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Dwindling economic opportunities in South Korea after the financial crisis of 1997 spurred forced retirement, with the Philippines emerging as a viable destination for relatively young South Korean retirees. Relations between these retirees and Filipinos have been influenced by the colonial-era system of racial hierarchy, resulting in intra-Asian hierarchies held by both groups. Shedding light on racial relations between postcolonial peoples, this article shows how South Korean retirees' feelings of economic superiority and communal exclusiveness are challenged by the sociocultural advancement of Filipino middle classes. Among South Korean retirees in the Philippines, the imaginary distance between the two countries has widened.

KEYWORDS: SOUTH KOREA · PHILIPPINES · INTRA-ASIAN MIGRATION · RETIREMENT MIGRATION · POSTCOLONIAL RACIALIZATION

I n summer 2013, when I first met the Gong couple in Baguio and asked why they decided to relocate from South Korea to the Philippines, the husband provided an interesting understanding of the two countries, South Korea and the Philippines. Gong (2013) said, "We can be confident [with] the Filipinos, unlike [with] the Whites. Koreans typically cower before blue eyes such as Americans, but we don't have to cower before shorter and darker people like the Filipinos. That's why I chose to come here." In 2006, at age 44, he and his wife and their two children relocated to Baguio, which once served as a summer capital under the US colonial regime. After his ambitious start-up upscale restaurant business in Seoul went bankrupt, he and his wife searched desperately for a new place in which to recover from their financial and emotional loss. They "discovered" the Philippines—a comfort zone where they could rest to regain their confidence. In clarifying this feeling of comfort that the Philippines offered, Gong represented the Philippines by what he understood as both premodern and modern features. For instance, he knew it had well-managed, Western-style facilities such as golf clubs and shopping centers as well as the prominent global marker, spoken English. However, the fact that economically it lagged behind South Korea ensured that they would not feel intimidated. Thus, among Filipinos, Gong could keep his head high, unlike among the Whites.

The Filipinos[1] I met during my field research in the Philippines do not share Gong's particular sense of superiority. Constantine (2013), a Filipina lecturer in her fifties in one of Baguio's universities, wonders why some South Koreans are so rude even though "most of them came here to learn English." For her South Koreans' extreme arrogance toward Filipinos is nonsensical because of their lack of English proficiency; premodern, impolite attitudes; and disregard for multicultural understanding.

By tracing the origins and meanings of racial confidence that South Korean retirees express toward Filipinos, this article examines intra-Asian hierarchy and considers national conceptions that South Koreans developed beginning in the late nineteenth century and how these views contribute to contentious relations with Filipinos. Contentious relations cut both ways. Thus, this article also looks into how educated Filipinos locate themselves in relation to Whites and other Asians and imagine a different place in the intra-Asian hierarchy through colonial and postcolonial histories. Drawing on ethnographic evidence, this article further analyzes how these clashing

imaginations of other Asians of the two countries are challenged and how they generate tensions in recent encounters between South Korean retirees and Filipinos in the Philippines.

In order to trace the historical formation of intra-Asian hierarchies in both countries, this article focuses on how their respective colonial histories have shaped the racial hierarchy surrounding Whites in each country. In the Philippines, which experienced a much longer presence of Western colonialism than South Korea, Whites gained powerful ascendancy in relation to both economic and sociocultural advancement. In this context the local mestizo elites acted out their racial supremacy and ranked themselves as Westernized, modern citizens above all other Asians. In this racial hierarchy, Korea[2] barely obtained the attention of the Philippines as a neighboring country. However, in South Korea, ever since the Japanese occupation, Whites, primarily Americans, have never taken the primary position; rather, America and Americans had always invoked ambivalent responses (Im 2000; Larson et al. 2004). Based on Orient–Occident binaries and strong ethnonationalism, the economic advancement of Whites and the US has been admired, but the sociocultural attributes of so-called Western modernization (e.g., gender equality) have been largely ignored. Ever since their country achieved remarkable economic success, South Koreans have established a clear sense of racial supremacy, with claims to racial homogeneity that has achieved a high level of economic development out of extreme poverty (Lee 2010; G. Shin 2010). At the same time, they discriminate against economically poor countries, which they look down upon as failures in a capitalist system (Lee 2014). They see countries like the Philippines as victims of capitalism, as opposed to their own position as victors. In sum, both South Koreans and Filipinos racialize each other and regard the other not as a close neighbor but as a distant Other.

These encounters have multiplied as the number of South Korean retirees in the Philippines has increased. Ever since the South Korean economy faltered as a result of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the "involuntary early retirement" of employees has become prevalent (K. Shin 2010; Klassen and Yang 2013). The number of retirees forced to leave their jobs has drastically increased, effectively lowering the retirement age to 53 (Kinsella and He 2009). Given South Koreans' high life expectancy of 80 years,[3] these relatively young retirees face many difficulties with the prospect of living thirty or more years after retirement. As many of my informants

narrated, what they could do for over thirty years without experiencing serious financial difficulties became the most significant question they confronted. As explained later, retirement migration to the Philippines (*P'ilip'in ŭnt'oe imin*) has become one of the most attractive, affordable, and viable options (on retirement migration to Canada, cf. Kim 2013). Especially since the mid-2000s when South Korean media started to highlight the Philippines as one of the best places for retirement, the Philippines gained popularity among middle-aged South Korean citizens. But in the Philippines the opposing racial hierarchies of South Koreans and Filipinos have opened up tensions between the two groups.

This article shows how certain characteristics of South Korean retirees have intensified tensions with Filipinos. It draws on ethnographic research to show how the South Korean retirees' racial pride in their economic advancement has been challenged as they come face-to-face with the Filipinos' perceived legacies of Western modernity, such as spoken English and gender equality.

