I think he would do great things with gochujang," she said, referring to the spicy, fermented paste of ripe red chili peppers that is one of the basic seasonings of the Korean kitchen.

New York City is viewed by the campaign's officials as a vast field of opportunity for shaping world opinion about Korean food. Although the city lacks a truly ambitious, transporting Korean restaurant, the flavors have made major inroads here. At the Momofuku restaurants, David Chang made his name by layering the intense flavors of Korea into Japanese and American dishes; at Ssam Bar, his version of tteokbokki is



**BEYOND KOREAN BBQ** Kim Yoon-ok, the first lady of South Korea, above, flips a savory pancake during a demonstration in Great Neck, N.Y., with the chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, in an apron, behind her. At left, sweet rice cakes.

### TTEOKBOKKI — KOREAN RICE CAKES WITH RED CHILI SAUCE

TIME: 20 MINUTES

- 8 ounces fresh or thawed frozen tteok (see note)
- 4 ounces beefsteak, such as chuck or sirloin, very thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cups green cabbage, cut crosswise into large pieces (optional)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons gochujang (Korean chili paste)
- 1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- Sesame seeds.

1. Soak tteok in cold water to cover while preparing the other ingredients, about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towels.
2. Combine beef with soy sauce, 1 teaspoon sesame oil and garlic.

crossbred with Italian gnocchi in a light, fiery, herb-spiced pork sauce. New York Hedong in Greenwich Village serves hot dogs topped with bulgogi (redundant, but tasty) and burgers with kimchi.

For many years, authentic Korean food was perceived, even among Koreans, as too spicy, too garlicky and too

the devastation of the war years.

But high-end restaurants in Seoul are now turning away from Western food and toward Korean tradition, drawing on both everyday snacks like pajeon and painstaking arts like the making of tteok, sticky rice pounded into a dizzying array of shapes, colors and flavors.

Making tteok, like almost all cooking in Korea, was traditionally done by women; hundreds of female slaves and workers were employed by the kitchens of the royal court during the Joseon dynasty, which ruled Korea from 1392 to 1910. "The court cuisine has become trendy in the last few years," said Michael Pettit, the author of "Korean Cuisine: An Illustrated History." "More people can afford to eat things once reserved for the elite, like tteok."

Last week on 32nd Street in Manhattan, where Korean restaurants are clustered, Eun-joo Song, a Korean-American student at Parsons the New School for Design, expressed doubt about the need for any official campaign. "I think the restaurants here can speak for themselves," she said, gesturing at storefronts advertising barbecued beef, organic tofu and handmade dumplings. "Governments can't tell people what to like."

Although Mrs. Kim's official role was to promote Korean food, she did use her platform to raise a tender political topic. "You all look very healthy to me," she said, gazing out at the veterans in their blue dress uniforms. "You might live to see the reunification of the two Koreas."

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1 small onion, thinly sliced

2 cups green cabbage, cut crosswise into large pieces (optional)

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1 to 2 teaspoons sugar

2 scallions, thinly sliced

Sesame seeds.

1. Soak tteok in cold water to cover while preparing the other ingredients, about 10 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

2. Combine beef with soy sauce, 1 teaspoon sesame oil and garlic.

3. Heat a wok or skillet over high heat until very hot. Add beef mixture and stir-fry just until lightly browned, 1 minute. Add onion and cabbage, if using, and stir-fry until crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes.

4. Add gochujang and mix. Add about ⅓ cup water; remaining teaspoon sesame oil, sugar and tteok. Mix and let simmer until sauce is thick and tteok is soft, adding water a little at a time as needed. Adjust seasonings with sugar and gochujang.

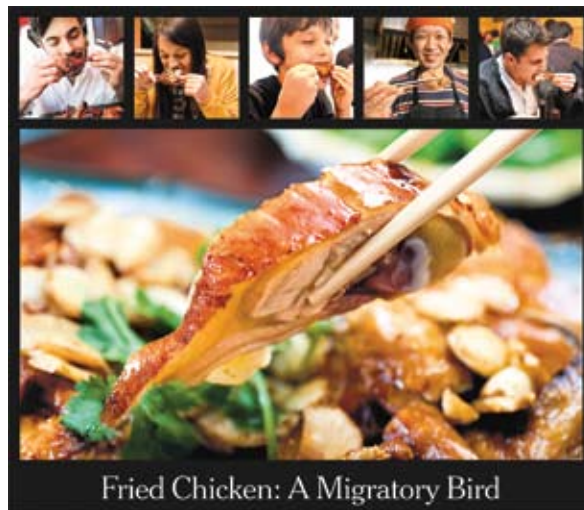
5. Mix in scallions and serve hot, sprinkled with sesame seeds.

**Yield: 2 servings.**

**Note:** Tteok (Korean rice cakes, also spelled dduk or toppoki) are available in Asian markets. For this dish, the traditional shape is long cylinders; cut them crosswise in half before cooking. If using dried tteok, cook according to package directions and do not soak.

# Fried Chicken: A Migratory Bird

By JULIA MOSKIN



**Fried Chicken: A Migratory Bird**

By Julia Moskin. Photos by Amy Gold. Illustration by Amy Gold.

## Fried Chicken: A Migratory Bird



PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY GOLD. TOP: A PHOTO OF A MAN AND A WOMAN SITTING AT A TABLE, EATING FRIED CHICKEN. BOTTOM: A PHOTO OF A MAN AND A WOMAN SITTING AT A TABLE, EATING FRIED CHICKEN.

## Fried Chicken: A Migratory Bird

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The religion of Southern fried chicken is spreading fast in New York City, with pilgrims making stops at the Redhead in the East Village, Locanda Verde in TriBeCa and Buttermilk Channel in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn.

But while adherents may argue about buttermilk or brine, batter or dredge and shallow fry or deep fry, dissenters say there's a more fundamental question — is Southern fried chicken ever that inspiring?

“Without seasoning it, without chopping it, fried chicken has no flavor at all,” said Eddie Yee, the manager of the Congee Village restaurant in Chinatown, where the hacked crispy garlic chicken is suffused with spice, crunch and sweetness.

At the two Fatty Crab restaurants, Corwin Kave's fried chicken with Thai chilies, an occasional special, is a thin-crust, spice-rubbed project that takes five days, begins in a steam oven and ends in a wok, and is flavored with turmeric, fennel seed, ginger, fish sauce and smoked simple syrup. Of the thick-crust genre, Mr. Kave, the restaurants' chef, said, “That's just junk food.”

Southern fried chicken is usually seasoned with nothing more than salt and pepper. Once that fabulous crust is gone, it's hard to ignore that the big hunks of breast are often as dry and woolly as fiberglass insulation, and the moister parts have a caul of flabby skin under the crust.

But around the city, from Creole kitchens to Japanese wing joints to carbon copies of Korean fast food, there's far more to taste in fried chicken than just crust. (Warning: MSG ahead.)

At Congee Village, Mr. Yee and the chef Yong Quan Yang have spent years developing their recipe, which now involves rubbing a whole chicken with white vinegar and malt syrup; seasoning the inside of the bird — this, Mr. Yee says, is essential — with five-spice powder, poultry seasoning, ginger and garlic; then hanging it in front of a fan to dry the skin (as is done for Peking duck), for about five hours. Then it's deep-fried whole, while a glaze of sugar, Thai fish sauce, sesame oil, white pepper and soy sauce is combined with slices of deep-fried garlic. The whole bird is hacked into pieces and the garlic glaze poured on top, where it slides off the crisp skin and saturates the meat.

That Congee Village chicken is one of the birds that inspired the chef David Chang to pose a challenge to all the cooks in his empire last summer: come up with a fried chicken dinner worthy of the Momofuku name.

“It was a long, arduous month,” said Kevin Pemoulie, chef at Momofuku Noodle Bar, whose dark-meat double-fried pieces, brushed with a spicy Korean-influenced glaze, was one of two winners. “It gave me new insight into the deep fryer.”

Mr. Pemoulie said the chefs tried various types of flour, multiple fryings, turning the batter into foam, and adding vodka to it (that idea stuck). Sean Gray of Ssam Bar tried to even out the cooking time between light meat and dark by resting a whole bird, legs down, in a pot half-filled with bubbling oil (“Jacuzzi style,” Mr. Pemoulie said).

The final meal — available by reservation only, a few times daily, at Noodle Bar — is a vast feed that includes Mr. Pemoulie's chicken and one by Peter Serpico, chef at Momofuku Ko, a relatively traditional American fried chicken with a bit of rice flour in the batter and a big salty shot of Old Bay seasoning. (Celery seed and paprika dominate the flavors.) The mountain of chicken is accompanied to the table by four sauces; house-made Chinese-style mu shu pancakes for wrapping; and a bowl of raw vegetables like baby carrots, radishes and fushimi peppers, plus leaves of shiso, basil and mint.

Others have taken a more direct route to packing flavor into fried chicken.

“Fried chicken is completely traditional to our generation,” said Koji Okamoto, the 39-year-old chef and owner of Tebaya, a Japanese chicken-wing specialist in Chelsea. Although Japan's culinary lexicon did not include deep frying until the Portuguese introduced it in the 16th century, the country now has at least three distinct fried chicken styles: katsu, with super-crisp panko or bread crumbs, is used for pounded breasts; karaage, ginger-and-garlic-marinated thighs in a light, puffy crust of sweet-potato starch; and Nagoya-style tebasaki, or wings.

That's Mr. Okamoto's specialty. His are tossed in a bath of soy sauce, mirin (sweet rice wine), black pepper and sesame seeds, after not one but two trips to the deep fryer. “The first frying seals the flavors in,” Mr. Okamoto said. “And the second one makes it crisp outside.”

Mr. Okamoto is from Nagoya, but his family is Korean, and his super-peppered wings recipe bears a distinct resemblance to the spicy Korean fried chicken that has become popular in New York since it was introduced around 2006.

Cecilia Hae-Jin Lee, the author of “Quick and Easy Korean Cooking,” said fried chicken became popular in Korea when fast-food places opened there after the war. “It fit into the family of Korean food called anju — specifically, something you eat with alcohol,” she said Monday in an interview from Seoul.

The original American formula has been altered to good effect, with less breading and the addition of spicy and sweet glazes that season the crisp skin. There are countless chicken chains and neighborhood places in Seoul, she said, each with fans that support the extra garlic here, the chili heat there, and extra sesame seeds across town. In New York, a great place to try it is Kyochon, in Flushing, where the skin is potato-chip-crisp and the sauces not too sweet.

American fried chicken has also been reworked in the Philippines, and exported back to New York. King Phojanakong, the chef at Kuma Inn and the new Umi Nom, in Brooklyn, serves fried wings tossed with roasted salt and lots of black pepper, sprinkled with fish sauce and thin slices of fresh green chili.

Mr. Phojanakong, a native New Yorker, has been spending summers with family in the Philippines since he was a child. He says that the region around Silay City is known for its birds, which are all, by default, free range and organic. The traditional marinade for them includes garlic, fermented fish sauce, lemon grass and palm vinegar, and the Umi Nom wings recall that balance of funky, salty and sweet.

“My favorite place is called Manukan Country, or Chicken Country,” he said. “No one finds it strange that there are 30 chicken vendors under one roof.” The

dish is so popular that it has its own slang — “PAL” is the word for chicken wings, because it's the acronym for Philippine Airlines; “Adidas” is used for chicken feet, a popular street snack.

The global question when it comes to fried chicken is: how to deal with the skin? Chicken skin is full of collagen and fat, both of which hug moisture that keeps it from getting, and staying, crisp.

“The skin should be absolutely dry and taut to the flesh before you fry it,” Mr. Kave said. “The best way to keep chicken skin crisp is to not put anything on it at all,” said Harold McGee, the food scientist. “But that wouldn't fit many people's idea of good fried chicken.”

Batters add moisture; sweet potato, cornstarch and rice flour look similar but create different effects in the fryer.

“The most important variable we found wasn't ingredients but temperature,” said Mr. Pemoulie: a few degrees each way in the fryer substantially changed the result. In other words, fried chicken is a highly complex amalgamation of muscle and bone, fat and flour. It's no wonder that chefs like Andrew Carmellini and Jean-Georges Vongerichten are stooping to conquer it.

But restaurants that plume themselves on pristine, freshly fried chicken are missing the point: the stuff tastes best at least an hour out of the fryer. Find a place where the chicken is fried in batches but there's plenty of turnover, like Mambí, a 24-hour Dominican cafe near the Broadway stanchions of the George Washington Bridge.

(Mambí is the kind of place where the toilet paper dispenser is padlocked, but the counter ladies nonetheless call everyone “amor.”)

One of the cooks, Carina Mejía, marinates chicken pieces — none bigger than a handball — in garlic, lime juice, black pepper and sazón Goya, the all-purpose Latin-Caribbean mix of MSG, cumin, coriander seed and annatto. Savory and crunchy, with a warm brown-and-burnt-orange crust, it could give rise to its own religion — with a cult of lime wedges and pink pickled onion rings on the side.

FINDING CRUNCH BEYOND KENTUCKY

Some of New York’s best (non–Southern) fried chicken dishes:

**CONGEE VILLAGE**  
100 Allen Street (Delancey Street), (212) 941–1818, congeevillagerestaurants.com. House special crispy garlic chicken: whole, \$18; half, \$9.

**FATTY CRAB**  
UPPER WEST SIDE 2170 Broadway (76th and 77th Street), (212) 496–2722, fattycrab.com. Fried chicken with Thai chilies and smoked palm sugar is an occasional special, \$22 to \$25, depending on the kind of chicken.

**KYOCHON**  
156–50 Northern Boulevard (157th Street), Flushing, Queens, (718) 939–9292. Original and spicy versions; \$19.59 for a whole chicken.

**MAMBI**  
4181 Broadway (177th Street), Washington Heights, (212) 928–9796. Pollo frito, served with rice and beans; \$9.35.

**MOMOFUKU NOODLE BAR**  
171 First Avenue (10th Street), East Village, (212) 777–7773, momofuku.com. Fried chicken dinner, by online reservation; two chickens and unlimited sides, \$100.

**TEBAYA**  
144 West 19th Street (Seventh Avenue), Chelsea, (212) 924–3335. Fried wings in black-pepper soy sauce; \$5.75 for eight.

**UMI NOM**  
433 DeKalb Avenue (Classon Avenue), Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, (718) 789–8806, uminom.com. Salt-and–pepper wings with Anaheim chilies; \$10.

KOREAN FRIED CHICKEN (YANGNYEOM DAK)

Adapted from “Quick and Easy Korean Cooking” by Cecilia Hae–Jin Lee (Chronicle Books, 2009)

Time: 30 minutes, plus one hour’s marinating

1 small yellow onion, coarsely grated

2 cloves garlic, minced

½ teaspoon salt, plus more for coating

¼ teaspoon black pepper, plus more for coating

8 to 10 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, quartered, or 24 wings

3 tablespoons Korean chili paste (gojuchang)

3 tablespoons ketchup

¼ cup sugar

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds, more for garnish

Juice of ½ lemon

Oil for deep frying

½ cup all–purpose flour

⅔ cup cornstarch.

1. In a medium–size bowl, combine grated onion, garlic, salt and pepper. Add chicken and toss to coat well. Cover and set aside to marinate for about 1 hour.

2. In a large bowl, stir together chili paste, ketchup, sugar, sesame seeds and lemon juice. Taste and adjust flavors to get a spicy–sweet–tangy finish. Set aside.

3. Pour oil into a large heavy pot to a depth of 1 ½ inches. Heat to 350 degrees. Combine flour and cornstarch in a shallow bowl and season with salt and pepper.

4. Working in batches to avoid crowding, lift chicken from marinade, dredge lightly in seasoned flour and cornstarch, gently drop into oil and fry for 5 to 7 minutes, turning occasionally, until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels. Repeat with remaining chicken, checking oil temperature between batches.

