

Cultural Policy and Development in Korea*

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I. Introduction

Although the importance of interfacing development with culture had long been recognized by policy makers and development planners, analysis of national development plans and activities shows that many developing countries have not accorded to culture a central place either as an object or an instrument of development.¹⁾ Korea has not been an exception to this. The typical thinking among the early policy planners in fact was that traditional values and institutions have placed too much emphasis on the spiritual, cultural aspect of a person or society to the point of disregarding and even neglecting the material needs. The backwardness of the nation owed, they believed, much to the overemphasis upon the spiritual and cultural value at the expense of the material well-being of the people. The materialistic culture of the west on the other hand was assumed to have enabled their societies to develop rapidly through industrialization. Therefore, the early development approach was unabashedly materialistic placing predominant emphasis on output goals such as raising GNP, increasing capital stock, increasing industrial outputs, and so on. Culture was considered as something to be dispensed with or to be put aside for a while in order to promote economic growth and hence it was largely left out of the national development plan during much of the early phase of modernization. So the idea that culture too is an important part of national development if not the central one gained acceptance among the higher circles of policy makers later when the country was well on its way toward industrialization and continuous economic growth.

In the following pages we will first outline the characteristics of the cultural poli-

*This paper is prepared with the financial support of 1990 Seoul National University Development Foundation.

cies of the 3rd to 6th republics and then attempt to analyze the interface of development and culture or the incorporation of cultural elements in the context of development in Korea.

II. Changes in Cultural Policy²⁾

1. The 3rd and 4th Republics

The new regime that came to power through a military coup in 1961 passed a number of new laws relating to culture in the ensuing years. They were mostly administrative laws aimed at controlling cultural activities rather than promoting cultural development. The ministry of education was in charge of cultural administration both in the first and second republics but in the third republic the newly created ministry of information took over from the ministry of education the administrative responsibilities for cultural affairs in movies, performing arts, national theaters, and national traditional arts theaters. This dual administration structure lasted until 1968 when the ministry of culture and information was established and assumed control of most cultural affairs administration.

President Park declared in his state of the nation address in 1972 that he had directed the ministry of culture and information to draft a long term plan for cultural development. So the government devised and put into effect the first 5 year cultural development plan in 1974 and started a nationwide systematic effort for cultural development with a view, first to consolidate and upgrade national identity and arts, second to ensure a broad dissemination of arts for all, and, third to introduce and promote national arts internationally. The total investment for the 5 year period amounted to US\$ 64.7 million of which 70.2% went for renovation and preservation of cultural heritage. For art promotion, the National Endowment for Arts and Culture was set up in 1972 which quickly became the major source of financial support for artists throughout the country.

2. The 5th Republic

The fifth republic inherited and expanded the cultural policies of the preceding regimes but the article 9 of the new constitution stipulated the state responsibility for cultural development for the first time and the government formally adopted cultural development as one of the four national policy priorities. The amendment in the 5th five year socio-economic development plan stated three objectives of cultural development as expansion of cultural spaces and facilities to ensure the right to culture especially for nonmetropolitan residents, affirmation and uplifting of national cultural identities and values through the promotion of cultural heritage and artistic

activities, and dissemination of national culture abroad taking advantage of Asian and Olympic Games. The total investment for the five year period was set at US\$ 2.5 billion. The emphasis was on the expansion of cultural facilities and art centers both in Seoul and major cities throughout the nation. The National Modern Art Gallery, the Center for Arts, the Independence Hall, the National Korean Art Center were some of the massive buildings constructed during the period. Also begun was the construction of multi-purpose art centers in all of the provincial capitals in the country. Another major thrust during the 5th republic was the promotion of traditional local arts and culture, and every city and township was encouraged to hold at least one community-wide cultural event such as a folk art festival and a arts contest.

3. The 6th Republic

Cultural policy was pursued with vigor in the 6th Republic with the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1990. The new Ministry drafted a 10-year cultural development plan in 1991 and began its implementation with the start of the 7th 5-year socio-economic development plan which had stated four main objectives; the upgrading of artistic creative activities, expansion of cultural media and right to culture, enhancement of local culture, and promotion of international cultural exchanges. The total investment for the five year period amounted to US\$ 1,375 million of which 13.2% was allotted for the upgrading of artistic activities, 17.1% for the expansion of cultural right, 53.7% for the enhancement of local culture, and 20.0% for international cultural exchange.