Many studies on racial formation or racialization in the US and European contexts (e.g., Omi and Winant 1986) reveal how "social processes actively construct and reconstruct race and 'racial difference'" that have "self-evident meaning" (McLaughlin 2004, 163). In the postcolonial context studies have unearthed how White ascendancy that emerged from colonial histories has been reconstructed, affecting the local idea of racial hierarchy (Steyn 2004; López 2005; West and Schmidt 2010). However, these studies show a reluctance to address the racial tensions *between* postcolonial countries by focusing only on the relations in the Euro-American context *or* between former colonizers and colonized. Questions remain about what happens when two postcolonial nations racialize each other and what it implies in their citizens' daily encounters with each other. To fill this gap, this article highlights how nonwhite postcolonial citizens negotiate their claims to racial pride when meeting other nonwhite postcolonial citizens.

Ethnographic Data

Data for this article were drawn from ethnographic field research conducted over eight months in June 2013, May 2014, and from January to June 2015 in several cities in the Philippines including those in Metro Manila, as well as Clark/Angeles in Pampanga, and Baguio, all said to be the most popular destinations for South Korean retirees (PRA 2013). Part of my ethnographic

fieldwork included participant observation in both newly built Korea Town and the heavily South Korean–populated neighborhoods, such as Ortigas Center in Metro Manila, Friendship Highway in Clark/Angeles, and Baguio.

While residing in these areas I tried to meet both South Korean retirees and Filipinos in the neighborhood. As discussed in this article, most of these young South Korean retirees operate small businesses, such as boarding houses and small Korean restaurants. My initial contacts with South Korean retiree informants were made through Internet searches for boarding houses and newly built small Korean restaurants in Metro Manila, Clark/Angeles, and Baguio. After seeking their willingness to participate in my study through online messages, I visited their homes and shops to meet them in person and conduct interviews. While living with them, I met other retirees through the snowball method and was able to observe how South Korean retirees started their businesses and interacted with Filipinos on a daily basis.

Besides the retirees, I conducted interviews with two staff members working for the United Korean Community Association, Inc. (UKCA), one of the largest and oldest South Korean civil organizations in the Philippines. I also interviewed one South Korean employee of a marketer[4] of the Philippine retirement migration visa, which is called the Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV). Except for these staff members, South Korean retirees in general came to the Philippines in the mid- and late-2000s when they were in their mid-forties to early sixties. All these retirees were male, and they came to the Philippines with their wives; some also came with their children, who were mostly teenagers on their first arrival in the Philippines.

I selected most of the Filipino interviewees through my personal network. I asked the help of Filipino friends, who studied in top local universities, to introduce me to their friends and colleagues who have had close experiences with South Koreans. I also interviewed two Filipino government officials who work closely with South Koreans, in particular, South Korean investors and retirees in Clark and Baguio. Most Filipino informants (eight out of ten) were female in their thirties and forties and had direct experiences of teaching English to South Koreans, ranging from elementary-school students to adult learners. Overall I was able to conduct a series of interviews with both South Koreans (twenty) and Filipinos (ten).

In my interviews with the UKCA staff, I focused on learning the general history of South Korean immigration to the Philippines and the characteristics

of recent comers. I also interviewed the South Korean marketer to gain a general understanding of South Korean retiree migrants and the retirement visa program. Through the series of interviews with both South Korean retirees and Filipino informants, I attempted to find out what they thought of each other and how they understood their coresidency in the Philippines.

In interviews with South Korean retirees, I specifically asked why and how they chose the Philippines as their place of retirement, how they perceived the Philippines, and what they thought of Filipinos; I probed changes in their perceptions before and after settlement. With Filipino informants, I delved mainly into their direct and indirect experiences with South Koreans, how they found South Korean English learners and employers, and how these interactions influenced their perceptions of South Korea and its people. I paid particular attention to the Filipino informants' educated middle-class status in order to find out how they understood the sudden increase in the number of South Koreans in the Philippines. Their middle-class status was particularly important because I hypothesized that their distanced geographical imagination of South Korea might contribute to their negative view of South Koreans recently coming to their areas of residence.

One last note regarding the research method might be relevant to the analysis of the interview data. While South Korean informants were straightforward in their comments about their experiences with Filipinos and their opinions about their new land, Filipino informants tended to be reserved in revealing their emotions about South Koreans. When asked about their experiences with and subsequent emotions about South Koreans, many Filipino informants would take several minutes before they spoke. Furthermore, all the Filipino informants did not use strong words, such as "hate," but rather relatively mild words to denote South Koreans' general attitudes, such as "strange" and "impolite." They cautiously asked me why so many South Koreans started coming to the Philippines, and why and how these South Koreans have so much money. Even though they did not express strong sentiment toward South Koreans, their curiosity (even suspicion) about South Koreans' wealth might indicate the uncomfortable feeling they harbored against South Koreans. In this light the analysis of data from interviews with Filipinos required a delicate approach.

Geographical Imagination of Other Asians in the Philippines and South Korea

Building upon C. Wright Mills's concept of sociological imagination, David Harvey (2009, 24) opens a scholarly discussion on geographical imagination by defining it as spatial consciousness, in which a person

> recognize[s] the relationship which exists between him and his neighborhood, his territory. . . . It allows him to judge the relevance of events in other places (on other peoples' "turf")—to judge whether the march of communism in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos is or is not relevant to him wherever he is now. It allows him also to fashion and use space creatively and to appreciate the meaning of the spatial forms created by others.

This recognition of the relationship, or judgment of the relevance, of others' events forms a historically and politically saturated field of knowledge, given that empires and nation-states had been the main producers of geographic and ethnographic knowledge (Harvey 2005). Even in a so-called globalized and cosmopolitan era, "stereotypes about geographical 'others'" (ibid., 219) abound and are even strengthened through media and casual discourse.