5. For wings only, when all pieces are done, increase oil temperature to 375 degrees and refry in batches for 30 to 60 seconds, until very crisp. Drain once more on paper towels. While chicken is still hot, brush thickly with chili sauce. Serve hot, sprinkled with sesame seeds.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings.

# Kimchi for a Groom Has New York Debut

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

## Kimchi for a Groom Has New York Debut

It was not all kosher dills at the International Pickle Festival on the Lower East Side 10 days ago. MIL, a new, well-traveled brand of kimchi (Korean fermented and spiced cabbage) had its New York debut and attracted a hefty following. Based on an old family recipe, it’s made by Young Ja Chun, who owns Jang Mo Gip, a Korean restaurant in Garden Grove, Calif.

**DNA THEORY**  
MIL stands for mother-in-law. According to Korean custom, the mother of a bride-to-be tries to impress the intended groom with her culinary skills, which presumably have been passed on to her daughter.

Ruddy MIL Kimchi is spiced to the hilt, but the fire is tempered by the rich complexity of the pickle, which is made without preservatives. Serve it with appetizers, layer it in a sandwich or on a burger, or use it to brighten a dish of grilled meat or fish.

MIL Kimchi is \$5.99 for 16 ounces at Best Farm Fruits and Vegetables in the Essex Street Market (Essex and Delancey Streets).



TONY CENICOLA/  
THE NEW YORK TIMES



# Economy Blunts Korea's Appetite for Plastic Surgery

By MARTIN FACKLER

## LIFE STYLE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

SEOUL

### Economy Blunts Korea's Appetite for Plastic Surgery

By MARTIN FACKLER

SEOUL — A grim frugality has settled over the export powerhouse that once burst with optimism — and silicon.

Cosmetic surgery took off here after South Korea's spectacular recovery from its currency crisis a decade ago. Rising living standards allowed ever-growing numbers of men and women to get the wider eyes, whiter skin and higher nose bridges that define beauty for many here. Improved looks were even seen as providing an edge in this high-pressure society's intense competition for jobs, education and marriage partners.

But turmoil coursing through the financial world and then into the global economy has hit South Korea hard, as it has many middle-income countries. The downturn drove down the stock market and the currency by a third or more last year, and the resulting anxiety forced many South Koreans to change their habits.

A particular chill has seeped into the plastic surgery industry, emptying waiting rooms and driving clinics out of business.

"In hard times, people always cut back on luxuries like eating out, jewelry and plastic surgery," said one plastic surgeon, Park Hyun, who has seen the number of his patients drop sharply. "If this is a normal recession, then these desires will eventually get reignited, and our patients will come back."

After a pause, Dr. Park added: "If this downturn is like the Great Depression, then we are all going to get killed off."

It is hard to measure the exact size of the industry here or the extent of the current downturn because no one keeps exact figures. South Korea's AHA Consulting, which

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Continued on Page B4



### Economic Downturn Blunts South Korea's Appetite for Plastic Surgery

Continued from Page B1

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One above being: A rising dollar means cheaper procedures.



Continued on Page B4

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It is hard to measure the exact size of the industry here or the extent of the current downturn because no one keeps exact figures. Seoul-based ARA Consulting, which specializes in the plastic surgery industry, said reports from surgeons and local media suggest the number of patient visits each month is down 40 percent since September.

That would be a huge setback to this once fast-growing industry. From a luxury limited to the wealthy a decade ago, according to ARA, plastic surgery has become so common that an estimated 30 percent of Korean women aged 20 to 50, or some 2.4 million women, had surgical or nonsurgical cosmetic procedures last year, with many having more than one procedure.

That compares with 11.7 million cosmetic procedures performed last year in the United States, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, meaning that the number of procedures in America is 4.9 times the number in South Korea, though the United States population is more than six times larger.

“As South Korea became wealthier, it was just one more thing that women desire,” said Yoon Sung-min, ARA’s chief executive. He said many doctors were drawn to plastic surgery because payment is outside of the national health care system’s price controls, allowing bigger profits.

Nowhere has the boom, and the currently unfolding bust, been more apparent than Seoul’s fashionable shopping neighborhood of Apgujeong.

More than half of South Korea’s 627 registered cosmetic surgery clinics are here — their names, including Dr. For You and Ivy Plastic, visible among the fashion boutiques and wine bars.

But their once-crowded waiting rooms are empty. For sale signs have begun appearing on clinic doors for the first time in memory, and some 20 clinics have already closed.

Dr. Park, the plastic surgeon, predicts a third of Apgujeong’s clinics could close by spring.

“This is the Mecca of plastic surgery in Asia,” said Dr. Park, who sat in his lavishly decorated wood-paneled clinic overlooking the neighborhood. “But even a Mecca can fall on hard times.”

Dr. Park said December would normally have been his peak season because high school seniors finish South Korea’s grueling university entrance exams and prepare for winter graduation. He said the exhausted students — and their equally stressed mothers — often celebrated by getting cosmetic surgery.

Not last December. Though he would not disclose specific numbers, Dr. Park said his patient load was down by half, leading him to lay off three of his seven nurses and office workers.

Sung Myung-soon can sympathize.

Like millions of South Koreans who recently emerged into the middle class, Ms. Sung, a 54-year-old homemaker, enjoyed a lifestyle of shopping at malls and lounging by her health club’s pool, and — until a few months ago — regularly visiting the plastic surgeon, where she maintained her youthful appearance.

But the financial crisis in the fall has brought fears that South Korea’s good times may be over, or at least on indefinite suspension, and Ms. Sung has cut back by making fewer visits to her plastic surgeon and bargaining hard for discounts when she does visit. She refuses to give up her plastic surgery altogether.

“Even at times like these, women still want their plastic surgery,” said Ms. Sung, who recently rounded her eyes and smoothed wrinkles on her forehead.

Typical of South Korea’s more frugal patients, she chose less expensive procedures, like Botox injections to remove wrinkles, instead of her usual surgery. She also said she would reduce her number of visits to once a year, from twice.

Still, surgeons say the continued desire of women like Ms. Sung to look beautiful will keep the industry alive, although it may shrink greatly.

But Dr. Park and other plastic surgeons said the country’s decline has brought one silver lining: South Korea’s

currency has fallen so far that procedures here are now cheap when calculated in dollars and other currencies. This has led to growing numbers of Japanese, Chinese and Korean Americans coming to Seoul for relatively inexpensive cosmetic procedures.

Some clinics said 20 to 30 percent of patients are now foreigners, up from 10 percent last year. A few larger clinics are even taking the opportunity of a downturn at home to open branches in China, the country seen as the industry’s next big growth market.

Other plastic surgeons have left the Apgujeong area to escape the intense competition. One, Jang Yeon-jae, recently moved to a small clinic in the nondescript middle-class neighborhood of Nokbeon, in northern Seoul, in hopes of drawing new customers. He said business had been slow so far at the clinic, whose tiny waiting room has a peach-colored sofa and a television playing footage of Korean pop concerts.

The lower volume of patients, as well as the national plastic surgery downturn, has led Dr. Jang to change some of his habits too. “Before, I focused on profitable procedures” like breast enlargement, he said. “Now, I take every little procedure, even just removing a single mole.”

Some companies in the industry are adapting in other ways. Hyumedi, a firm that sells and leases medical equipment, has been buying used equipment from liquidated clinics at fire sale prices.

Jeon Jin-wook, the company’s chief executive, said he had bought so many machines that he rented a second warehouse just to store them all. He said he expected demand for second-hand equipment to pick up as clinics can no longer afford expensive new machines.

“It is a good time to stock up,” Mr. Jeon said. “We have to change with the times.”

*Su Hyun Lee contributed reporting.*



# The Big Cram for Hunter High School

By JAVIER C. HERNANDEZ

While their friends played video games in pajamas or vacationed in the tropics, a dozen sixth graders spent winter break at Elite Academy in Flushing, Queens, memorizing word roots. Time was ticking as they prepared to face the thing they had talked about, dreamed about and lost sleep over for much of the past year: the Hunter College High School admissions exam, a strenuous three-hour test that weeds out about 90 percent of those who take it.

On Wednesday, the final day of test-prep boot camp before the Jan. 9 exam, there seemed to be nothing more terrifying to these 11-year-olds than the risk of failure.

Some had taken up coffee; others, crossword puzzles and cable news shows to glean vocabulary words. A few of their parents had hired private tutors and imposed strict study hours, and several had paid up to \$3,000 for a few months of English and math classes at Elite, a regimen modeled on the cram schools of South Korea, China and Japan.

The five girls and seven boys at Elite on Wednesday seemed to delight in their onerous routine, unwilling or unable to imagine life any other way.

"My friends think it's wacko to do so much preparation," said Akira Taniguchi, an aspiring F.B.I. agent who attends the honors program at Junior High School 54 on the Upper West Side. "But now I feel I'm really focused, thanks to this academy, and way more confident than I was when I first came here."

Patryk Wadolowski, the brown-haired, blue-eyed president of his sixth-grade class at Public School 58, chimed in: "It just prepares us for life. Any obstacle we face we'll be able to conquer."

In a classroom decorated with maps and illustrations of vocabulary words (a string of z's for "dormant," a serene plateau for "salubrious"), the squad of high-achievers spent 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. dissecting English and math questions. As they progressed from sentence completion to reading comprehension, nearly every question posed by the teacher, Elisabeth Stuveras, elicited a garden of eager hands.

The puzzle of the moment was the word "resentment." Some students had been stumped by it on the practice test, and Ms. Stuveras asked if anyone could offer a definition.

"Like, you resent having a fight with people?" Patryk hypothesized.

No, that was "regret," Ms. Stuveras explained. She searched for an example that might ring true for the students.

"Pretend your friends are applying to Hunter," she said. "There's a chance that the person who didn't get in might feel a little resentment they didn't get in. They are upset the other people got in, with a little jealousy."

"'Resent' is a good word to add to your vocabulary," Ms. Stuveras concluded. The students nodded in understanding, highlighting the word in unison.

At 1:15, they took a break, throwing aside lofty vocabulary to chat around the vending machines about their favorite rappers (Jay-Z and Kanye West) and coming school dances.

When prompted, they took a moment to reflect on why they wanted to get into Hunter. Some said it was an urge to become better students and be surrounded by bright peers; others said they had been told Hunter was a vital steppingstone to elite colleges and a successful career.



A group of sixth graders — seven boys and five girls, including Julie Shon, 11, center — studied at Elite Academy in Flushing, Queens. The entrance test is Friday.

## The Big Cram for Hunter High School

Eager Young Minds Compete, Even if Friends Call Them 'Wacko'

By JAVIER C. HERNANDEZ

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be surrounded by bright peers; others said they had been told Hunter was a vital steppingstone to elite colleges and a successful career.

"Ever since I was in second grade, I always wanted to go to Hunter," Patryk said. "I've always strived to achieve everything in every test."

Most of the students came to the five-day winter break program at Elite after attending Saturday prep classes at the academy through the fall. Elite, which opened in 1986, is one of several cram schools in New York that has imported the year-round enrichment programs of the Far East,

**Up to 2,000 take the test, but only 200 get seats.**

giving students the chance to forfeit evenings, weekends, summer break and winter vacation for test preparation.

While Elite limits advertising to Asian-language newspapers, about 50 percent of its students are non-Asian. (Asian students still predominate in the city's top public high schools, including Hunter.)

Many of the students in the winter break program were children of immigrants — from South Korea, Japan, Poland — and most attend city schools. Few things are kept private. Scores on practice tests are posted in the front lobby, and students freely share their homework scores and edit

each other's essays. It is the first time many of them have received letter grades on assignments.

When it was time to hand back essays, Ms. Stuveras announced that four students had earned high-passes. "Ah, yes!" Patryk exclaimed.

Did anyone fail? "Well, yes," Ms. Stuveras explained. "You guys did pretty well, though; there were a lot of high-fails."

Joanna Cohen, a student at the School at Columbia University who peppers her sentences with words like "amiable" and "headway" and spits out math formulas faster than the teacher can write on the board, sipped on mint tea at her desk (most of her classmates preferred Pepsi or Mountain Dew). She smiled as she looked at her high score on the practice exam.

After class, she passed around her blue grammar book and asked some classmates to write their phone numbers in the front.

Outside, in the lobby, the students exchanged study tactics and traded recommendations on dictionaries and vocabulary books. (Joanna recommended "Webster's.")

A few said they were going to devote their free time to the thesaurus, looking for ways to spruce up ho-hum sentences. ("Our teacher said using high-level vocab will increase your chance of passing," Akira explained.)

And what if they were not among the fewer than 200 students who gain seats out of a pool of up to 2,000 test-takers? "I'll be sad," said James Lee, a student at Intermediate School 119 in Glendale, Queens, "but there's still Stuyvesant."



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# In South Korea, Drinks Are On the Maple Tree

By CHOE SANG-HUN

## HADONG JOURNAL In South Korea, Drinks Are On the Maple Tree

By CHOE SANG-HUN

HADONG, South Korea — At this time of year, when frogs begin stirring from their winter sleep and woodpeckers drill for newly active insects, villagers climb the hills around here to collect a treasured elixir: sap from the maple tree known as gorosoo.

“It’s important to have the right weather,” said Park Jeon-sik, 56, toting plastic tube up a moss-covered slope. “The temperature should drop below freezing at night and then rise to a warm, bright, windless day. If it’s rainy, windy or cloudy, the trees won’t give.”

For centuries, southern Korean villagers like Mr. Park have been tapping the gorosoo, or “tree good for the bones.” Unlike North Americans who collect maple sap to boil down into syrup, Korean villagers and their growing number of customers prefer the sap itself, which they credit with a wide range of health benefits.

In this they are not alone. Some people in Japan and northern China drink maple sap, and birch sap has its fans in Russia and other parts of northern Europe. But no one surpasses southern Koreans in their enthusiasm for maple sap, which they can consume in prodigious quantities.

“The right way is to drink an entire meal” — 20 liters, or about 5 gallons — “at once,” said Yeo Manyong, a 72-year-old farmer in Hadong. “That’s what we do. And

that’s what gorosoo lovers from the outside do when they visit our village.”

But how can you drink the equivalent of more than 50 beer cans of sap at one go?

“You and your family or friends get yourselves a room with a heated floor,” Mr. Yeo said, taking a break under a maple tree in Hadong, 160 miles south of Seoul. “You keep drinking while, let’s say, playing cards. Salty snacks like dried fish help because they make you thirsty. The idea is to sweat out all the bad stuff and replace it with sap.”

Drinking gorosoo has long been a springtime ritual for villagers in these rugged hills, for whom the rising of the sap in the maples is the first sign of the new season. Some villagers even use the sap, which tastes like vaguely sweet, weak green tea, in place of water in cooking.

In the past decade, thanks in part to the bottling industry and marketing campaigns by local governments, gorosoo sap has become popular with urban dwellers as well.

“I send most of my sap to Seoul,” said Mr. Park, who harvests 5,000 liters, or 1,320 gallons, of sap in a good year.

Koreans may have been drinking sap as early as a millennium ago, historians say. According to one popular legend, Doseon, a ninth-century Buddhist monk, achieved enlightenment after months of meditating cross-legged under a maple tree near here. When he finally tried to get up, his stiffened legs would not work. The sap from the tree fixed the problem. Hence the name’s meaning it is good for the bones.

Mr. Yeo said that villagers used to make a V-shaped incision in the tree and insert a large bamboo leaf to run the sap into wooden or earthenware tubs. Then they would carry away the sap-filled tubs on their backs.

Today, villagers usually drill holes in the trees and insert plastic spouts. A maze of plastic tubing carries the sap to holding tanks downhill.

Every year, Hadong produces 317,000 gallons of sap, which fetches between \$6 and \$7 a gallon. Although most sap harvest-

ers here are tea or persimmon farmers who gather sap on the side for extra income, some enterprising villagers have begun planting thousands of maple trees as a primary business venture.