III. Culture in the Context of Development³⁾

Culture in the context of development has four distinct dimensions; culture as the object, the driving force, a remedy of social maladies, and a means of development. In this report, I will first attempt to briefly explain what I mean by these and then present the outline of developmental strategies and performances in Korea pertaining to each of the four dimensions successively.

1. Culture as the Object of Development

There is a common tendency among those responsible for development strategies and programs in the 3rd world countries to regard culture as a luxury which lies beyond the scope of policy considerations so long as emancipation from abject poverty remains as the first and perhaps the sole concern of the people. Such was the view of the policy makers in Korea for more than a decade after it embarked on her first 5 year national development plan in the early 1960's. The recognition that

culture, too, needs 'development' gained acceptance later among development planners after they thought they had succeeded in combatting poverty and raising the standards of living considerably above the level of subsistence. With the rise of income people began to consume more and more cultural goods, both material and non-material and there was growing demand from the public usually led by intellectuals and artists for government to take active interests in the cultural welfare of the citizenry.

This led to the adoption by the government of the nation's first 5 year cultural revival plan drafted in the fashion of its 5 year economic development plans in 1974. This and a succeeding 5 year plans were conceived in the traditional notion of cultural development which focused on the conservation of national monuments and arts of historical significance, assistance for artists and others in their creative activities, and the encouragement of the fine arts,⁴⁾ The two consecutive 5 year plans were drafted originally as an independent plan outside of the framework of the government's more comprehensive national economic development plan but since 1983 cultural development plans became incorporated into the latter which was renamed by then as the 5 year economic and social development plan, placing emphasis on the balance and harmony between the material and cultural aspects in national progress.

Also, policy priorities have shifted in the middle of the 80's from conservation of cultural heritage to promotion of cultural right and equal access to culture by all. A number of measures were put into effect to implement the policy changes, the most notable of which was the regional and local arts assistance program. Regional performing art centers, museums and town halls where art events can be staged were built throughout the country with funds provided by the government and local art events, folk arts contests, regional music festivals were encouraged, The government also helped start in this period Regional Endowment for Culture and Arts in provinces and metropolitan administrative areas.

A 10 year cultural development conceptual plan was devised in 1990 in the anticipation of and policy preparation for the newly created Ministry of Culture which was heralded as the assurance and commitment by the leadership of the 6th Republic to support cultural development as a primary goal of the national development in the coming decade.⁵⁾ It will be interesting to observe whether this will indeed become materialized.

2. Culture as a Driving Force of Development

The definitions of culture have both static and dynamic aspects. The static aspects, usually stressed more frequently than the other states that culture is the products of human activities as members of a society and represented by works of arts, ways of

life, customs, objects, and so on. The dynamic aspects in contrast emphasize that it is more than the mirror of the past, that it is the view-finder for the present and the future. Culture represents, most of all, according to this view a value system which occasions, stimulates and guides the thoughts and acts of a human being.⁶⁾ This conception of culture draws attention of many development planners who has the task to mobilize the energy and commitment of people toward modernization. A mass mobilization if successful becomes an invaluable resource for national development. People in many poverty stricken parts of the world, however, are often found to be bound by tradition which stifles the will to better their lives, a sad mark of mass poverty. A severe test of leadership in the initial stage of development in the 3rd world is often whether he or she can kindle in the heart of the people a hope and trust for the future and the courage to work towards it.

Korean national leaders in the initial phase of national development did not have to look far to find the spirit, values and commitment of people to work hard to better themselves and to help build their country a stronger, richer nation. With confucian ethic inculcated in them for hundreds of years and a tradition of placing high value on education, the people seemed only waiting for someone to show them where and how to work. Long working hours and hard working conditions were of little concern to them for they were deprived so long of opportunities to work for their families and themselves. However this did not prevent government officials from setting out to find ways for urging people to push the work. The New Community Movement represented a most successful such program especially in the rural areas. It's success was largely due to an effective combination of material assistance, organization, technical training provided to villagers as well as indoctrination schemes aimed at instilling in them work ethics, rational attitude, and the value of collective work.

It has become almost obligatory in the introduction of every annual and long-range cultural development plans to exclaim how national spirit might be uplifted through cultural development in the service of continuous progress of the nation. But concrete programs necessary to implement the stated goal are difficult to find these days. The situation may have to change again soon as concern with declining productivity and poor workmanship has assumed very serious dimensions lately throughout the country.