Building on Harvey's concept of geographical imagination, this article traces how Filipinos and South Koreans' judgments of each other have been constructed and reinforced, not only in historical circumstances but also through contemporary interactions between the two. It pays particular attention to racial hierarchy as the primary process of creating geographical imagination of other Asians in both countries. This formation of hierarchy does not mean that racial relations overwhelm other factors, such as gender and class. Rather, in encountering other Asians—but not necessarily limited to Asians—both countries experienced racialization processes rooted in histories of colonialism and empire. In other words, as racialized others, they themselves looked at other Asians based on the empire's racial hierarchy when their territories were forcibly occupied by invaders and opened to the international arena.

In order to understand the intra-Asian hierarchy of the two countries we need to first study how the concept of Whiteness was formulated, since in both

countries the concept and significance of Whites have been the dominant reference points from which to construct racial others throughout their colonial and postcolonial histories. The colonial history of the Philippines and South Korea generated the representational power of Whites and created racial hierarchy in other races, other Asians in particular. However, each country developed a different racial hierarchy based on its own colonial history.

Beginning in the Spanish colonial period, the Philippines experienced more substantial White supremacy when European racial ideas of White biological superiority emerged to shape the hierarchical racial order. For instance, by emphasizing a much longer history of European colonialism in the Philippines, Joanne Rondilla and Paul Spickard (2007) claim that the Filipino preference for light skin has a different origin from that of people from other Asian countries. In other words, they argue that, whereas the longing for light skin color by people in other Asian countries mostly stemmed from these countries' own class imperative (for example, workers get tanned by their hard work under the sun), the Filipinos' love for light skin, clearly rooted in the colonial era, stemmed from the Spanish colonial period.

The system of racial ranking was solidified with the US entry to the archipelago after 1898 (ibid.). As the American colonial regime improved the economic position of the mestizos and formed a fairly large class of mestizo elites (Agoncillo and Alfonso 1969; Anderson 1988), racial hierarchy based on White supremacy was intensified as a ruling system. For example, the US imagined the Philippines as "*tabula rasa* settled by successive waves of colonizers" (Rafael 2000, 36, italics added) and categorized the Filipino based on a racial hierarchy ranging from the most light skinned as the most civilized to the most dark-skinned natives (i.e., Negritos or Aetas) as the most dangerous, prehistoric humans (ibid.). As Vicente Rafael (ibid.) has argued, this racial difference was justified by both the rhetoric of America as liberator and the mestizo elites' collaboration with this logic. Thus, for the Filipino elites, in particular mestizos, their whiteness was not only a system that the American colonizers practiced but also a way to justify their own superior identity and social privileges.

Understandable in this context is how the historical affinity of Filipino elites with Euro-Americans created an interesting intra-Asian hierarchy. Embracing it as the ascendant social power, the Filipino mestizo both fetishized and acted out their racial supremacy side-by-side with their

American colonizers. Arguably, for Filipino elites this supremacy created an imaginary geographical distance in which the Philippines is regarded as closer to Spain or America (i.e., Euro-America) than to fellow countries in Asia, such as Japan. For instance, in the early twentieth century Filipino elites regarded themselves as superior to the Japanese and at that time did not even feel that they were a part of Asia (Constantino and Constantino 1978). Lydia Yu-Jose's (1992) study on how the Japanese viewed the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century also reflected this racial hierarchy that Filipino elites possessed at that time. A wartime officer and traveler, Tsurami Yusuke, described in his travel log the pride Filipinos had of their European heritage (ibid., 35–36). After his sightseeing tour in Manila, he wrote about Filipinos: "They were Christians and were prejudiced against the Japanese because they were not. They looked down on Japan, where people rode in rickshaws (*jinrikisha*). Filipinos boasted that in the Philippines, carts were pulled by horses or cows, not by human beings" (ibid., 35).

After the Second World War, the Philippines joined Asian regional meetings as one of the newly independent nations among other Asian nations, but its ambivalent intimate relationship with the US resulted in other Asian countries' dubious regard for the Philippines. For example, in the Bandung conference, the first Afro-Asian conference held in 1955, Richard Wright observed the general ambivalence of the Philippines, which he remarked was linked to the West to such an extent as to be in the awkward position of acting both for America and for its Asian brothers (Espiritu 2006). By observing the speeches of Carlos P. Romulo, Wright continued his criticism that the Philippines seemed to retain the traces of Western racialism with its ardent love for America (ibid.).

Even among Asian countries, Korea barely caught the attention of Filipino elites at the dawn of the twentieth century because it was a place of desperate need and protection. For example, during the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula in 1929, An Chang-ho, one of the prominent Korean anti-imperialists against the Japanese occupation, went to the Philippines to seek help. He met with Manuel Luis Quezon, then Senate President, and asked that Korean anti-imperialists be allowed to settle in Baguio. An Chang-ho specifically admired the advanced level of democracy that the Philippines enjoyed, even under US occupation, with elements such as freedom of the press (History of Korean Independence Movement Online n.d.). However, this bold request was turned down by Quezon since the

Philippine government required Koreans to pay KRW50 per person and enter its territory with a Japanese visa.[5] For Filipino elites, who felt superior to other Asians or believed their country to be one of the three great Oriental countries along with Japan and China (Yu-Jose 1992, 36), these Koreans might have been seen as a far more distant and backward people.