Some rural governments host gorosoo festivals for tourists, with activities that include sap-drinking contests and ritually venerating mountain spirits. A popular place for drinking sap is public bath houses, where customers take the tonic while relaxing on heated floors.

Promotional pamphlets advertise the sap’s purported benefits:

It is good, they say, for everything from stomachaches to high blood pressure and diabetes.

Lee Jae-sung, a naval officer attending the gorosoo festival on Koje, an island east of Hadong, with his two daughters, said he liked the sap because “it soothes my stomach after a hangover.”

Most of these claims have yet to be substantiated, said Kang Ha-young, a researcher at the Korea Forest Research Institute.

“But one thing we have found is that the sap is rich in minerals, such as calcium, and is good, for example, for people with osteoporosis,” he said. “Somehow, our

ancestors knew what they were doing when they named it.”

The seesawing temperatures are needed to collect gorosoo because they build pressure inside the tree, which causes the sap to flow more easily when the trunk is punctured, preferably on its sunny side.

Now that sap-gathering is becoming more commercial, some environmentalists have criticized tree tapping as “cruel.”

“I oppose boring holes in a tree and drinking its sap,” said Kim Joong-yeon, 46, a tourist visiting Koje.

Mr. Kang, the researcher, says

careful tapping is harmless. To ensure this, the national forest authorities recently began requiring licenses for sap collectors and regulating the number of holes they can bore into each tree.

Gorosoo farmers, who were doing a brisk business selling sap to visitors from makeshift stands, acknowledged the need for restraint.

“The trees donate their blood to us,” said Yang Heung-do, 51. “If you donate too much blood, you get weak. So we drill only one to three holes per tree, depending on its size.”



Drinking sap from the maple tree known as gorosoo has long been a springtime ritual in the rugged hills in southern Korea.



Villagers insert plastic spouts in the trees, and tubes carry the sap downhill. The sap has become popular in cities like Seoul.



Every year, Hadong produces 317,000 gallons of sap.

HADONG, South Korea

At this time of year, when frogs begin stirring from their winter sleep and woodpeckers drill for newly active insects, villagers climb the hills around here to collect a treasured elixir: sap from the maple tree known as gorosoo.



“It’s important to have the right weather,” said Park Jeom-sik, 56, toting plastic tubs up a moss-covered slope. “The temperature should drop below freezing at night and then rise to a warm, bright, windless day. If it’s rainy, windy or cloudy, the trees won’t give.”

For centuries, southern Korean villagers like Mr. Park have been tapping the gorosoe, or “tree good for the bones.”

Unlike North Americans who collect maple sap to boil down into syrup, Korean villagers and their growing number of customers prefer the sap itself, which they credit with a wide range of health benefits.

In this they are not alone. Some people in Japan and northern China drink maple sap, and birch sap has its fans in Russia and other parts of northern Europe. But no one surpasses southern Koreans in their enthusiasm for maple sap, which they can consume in prodigious quantities.

“The right way is to drink an entire mal” — 20 liters, or about 5 gallons — “at once,” said Yeo Manyong, a 72-year-old farmer in Hadong. “That’s what we do. And that’s what gorosoe lovers from the outside do when they visit our village.”

But how can you drink the equivalent of more than 50 beer cans of sap at one go?

“You and your family or friends get yourselves a room with a heated floor,” Mr. Yeo said, taking a break under a maple tree in Hadong, 180 miles south of Seoul. “You keep drinking while, let’s say, playing cards. Salty snacks like dried fish help because they make you thirsty. The idea is to sweat out all the bad stuff and replace it with sap.”

Drinking gorosoe has long been a springtime ritual for villagers in these rugged hills, for whom the rising of the sap in the maples is the first sign of the new season. Some villagers even use the sap, which tastes like vaguely sweet, weak green tea, in place of water in cooking.

In the past decade, thanks in part to the bottling industry and marketing campaigns by local governments, gorosoe sap has become popular with urban dwellers as well.

“I send most of my sap to Seoul,” said Mr. Park, who harvests 5,000 liters, or 1,320 gallons, of sap in a good year.

Koreans may have been drinking sap as early as a millennium ago, historians say. According to one popular legend, Doseon, a ninth-century Buddhist monk, achieved enlightenment after months of meditating cross-legged under a maple tree near here. When he finally tried to get up, his stiffened legs would not work. The sap from the tree fixed the problem. Hence the name’s meaning it is good for the bones.

Mr. Yeo said that villagers used to make a V-shaped incision in the tree and insert a large bamboo leaf to run the sap into wooden or earthenware tubs. Then they would carry away the sap-filled tubs on their backs.

Today, villagers usually drill holes in the trees and insert plastic spouts. A maze of plastic tubing carries the sap to holding tanks downhill.

Every year, Hadong produces 317,000 gallons of sap, which fetches between \$6 and \$7 a gallon. Although most sap harvesters here are tea or persimmon farmers who gather sap on the side for extra income, some enterprising villagers have begun planting thousands of maple trees as a primary business venture.

Some rural governments host gorosoe festivals for tourists, with activities that include sap-drinking contests and rituals venerating mountain spirits. A popular place for drinking sap is public bath houses, where customers take the tonic while relaxing on heated floors.

Promotional pamphlets advertise the sap’s purported benefits: it is good, they say, for everything from stomachaches to high blood pressure and diabetes.

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# The Roar of the Crowd, The Taste of Dried Squid

By SAKI KNAFO

A tavern called Players Sports Restaurant and Lounge, on West 32nd Street near Broadway, is unlike most sports bars. You can choose from a selection of soju (Korean vodka) or order oh jing uh (dried squid) to go with your beer.

West 32nd Street is the heart of Koreatown, of course, and on Tuesday night, the entertainment suited the setting. On a large projection screen and seven television sets, the South Korean national baseball team was facing its archrival, Japan, in the second round of the World Baseball Classic.

"We usually come here to celebrate birthdays or just to party," said John Choi, a Columbia pre-med student with a toothy smile. He and two friends sat on plush white benches in the middle of the noisy room. Two low tables were laden with shot glasses, a carafe of Coke, several bottles of Corona, a bottle of Johnny Walker Black and a plate of tong-dak, or fried chicken.

As the friends picked at the chicken with chopsticks, the South Korean batters picked apart Japan. At the end of the third inning, the score was South Korea 3, Japan 0. "I'm pretty sure we're better than them," Mr. Choi said.

One of his friends, a Princeton student named Jin Hyun Cheong, shed some light on the game's historical context.

"Japan colonized Korea," Mr. Cheong said. "They didn't teach in Korean in the elementary schools. A lot of people in my grandfather's generation only speak Japanese."

At another table, Michael Yoo, a hedge-fund employee who played third base for a Little League team in Forest Hills, Queens, had this to say: "It's a much bigger rivalry than the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees."

Back at Mr. Choi's table, three small glasses were filled with beer, and everyone drank. "When we watch baseball games," Mr. Choi said, "it's a combo of fried chicken and beer, not pizza."

How about Cracker Jack? "We eat Saewookkang," Mr. Choi said. "It's a shrimp-flavored chip."

During the regular South Korean baseball season, Mr. Choi roots for the LG Twins (of Seoul — Korean baseball teams are generally named after the companies or conglomerates that own them). On this night, a Twins pitcher, Jung Keun Bong, was on the mound. Mr. Choi and his friends respectfully referred to him as Mr. Bong.

Mr. Bong and his teammates would eventually win, 4-1. But at the moment, it appeared that the pitcher was in trouble: men on first and second, one out, top of the fourth. Then Seiichi Uchikawa, the Japanese designated hitter, grounded into a double play: Park to Jeong to Kim.

Mr. Choi and his friends celebrated American style, with high fives.

"Byung sal-ta," Mr. Choi said.

Translation? "Side-by-side kill hit."

## KOREATOWN

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Cheering for South Korea as it faced its baseball archrival, Japan.



# No Red Cape, or Red Ink, In South Korean Bullrings

By CHOE SANG-HUN

JINJU JOURNAL

## No Red Cape, or Red Ink, In South Korean Bullrings

By CHOE SANG-HUN

JINJU, South Korea — Gangta, his neck muscles rippling, butts his head against a pine tree. Like a prizefighter, he does roadwork on a hilltop training ground, dragging in stoic plods a 450-pound tire filled with rocks.

"Since he's an animal, I can't teach him skills. All I can do is build up his muscles and stamina," said Kang Myoung-chul, Gangta's owner. "Technique is something he's either born with or learns the hard way in the ring."

Gangta, or Power Punch, is a 10-year-old fighting bull weighing 1,840 pounds. He is also a three-time heavyweight national champion, a star in a sport that once meant as much to South Koreans as the Kentucky Derby does to some Americans.

Unlike Spanish bullfighting, there is no matador. In South Korea, bull fights bull. Tons of muscle charge at each other, and clumps of bloody hair fly as the animals bang heads, their horns clashing like sabers.

That may sound brutal, but bulls rarely die in the ring. The fight is over when one turns tail. Some matches stretch on for hours. Others end before they start: the bulls stare each other down, and one walks away.

Popular interest in bullfighting in South Korea, has waned in recent decades, a victim of television, the Internet and

more-global spectator sports, like soccer and baseball. But in the last few years, some cities have begun promoting bullfighting as a tourist attraction and the government now hopes to reignite the old passion by legalizing ringside gambling, starting in July.

Mr. Kang, 32, is one of about 500 rancher-trainers who own the country's 1,500 or so fighting bulls. Most bulls are chosen from cattle headed for the slaughterhouse when they reach the age of 2 and weigh nearly 1,000 pounds. Mr. Kang and other trainers travel the country in search of talent among these young bulls.

"We look for small, furry ears, eyes menacing like a snake's, big horns and a thick neck with a long, low-slung torso," said Mr. Kang, a former computer engineer who writes a blog on bullfighting and is one of three ringside commentators certified by the National Bullfighting Association.

A bull can grow to well over a ton and compete until he is about 15. To start him on his career, owners bind the young bull's horns with wires to shape them into weapons.

Fighters are also distinguished from other bulls by what they eat. Their basic vegetarian diet is often supplemented with fish, live octopus and snakes. When a bout is imminent, Gangta gets herbal soups laced with ginseng, and energy drinks usually sold in pharmacies for people suffering hangovers.

On the day of a match, many are fed soju, a fiery grain liquor. "We don't know for sure whether a bull has been drinking," Mr. Kang said, "until he gets exhausted and starts panting," allowing bystanders to smell his breath.

Mr. Kang's day begins at 6 a.m., when he serves his 13 fighting bulls the first of four hot meals a day. On this morning, Mr. Kang was busy stoking the fire under a caldron filled with bean sprouts, rice stalks, corn, yams, potatoes, pumpkin chunks and anchovies — a stark contrast to the factory feed that goes to ordinary cattle at Mr. Kang's ranch in Jinju, about 180 miles south of Seoul.



There are no matadors in South Korean bullfighting. Kang Myoung-chul, left, one of 500 rancher-trainers in the country, ran with Hanmyong during a training session this month.

ring during bouts. Some stand back and watch. Others join their animals in the fight, stomping the ground, crouching and growling, and shouting: "Stab! Stab! Gouge the eyes out of the stupid bull!"

"You never find a man more dejected than a bull owner whose animal just lost a match," Mr. Kang said. "Heads hanging, they and their bulls slip out to console themselves by sharing some rice wine."

The bullfighting renaissance taps into the unusual attachment South Koreans feel toward the animal. In South Korea, an agrarian society until a few decades ago, a cow or bull was a farmer's most prized asset. The animal pulled the plow, carried the loads on its back and was sold when the farmer needed money for his children's education.

"In the days before television, during major holidays, whole villages followed their strongest bulls to a makeshift ring where the bulls from neighboring villages converged," said Mr. Kang's father, Kang Cho-sam, 64, who is president of the Jinju Bullfighting Association. "In a society

Bulls enter the ring with their names painted on their sides: "Flying Tiger," "887," "Komodo Dragon." One champion named "My Country," who lost his right horn, went on to further victories under the new name "Unicorn." Bull owners are allowed in the

Later in the day, Mr. Kang and Gangta climbed the hill behind the ranch for training. Gangta knew the routine, stopping to rest whenever Mr. Kang's cellphone rang. After an hour of dragging the tire, the bull stalked Mr. Kang, demanding his reward: a full-body scratching.

Animals and owners develop a close bond. During fighting season, which runs from March to November, they travel together to the 11 cities that stage bullfights. On the road, Mr. Kang sleeps in a tent beside his bulls.

Around the amphitheater, bulls wait their turn like gladiators while their trainers sharpen their

where face is important, bullfighting was a serious business for rich families."

Jeong Ho-yong, 55, a Jinju native, remembers from his childhood, "The champion bull was a hero, returning home like a victorious general, villagers dancing behind him, kids jostling to touch the bull."

Maintaining a fighting bull still requires some means. In a national tournament, a champion is typically awarded 10 million won, or about \$6,730. But most of the other finalists get only about \$300 to \$350 a fight — hardly enough to cover their feed.

But with the government set to allow legalized gambling in one bullring in each province — starting in the central city of Cheongdo, where a 12,000-seat bullring stands ready — Mr. Kang sees a promising future for the sport.

He dismissed concerns that the pastime's revival might attract charges of animal abuse. "All male herd animals fight each other for reproduction," he said. "This is not about man conquering nature, as in Spanish bullfighting. We are simply observing nature in action."

## JINJU, South Korea

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A ring in Cheongdo will be the first to have legal gambling.



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Around the amphitheater, bulls wait their turns like gladiators while their trainers sharpen their horns. Between fights, cheerleaders in miniskirts prance in the ring. Folk musicians let rip with a frenzy of drums and gongs. Children crowd snack stands, which often promote local beef.

Since the revival of bullfighting, unofficial ringside gambling has become common and some bulls have developed national followings.

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## Korean Students Go Online to Cram

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — In the 1990s, Son Joo-eun was a success in South Korea's hypercompetitive business of preparing students for the national college entrance exam. He had an annual income of 720 million won — the equivalent of \$573,000 today — as a private tutor helping children from rich families in Seoul win admission to elite universities.

Then, he says, he had an epiphany: "What I was doing — helping the rich lift their children in the top of the ladder while pushing others down — was deepening inequality in education."

In 1999, while watching a home-shopping channel on television, Mr. Son came up with the idea for an online test preparatory school. As South Koreans were embracing broadband Internet, he thought: why not bring classes into the home, too?

He turned to the Web to provide "an honest, inexpensive education available to everyone," and South Korea's multibillion-dollar test preparation industry has never been the same.

Megastudy.net, the online tutoring service Mr. Son started in 2000, may be the perfect convergence of South Koreans' dual obsessions with educational credentials and the Internet. In this country, where people's status and income at 60 are largely determined by which college they entered at 18, South Korean parents' all-consuming task is to ensure that their children enter an

elite university. And that requires a high score on the college entrance exam.

By tapping into those anxieties, which deepen during recessions, Megastudy has become South Korea's fastest-growing technology company, with sales expected to grow 22.5 percent this year, to 245 billion won (\$190 million), even as the country's economy is projected to contract.

About 2.5 million students, including approximately half of all college-bound high school seniors, are members of Megastudy, which allows them access to

**In hopes of getting into elite schools, millions pay fees for Web-based tutors.**

some of the country's most celebrated exam tutors. For a fraction of what they would pay at traditional private "cram schools," students can watch video-on-demand tutorials on home computers or download them into hand-held devices for viewing in the subway or parks. They can skip or fast-forward through some parts of a lecture and bookmark or repeat the rest.

The explosive growth of Megastudy, and other Web cram schools it has inspired, has taken

place against the backdrop of a phenomenon that many here, including President Lee Myung-bak, have deplored: students' chances of entering a top university are often determined by their parents' ability to pay for after-school tutoring.