3. Culture as a Remedy for Social Maladies

As traditional society undergoes transformation in the course of industrialization and modernization, they are usually faced with a host of social problems little known to them before. Korea was no exception to this and lately the Ministry of Culture has proposed a number of measures to combat the problems. A priority project among

them is aimed at promoting the production and circulation of quality videos for youths. The Ministry plans to provide financial and programming assistance to the video industry for production of educational and recreational programs for the children. At the same time restrictions against manufacturing and marketing of unauthorized videos will be strictly enforced and control over the video shops will be tightened.

There is also a program to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to read more good books. Writers and educators are preparing at the government request basic reading lists for the public; there will be separate lists for children, youths, women, working men and women, senior citizens and so forth. A series on Korean culture will be edited and published as part of the program on a variety of subjects ranging from history, religion, arts, customs etiquette, geography, language, and so on and will be distributed widely at low cost. Development of new recreational programs for various age groups is another project that is on foot. Traditional games and recreations are being reviewed by the experts for possible adaptation to contemporary situations. Revival of folk festivals, sports and games, and observation of traditional holidays are encouraged also. Music is another important medium in the government campaign for the reconstruction of strong, healthy social fabric. A selection of new and old songs will be designated as national songs and a nation-wide sing-along campaign will follow once the selection is completed.

4. Culture as a Means for Development

The last but not the least important dimension of culture in development involves asserting the economic value of cultural investment. The fundamental role of education and literacy in this sense has been universally recognized but there are other sectors more directly bearing on the regional and national socio-economic development. They include cultural industries, tourism, crafts, environmental planning, and so on.

This dimension of cultural development has not received sufficient attention until recently in Korea except in connection with the promotion of tourism which falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation. But there have been some notable exceptions to this in the past, too. The designation and reconstruction of the University Avenue in Seoul at the site of a former university campus is an example. When a national university decided to move to a new location, there ensued a lively debate as to the best use of the site. Suggestions included developing a commercial district, a government building district, and also a residential area. But there was also advocacy from leading artists, architects and other citizen groups for creating a cultural street where automobile traffic is limited and people can come to enjoy performing arts, pop musics, outdoor display of sculptures which was finally accepted

after much deliberation by the planning commission of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. It stands today as a testimony to the wisdom and foresight of the citizens and city planners who were able to appreciate the value of the cultural dimension of development in city planning. The streets continue to attract tourists and the general public of all ages but especially college students some of whom make them home in more ways than one and the area shops are doing booming business and land prices there have skyrocketed since.

Spurred on in part by such an event but mostly reflecting a heightened awareness of changing concept of the role of culture in development, government's official cultural development plan now contains several programs specifically designed to help promote local and national economy. Among them is a project to build a Folkcraft Village for those working in traditional arts and handicrafts. Because of low productivity and difficulty in expanding market, the traditional handicraft industry has been for years on the decline. The present scheme hopes to reverse the trend by introducing new manufacturing technologies and management knowhow as well as providing financial assistance. Another priority area in the list of the Ministry of Culture is cultural industries including those of movies, videos, television and radios, and publications. They were not used to be considered as making significant contribution to the economy and hence did not receive much government support. Now both the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry will join forces to give support to them in the coming years.

The introduction of the cable television industry is expected to have a significant impact on the economy, hence its development is also high on the Ministry of Culture's list for government support.

Notes

- 1) S.C. Dube, "Cultural Dimensions of Development," in Yogesh Atal(ed), *Culture and Development Interface*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd(1991), p.20.
- 2) For more detail refer to Hong-Ik Chung, "A Historical Analysis of Cultural Policy in Korea," paper presented to the 1991 Annual Academic Conference of the Korean Association of Public Administration held in Seoul, Korea.
- 3) For related information on this subject refer to Hong-Ik Chung, "Cultural Policy in the Context of Development in Korea," Paper presented to the Regional Conference on the Cultural Elements in the Context of Development held on Bali, Indonesia, Nov. 1991.
- 4) Hong-Ik Chung, "A Historical Analysis of Cultural Administration" paper presented to the Second Annual Seminar of the Arts and Culture Research Center, Seoul National University, October 1991.
- 5) The Ministry of Culture, *10 Year Cultural Development Concept Plan; A Draft*, February 1990.
- 6) Pierre Piganiol, *International Workshop on Planning Methods in the Cultural Sector*, December 1983, French Commission for Unesco, p.130.