Here we need to note that the Euro-American affinity and the sense of distance from other Asians were clearly based on Filipino elites' pride in westernization and modernization in sociocultural dimensions as well as economic prosperity. In particular, their Christianity and the level of democracy that the Philippines achieved at the time of US colonialism became a prominent source of their sense of superiority. However, it should be clear that this article does not argue that Filipinos uncritically accepted or absorbed Western-led society and culture. As scholars studying the Philippines have argued (e.g., Cannell 1999), Filipinos have shown themselves to be critical of Western cultures and norms. What I try to argue is not that Filipinos did not resist Spanish or American colonialism, but that cultural traits, such as racial hierarchy, have remained throughout the colonial histories of the Philippines. For example, Jason Cabañes (2014) has suggested that even in the contemporary Filipino media scene a deeply embedded "unspoken racial hierarchy" is present, seen for instance in the strong preference for mestizo celebrities.[6]

In order to understand South Koreans' racial hierarchy toward other Asians, two major conditions should be acknowledged. First, imperial power came much later to the Korean peninsula than to the Philippines—in the form of Japanese imperialism, not in the form of Euro-American White empires. Second, because of this late coming of imperial power, the Korean peninsula had maintained and continued to reinforce its imaginary ideology of "one ethnicity and one race" (*Tanil minjok*).

Echoing the image of a "hermit kingdom" to describe the isolated Korea up until the late nineteenth century (see Foulk 2008), Korea closed off its territory and maintained its independence since the seventeenth century. As Kelvin Ho and Joon Park (2004) argue, the centuries of isolation and the durability of its culture became the main source of Koreans' air of superiority over other Asians. In the late nineteenth century at the dawn of the Japanese occupation, however, Korean elites started to observe the emerging power of Japan as it opened its territory and reformed society with the logic of modernization (i.e., the Meiji restoration). Accordingly, pro-Japan scholars

in Korea began to import new ideas from Japan, hoping to develop Korea into a similarly modern country (Jager 2003).

Social Darwinism was one such idea, which the pro-Japan scholars applied and used to form a racial hierarchy in the Korean context (Tikhonov 2010). It had two characteristics; first, it strongly manifested the law of survival of the fittest, and second, it promoted racial hierarchy by claiming that survival and further advancement were allowed only to certain races. Based on social Darwinism, the pro-Japan Korean elites collectively posited Koreans as slightly inferior to White people, as did the Japanese. Moreover, they evaluated Koreans and Japanese as the only race deserving of further development (civilization) along with the Whites (ibid.).

Interestingly, social Darwinism was promoted not only by pro-Japan but also by anti-imperial elite groups. In her study on the origin of Korean nationalism, Sheila Jager (2003) argues that anti-imperial Korean elites idealized the strong masculine nation based on social Darwinism. For example, Sin Ch'ae-ho, one of the famous anti-imperial intellectuals, held a belief in making a strong nation with loyal men (masculine heroes) to win the war, which was identified as the "natural" expression of nationalism ("the survival of the fittest") (ibid., 12). At the turn of the twentieth century, social Darwinism left behind the legacies of a racial hierarchy and a belief in a strong masculine country and in survival as a priority for both groups of Korean intellectuals.

As the Japanese colonial government intensified its oppressive occupation and spread the idea of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity in the 1930s and 1940s, the Orient–Occident binary was solidified in Korea. In particular, since the China-Japan War in 1937, Japan expanded its geographical imagination of "Greater East Asia" to include Southeast Asia. In its imaginary Occidentalism, Japan developed a binary system of understanding the West as a materialistic and individualistic sphere of the world, which was opposed to the spiritual and communal sphere of the East (Yi 2008). This idea of being anti-West and anti-White resonated in Korean literary works, which demonized liberalism, individualism, democracy, and consumerism as symbols of Western modernization (ibid.). In this imaginary geography, Korean intellectuals believed in uniting all of Asia (including Southeast Asia) around Japan to fight against the West. South Korean literary critic Ki-sŏng Yi (2010) argued that this Orient–Occident binary even led to solidarity with or affinity

toward Blacks and other colonized peoples over White people, even right after the liberation from Japan.

However, this anti-West and anti-White sentiment began to change after the collapse of the Japanese empire and South Korea's incorporation into the US-led "free world." With this historical thrust, Japan became invisible in South Korea while the US empire came to the land. These developments crystallized disillusionment toward and admiration of the US empire (ibid.). The advanced economy of the US, which the South Korean nation-state was eager to emulate in order to escape from extreme poverty after the Korean War, definitely drove admiration. But, at the same time, the sociocultural dimensions that the US represented brought ambivalent responses from South Koreans. For example, throughout his presidency (1964–1979), Park Chung-hee, who ardently promoted economic development, sought to incorporate South Korea into a US-led capitalist society. But somewhat echoing the Orient–Occident binary, he despised the danger of (Western) consumerism and individualism and urged his citizens to save money for the nation (Nelson 2000). The ambivalent feeling came not only from the nation-state; even antidictator dissent groups in the 1970s and 1980s strongly challenged the US because they believed that the US government backed authoritarian regimes.

Unfortunately, this anticolonial and antidictator movement never formed solidarity with anticolonial movements in other postcolonial countries because ethnonationalism triumphed over all other doctrines in the country (Yi 2010). In other words, while anticolonial intellectuals sharply criticized the US, they did so to build an "epic of struggle that reflected South Korea's postcolonialism and national division" (*Minjung movement*; Abelmann 1996, 226). Since it clearly aimed to establish "one" Korea (not a divided one) by itself (without any US interference), the anticolonial movement in South Korea was limited to the domestic realm. In sum South Korea held ambivalent perspectives of the US and the West due to its legacies of ethnonationalism as well as the Orient–Occident binary. The US was perceived as a liberator and the most advanced country in the world; however, both the dissent groups and the authoritarian regimes blamed the US for polluting "Korean-ness" and its ascetic ethos.