Last year, South Korea spent 35 trillion won, 6 percent of its gross domestic product, on public education. But private education expenditures amounted to an additional 20 trillion won, a burden that has been cited as a factor in South Korea's low birth rate. Eight of every 10 students from elementary school through high school take after-school classes from private tutors or at cram schools, online or offline. Offline cram school courses cost up to five times as much as their online counterparts.

Mr. Lee recently lamented the fading tradition of "dragons ascending from the sewers" — smart children from poor families rising to the highest levels of business and government, as the president himself did.

"These days, the rich get the help of cramming tutors and get good exam scores to enter colleges," he said. "This discriminates against children who can't afford private education."

The government considers the Web an ally in curbing the runaway costs of private education. In 2004, EBS, a government-run educational TV network, opened a Web site that offered free tutorials on the national exam and now has 2.8 million members.

Online commercial services like Megastudy charge a relatively small fee, averaging 40,000 to 50,000 won (\$30 to \$40), for each course a student selects from thousands of online tutorials. But as they grow bigger and more commercialized, schools like Megastudy create a new divide in education, this time on the Web, said Yang Jung-do, a professor of pedagogy at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul.

"At Megastudy, a subject, for instance English, is split into many different classes, such as different levels of grammar, so that it becomes a financial burden for low-income families if their children subscribe to multiple classes," Mr. Yang said. Even though the entry costs are lower, the educational gap still exists, he said. "How much private education a student can get in South Korea is determined by how rich his parents are."



Kim Sung-jae, a physics instructor, conducts a lecture that is filmed for use on the Internet.

Well-off urban families prefer commercial Web schools like Megastudy, which is more engaging but requires fees, while rural or low-income families gravitate toward free public services like EBS, which students find less interesting, he said.

To compete with the free online schools, Megastudy hires teachers with followings that rival those of pop stars. Some teachers lose their contracts if their popularity ratings drop. Last year, one Megastudy teacher generated 10 billion won (nearly \$8 million) in online sales and pocketed 23 percent as his share.

At Megastudy, high school students can choose from 2,500 courses. Tailored for students at various stages of academic achievement, the courses offer options unimaginable at the country's crowded public schools, like some that promise to teach modern poetry in two weeks. The courses are made up of 10 to 20 lectures that last as long as three hours each.

"Think of your mother!" a message chastises if a student logs off without finishing a tutorial.

Megastudy runs seven offline cram schools, whose classes are recorded and offered on the Web. Its teachers also record tutorials in studios, lecturing into a video camera.

Teachers are under pressure to hold onto their audiences.

"This is an intensely competitive market," said Kang Su-hyun,

college students studying to get into medical and law schools.

Besides South Koreans' affinity for all things online, whether shopping or watching TV, Mr. Son's success also rests on distrust of the public school system.

"If we have a question, we don't ask our teachers. We go to our cram school and ask," said Lee Jee-nee, 17, who has taken Megastudy courses.

The Web schools have their drawbacks, however. Lee Won-jin, 17, a Seoul high school senior who has also attended the offline Megastudy classes and who is not related to Lee Jee-nee, said, "You pay less attention in online classes than in real offline classrooms where you face the teacher in the flesh."

Critics say online cramming adds to a student's already intense schedule. But Mr. Son dismisses such views, saying that the energy demonstrated by South Koreans who "study like crazy" is what keeps the country's economy going.

With the country pouring billions of dollars into making its Internet 10 times faster by 2014, Mr. Son suggested that the world turn to South Korea for a glimpse of what education might look like in the future.

"Offline schools will become supplemental to online education," he predicted. "Students will go to school, perhaps once a week, for group activities like sports."

SEOUL, South Korea

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A student watching an online physics lecture by Kim Sung-jae. Megastudy sales are expected to grow 22.5 percent this year.



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In 1999, while watching a home-shopping channel on television, Mr. Son came up with the idea for an online test preparatory school. As South Koreans were embracing broadband Internet, he thought: why not bring classes into the home, too?

He turned to the Web to provide “an honest, inexpensive education available to everyone,” and South Korea’s multibillion-dollar test preparation industry has never been the same.

Megastudy.net, the online tutoring service Mr. Son started in 2000, may be the perfect convergence of South Koreans’ dual obsessions with educational credentials and the Internet. In this country, where people’s status and income at 60 are largely determined by which college they entered at 18, South Korean parents’ all-consuming task is to ensure that their children enter an elite university. And that requires a high score on the college entrance exam.

By tapping into those anxieties, which deepen during recessions, Megastudy has become South Korea’s fastest-growing technology company, with sales expected to grow 22.5 percent this year, to 245 billion won (\$195 million), even as the country’s economy is projected to contract.

About 2.8 million students, including approximately half of all college-bound high school seniors, are members of Megastudy, which allows them access to some of the country’s most celebrated exam tutors. For a fraction of what they would pay at traditional private “cram schools,” students can watch video-on-demand tutorials on home computers or download them into hand-held devices for viewing in the subway or parks. They can skip or fast-forward through some parts of a lecture and bookmark or repeat the rest.

The explosive growth of Megastudy, and other Web cram schools it has inspired, has taken place against the backdrop of a phenomenon that many here, including President Lee Myung-bak, have deplored: students’ chances of entering a top university are often determined by their parents’ ability to pay for after-school tutoring.

Last year, South Korea spent 55 trillion won, 6 percent of its gross domestic product, on public education. But private education expenditures amounted to an additional 20 trillion won, a burden that has been cited as a factor in South Korea’s low birth rate. Eight of every 10 students from elementary school through high school take after-school classes from private tutors or at cram schools, online or offline. Offline cram school courses cost up to five times as much as their online counterparts.

Mr. Lee recently lamented the fading tradition of “dragons ascending from the sewers” — smart children from poor families rising to the highest levels of business and government, as the president himself did.

“These days, the rich get the help of cramming tutors and get good exam scores to enter colleges,” he said. “This discriminates against children who can’t afford private education.”

The government considers the Web an ally in curbing the runaway costs of private education. In 2004, EBS, a government-run educational TV network, opened a Web site that offered free tutorials on the national exam and now has 2.8 million members.

Online commercial services like Megastudy charge a relatively small fee, averaging 40,000 to 50,000 won (\$30 to \$40), for each course a student selects from thousands of online tutorials. But as they grow bigger and more commercialized, schools like Megastudy create a new divide in education, this time on the Web, said Yang Jung-ho, a professor of pedagogy at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul.

“At Megastudy, a subject, for instance English, is split into many different classes, such as different levels of grammar, so that it becomes a financial burden for low-income families if their children subscribe to multiple classes,” Mr. Yang said. Even though the entry costs are lower, the educational gap still exists, he said. “How much private education a student can get in South Korea is determined by how rich his parents are.”

Well-off urban families prefer commercial Web schools like Megastudy, which is more engaging but requires fees, while rural or low-income families gravitate toward free public services like EBS, which students find less interesting, he said.

To compete with the free online schools, Megastudy hires teachers with followings that rival those of pop stars. Some teachers lose their contracts if their popularity ratings drop. Last year, one Megastudy teacher generated 10 billion won (nearly \$8 million) in online sales and pocketed 23 percent as his share.

At Megastudy, high school students can choose from 2,500 courses. Tailored for students at various stages of academic achievement, the courses offer options unimaginable at the country’s crowded public schools, like some that promise to teach modern poetry in two weeks. The courses are made up of 10 to 20 lectures that last as long as three hours each.

“Think of your mother!” a message chastises if a student logs off without finishing a tutorial.

Megastudy runs seven offline cram schools, whose classes are recorded and offered on the Web. Its teachers also record tutorials in studios, lecturing into a video camera.

Teachers are under pressure to hold onto their audiences.

“This is an intensely competitive market,” said Kang Su-hyun, 36, a Megastudy teacher who offers 50 courses

on Korean language and literature. “Some teachers undergo cosmetic surgery and hire makeup artists.”

Mr. Son’s idea for cheap mass education has made him one of the richest men in the country. Sales at his company, which went public in 2004, jumped to 202 billion won last year, from 579 million won in 2000, when the company was formed. From high school-level courses, Megastudy has expanded into elementary school and opened courses for college students studying to get into medical and law school.

Besides South Koreans’ affinity for all things online, whether shopping or watching TV, Mr. Son’s success also rests on distrust of the public school system.

“If we have a question, we don’t ask our teachers. We go to our cram school and ask,” said Lee Jee-nee, 17, who has taken Megastudy courses.

The Web schools have their drawbacks, however. Lee Won-jin, 17, a Seoul high school senior who has also attended the offline Megastudy classes and who is not related to Lee Jee-nee, said, “You pay less attention in online classes than in real offline classrooms where you face the teacher in the flesh.”

Critics say online cramming adds to a student’s already intense schedule. But Mr. Son dismisses such views, saying that the energy demonstrated by South Koreans who “study like crazy” is what keeps the country’s economy going.

With the country pouring billions of dollars into making its Internet 10 times faster by 2014, Mr. Son suggested that the world turn to South Korea for a glimpse of what education might look like in the future.

“Offline schools will become supplemental to online education,” he predicted. “Students will go to school, perhaps once a week, for group activities like sports.”

# Midtown's Hidden World

By JENNIFER 8. LEE

Under the colorful glow of the Empire State Building, Koreatown has burst forth as an area known for late-night (dare we say all-night?) revelry. With its heart on West 32nd Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue, the neighborhood draws well-coiffed crowds to its 24-hour restaurants, beauty spas and karaoke bars that close only when the sun starts to rise.

Koreatown is convenient to mass transit — it sits close to the tangle of subway lines at Herald Square — but it is also hidden to outsiders by language and physical layout. The visitor spends much time treading narrow stairways or riding in small creaky elevators, the kind that emphatically warn of four-person maximums.

**6 P.M.** Get spruced up for the night at any number of specialty salons. At Ebenezer Eyelash, 32 West 32nd Street, fourth floor, (212) 947-5503, specialists will delicately place eyelash extensions that can last as long as two months (about \$100 plus tip). Hair Collage, 316 Fifth Avenue, second floor, (212) 594-5085, offers Japanese-style straight perms (\$200 to \$300), and for skin and body care, the Face 101, 32 West 32nd Street, fifth floor, (212) 268-7546, has many services, including ultrasound treatment for reducing fat (starting at \$130 per one-hour session).

**8 P.M.** Traditional Korean restaurants operate around the clock along West 32nd Street, but a notable culinary trend is Korean-style fried chicken, known for its light and crisp texture. A heaping plate of drumsticks can be bought at the vibrant Mad for Chicken, 314 Fifth Avenue, second floor, (212) 221-2222 (\$16.95 for medium). If the weather's nice, try the takeout chicken at K Town, 34 West 32nd Street, (212) 643-2603 (\$13.95).

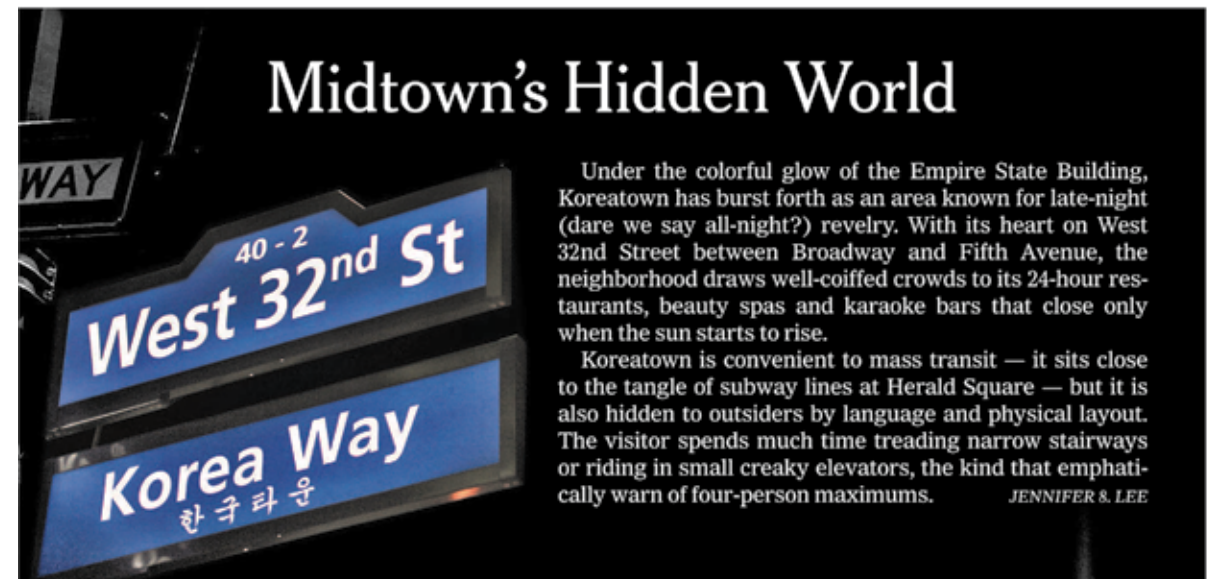
**10:30 P.M.** For dessert, choose between two rival frozen yogurt shops that have inspired copycats on both coasts. The original New York Pinkberry, 7 West 32nd Street, (212) 695-9631, has added coffee to its origi-

nal lineup of plain and green tea flavors. Just yards away is the Red Mango, 39 West 32nd Street, (212) 290-7650, which likes to remind people that they are the original Korean frozen yogurt institution, even if they opened in the United States in 2007, two years after Pinkberry.

**11 P.M.** Karaoke clubs abound in Koreatown. The moderately priced ones, such as Grand Music Studio, 23 West 32nd Street, third floor, (212) 629-7171, generally cost \$30-\$40 total per hour for the first four people, and \$5 for every additional person. Higher-end karaoke is often packaged with liquor service. On weeknights at the Players II sports bar, for instance, 34 West 32nd Street, fifth floor, (212) 594-4244, bottles of liquor start at \$170, but come with two hours in a karaoke room for up to eight people, plus a fruit plate and five beers. To drink without singing, head to the rooftop Mé Bar at La Quinta Hotel, 17 West 32nd Street, 14th floor, (212) 290-2460. The Empire State Building is so close that patrons must crane their necks to see the top.

**3 A.M.** One of Koreatown's hallmarks, the all-night spa, is a favorite of Broadway performers seeking relaxation after the curtain falls. The subterranean Spadium, 49 West 32nd Street, downstairs, (212) 967-3131, offers massages and body treatments (seaweed body wrap for one hour, \$125). For more luxury, head to Juvenex, 25 West 32nd Street, fifth floor, (646) 733-1330, which offers packages for couples from 7 p.m. (starting at 150 minutes for \$395 per couple). For a soothing end to a long night, try the private soaking tub in the "celebrity room" (rates start at \$75 for 30 minutes per person, with fruit and Champagne).

LOCAL STOP **B D F V N Q R W** KOREATOWN



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BÉATRICE de GÉA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



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ONLINE: **PERSONALIZED TOUR**  
Readers share suggestions for other stops in Koreatown:  
[nytimes.com/nyregion](http://nytimes.com/nyregion)



# With Wounded Pride, Unemployed Koreans Quietly Turn to Manual Labor

By MARTIN FACKLER

## With Wounded Pride, Unemployed Koreans Quietly Turn to Manual Labor

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KUNGHANG, South Korea — With his clean white university sweatshirt and shiny cellphone, Lee Chang-shik looks the part of a manager at a condominium development company, the job that he held until last year's financial panic — and the one he tells his friends and family he still holds. But in fact, he leads a secret life. After his company went bankrupt late last year, he recently relocated to this remote fishing village to do the highest-paying work he could find in the current market: as a hand on a crab boat.

"I definitely don't put crab fisherman on my résumé," said Mr. Lee, 33, who makes the five-hour drive back to Seoul once a month to hunt for a desk job. "This work hurts my pride."