In more recent years South Korea's success in economic development based on a strong ethnonationalism has led to its identification with capitalism and disregard for economically poor countries that have been

viewed as lying outside of capitalist society (Yi 2010). By locating themselves as the only race and ethnicity that overcame the US empire with successful economic development, South Koreans have come to view less developed countries as racial others (ibid.). For example, Ju Hui Judy Han's (2010) study of a South Korean missionary group in Africa reveals that South Korean middle-aged missionaries had great faith and pride in their native country's economic development and believed that the South Korean way of economic development could save poverty-ridden Africa. This identification with empire echoes South Korean literary critic Jin-kyung Lee's (2010) argument for the desire of sub-empire. Lee has traced the atrocities that South Korean soldiers carried out in the Vietnam War back to the systematic racism under the military regime and its desire to imitate the US. By criticizing the discriminatory practices of contemporary South Koreans against Southeast Asians, she further argues that South Korean governments have tried to support a South Korean version of the American Dream by idolizing economic nation-states (rather than promoting principles of democracy and liberalism) (ibid.). In this system of racial hierarchy, Filipinos, not unlike other Southeast Asians, can be renamed not as "neighbors" but as racialized "poor others" who need "our" help by erasing the Filipinos' historical and cultural legacies and internal diversities (Yi 2010, 471).

However, it is important to note that South Korean governments targeted the capitalist success of the empire, not its sociocultural advancement such as democracy. Thus, the racial and ethnic pride of South Koreans to identify their native country with the empire was mainly rooted in its economic development as a symbol of success in capitalist society. We remember that Filipino elites historically built their intra-Asian hierarchy based on their pride in Westernization and modernization—in particular, in sociocultural dimensions. In this context South Koreans' racial pride and discrimination against (economically) poor Southeast Asians can be challenged when they encounter middle-class Filipinos who claim sociocultural as well as economic advancement.

South Korean "Half-Retirees" in the Philippines

In January 2006 a series of five South Korean TV documentaries, *Screening Humanity* (*Ingan kŏkjang*), featured a couple in their early sixties who had retired and were enjoying a luxurious life in Baguio. This TV program first introduced the idea of retirement migration to the Philippines as an

alternative route to affordable retirement. The program showed how the couple was living "like royalty" on US$2,000 a month. In particular, the couple's daily golf playing and the presence of a domestic worker significantly impressed viewers. Many of the retirees whom I met during my fieldwork specifically commented that they chose the Philippines after watching that television series. One Korean informant said that because of this TV program the South Korean population in Baguio had tripled since the mid-2000s.

But the sudden increase in the number of South Korean retirees in the Philippines would not be possible without the attractive policy changes that the Philippines adopted. Most of the retirees I met in several cities in the Philippines hold Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV), which was designed to make the Philippines known as a "retirement haven" (PRA 2013). Since the mid-2000s, the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA), which was founded in 1985, made a strong effort to attract more foreign retirees by implementing new programs. In particular, the 2006 policy change to reduce the required deposit investment (*Philippine Retirement News* 2007) bolstered the number of South Korean visa holders. Before 2006 foreigners between 35 to 49 years of age needed to deposit US$70,000, and those over 50 years old needed to deposit US$50,000 in a designated Philippine bank. However, the monetary requirement was lowered to US$50,000 and US$20,000, respectively, in 2006. In 2009 the PRA reformed its policy once again by introducing another program, allowing foreigners between 35 to 49 years old to be issued SRRV with a US$20,000 deposit. This required amount is comparatively lower than that of neighboring countries such as Malaysia, providing the Philippines the competitive edge needed to attract more foreign retirees.[7] Not surprisingly, the number of South Koreans who applied for the SRRV has increased rapidly since 2006. It rose from 371 in 2005 to 1,178 in 2006 and to 1,255 in 2007 (Chang 2009). From January to August 2013 it rose further to 2,388. From 1987 to 2013 the total number of South Korean SSRV holders reached 31,278.[8] South Korean nationals now rank second to the Chinese among the SRRV holders (PRA 2015).

Interestingly, although the number of South Korean SRRV holders has greatly increased, most of the visa holders hardly classify as "retirees" in the traditional sociological sense. It should be noted that wage labor has long been regarded as the core of the "rationalization of society" (Weber 1958). From this perspective people choose formal education in order to gain

credentials and acquire a job, in which promotion is based on years of service until one reaches retirement—assuming that retirement funds are correctly calculated to support postretirement lives. This traditional view constructed workers' lives around the temporality of wage labor (Thompson 1967), with retirement often understood as the antithesis of labor and work and largely conceived as a practice of the middle classes who could be compensated for their long years of wage work (Mills 1951; Vogel 1963; Oliver 2008; see Lynch 2012). Against this traditional view of retirees, South Korean retirees in the Philippines are too young and do not have enough financial basis to secure their postretirement lives.

South Korean retirees themselves acknowledge their difference from other "Western" retirees by providing interesting self-distinctions. For example, Myeong (2013) looked very puzzled when I told him that I was studying South Korean retirees in the Philippines. He said that I might not be able to find any "pure retirees" because most South Koreans with special retiree visas like himself were in fact only "half retirees"—people who continued to make money while enjoying free time and peace of mind (*yŏyu*) on the journey to becoming "pure retirees." As noted earlier, most of these self-proclaimed half-retirees were forced out of their jobs when they were in their early fifties (or even forties) due to neoliberal labor reforms in South Korea in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. They tried to open small businesses in the Philippines such as real estate agencies, Korean restaurants, and boarding houses serving other South Koreans who come to the Philippines as students, tourists, and missionaries.

Jo, who works in one of the South Korean marketers for the SRRV in Manila, echoed this distinction between "pure" and "half" retirees in the Philippines. When asked who those South Korean SRRV holders were, he said,

> The majority of the (South Korean) SRRV holders in the Philippines are not *real* retirees, but most of them have very diverse reasons to obtain the visa. The biggest population of SRRV holders were mothers of "geese family" [*kirŏgi kajok*, in which the male family breadwinner earns money in South Korea while the mother and children are located abroad in English-speaking countries] to educate their children in English. The second population would be those over middle-aged couples who want to start some businesses here. (Jo 2013)

Choi (2013), one of the high-level staff members of the United Korean Community Association (UKCA),[9] specifically explained these half-retirees in line with the contemporary South Korean socioeconomic condition. He understood these newcomers to be *"aiemep* (IMF) generation, those who lost their businesses during and after the IMF [Asian financial crisis], often come to the Philippines to find another chance to live. . . . That's why most of them have some inevitable reasons (*p'ich'i mothal sajŏng*) not to come back to Korea" (ibid.).

Thus, the conditions of the two countries—the postfinancial crisis in South Korea and drastic reduction in visa deposit requirements in the Philippines—opened a window for South Korean "half-retirees," who had lost their financial stability in their home country. This characteristic contributed negatively to the relationship between these South Koreans and Filipinos. In other words, the limited experiences of this particular Korean population shored up the geographical distance between the two countries based on the racial imagination of South Koreans.

Retirees' Racial Superiority amid Difficulties in Their Lives

The limited experiences of South Korean retirees can be analyzed in three ways. First, most of these South Korean "half-retirees" in the Philippines have little international exposure. Second, their strong intention to rest emotionally in the place that does not threaten their confidence prevents them from intermingling with the locals. Lastly, their business engagement to earn money in the Philippines intensifies tensions with Filipinos.

First, South Korean retirees who are now in their mid-fifties and sixties belong to the generation that had no access to international travel until they reached the age of at least 30 years old. The South Korean military regimes had strictly controlled international travel; only in 1989 did the government allow its citizens unrestricted international travel. When they were asked about their experience with international travel or residence before coming to the Philippines, many of my South Korean informants remarked that they were too busy to think of international travel "because of the hardship of living" (*mŏggo sanŭra pappa*). For many of them, particularly female participants,[10] the Philippines is the first foreign country they had experienced.

I do not intend to argue that people who lack experiences of international travel or residence are likely to have restricted understandings of other

cultures. Rather, I argue that given their limited experiences their racial pride based on economic development and their discriminatory perception of economically less advanced countries had never been challenged prior to retirement. Esteemed as hard workers and national heroes by the authoritarian regimes in South Korea, they belonged to the generation that embodied a wholehearted desire for economic development. Thus, their remarks about the Philippines echoed the military regimes' discrimination against less developed countries as racially inferior nations (Lee 2010). Without exception, all South Korean participants described the Philippines as an "economically poor" (*motsanŭn*) country, ignoring both historical and cultural heritages and the class variants within Philippine society.

Second, it is not easy for South Koreans to imagine learning about the local context before and after arrival in the Philippines because many of them came to the Philippines to recuperate their losses. They can recuperate emotional losses partly because they can act like middle or upper middle class in the Philippines with much less money than in Korea or in other economically advanced country. In other words, because of the cheaper price index in the Philippines than in South Korea, they can enjoy more affluent lives, and this helps them regain emotional comfort (i.e., the sense of middle-classness). However, this intention of crossing the border prevents them from learning about the local context prior to departure because they just want a place to "rest." The Cha couple in their early fifties exemplifies this attitude. The couple decided to settle down in Baguio after the husband's business in South Korea went bankrupt in 2008. Cha's wife (2013) said, "I cannot bear to see him [her husband] to be downed and disappointed after he went bankrupt. I thought maybe we need to find somewhere to rest." She uses "rest" not really in the sense of staying in a relaxing environment but of hiding in a place where "nobody knows us" because "in a small country like South Korea, it is so difficult to hide from all the rumors of failure." This idea of "rest" or "hide" is not unlike what Japanese sociologist Mika Toyota (2006) described among relatively young Japanese retirees who found it difficult to live in Japan after early retirement, so they moved to Southeast Asian countries in order not to lose face. Like these Japanese retirees, many South Korean retirees needed some place to escape from the judgmental gaze of kin and neighbors.

Nonetheless, these South Korean retirees were not totally ignorant of the history of the Philippines. In particular, my male informants were well

aware of the Philippines having been a much richer country than South Korea until the 1960s. Based on this historical fact, Hwang (2013), who came to Baguio in 2012 in his early fifties after deciding to quit his small self-employed job in Seoul, showed a critical stance both against fellow South Koreans and Filipinos:

> South Koreans who come to this land have some problems on their behaviors. They are not rich enough like Americans and Japanese but treated Filipinos in a very rude way. It is so absurd. . . The Philippines was very rich country even they fought against North Koreans for us during the Korean War and built *Changch'ung* Stadium and *Hannam* Bridge in Seoul. That is why the contemporary Filipinos think that South Koreans here are such an ass! . . . To [economically] develop, Filipinos need someone who are [sic] willing to sacrifice themselves just like the President, Park Chung-hee [but apparently they do not have the right one].

Despite being critical of fellow South Koreans, Hwang still ranked his country as superior to the Philippines based on economic development (i.e., US-Japan as better than South Korea, but South Korea better than the Philippines). He reiterated the idolization of success in capitalism. Moreover, in providing a solution to the Philippines, which he believed to be an underdeveloped and immature country, Hwang projected his paternal eyes on the Philippines and suggested the need for a paternal hero (i.e., Park Chung-hee). In this way, he did not necessarily lose his superior stance on the Philippines, but rather sustained emotional stability while maintaining critical views of both nationalities.

Lastly, South Korean retirees try to recover in their new country not only their emotional but also their economic losses. Costs of living in the Philippines are much lower than those in South Korea. However, the retirees are so young that they have children in their teens and early twenties who were accompanied by their parents to the Philippines to continue to study in this new land. Thus, many of the retirees engage in diverse forms of self-employment. Their businesses tend to target fellow South Koreans,[11] but through these businesses they encounter Filipinos, although in a very limited way. Most Filipinos they meet become their employees (such as drivers, helpers, and security guards). These retirees

tend to use their business experiences in the Philippines as the only window for understanding Filipino society. "Servant mentality" (*Noye kŭnsŏng*) is the word that South Korean informants use commonly to describe the Filipinos with whom they have been working. Sim, in his mid-fifties, opened a Korean restaurant in Ortigas Center, Pasig three years ago after closing his business in Seoul. He describes his impression of Filipino employees: "I think they have some servant mentality—they [employees] first ask money without any hesitation, but they do not work fast and do not work like an owner (*Chuin*). I feel like I am the only one who works in a right [fast] pace" (Sim 2014).