Tales of the downwardly mobile have become common during the current financial crisis, and South Korea has had more than its share since the global downturn hammered this once fast-growing export economy. But they often have a distinctly Korean twist, with former white-collar workers going into more physically demanding work or traditional kinds of manual labor that are relatively well paid here — from farming and fishing to the professional back-scrubbers who clean patrons at the nation's numerous public bathhouses.

Just as distinctly Korean may be the lengths to which some go to hide their newly humble status.

Mr. Lee says he carefully avoids the topic of work in phone conversations with friends and

his parents, and dodges invitations to meet by claiming he is too busy. He gave his name with great reluctance, and only after being assured the article would not appear in Korean.

Another former white-collar worker who now works on a crab boat in the same village said he could not tell family and friends, and told his wife only via e-mail after arriving here. Yet another tells his parents that he is in Japan.

In a competitive, status-conscious society, these and other workers say they feel intense shame doing manual work. Some also say they feel guilty working such rough jobs after years of expensive cram schools and college. And many younger workers, having grown up in an in-

creasingly affluent nation, consider physical labor a part of the bygone, impoverished eras of their parents and grandparents. "These days, many South Koreans think they have the right to be white collar," said Lee Byung-hee, senior economist at the Korea Labor Institute, a government-linked research organization based in Seoul. "But their expectations hit the dark reality of this economy, where people have no choice but to go into the blue-collar work force."

Labor experts say the number of former office workers who are moving into blue-collar jobs has increased as South Korea has suffered its worst unemployment since the 1997 Asian currency crisis. According to the National Statistical Office, the unemployment rate has risen to 3.8 percent — low by American standards, but high for this Asian economic powerhouse.

Many of the unemployed can rely on traditional forms of economic support, like living with family. And despite the slowdown, jobs are still to be found in this prosperous society, where the neon-lit bustle of cities like Seoul has not missed a beat.

Still, Jeong Seung-beom, whose small Seoul-based firm helps recruit workers for South Korea's fishing industry, says that this year is the busiest he has seen, even better than 1997, when white-collar workers also flooded his office.

He said his company, the Sea Job Placement Center, now places about 80 people a month, four times the number a year ago. Mr. Jeong said most of the

new recruits were laid-off office workers or university students who could no longer afford tuition. Many of the newcomers are so woefully unprepared for the physical demands of fishing, he said, he tries to scare them during orientation sessions.

On a recent morning in his cramped office, six young men showed up with gym bags, ready to make the trip to Kunghang, near the nation's southwest tip. Among them was Mr. Lee, the former condominium developer.

Mr. Jeong warned them that they might get seasick or homesick, or even be injured or killed on the crab boats, which can spend 14 hours a day at sea. When he paused for questions, one man in his 20s asked if he

could go home during holidays. "Crabs don't take holidays," Mr. Jeong scoffed.

Undaunted, all six went to Kunghang later that day.

Mr. Lee said he decided to fish because he could make about \$1,700 a month, much more than he could earn in Seoul pouring lattes or bussing tables. The high salaries stem from the chronic labor shortages in these occupations during the boom years when South Koreans shunned them as too dirty, leaving them to Asian migrant laborers.

Another allure is that many of these menial jobs seem to be recession-proof, workers and labor experts say.

Na Deuk-won, who owns a school in Seoul that trains back-

scrubbers and bathroom maids, says enrollment has jumped 50 percent this year, to 180 students, because of a sudden influx of university graduates and laid-off office workers.

"Even in a recession, people need their backs scrubbed," Mr. Na said.

At his Dongdaemun Bath Academy, students gathered in a tiled shower room to learn how to scrub naked customers with a pair of sponge mitts. One, Hyun Sung-chul, 45, said he had been supervising 50 workers as a manager at a construction company before losing his job in January.

At first, he said, he hid his enrollment in scrubbing school from family and friends, though he told his wife. When he finally confided about his career change to a friend, he was surprised when the friend confessed interest as well.

"He told me, 'Teach me when I get fired, too!'" Mr. Hyun said. "I think people come into this field only when they are afraid that their livelihood is at risk."

In Kunghang, many of the new crab fishermen recruited by Mr. Jeong expressed regrets about their choice.

"This is so smelly and dirty, it makes me want to vomit," Kwak Jung-ho, 33, a branch manager of a cellphone store in Seoul before it closed this year, said as he cut tangled crabs out of a net.

"If my parents knew what I was doing now, they would pity me," he said. "Now, I look at the ocean and think, I should have worked harder at the cellphone store, and be a better man for my family."

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Laid-off workers were hired as fishermen in Kunghang.

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# Cities Peel Back Pavement To Expose Watery Havens

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

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SEATTLE, Wash. (AP) — For half a century, a dark tunnel of crumbling concrete encased the stream bed in a place where the city's population is now 1.5 million.

The stream had been a centerpiece of Seoul since a king of the Choson Dynasty selected the new capital 600 years ago, enticed by the graceful meandering of the stream and its 23 tributaries.

But in the industrial era after the Korean War, the stream, by then a rank open sewer, was entombed by pavement and forgotten beneath a lacework of elevated expressways as the city's population swelled toward 10 million.

Now, the city is peeling back the pavement to expose the stream bed in a project that has helped reduce air pollution.

Part of the plan would expose an arc of the river and line it with earth and restaurant patios that would wrap around a shopping complex and the ballpark. Another open stretch would become a "rested park" on what is now a parking lot.

Mr. Anderson, who has a background in civil engineering, said the example of Seoul's success had helped build support in Washington.

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Seoul's Cheonggyecheon stream, a centerpiece of the city since a king of the Choson Dynasty selected the new capital 600 years ago, is now a centerpiece of the city's recovery project.

The project has gained political dividends for Lee Myung-bak, a former leader of conservative forces in the 2002 largely around his path to remove old roads — some of which he had helped build — and to revive the stream. Teller he is South Korea's president.

Even strong critics of the president tend to find his approach to the Cheonggyecheon revival, which involved hundreds of meetings with businesses and residents over two years.

A recent newspaper column that criticized the president over a limited police raid on reporters asked with the words "Please come back, Cheonggyecheon Lee Myung-bak!" — a reference to the nickname he earned during the campaign to revive the stream.

The role of Seoul's environmental revivalist Mr. Lee's political ascent is not lost on Mayor Philip A. Anderson of Portland, a city of 580,000 where overcrowded poverty had caused a revival project. Once the river restoration was added to the plan, he said, he found new support for the development.

Yoon said his family moved from New York State and established support from environmental groups for the river restoration, which is part of a proposed \$1.5 billion development that includes a multi-league ballpark. The river portion is expected to cost \$42 million over all.

A longtime supporter was George E. Fauriol, who helped line up state money in his last year as governor, Mayor Anderson said. "Every time he'd visit, he'd say, 'You've got to open up that river,'" he added.

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## Cities Peel Back Pavement To Expose Watery Havens

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

SEATTLE, Wash. (AP) — For half a century, a dark tunnel of crumbling concrete encased the stream bed in a place where the city's population is now 1.5 million.

The stream had been a centerpiece of Seoul since a king of the Choson Dynasty selected the new capital 600 years ago, enticed by the graceful meandering of the stream and its 23 tributaries.

But in the industrial era after the Korean War, the stream, by then a rank open sewer, was entombed by pavement and forgotten beneath a lacework of elevated expressways as the city's population swelled toward 10 million.

Now, the city is peeling back the pavement to expose the stream bed in a project that has helped reduce air pollution.

Part of the plan would expose an arc of the river and line it with earth and restaurant patios that would wrap around a shopping complex and the ballpark. Another open stretch would become a "rested park" on what is now a parking lot.

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The Cheonggyecheon recovery project, which removed three miles of elevated highway, has helped reduce air pollution.

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Today, after a \$384 million recovery project, the stream, called Cheonggyecheon, is liberated from its dank sheath and burbles between reedy banks. Picnickers cool their bare feet in its filtered water, and carp swim in its tranquil pools.

The restoration of the Cheonggyecheon is part of an expanding environmental effort in cities around the world to “daylight” rivers and streams by peeling back pavement that was built to bolster commerce and serve automobile traffic decades ago.

In New York State, a long-stalled revival effort for Yonkers’s ailing downtown core that could break ground this fall includes a plan to re-expose 1,900 feet of the Saw Mill River, which currently runs through a giant flume that was laid beneath city streets in the 1920s.

Cities from Singapore to San Antonio have been resuscitating rivers and turning storm drains into streams. In Los Angeles, residents’ groups and some elected officials are looking anew at buried or concrete-lined creeks as assets instead of inconveniences, inspired partly by Seoul’s example.

By building green corridors around the exposed waters, cities hope to attract affluent and educated workers and residents who appreciate the feel of a natural environment in an urban setting.

Environmentalists point out other benefits. Open watercourses handle flooding rains better than buried sewers do, a big consideration as global warming leads to heavier downpours. The streams also tend to cool areas overheated by sun-baked asphalt and to nourish greenery that lures wildlife as well as pedestrians.

Some political opponents have derided Seoul’s remade stream as a costly folly, given that nearly all of the water flowing between its banks on a typical day is pumped there artificially from the Han River through seven miles of pipe.

But four years after the stream was uncovered, city officials say, the environmental benefits can now be quantified. Data show that the ecosystem along the Cheonggyecheon (pronounced chung-gye-chun) has been greatly enriched, with the number of fish species increasing to 25 from 4. Bird species have multiplied to 36 from 6, and insect species to 192 from 15.

The recovery project, which removed three miles of elevated highway as well, also substantially cut air pollution from cars along the corridor and reduced air temperatures. Small-particle air pollution along the corridor dropped to 48 micrograms per cubic meter

from 74, and summer temperatures are now often five degrees cooler than those of nearby areas, according to data cited by city officials.

And even with the loss of some vehicle lanes, traffic speeds have picked up because of related transportation changes like expanded bus service, restrictions on cars and higher parking fees.

“We’ve basically gone from a car-oriented city to a human-oriented city,” said Lee In-keun, Seoul’s assistant mayor for infrastructure, who has been invited to places as distant as Los Angeles to describe the project to other urban planners.

Some 90,000 pedestrians visit the stream banks on an average day.

What is more, a new analysis by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, found that replacing a highway in Seoul with a walkable greenway caused nearby homes to sell at a premium after years of going for bargain prices by comparison with outlying properties.

Efforts to recover urban waterways are nonetheless fraught with challenges, like convincing local business owners wedded to existing streetscapes that economic benefits can come from a green makeover.

Yet today the visitors to the Cheonggyecheon’s banks include merchants from some of the thousands of nearby shops who were among the project’s biggest opponents early on.

On a recent evening, picnickers along the waterway included Yeon Yeong-san, 63, who runs a sporting apparel shop with his wife, Lee Geum-hwa, 56, in the adjacent Pyeonghwa Market.

Mr. Yeon said his family moved to downtown Seoul in the late 1940s, and he has been running the business for four decades. He said parking was now harder for his customers. But “because of less traffic, we have better air and nature,” he said.

He and his wife walk along the stream every day, he added. “We did not think about exercising here when the stream was buried underground,” Mr. Yeon said.

The project has yielded political dividends for Lee Myung-bak, a former leader of construction companies at the giant Hyundai Corporation. He was elected Seoul’s mayor in 2002 largely around his push to remove old roads — some of which he had helped build — and to revive the stream. Today he is South Korea’s president.

Even strong critics of the president tend to laud his approach to the Cheonggyecheon revival, which involved hundreds of meetings with businesses and residents over two years.

A recent newspaper column that criticized the president over a police raid on squatters ended with the words “Please come back, Cheonggyecheon Lee Myung-bak!” — a reference to the nickname he earned during the campaign to revive the stream.

The role of Seoul’s environmental renewal in Mr. Lee’s political ascent is not lost on Mayor Philip A. Amicone of Yonkers, a city of 200,000 where entrenched poverty had slowed a revival project. Once the river restoration was added to the plan, he said, he found new support for redevelopment.

Yonkers has gained \$34 million from New York State and enthusiastic support from environmental groups for the river restoration, which is part of a proposed \$1.5 billion development that includes a minor-league ballpark. The river portion is expected to cost \$42 million over all.

A longtime supporter was George E. Pataki, who helped line up state money in his last year as governor, Mayor Amicone said. “Every time he’d visit, he’d say, ‘You’ve got to open up that river,’ ” he added.

Part of the plan would expose an arc of the river and line it with paths and restaurant patios that would wrap around a shopping complex and the ballpark. Another open stretch would become a “wetland park” on what is now a parking lot.

Mr. Amicone, who has a background as a civil engineer, said the example of Seoul’s success had helped build support in Yonkers. In an interview, he recalled the enthusiasm with which Mr. Lee, then Seoul’s mayor, toured Yonkers in 2006 and discussed the cities’ parallel river projects with him.

“Whether it’s a city of millions or 200,000, the concept is identical,” Mr. Amicone said. “These are no longer sewers, but aesthetically pleasing assets that enhance development.”

*Jean Chung contributed reporting.*

# In South Korea, Retirement Can Be Elusive

By SU-HYUN LEE



Job fairs for older South Koreans are growing as the tradition of caring for aging parents fades.

## In South Korea, Retirement Can Be Elusive

By SU-HYUN LEE

SEOUL, South Korea — At the Coex Convention Center in this city's southern district, a site best known for sleek business exhibitions, Kang Dal-soo, 76, joined the rush to check out the "silver job fair" offering 2,000 private sector and 4,700 public sector jobs for retirees.

"It seems I need to learn text messaging in order to deliver flowers," Mr. Kang said anxiously after an interview at a courier company's booth. He wanted to work — even though flower delivery was not his ideal job — but he was worried about having to master a new technology and wondered if he would be able to keep the job even if he got it.

Silver job fairs, established to find jobs for people 60 and older, have mushroomed across South Korea in the past year as part of a government effort to assist a rapidly growing population of older Koreans adrift in a changing society.

Until recently, the notion of older people having to look for jobs did not cross the minds of most South Koreans. The traditions of Confucianism held that adult children should take primary responsibility for the care of their aging parents, who would enjoy respect and high status as sovereigns of the household.

But this practice is crumbling under the weight of longer life spans and changes in family structure, and many Koreans are entering the later stages of their lives unprepared. A government survey released in July found that fewer than 27 percent of Koreans 60 and older had made any provision for their post-retirement years beyond investing in their children's education.

Now, many of these older Koreans are dismayed to find them-

selves dependent on their children, often in cramped urban settings, with very different priorities. These days, if adult children are willing to take in elderly parents, they often make it clear that they expect those parents to do household chores and look after the grandchildren, prospects that can make the parents think twice about moving in.

According to the National Statistics Office, 48.3 percent of South Koreans 65 and older were living with their children in 2007, compared with 72.4 percent in 1990.

The government is scrambling now to fill the gap in support, and older job seekers are responding. This year employers have received an average of three applications for every job offered at the fairs, compared with 1.5 applications in previous years.

A government pension system, financed in part by employee contributions, was introduced in 1988 for retirees over 60. But only 28 percent of the working population is covered. Many Koreans of that age, particularly those who worked as farmers, never held jobs that qualified for such pensions. For those who did, many are not receiving the monthly allowance, which averages less than \$193, because they chose to take their pension in a lump sum at retirement.

In 2004, the government ordered the National Pension Service to try to find jobs for older workers. By 2006, the project was made permanent, overseen by a new independent body called the Korea Labor Force Development Institute for the Aged. Job placements rose from about 30,000 in 2004 to more than 83,000 in 2006 and 196,000 in the first half of this year.

Despite that progress, there still are not enough openings for

older job seekers. So local governments have been creating publicly financed "silver jobs," like chaparrons for children returning home from late-night cram schools, gas station attendants, opinion survey interviewers and wedding officiators.