It might be true that an employee will not work like an owner. But what Sim wanted to say was not about the difference between employee and employer, but about "self-help" (*Chajo*) mentality, which he strongly believed was what spurred South Korean economic development, the basis of his claim to racial superiority. As one of the three main principles of the New Community Movement (*Saemaŭl undong*) launched by President Park in the early 1970s, self-help was highly valued as a way of living: not asking for help (from the nation) but being responsible (for their poverty) (Kim 2011). Thus, the "servant mentality" in Sim's remark does not refer to a servile attitude but to the attitude that is unlike that of the master or owner (*Chuin*). By asserting this self-help mentality as a secret foundation for economic development, Sim attempts to revive his class mobility in the Philippines. In other words, since South Korean retirees like Sim are desperate to make money in their new businesses, they keep evaluating the Filipinos' work ethic, which they observe to be different from that of South Koreans. Sim (2014) further contrasted the work ethic of the Filipino as individualistic, which stemmed from Western imperialism:

I think Filipinos'/Filipinas' work ethic are the result of years of long Western colonial occupation. With the US influence, they have very individualistic and liberalistic idea—for example, they never overwork but follow the labor standard. They also respect gender equality a lot—the most often conflictual cases between South Korean [male] employers and [female] employees would be sexual harassment. They [Filipina employees] just make a lawsuit against us with very, very trivial things. I think they imported very useless culture from the US.

For middle-aged South Koreans like Sim, who upholds the Korean way of economic development (through sacrifice and masculine heroes), the allegedly US-influenced individualism, democracy, and consumerism seem to be useless for national (economic) development. In this way Sim interestingly echoes the idea of the Orient–Occident binary by locating himself in a communal and traditional Orient unlike the Filipinos. He reduces the democratic ideas of individual rights and gender equality to weaknesses or barriers to the development of the Philippines into an economically stronger nation.

Voluntary Social Isolation and Korean–Filipino Relations

South Koreans' pride in the economic advancement and racial superiority of their native country is challenged when they encounter the sociocultural modernity that Filipinos express. Filipinos' proficiency in English is an instance that complicates the confidence of South Korean retirees who feel vulnerable because of the possibility of a hierarchal subversion with respect to the "English capital" of the Philippines. Here we need to note that, since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, English has emerged as one of the most important assets for economic success in both the domestic and international arenas for South Koreans (Park 2010, 2011). With their strong desire to incorporate themselves into the global market, South Koreans strive to purchase English capital (giving rise to an English fever), which they believe will give them a global competitive edge. To obtain this capital, numerous South Koreans have left for English-speaking countries (the "education exodus"; Abelmann et al. 2015), with the Philippines as one of these destinations for people who have limited finances.[12]

In this context South Korean retirees feel threatened by Filipinos' English capital, which they value highly as a basic condition for success and social mobility. While residing in the Philippines, I encountered many South Koreans who said that they were surprised to find that "these people can speak English." The South Koreans' reference to "these people" suggested that Filipinos are inferior yet have much better English than South Koreans. In other words, for South Koreans, the Filipinos' ability to speak good English is one obstacle to their full-fledged claim of pride over Filipinos. In this sense it is also hard for some South Koreans to admit that they came to the Philippines to *learn* something that would make them global citizens. Hwang (2013) attempts to justify this dilemma by saying, "If the Philippines

did not have English capital, no South Koreans would choose to come here. Filipinos were compensated for the loss of [their] nation [to the US] with English." In reducing Filipinos to free riders in obtaining their English-speaking ability and erasing the tragic colonial history, Hwang limits his act of learning to mere consumption.

The dissatisfaction is not unilateral. With their increasing number, the South Koreans' unwillingness to mingle with local people and their voluntary isolation of themselves have been sarcastically labeled by the local media as the "Korean invasion" (*GoodNews Pilipinas* 2007). It indicates that South Koreans in the Philippines have purchased land parcels and buildings even by illegal means, so that the term "Korean invasion" embeds the anxieties of Filipinos as they observe this takeover of Filipino properties. Given this narrative of invasion, Filipino informants expressed surprise at how and why South Koreans have tremendous wealth that they can bring to the Philippines. Dan (2015), one of the government officers of Clark Development Corporation (CDC), expressed much curiosity about the huge increase in the population of South Koreans in the Clark Freeport Zone: "Do you know why there are so many wealthy Koreans? Does the Korean government give money to those Koreans who want to move to other countries, in order for them to invest on respective countries?" Dan found it very odd to see South Koreans becoming wealthy investors in the Philippines, but he never questioned the status of Japanese and Americans as old-time investors in Clark.

This expression of wonder echoes Lagon's nostalgic account of her experience in South Korea. Lagon, who runs a retail shop on Friendship Highway, at Korean town in Angeles City, visited Seoul in 1986 to purchase cheap construction equipment. She said, "At that time, South Korean products were pretty cheaper. . . . And, I did not need to have visas to enter South Korea unlike today" (Lagon 2015). Considering that the current South Korean government is eager to call Filipino comers without visas "illegal migrants," her nostalgic comment echoes Dan's wonder at South Korea's sudden claim to be an investor country. Both Dan and Lagon never specifically criticized South Koreans' attitude or business practices, but their understanding of South Koreans' sudden visibility in the Philippines might indicate a reluctance to accept South Korea as a developed and an investor country.