Then they urged potential private employers to set up booths at silver job fairs. The government offers subsidies to private companies that hire older people and pays half the roughly \$163 in monthly wages for each person employed by the public sector.

At the Seoul silver jobs fair, desperation was in the air as 30,000 or so people crowded the booths exploring openings for work most had never expected they would need.

Han Teresa, a job placement counselor who had helped organize the fair, described a man in his early 70s who had flopped down on a chair in front of her. "He said, 'I thought I'd die a few years after I retired,'" Ms. Han said. "I never believed I'd be alive for another 10 years or so."

Lee Eun-seok, 77, who had applied for a job as a garbage sorter, said, "I hope my daughter-in-law asks us to live with them soon." Her eldest son and his wife had been citing the lack of a spare bedroom for the delay, she said.

But Mrs. Lee's husband, Han Chul-soo, 78, said he feared that none of their four sons would ever invite them to move in. And so he joined his wife at the fair doing what was once the unthinkable: looking for a job.

Nam Su-hyun, 30, had come to the job fair to submit résumés for his 63-year-old father, who had objected that he would lose face if he had to do so himself.

"I want my father to work rather than just moping at home," Mr. Nam said.

## SEOUL, South Korea

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"I want my father to work rather than just moping at home," Mr. Nam said.





“Being tall means being competitive,” Lee Do-kyong, a student at Hongik University in Seoul, said on a television talk show. “I think short guys are losers.”

Bloggers vilified her, and lawmakers denounced the station, KBS-TV, for not editing her comments. Viewers filed defamation lawsuits. Ms. Lee was forced to apologize, and the Communications Standards Commission ordered the show’s producers to be reprimanded for “violating human rights” and “stoking the looks-are-everything phenomenon.”

“She simply said what everyone thinks but doesn’t dare say in public,” said Dr. Kim Yang-soo, who runs a growth clinic called Kiness. “Here, if you change your height, you can change your fate.”

At his clinic, Kim Se-hyun, a fifth grader, walked on a treadmill with her torso encased in a harness suspended from an overhead steel bar. The contraption, the clinic maintains, will stretch her spine and let her exercise with less pressure on her legs.

Nearby, sweat rolled off Lee Dong-hyun, 13, as he pedaled a recumbent bicycle while reading a comic book. Behind him, his sister, Chae-won, the shortest girl in her first-grade class, stretched to touch her toes on a blue yoga mat, squealing as an instructor pushed down against her back.

Two years ago, their mother, Yoon Ji-young, had tried giving Dong-hyun growth hormone shots, which have also increased in popularity here. But many doctors will prescribe them only for exceptionally small children with severe growth disorders. And parents have been discouraged by their high cost and fears of side effects.

Ms. Yoon said she was spending \$850 a month on the shots but stopped after eight months.

Now she drives her children to Kiness three times a week. “Both my husband and I are short,” said Ms. Yoon, 31, who is about 5 feet tall. “I don’t want my children to blame us for being short when they grow up.”

Another mother at the clinic, Chang Young-hee, 54 and 4-foot-10, said her children had already experienced height discrimination. Both her daughters are

college graduates and have good jobs, but when they reached marrying age, matchmakers regarded their short stature as a defect.

“It felt like a blow to the head,” Ms. Chang said. “I learned a lesson. If you fall behind in your studies, you can catch up later. But if you miss the time to grow, you miss it forever.”

Her daughters eventually married, but for the past four years, she has been taking her youngest child, Seo Dong-joon, to Kiness. The boy, now 15, knows his goal.

“If I’m tall, I’ll have an advantage selecting my future wife,” he said, holding an English vocabulary book, which he studies while exercising. “Short guys are teased at school.”

South Koreans have been growing taller anyway, thanks to changes in their diet. Over the past 30 years the average height of high school senior boys in South Korea has increased 3.5 inches, to 5-foot-8, according to government data. Senior girls grew an average of 2 inches, to 5-foot-3.

Doctors at the growth clinics say that most children simply aspire to the new average height, but with more tall teenagers, those who are not as tall seem even shorter. “The gap between tall and short has become more pronounced,” said Dr. Park of Seojung, who recently opened 36 joint-venture growth clinics in China and said the quest to become taller was nationwide.

If so, one country that has been left behind is North Korea. Food shortages there have left children stunted, according to the United Nations and private relief agencies. Dr. Park cited the case of a 16-year-old who fled North Korea last July to join his mother, who had arrived in the South three years earlier. The boy was 5 feet tall, almost four inches below the South Korean average.

“His height wasn’t unusual for the North,” Dr. Park said. “But when his mother saw him again, she cried because the boy hadn’t grown at all, and because she knew the disadvantages he’d face here.”

“My dream is to open growth clinics in North Korea,” Dr. Park said, “so that, once we unify, children from both sides will be able to stand shoulder to shoulder, not with one side a head taller than the other.”



# SPORTS

## IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Kim Secures Her First World Title in Record Fashion

By JULIET MACUR

## FIGURE SKATING

### *Kim Secures Her First World Title in Record Fashion*

By JULIET MACUR

LOS ANGELES — More than an hour after Kim Yu-na won the world figure skating championship Saturday, she remained on the ice here, skating laps around the arena with a South Korean flag wrapped around her body.

She stopped to sign autographs and pose for photographs with her fans, many from the large Korean community here. She doled out high-fives. But most of all, she soaked in the moment.

For the past two world championships, the best Kim could do was third place. But this time, she did not let that happen. And there was not much of a chance that it would.

For the second night in a row, Kim performed yet another elegant, seemingly effortless routine that enthralled the crowd — and the judges.

After her long program Saturday, she earned a total score of 207.71 points — the first time a female skater has broken the 200-point mark. Less than one year before the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, the 18-year-old Kim dominated the world championships by more than 16 points.

"I don't think about the points," she said afterward, sparkling in her red rhinestone-accented dress. "Being the world champion was my dream and I did it here, so this is just amazing."

Joannie Rochette of Canada won the silver medal, with 191.29 points. In third was Miki Ando of Japan, the 2007 world champion. She had 190.38 points.

Mao Asada, Kim's longtime rival and the 2008 world champion, was fourth, with 188.09 points.



GABRIEL BOUYS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Kim Yu-na of South Korea scored 207.71 points over all, the first time a female skater has passed 200 points.

She dropped her head when her program was done.

Asada, from Japan, had attempted two triple axels, a daring move, but she fell on the second. For her to even possibly pass Kim, she had needed to be mistake-free.

"It is very regrettable that I fell, but I didn't let it affect the rest of my performance," Asada said. "So I'm satisfied."

The two American women competing at the worlds, Alissa Czisny and Rachael Flatt, left less than satisfied, however.

They had failed to place high enough to earn three entries for the coming Winter Games. To earn those spots, they had to finish 13th or better here, combined, but only rose to 16th. For the first time since 1994, the United States will have only two skaters in the women's event at an Olympics.

Czisny, who won the United States national championship in

January, finished 11th, with 159.78 points. Flatt, the 2008 junior world champion, finished fifth, with 172.41.

"The outcome is not in my hands," Czisny said of the United States team having only two entries for Vancouver. "There's nothing I can do about it."

After falling twice in her short program, Czisny redeemed herself in her long program, skating to the soundtrack from Dr. Zhivago. Before heading onto the ice, she said she tried to forget about the pressure. It helped.

She landed three triple jumps cleanly and smiled wide, a rare sight this week.

Flatt, however, had hardly stopped smiling during these world championships, her first one at the senior level. For her program, which had six clean triples, she was given her best long-program score yet: 113.11.

To celebrate, she said, she is

going to Disneyland.

"Skating two pretty solid programs was very exciting for my first worlds," Flatt, 16, said. "This experience was irreplaceable. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Kim could not ask for much more, either.

She grinned when she landed some jumps during her long program. For others, she let her mouth fall open in amazement.

She aborted one triple jump, then also missed one of her spins, receiving zero points for it. But the rest of her program was performed with such ease, she looked as if she were dancing on a stage in ballet slippers — not skating on a slick sheet of ice.

Her short program Friday was just as breathtaking. It was virtually without a flaw and her score showed it. She was given 76.12 points, the best ever for a woman.

After both programs were done, Kim said she was thrilled that she had achieved the biggest goal of her career so far: the world title. But a chance for an Olympic gold medal awaits.

"This world championships is the last competition before the Olympic season, so I really wanted to get this title," said Kim, who trains with the two-time Olympic medalist Brian Orser in Toronto.

Kim is usually composed when hearing her national anthem play, but that was an impossible feat Saturday.

Soon after the first note sounded, she could not stop tears.

She wiped them off carefully, with the back of her fingers, so not to mess up her makeup. There were too many tears to catch, though, as they rolled down her face.

"I couldn't hold it in," she said.

## LOS ANGELES

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Kim could not ask for much more, either.

She grinned when she landed some jumps during her long program. For others, she let her mouth fall open in amazement.

She aborted one triple jump, then also missed one of her spins, receiving zero points for it. But the rest of her program was performed with such ease, she looked as if she were dancing on a stage in ballet slippers — not skating on a slick sheet of ice.

Her short program Friday was just as breathtaking. It was virtually without a flaw and her score showed it. She was given 76.12 points, the best ever for a woman.

After both programs were done, Kim said she was thrilled that she had achieved the biggest goal of her career so far: the world title. But a chance for an Olympic gold medal awaits.

“This world championships is the last competition before the Olympic season, so I really wanted to get this title,” said Kim, who trains with the two-time Olympic medalist Brian Orser in Toronto.

Kim is usually composed when hearing her national anthem play, but that was an impossible feat Saturday.

Soon after the first note sounded, she could not stop tears.

She wiped them off carefully, with the back of her fingers, so as not to mess up her makeup. There were too many tears to catch, though, as they rolled down her face.

“I couldn’t hold it in,” she said.



# South Korean's Short Game Goes Long Way, as Young Americans Struggle

By FRANK LITSKY

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In the wind and chill Sunday, Ji Young Oh shot a two-under 70 to win the Sybase Classic by four shots over Suzann Pettersen.

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CLIFTON, N.J. — Ji Young Oh of South Korea used a meticulous short game in the face of strong winds Sunday, shooting a final-round 70 to win the L.P.G.A.'s Sybase Classic.

The 20-year-old Oh started out tied for the lead with Suzann Pettersen of Norway. But Pettersen had a rough day, slumping to a 74 with five bogeys, and Oh cruised to a four-stroke victory with a 72-hole score of 14-under 274.

The weather was chilly and grim, and so were the golf games of three young Americans contending for the \$300,000 winner's prize in the \$2 million tournament.

In the final round, 19-year-old Michelle Wie and 22-year-old Paula Creamer shot 73s on Upper Montclair Country Club's 6,413-yard, par-72 layout. Brittany Lincicome, 23, the second-round leader, fell off to a 77.

Wie and Creamer tied for third at 280 and Lincicome tied for sixth at 282.

Oh's victory, her second on the tour, might have been somewhat surprising, though not to her. "From the first day, when I made a hole in one, I knew that the trophy was waiting for me," said Oh, whose careful 70 was bested in the final round only by the 68 shot by her countrywoman M. J. Hur.

"I really wanted it badly, and there was no way I wasn't going to get it," Oh said. "But today was not too easy for me. I was really nervous, but after a few holes I became really, really calm. I was

just thinking about my game and just good shots, and I had a good putter and good score and win."

Still, Oh, whose drives go 240 or 250 yards, played in the final threesome with Pettersen and Lincicome, who drive almost 300 yards.

"It doesn't matter," Oh said, "because I have good iron shots and good wedge shots."

Those left in Oh's wake talked of wasted opportunities. "I'm very disappointed," Pettersen, 28, said. "I felt like I gave away another win and this will be another second place." Pettersen has been the runner-up in two of her last three tournaments.

Wie said she played better than she had been, but a double-bogey 8 on the 408-yard No. 12 did her in. "I'm disappointed," Wie said. "I missed little shots here and there. I putted well. I drove the ball well. There were a lot of positive things, but I wish I could have got a couple of irons going."

Creamer, dressed in her signature pink, shrugged off her day. "Nothing clicked for me," she said. "I don't think I gave myself enough opportunities. But things will get better. We play next week in Corning, N.Y., and my 91-year-old grandfather will be there."

Lincicome had four bogeys on the front nine. "I came out of the box not hitting well," she said. "I missed two one-footers in the first five holes. I tried to stay positive. I couldn't."

Oh could and did. She had a bad spell when she three-putted on No. 8 for a bogey; put her ball behind a tree and escaped with a

par on No. 9; and failed to reach the green on No. 10, taking another bogey. But she soon righted herself, finishing with seven straight pars and a birdie at No. 18.

Oh started playing golf when she was 10 and came to the United States in 2006. As a tour rookie in 2007, she missed the cut in 9 of her first 11 tournaments. Last year, she won the L.P.G.A. State Farm Classic.

Of the more than 200 women on tour, 47 are from South Korea. When Oh was asked if she was the best, she emphatically answered no.

"We have good players," she said. "I think I am also a very good player. There are so many good players now. We all played together and we competed against one another on the amateur level. I think you are seeing more and more of those players here on the tour and I think you'll see a lot more coming."

### NOTES

**LORENA OCHOA** of Mexico, who won this tournament the three previous years, shot a final-round 73 and finished tied for 19th at 287. **HELEN ALFREDSSON**, who shot a first-round 62, had a 74 and finished at 284.

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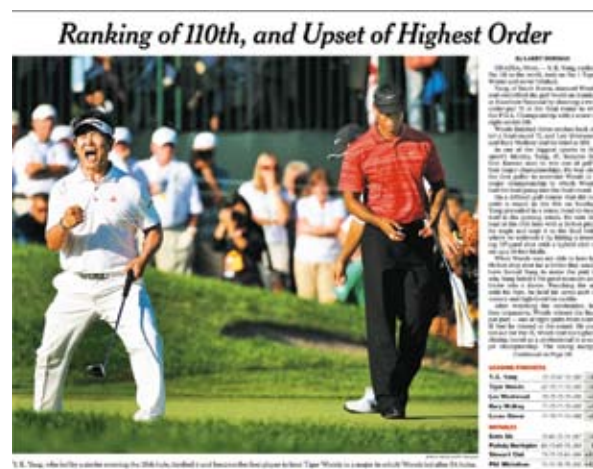
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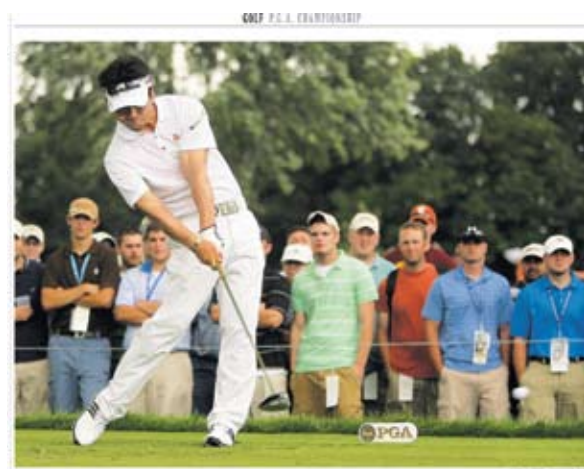
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# Ranking of 110th, and Upset of Highest Order

By LARRY DORMAN



T. K. Yeag, who led the nation's morning, 20th-century, *Harold's* and *Insider's* list appears in last Time Weekly in a paper in which Weekly last after 31 years.



GOLF P.O.L. CHAMPIONSHIP

### A Ranking of 110th, and an Upset of the Highest Order

**A Five-Shot Swing** Tiger Woods began the fourth round with a two-shot lead, but Woods was never able to build on it. Meanwhile, ...

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CHASKA, Minn.

**Y**. E. Yang, ranked No. 110 in the world, took on No. 1 Tiger Woods and never blinked.

Yang, of South Korea, stunned Woods and electrified the golf world on Sunday at Hazeltine National by shooting a two-under-par 70 in the final round to win the P.G.A. Championship with a score of eight-under 280.

Woods finished three strokes back after a final-round 75, and Lee Westwood and Rory McIlroy tied for third at 285.

In one of the biggest upsets in the sport's history, Yang, 37, became the first Korean man to win one of golf's four major championships. He was also the first golfer to overtake Woods in a major championship in which Woods had the lead going into the final round.

On a difficult golf course that did not yield a round in the 60s on Sunday, Yang prevailed in a tense, head-to-head duel in the gusting winds. He took the lead at the 14th hole with a 75-foot pitch for eagle and kept it to the final hole, where he widened it by hitting a towering 197-yard shot with a hybrid club to set up a 10-foot birdie.

When Woods was not able to hole his 60-foot chip shot for a birdie that would have forced Yang to make the putt to win, Yang holed it for good measure and broke into a dance. Punching the air with his fists, he held his arms aloft in victory and high-fived his caddie.

After watching the celebration, his face impassive, Woods missed his final par putt — one of eight putts from inside 10 feet he missed in the round. He putted out for the 75, which tied his highest closing round as a professional in a major championship. The losing margin was a five-shot swing from the start of the day, which Woods entered leading by two.

"You never know in life, this might be my last win as a golfer," Yang, smiling, said through an interpreter. "But this is a great day. It's going to be a great foundation for me to continue playing on the PGA Tour. It means the world right now. It hasn't sunken in, but I do know the significance of it."

It was new territory for Woods, who had built a 14–0 record in the majors he led after 54 holes. He was stoic afterward, more angry about his putting than anything else. His 33 putts Sunday were his most for the tournament by 3.

"I hit the ball so much better than my score indicates," he said. "I hit it great all day, and just didn't make anything. I played well enough to win the golf tournament, but I did not putt well enough to win the golf tournament. It was just a bad day at the wrong time, and that's the way it goes."

Woods was not the only golfer to struggle Sunday. Padraig Harrington, the defending champion, came into the round trailing Woods by two, but he shot a 78 and finished tied for 10th. The bulk of the damage in his six-over-par round came at the eighth hole, the shortest hole on the course, where he imploded with a quintuple-bogey 8.

By then, Woods and Yang had tossed the lead back and forth. Woods missed a par putt at the fourth hole and fell into a tie with Yang at seven under. He regained the lead on the fifth hole, where he made a 6-foot par save, getting up and down from a greenside bunker, and Yang missed his 6-footer for par.

They traded pars the next two holes and arrived at the tee of the seemingly diminutive 176-yard, par-3 eighth with Woods clinging to a one-stroke lead over Yang and Harrington.



Harrington was in the process of eliminating himself from contention. After hitting his tee shot into the pond in front of the green, he pitched into the heavy grass 15 yards beyond the hole and sent his next shot back into the water. He wound up with an 8 for the second straight week while in contention and battling Woods. The main difference was that this 8 was for quintuple bogey, and it ended his chance of successfully defending his title.

“Obviously it was disappointing for me,” Harrington said. “I still made the shots out there. I only got out of position one hole.”

And on that hole he went from six under par to a figurative six feet under where the championship was concerned.

With Harrington gone, Woods and Yang were left to compete for the last major of the year. Westwood tied Yang (and three others) for the low round of the day with a 70, but never got closer to the lead than three shots. He and McIlroy, a 20-year-old from Northern Ireland, finished a shot ahead of Lucas Glover, the United States Open champion, who closed with a 74.

Woods had his chances to pull away from Yang, but simply could not shake him. After reaching the green in two shots at the uphill, 606-yard par—5 11th, Woods gave a stroke right back at the 12th with a missed 10-footer for par.

The first of two defining moments in Yang’s victory was his electrifying eagle at the 14th hole, a driveable par 4 of 352 yards. His tee shot stopped short of the green, and it appeared Woods would have the advantage from a good lie in the greenside bunker.

But Yang sent shockwaves through the huge gallery when he landed his pitch from 75 feet on the green and it rolled across the slick surface and into the hole for an eagle.

Woods got up and down from the bunker for birdie to trail by a stroke, but he finished the round with bogeys at the 17th and 18th holes, and Yang played them in an even-par total, with the coup de grâce at the final hole.

Yang, who was elated in his postvictory news conference, was not certain where his victory would rank in the list of groundbreaking Korean golf accomplishments. What he was hoping for, he said, was that it would be as inspirational to young Korean players as Se Ri Pak’s 1998 win at the United States Women’s Open and K. J. Choi’s first PGA Tour win.

“I hope this win would be as — if not as significant, something quite parallel to an impact both to golf in Korea as well as golf in Asia so that all the young golfers, Korean and Asian, would probably build their dreams and expand their horizons a bit with this win,” he said.

# A Milliner, A Superstar And a Flood Of Business

By MICHELINE MAYNARD

# & MORE

IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

DETROIT JOURNAL

## A Milliner, A Superstar And a Flood Of Business

By MICHELINE MAYNARD

DETROIT — The vacant lots and hollow buildings abound across Detroit. But walk into Mr. Song Millinery on Woodward Avenue, north of downtown, and you are hit by two impressions: a riot of color and a constantly ringing telephone.

The color comes from row upon row of custom-designed ladies' hats, from unassuming be-rettas to the kind of lavishly decorated headgear seen at the races at Ascot. The sound of the phone is thanks to Aretha Franklin, who stepped to a microphone at President Obama's inauguration in January wearing an eye-catching gray felt hat trimmed with a huge sloping, rhinestone bow.

Now, the hat's creator, Luke Song, has more than 5,000 orders for the spring version of the Aretha Hat (he declines to make a replica of the actual model), available in a variety of pastel colors and selling for \$179 apiece.

And more orders are bound to pour in because Mr. Song learned this week that Mrs. Franklin has decided to lend her hat to the Smithsonian, where it will be on display until it moves to a permanent place in Mr. Obama's presidential library.

While the nation had no idea what would be on Mrs. Franklin's head, Mr. Song knew it would be one of three models she had picked out. He learned which one only while watching her sing at the inauguration on the television in his crowded workroom.

"I'm so glad she chose that one," he said. "It was the one I was pushing her to wear."

Interest in Mr. Song's work has exploded so much that he expects his business, Moza Incorporated, which recorded \$1 million in sales during 2008, to do six to seven times more than that this year. Mr. Song would like to double his workforce, currently at 11 people, if he could find more experienced seamstresses.

The only hitch, he said, is that millinery "is a dead art." And indeed, Mr. Song, who estimates that he is one of about a dozen custom milliners in the country, is, in a sense, an accidental milliner.

As a young man, Mr. Song, 36, had no intention of taking over the business his parents, Han and Jin Song, started after emigrating from South Korea in 1982. After studying biochemistry in college, he left one semester short of a degree to pursue art



DeLois Dawkins of Flint, Mich., shopping at Mr. Song Millinery in Detroit, where each piece is hand-sewn. The shop had a local following long before January.



Aretha Franklin at President Obama's inauguration, in the hat that has made the milliner Luke Song, right, famous.



ONLINE: TOPS IN HATS

A side show of the fancy hats on display at Luke Song's Detroit store: [nytimes.com/national](http://nytimes.com/national)

of the city's most prominent churchwomen.

Mrs. Ellis, who owns three Mr. Song hats, said she was surprised at the fuss over Mrs. Franklin's hat, which she considered to be subdued. "In the black community, women wear hats, and sometimes the more 'bling bling' you have, the better," she said.

Mr. Song's hats are generally priced from \$206 to \$960, but he does accommodate more modest budgets, too.

On a recent afternoon, he did a brisk business in tams, two for \$16, while he offered generous discounts on his remaining stock of winter hats.

But his future may lie in letter circles: the Aretha Hat apparently caught the eye of Queen Elizabeth, he confided, although Buckingham Palace has yet to place an order.

His ideal customer, though, is a little closer to home. Mr. Song said he would love to sell a hat to Michelle Obama, although she does not seem to have embraced hats — at least, not yet.

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studied at Parsons the New School for Design in New York.

When his parents refused to pay for more schooling, he sold a prized cello to pay for classes. He became so immersed in his new field that friends were convinced he would become a painter, Mr. Song said.

But he became burdened with student loans and had no evident way to pay them off. The answer, he found, lay in hats.

An early success came in a hat he designed from a chicken-wire base and covered with silk, chiffon and trimmings. Word of the creation, which cost \$200 and up,

flew through the hat world.

Boosted by that success, Mr. Song paid off his student loans and decided to embrace a millinery career, seeing in it a parallel to the principles of sculpture that he had studied in New York.

Today, he is helped by his parents, who supervise a cramped workroom where six women turn out about 100 hats a day, many to his customers' specifications. Despite the volume, the work is painstaking; one seamstress's time is devoted entirely to applying lace.

His sister, Lillian, manages orders (and her brother's interview

schedule). "We haven't slept since the inaugural," she said.

One irritant is that Mr. Song has already seen the Aretha Hat copied by competitors, with varying degrees of success. What imitators do not understand, he explained, is the hat's construction.

The spring version is made from yards of reinforced silk ribbon, first stitched into a circle from the center outward, and then shaped over a hat form so that it becomes a cap.

Then, Mr. Song builds up the front of the hat, steaming the fabric to create a sort of ledge that slopes down to the back. Without

the extra structure, the bow would simply sink; with it, the decoration sits firmly in place, drawing attention above the wearer's eyes, the hat elevating the entire face.

Mrs. Franklin, a customer for 20 years, is the best known of Mr. Song's avid buyers, who wear their hats to churches, synagogues and tea parties, and often display them in transparent boxes in their homes.

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## DETROIT

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# An Old and Faraway Dispute Goes Home With the Cleaning

By KAREEM FAHIM

The islands began appearing last fall, detailed in pleasing shades of blue on the plastic bags that drape the city's dry cleaning. Busy New Yorkers fetching their shirts might have glanced at the picture — of an ocean and a rocky isle — and taken it for a travel ad, perhaps for an Italian island like Capri, or Phuket in Thailand.

Those who looked closer saw a manifesto.

"Dokdo Island is Korean territory," the ad declared. "The Japanese government must acknowledge this fact."

To understand the message on the bag is to go back more than a century, to the beginning of an emotional land dispute between Japan and Korea.

The conflict is over a cluster of barely inhabitable islets and reefs in the sea between the countries — called Dokdo in South Korea and Takeshima in Japan — and much more, especially the legacy of Japan's colonial occupation of Korea.

Foreign arguments like these often persist in New York City, where more than a third of the population is foreign-born and memories of home are kept close, from soccer allegiances to shared experiences of oppression. While some of those conflicts regularly make headlines in the city, others, like the tug of war over the islets are barely noticed.

That is, until last year, when Chang-Duck Jeon, president of the Korean Dry Cleaners Association, assumed the role of publicist: He ordered 250,000 "Dokdo bags" from a South Korean manufacturer and solicited orders from the approximately 3,000 Korean-owned dry cleaners in the city. About 100 of them ended up stocking the bags.

"It was a way to speak out," Mr. Jeon reasoned. "What's ours is ours."

It was not the first effort by Koreans to argue their case in the United States, but it might be the most ambitious. "This is the first attempt I've heard of to commercialize this," said Alexis Dudden, a professor of modern Japanese and Korean history at the University of Connecticut who follows the Dokdo-Takeshima debate closely.

In the past, she said, a few Koreans had pursued an ad-hoc campaign. A freelance publicist for South Korean causes placed advertisements in American newspapers. A radio station in Queens printed binoculars on camouflage T-shirts and a slogan on the back: "Together we can protect Dokdo."

A few years ago, the "Dokdo Riders," a group of young South Korean college graduates, toured several countries on motorcycles, collecting signatures, looking for free food and spreading the Dokdo word.

But the real action lies elsewhere. Protesters in South Korea have cut off their fingers, stabbed themselves and, in a particularly inventive move, burned large cardboard effigies of the Japanese Ministry of Education (to protest Japan's teaching of its version of the dispute).

Japanese-Americans have, for the most part, stayed out of the fray, for a variety of reasons. Third- and fourth-generation Japanese-Americans often have a distant relationship with Japan, Ms. Dudden said, pointing out that the dispute over the islets raised uncomfortable questions about the ways Japan portrays its colonization of Korea.

Gary S. Moriwaki, the president of the Japanese American Association of New York, said the Japanese community in the city was small, made up mostly of people born in Japan, and not very politically active, at least on the question of the islets. "The conflict doesn't really come up," he said.

A spokeswoman for the Japanese Embassy in Washington said she was having a hard time finding someone to comment on the dispute, and she referred a reporter to the Web site of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. There, "Japan's Inalterable Position on the Status of Takeshima" is spelled out in 10 languages.

Mr. Jeon recounted his path to action last week as a different kind of tension mounted between Japan and South Korea: In San Diego, teams from the two countries were set to face off on Tuesday in the World Baseball Classic (Korea won, 4-1; when the teams met again on Thursday, Japan was the winner, 6-2).

He came up with the idea in July, during one of the semiregular flare-ups over the islands, which are now administered by South Korea. Mr. Jeon could not remember exactly what had set him off, but that month, the Japanese Education Ministry asked teachers and textbook publishers to make sure Japanese students understood their country's claim to the islets.

Also that month, the United States Board of Geographic Names changed the islands' status from "South Korean" to "undesignated sovereignty." Enough was enough; Mr. Jeon ordered his bags, from a distributor he works with in New Jersey.

Some of his fellow Korean New Yorkers have said they might start pushing homeland issues with more force. A group of parents is planning to lobby the city's Department of Education next week to change textbook references to the Sea of Japan — Koreans call it the East Sea — and the local Korean-American Association has just started a Dokdo committee to plan ever-more ambitious campaigns.

These include teaching younger Korean-Americans about the claim to Dokdo. Misun Chang, the general manager of WWRU (1660 AM), a Korean-language radio station, often talks about the conflict on her morning program, hoping to reach that audience. "The first generation — we know Dokdo is ours," she said, adding that as people her age set up new lives in the United States, they had sometimes been too busy to teach their children about the issue.

Kevin Kim, 38, a City Council candidate from Queens, said that he really started thinking about the islet dispute only when he got to college, but that Korean-Americans young and old were becoming more politically active.

The resolution by the House of Representatives in 2007 calling on Japan to acknowledge and apologize for its wartime sex-slavery, was a milestone, he said. "The community rallied around pressuring the house to pass the resolution," he said. "That was considered a huge success, and they felt more empowered."

It is not clear what Mr. Jeon thought would happen when his dry-cleaning bags hit the streets of New York. The association's previous activism had centered on matters central to the business, like the rise in the prices of hangers imported from China, and donating leftover clothes to charity. Still, he worked with what he knew.

"The whole world lives together in New York," he said. "And we use a lot of poly bags."



A deliveryman in Manhattan for Van Gogh Cleaners with bags of dry cleaning containing a message about Dokdo Island (or, if you subscribe to the Japanese point of view, Takeshima).

## An Old and Faraway Dispute That Goes Home With the Cleaning

From Page A1

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### Immigrants come to a new world, but often cling to old grievances.

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### A Rocky History

The nearly uninhabitable rock outcroppings in the sea between Korea and Japan are an emotional flashpoint far out of proportion to their size. Here is a brief history of the controversy over the islands, called Dokdo by Koreans and Takeshima by Japanese.

**1905** Japan, declaring the islands uninhabited, annexes them.

**1910** Japan annexes all of Korea and imposes a brutal occupation.

**1945** Japan surrenders. The islands are placed within the Japan-based United States Sixth Army's administrative area.

**1946** Those boundaries are replaced by the "MacArthur Line," which puts the islands under the command of Korea-based United States forces.