Another response from Filipinos is their concern or discomfort over South Koreans' exclusiveness. Constantine (2013) expressed a view that she

shared with her two female friends, all of them PhD students and lecturers in a local university in Baguio; they specifically mentioned the changes in the city space with South Korean newcomers: "The only things that I noticed as change with the emergence of South Koreans are rising cost of rent and a number of all-Korean style residences. Other than that, I think South Koreans just well blended in the city." Later, however, she clarified what she meant by "blend in":

> Well, honestly, I think they silently blended in our middle-class residences and facilities like Starbucks, but never share any other things, such as jeepney. I mean they share time and space with us but [that is all] . . . they never intermingle with us. I assume the only Filipino they know would be their employees who can only say "sir" and "ma'am." I think that is why they often look down [on] us. (ibid.)

South Korean retirees succeed in entering middle-class residences with their economic capital. However, Filipino neighborhoods acknowledge that South Koreans are not ready or do not intend to mingle with the Filipino middle classes of the city. Notably the exclusiveness of the ethnic Korean community, the so-called ethnic enclave, is not unique to South Korean immigrants in the Philippines. Studies on South Korean communities in other countries, particularly in the US, have discovered similarly insulated Korean communities in cities (see Abelmann and Lie 1997; Young 2012). But there is a difference. Whereas Korean American communities in the US have tended to be isolated due to linguistic barriers and the difficulties for them to be included in mainstream society (Abelmann and Lie 1997), South Koreans in the Philippines *voluntarily* choose to be isolated or rarely show their intention to be included in Filipino society. In other words, whereas Korean communities in other countries, particularly in the West, target eventual adaptation to the host society as generations go by (Yoon 2012), South Korean retirees hardly show any intention toward adaptation to the Philippines.[13]

Conclusion

Given the historically developed geographical imagination of Filipinos and South Koreans toward the other, the imagined distance and hierarchical relation between the two have been reinforced and challenged through

encounters and nonencounters with each other. An important factor in the relations between South Koreans and Filipinos is the system of racial hierarchy that developed throughout the colonial and postcolonial histories of each country, which have resulted in intra-Asian hierarchies held by both groups. Shedding light on racial relations between postcolonial countries that have been lacking in race studies, this article has shown how, among South Korean retirees in the Philippines, the imaginary distance between the two countries has widened. Thus, although South Koreans have become the largest group of foreigners visiting the Philippines (Philippine Department of Tourism 2016), the historically formed intra-Asian hierarchy and geographical distance between the two countries has not narrowed. The South Korean retirees' feelings of superiority and their exclusiveness, amid efforts to overcome the failures that led to forced retirement, are often challenged by the sociocultural advancement that the Filipino middle classes have achieved. We need to continuously pay attention to this conflictual space between the two in order to figure out how it affects their perceptions of the other.

Nevertheless, despite this conflicted encounter between South Korean retirees and Filipinos, a seemingly contrary interaction between the two nations can be observed at the same time. Elements of Korean pop culture, particularly Koreanovelas (Korean TV dramas), have gained popularity in the Philippines. The genre of Korean pop cultures imported into the islands has diversified, ranging from the Korean pop music to the game industry. As a result, the number of Filipino youngsters who like Korean culture has increased, and young Filipinos enjoy Korean pop cultures in diverse ways, from simple consumption to creating fandoms. At the same time, new areas of encounter have emerged as South Korean teenagers, who have come to the Philippines with their retired parents, study under the Filipino educational system. Without adequate ethnographic data, we cannot conclude how these new encounters between the young people of the two countries differ from their parents' generation. Further studies, therefore, need to expand toward diverse generational interactions.

Notes

1   Throughout this article I use "Filipino" to refer to members of the ethnic group in both masculine and feminine genders.

2   In this article I use "South Korea" to avoid error in most cases; but "Korea" is also used where I refer to the Korean peninsula before the division in 1948.

3   As of 2012 the life expectancy among South Korean women is 84 years, and among men it is 79 years (UNFPA).

4   There are several South Korean companies and personnel working as marketers in the issuance of the SRRVs. The list of the companies can be found in PRA n.d.

5   In 1929 the average monthly income for labor was KRW10; thus, KRW50 was too expensive for ordinary Koreans to pay. Carrying a Japanese passport was also an almost impossible condition for Koreans (Yi 2006).

6   Throughout this article, I use "mestizo" to refer to both masculine and feminine gender.

7   For example, Malaysia's "My Second Home Program" requires foreigners who are below 50 years old to deposit MYR300,000 (approximately US$93,500) and those 50 years old and above to deposit MYR150,000 (approximately US$47,000) (Malaysia My Second Home Program 2013).

8   Based on a personal interview with Jo (2013), a South Korean staff in SRRVs marketers.

9   Founded in 1978, UKCA is the largest South Korean civilian federation in the Philippines. Although not a government institution, it is supported by Korean government institutions such as the Korean Embassy and the Korean Cultural Center. It has more than fifteen regional offices throughout the Philippines.

10   Male participants had several experiences of business trips even though they were often restricted to only several days in Western countries. However, most of the female participants, wives of male informants, were housewives and had limited experience in international travel.

11   South Koreans who open new businesses in the Philippines tend to target fellow South Koreans exclusively because they believe the economically poor living standard of Filipinos would not make them deserving customers. They forget the existence of the rich upper and middle classes.

12   In 2010 26,823 South Koreans received Special Study Permits (SSP) in the Philippines, and South Korea ranked first among countries that receive SSP (*Manila Bulletin* 2011).

13   South Korean informants hardly show their willingness to be adapted into mainstream Filipino society because many of them temporarily come to these islands for resting. However, they also acknowledge that their unwillingness is partly because to them the Philippines is not a country that wants to accept immigrants, what with its emphasis on complicated regulations for foreigners to obtain citizenship in the Philippines.

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