**1951** The San Francisco Peace Treaty between the Allies and Japan leaves sovereignty over the islands undefined.

**1952** South Korea proclaims the "Pines Line," which puts the islands within its territory, and begins to seize Japanese fishing vessels nearby. Japan responds with similar actions.

**1954** South Korea stations military personnel on the islands.

**1977** The Japanese prime minister declares that the islands belong to Japan, and claims exclusive fishing zones near the islands. Japan says it will take the issue of sovereignty to an international court.

**2004** South Korea begins gas exploration near the islands.

**2005** The Shimane Prefectural Assembly in Japan passes an ordinance designating "Takeshima Day" to reiterate Japan's 100-year-old claim. A plane sent by a Japanese newspaper flies toward the islands, and South Korean military jets scramble to intercept it. Street protests break out in Seoul.

**2008** The United States Board on Geographic Names changes the islands' status from "South Korean" to "undesignated sovereignty," ousting South Koreans. The Bush administration quickly orders the change rescinded.

Sources: Harvard Asia Quarterly, japaneseculture.com

THE NEW YORK TIMES



# South Korea's New Export: Its Alphabet

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea

South Korea has long felt under-recognized for its many achievements: it built an economic powerhouse from the ruins of a vicious war in just decades and, after years of authoritarian rule, has created one of Asia's most vibrant democracies.

Now, one South Korean woman, Lee Ki-nam, is determined to wring more recognition from the world with an unusual export: the Korean alphabet. Ms. Lee is using a fortune she made in real estate to try to take the alphabet to places where native peoples lack indigenous written systems to record their languages.

Her project had its first success — and generated headlines — in July, when children from an Indonesian tribe began learning the Korean alphabet, called Hangul.

"I am doing for the world's nonwritten languages what Doctors Without Borders is doing in medicine," Ms. Lee, 75, said in an interview. "There are thousands of such languages. I aim to bring Hangul to all of them."

While her quest might seem quixotic to non-Koreans, in this country — which has a national holiday called Hangul Day — it is viewed with enormous pride. Newspapers have gushed, and a Korean political party praised her feat in Indonesia — which Ms. Lee says involves just 50 children so far — as "a heroic first step toward globalizing Hangul."

Such effusiveness is tied to Koreans' attachment to their alphabet — a distinctive combination of circles and lines — and what they believe its endurance says about them as a people. During Japanese colonial rule in the past century, Koreans were prohibited from using their language and alphabet in business and other official settings; schools were forbidden to teach the language to their children and others. Ms. Lee's father, a linguist and professor, secretly taught his children and other students the language. She sees her mission as honoring his legacy, honoring Korea and helping the world. Kim Ju-won, a linguist at Seoul National University and the president of the Hunminjeongeum Society, which Ms. Lee established to propagate Hangul, summarized the mission this way: "By giving unwritten languages their own alphabets, we can help save them from extinction and thus ensure mankind's linguistic and cultural diversity."

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The government says it does not provide money to Ms. Lee's group, but she said it offered indirect support by giving linguists grants to pursue their work, which can include teaching Hangul abroad.

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Continued on Page A6

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THE HUNMINJEONGEUM SOCIETY

A nation so proud of its script that it has its own holiday.

A South Korean real estate magnate is trying to take her country's 28-letter alphabet to places where people lack writing systems to record their native languages. At left, a page from a textbook created for an Indonesian minority group.

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# The Caged Bird Sings

By B. R. MYERS

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A novel of a Korean political prisoner who emerges to a world transformed.

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ONE must never speak ill of nonchronological storytelling in America, where it is considered innately more serious than the other kind. But it is worth pondering the fact that flashbacks are nowhere more common than in North Korea. A

**THE OLD GARDEN**  
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\$29 pp. Seven Stories Press. \$30.

writer will start with a woman getting a medal, say, then explain how she got there; this approach leaves less room for intellectual uncertainty and divergent responses. I make the point because although Hwang Sok-yong's "Old Garden" was written south of the 38th parallel, it resembles a North Korean narrative in structural as in ideological ways. This is not a good thing. If I never read another mournful account of the fall of the Berlin Wall, it will be too soon.

"The Old Garden" begins interestingly enough. The description of a former political prisoner's first day of freedom after almost 20 years, when the mere sight of open space exhausts him, is vivid and moving. (Hwang, one of South Korea's most famous novelists, was himself a dissident who served prison time after an unsanctioned visit to the North.) Unfortunately the protagonist, Hyun Woo, soon learns that his lover and comrade Yoon Hee has died of cancer, whereupon the novel starts going back and forth in time. We read her letters to him, his cards to her, and so on. Much of this correspondence is of the implausible kind in which the recipient is reminded in great detail of shared experiences, but the transition to Yoon Hee's notebooks from the 1980s does not help matters. To recount the student movement's struggle against Chun Doo Hwan in such a disjointed and meandering fashion is to take all the drama out of it.

Jay Oh's translation is basically functional, but it feels too

youthful and distinctly American. The standard Korean expression for "24 hours a day" is rendered into English as "24/7," a word meaning "shy" becomes "totally embarrassed," and so on; this is hardly how a middle-aged man emerging from a long prison term would express himself. Other characters are made to swear in ways that could not seem less Korean: "Jesus, my mouth is watering." The original at least has more gravitas — but that's about it. Especially baffling is the author's choice of a narrator. Hyun Woo is a man for whom "every-

"our enemy was not the North," we are evidently to agree that this was the only possible conclusion. And when another man explains his newfound sympathy for Pyongyang with the words "I just decided to be on their side, O.K.?" (the Valley Girl tones of the translation are not always inappropriate), we are to feel something other than the urge to hurl him across the DMZ. Yoon Hee, who is clearly the author's favorite, grows more insufferable with every page. Having chosen to live in West Berlin, she is horrified when East Germany collapses, and worries that North Korea may follow suit. "This is not the solution. At least they had the correct beginning, didn't they?"

THE striving for simplicity and emotionality among students bewildered by long reading lists is, as the historian Ernst Nolte once wrote, "almost disgustingly easy to explain." Harder to understand is why a man of Hwang's age and experience would want to present this striving as something the world needs more of. (According to the publisher, Hwang is organizing a "peace train" that will go from Paris through North to South Korea — though I suspect he wants to stay on until Stockholm.) Having studied in Seoul in the mid-1980s, and witnessed the bravery of the demonstrators on many occasions, I was ready to like Hwang's characters for helping to end military rule. Alas, he has so little apparent respect for the ensuing bourgeois democracy that he describes them cursing the transition to it. The hunch that we are dealing here with an ideology even sillier than Marxism is confirmed in one of Yoon Hee's lines: "It's a fight that has continued for over a hundred years since we opened up the port." In other words, Korea's problems began when it ceased to be the Hermit Kingdom. The penny drops: this is how the students could have fought so heroically against a pro-American dictator in Seoul, yet found so little cause to criticize the paranoid nationalist thugs in Pyongyang. "The Old Garden" thus raises an interesting question despite itself. Should we admire these people for making South Korea less like North Korea, if they were aiming for the opposite effect?



*Freed from prison after almost 20 years, a dissident learns his lover has died of cancer.*

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PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID HARRIS



# Amid Soldiers and Mines in the Korean DMZ, School Is in Session

By CHOE SANG-HUN

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TAESUNG FREEDOM VILLAGE, Korean demilitarized zone — Kim Han-seul, a fifth grader, has the most heavily armed crossing guard in the world.

Each morning, his school bus picks him up at a bustling town outside the demilitarized zone that separates South and North Korea. It drives through wire fences, tank traps and military checkpoints along a road flanked by minefields.

After a 50-minute drive escorted by a military jeep with a United Nations flag, the bus unloads Han-seul and a score of other students at Taesung Elementary, the only school inside the Korean demilitarized zone, a heavily armed no man's land guarded on both sides by nearly two million troops facing off in an uneasy truce.

"People say that if a war broke out, I am going to be the first to be killed," said Han-seul, an 11-year-old with horn-rimmed glasses. "But I say, if we haven't had another war since the Korean War in the 1950s, why would you expect a war to happen now? I don't have a worry in the world."

Then he hurried off to join friends on a trampoline in the schoolyard.

Nearby, armed South Korean soldiers stood guard behind the corners of school buildings.

This two-story island of childhood innocence is the proudest part of Taesung Freedom Village, the only pocket of land inhabited by South Korean civilians inside the 2.5-mile-wide demilitarized zone.

For decades, the village and its school have symbolized the uneasy peace on the border. To keep them populated, South Korea has given the villagers incentives for staying, exempting them from taxes and mandatory military service. Taesung is one of South Korea's richest villages, its farmers allotted 10 times as much farmland as their average counterparts elsewhere in the country.

Still, by 2007, Taesung was succumbing to the problem plaguing every other rural village in South

Korea: its population was shrinking and aging as young people left for college and jobs in cities. The number of elementary school students dwindled to a mere six in 2007 from around 25 decades ago, making the school a prime target for a cost-cutting program that called for shutting down and merging rural schools depleted of students.

But Taesung is no ordinary school. Its presence gives a determined look of normality to a village where few things are normal.

So last year, South Korea and the United Nations Command, which oversees the southern side of the demilitarized zone, decided to bring children from outside the zone to attend Taesung Elementary.

Now the school has 30 students, the maximum allowed under an agreement between the South and the United Nations Command. Children's paintings decorate the walls of classrooms. Everything in the school is free except for snacks.

"There are 15 outside students

waiting for a vacancy here," said Joo Sung-hyun, 37, one of the school's 18 teachers. "Our school gets special attention, and it's better equipped and better staffed than most other schools in South Korea."

When the armistice ending the Korean War in 1953 created the demilitarized zone, the warring sides agreed to keep two villages inside it. Across the border from Taesung is the North Korean village Kijong, which stands empty today.

Soon the two villages became propaganda tools, each side pouring money into its showcase model village. When South Korea erected a flagpole about 330 feet tall here in the 1980s, North Korea built a pole about 525 feet high, the world's tallest. The North Korean flag is so big that when it rains, it has to be taken down for fear the weight of the wet flag might break the pole.

Much of the South's lavish spending went to the school. Each classroom has a large flat-screen television. The school has more computers than students. Corporate sponsors have lined up. Each year, when one or two children graduate, national media, politicians and American and South Korean generals show up with gifts.

Last year, the United States military, which leads the United Nations Command here, chipped in an incentive that gave second thoughts to parents reluctant to send their children here: it began sending American soldiers twice a week to teach English. Learn-

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Government and military officials with students from Taesung Elementary in the Korean DMZ.

### TAESUNG FREEDOM VILLAGE, Korean demilitarized zone

Kim Han-seul, a fifth grader, has the most heavily armed crossing guard in the world.

Each morning, his school bus picks him up at a bustling town outside the demilitarized zone that separates South and North Korea. It drives through wire fences, tank traps and military checkpoints along a road flanked by minefields.

After a 50-minute drive escorted by a military jeep with a United Nations flag, the bus unloads Han-seul and a score of other students at Taesung Elementary, the only school inside the Korean demilitarized zone, a heavily armed no man's land guarded on both sides by nearly two million troops facing off in an uneasy truce.

"People say that if a war broke out, I am going to be the first to be killed," said Han-seul, an 11-year-old with horn-rimmed glasses. "But I say, if we haven't had another war since the Korean War in the 1950s, why would you expect a war to happen now? I don't have a worry in the world."

Then he hurried off to join friends on a trampoline in the schoolyard.

Nearby, armed South Korean soldiers stood guard behind the corners of school buildings.

This two-story island of childhood innocence is the proudest part of Taesung Freedom Village, the only pocket of land inhabited by South Korean civilians inside the 2.5-mile-wide demilitarized zone.

For decades, the village and its school have symbolized the uneasy peace on the border. To keep them populated, South Korea has given the villagers incentives for staying, exempting them from taxes and mandatory military service. Taesung is one of South Korea's richest villages, its farmers allotted 10 times as much farmland as their average counterparts elsewhere in the country.

Still, by 2007, Taesung was succumbing to the problem plaguing every other rural village in South Korea: its population was shrinking and aging as young people left for college and jobs in cities. The number of elementary school students dwindled to a mere six in 2007 from around 25 decades ago, making the school a prime target for a cost-cutting program that called for shutting down and merging rural schools depleted of students.

But Taesung is no ordinary school. Its presence gives a determined look of normality to a village where few things are normal.

So last year, South Korea and the United Nations Command, which oversees the southern side of the demilitarized zone, decided to bring children from outside the zone to attend Taesung Elementary.

Now the school has 30 students, the maximum allowed under an agreement between the South and the United Nations Command. Children's paintings decorate the walls of classrooms. Everything in the school is free except for snacks.

“There are 15 outside students waiting for a vacancy here,” said Joo Sung-hyun, 37, one of the school’s 18 teachers. “Our school gets special attention, and it’s better equipped and better staffed than most other schools in South Korea.”

When the armistice ending the Korean War in 1953 created the demilitarized zone, the warring sides agreed to keep two villages inside it. Across the border from Taesung is the North Korean village Kijong, which stands empty today.

Soon the two villages became propaganda tools, each side pouring money into its showcase model village. When South Korea erected a flagpole about 330 feet tall here in the 1980s, North Korea built a pole about 525 feet high, the world’s tallest. The North Korean flag is so big that when it rains, it has to be taken down for fear the weight of the wet flag might break the pole.

Much of the South’s lavish spending went to the school. Each classroom has a large flat-screen television. The school has more computers than students. Corporate sponsors have lined up. Each year, when one or two children graduate, national media, politicians and American and South Korean generals show up with gifts.

Last year, the United States military, which leads the United Nations Command here, chipped in an incentive that gave second thoughts to parents reluctant to send their children here: it began sending American soldiers twice a week to teach English. Learning English from native speakers is an obsession in South Korea.

“We thank you always because you are guardians of peace,” Kim Moon-soo, governor of Gyeonggi Province, told villagers recently, dedicating another benefit for them: a 60-seat movie house. “Your presence here symbolizes peace and hope amid tension and pain of the divided nation.” (The students voted to have “Transformers” as the first movie to be screened here.)

To outsiders, Taesung looks like any other quiet and well-kept farming village in South Korea. Old farmers stroll in nearly deserted alleys. Outside lie golden fields of autumn rice.

But a garrison of 80 South Korean soldiers is on guard here 24 hours a day. The soldiers follow villagers when they go to the fields and escort them back at sundown.

Land mines are a constant threat. If people want a pizza delivered, they must pick it up at a military checkpoint outside the demilitarized zone.

There is an 11 p.m. curfew and a door-to-door head count. Visitors invited by villagers must apply with the military two weeks in advance. Once they get here, they are trailed by soldiers.

“Travel is a main inconvenience,” said Bronwyn Witthoft, an English teacher from South Africa. “But there are not many people who can say they were here. So I think I am lucky.”

Most villagers look bored when outsiders ask about the dangers of living here.

“Look, we have lived here for generations,” said Kim Dong-hyun, 54. “We have nowhere else to go. This is our home.”

Mr. Kim seemed more worried about the village’s aging population than about the North Koreans. The population has declined steadily, to 198 now from about 250 two decades ago.

Still, the propaganda war here was won by the South long ago. The empty North Korean village, Kijong, is now shadowed by the rise of a modern industrial complex built by South Korea in the North Korean town of Kaesong.

Years ago, North Korean commandos often infiltrated the border to attack South Korean and American soldiers. The North also bombarded the villagers with propaganda music. “Come to the bosom of our Great General Kim Il-sung,” the North Korean loudspeakers used to say, referring to the former North Korean president. “It’s only 5 minutes on the run and 10 minutes on foot.”

The children here seem unbowed by the weight of that history, though.

“I was a bit scared being so close to North Korea when I first came here,” said Lee Kyong-eun, a 12-year-old girl. “But I am not now. Why should I, with so many soldiers working as my bodyguards?”



THE KOREAN WAVE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES IN 2009 THE KOREAN WAVE AS

