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# A Study on Chinese Image in Korean Chinese Literature

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## Introduction

The thesis is to investigate Chinese images in Korean-Chinese short stories and novels on the principles of imagologie, focusing on the works of writers, such as Guo-zhe Cui, Yu-nan Piao, Jin-ji Jin, Cheng-xi Zhao, Guang-xun Yu, and Zheng-nan Liu. According to the imagologie, the “other” refers to the image of foreign countries, so it appears unreasonable to apply the “other” to Korean Chinese and Han Chinese since they are living in the same country with the same citizenship. Korean Chinese people inhabit in a multi-ethnic country, China, but since the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, they have been in South Korea to realize their Korean Dreams for 30 years where they confronted the confusion and conflicts of identity. They have been at a loss in the margin of South Korea and China, because they have been recognized as “others” in both countries. Therefore, Korean Chinese people can be studied as “exotic others”.

### 1. The most competitive rival for survival--- Han nationality

Guo-zhe Cui has created various images including Korean Chinese and Han Chinese, paying special attention to the relationship between Korean Chinese and other nationalities in the context of Korean Dreams, trend of urbanization, and torment and collapse of Korean Chinese rural communities. In his short story, *One Summer Day* (2008), he described a strong, low-witted, reckless, rough, and impulsive Korean Chinese man. To revenge for the villagers, he rushed into Mr. Liangs’ villa construction site, and pasted framework and substruction stone with cow manure. Later he was fooled by the Liangs’ conciliatory move, and even caught snakes for Wangsan’s snake soup restaurant in the villa, but was hit and killed by a rock. His image represents Korean Chinese farmers who were excluded from other nationalities and isolated by urbanization and industrialization.

Yu-nan Piao’s short story, *Birds’ Nest* (2005) exposes the reality of Korean Chinese rural communities which were broken up and encroached by Han Chinese. The Korean Chinese primary

school for Korean pupils were sold to Han Chinese and converted into a sheepfold. The vivid description, “School signboard was split into two pieces by the axe and embedded in the classroom window”, is the symbol of fragmentation and collapse of Korean Chinese rural communities. If the nest broke up, would eggs be flourishing? At the sight of school which was converted into sheep shelter, Cheng-zhu, the hero in the story, was lost in thought. “All of a sudden I felt the sheep much happier than me. While my own house has vanished, the sheep could live in such a good tile-roofed brick house far beyond their fortune.” What a heart-breaking paradox and irony!

Jin-ji Jin’s short novel *Moonlight Dance* (2015), reveals clearly the miserable consequences due to the departure of hometown and the break up of Korean Chinese society. In the novel, prolonged life power of Han Chinese who put down roots in one place and live there from generation to generation, and immigration spirit of Korean Chinese who floated like duckweed, are depicted comparatively. A Korean Chinese fellow named You, denotative meaning of having much property, had been doing business in the South of China for ten years. Without even mere 30000 Chinese Yuan, he had run for three days from the southern end to the northeast of China in hope of getting help from his Chinese friend Malaoer in the hometown. In front of high gate of Malaoer’s house with the head of a dragon engraved in it, he was low in spirit and hesitated to go in. He was lost in fantasy of bear dancing merrily in the deep forest in the moonlight. The giant bear was just the phantom of his Chinese friend Malaoer, who was living with a strong will and mind. Compared to Malaoer, he was the representation of poor Korean Chinese who floated like seaweeds for nothing in the process of pursuing Korean Dreams and urbanization.

## 2. Cultural differences between Korean Chinese and Han Chinese and grief of assimilation

Succeeded by *Birds’ Nest*, Yu-nan Piao’s another short story, *Ant River*, was published. It is a story about a cultural boundary between Korean Chinese and Han Chinese in a mixed residence area. There lied two villages as neighbors inhabited by Korean Chinese and Han Chinese respectively along both sides of the river which is as narrow as a slim waist of ant. Two young people with different custom and habit from the two villages fell in love with each other but ended in tragedy. A Korean Chinese girl, Xin-yu, was longing to get married with a veteran in olive uniform. Unfortunately, the veteran whom she had a secret crush on, had a girl friend. Then she fell in love with the youngest son of the Sun family, a Han Chinese man whose family was running a bean curd mill. A rumor spread so widely that her parents got to know the fact, and she was beaten harshly by her father. The next day, females in the Korean Chinese village hauled the girl out and criticized her indignantly about her evil behavior. Then the following day, she was found a body dead in a bend of Ants River.

The death of Korean Chinese girl had been a distant past. A young man got some money from his elder sister who labored hard in South Korea to support him. Owing to his sister’s help, he could

marry a Han Chinese girl. Looking back on the tragic love of Xin-yu, people in Korean Chinese village should have felt proud of having a Han Chinese girl as a bride. But as the wedding scene showed, Korean Chinese village had been encroached on by Han Chinese. Compared to the active behavior of the Chinese bride who followed the natural rules of Han Chinese, Korean Chinese bridegroom looked shabby and humble. What would be the future of Korean Chinese bridegroom in the stream of Chinese culture? Yu-nan Piao's another short story, *Eldest Grandson*, gives hints to the problem.

Eldest grandson in Korean Chinese culture has the great responsibility of succeeding to the family line and performing ancestral rites. The hero in the story had studied in a Chinese school, favored Chinese food rather than Korean Chinese food, and preferred not working in spite of healthy and handsome looks. He was often captivated by the charms of women, had been married many times, and eventually was dying in the arm of a Chinese woman. The woman, however, did not shed even a single tear, while the mourners were playing mahjong whole night. The first brother-in-law took away his hunting rifle, the second brother-in-law took away the boots, and the third brother-in-law and sister-in-law were quarreling about the ownership of the motorcycle. There rang the plaintive horn, and the hero looked like an animal even without a picture of himself. According to Korean Chinese custom, a portrait of the deceased should be held by an intimate family member during the funeral. Reflecting on the reality of losing the land which had been cultivated by ancestors with sweat and blood, of losing their own language and words, and above all of losing the site of national education, the eldest grandson was not merely a fictional character. This story regrets deeply the hopeless collapse of Korean Chinese rural communities and is satirizing the Korean Chinese society which is now being assimilated effortlessly by Han Chinese.

### 3. Understanding of Han Chinese and the Imagination of Multi-Coexistence

Cheng-xi Zhao's *Childhood* (1999) visualizes the fateful coexistence and syncretic logic of the Han Chinese and Korean Chinese. "Childhood" is a masterpiece characterized by dreamy realism. In the lower village there is a Korean family, and in the upper village there is a Han family. An elder Korean bachelor falls into love with a Chinese girl in the upper village and on the other hand, the black male dog from upper village finds a white bitch in the lower town and mates. The Korean bachelor is hit almost to death by the Chinese ones who are jealous of him, while the black dog is bitten and torn by the male dogs from lower village. What's quite unexpected and strange is that in the spring of the following year, the white bitch in the lower town has several babies and all the puppies are stained. It's really a humorous piece that depicts between the peoples the antagonism and cultural friction as well as the fate of its fateful coexistence and fusion.

Guang-xun Wu's *Kajiburi* created a unfortunate image of a Han Chinese single man living in the countryside in the background of the "Cultural Revolution". The main character of this work, "Kajiburi", is often teased as a fool in this village, and it is only my father and mother who are

Korean Chinese but sympathize with and would like to help him. It is also my father and mother who feed corn porridge to “Kaji-bori”, who came back after being excluded for many months. Therefore, “Kajiburi” bows nine times with the highest courtesy to my father and mother, from which we can see he has some knowledge of the “Analects of Confucius”, which means he cares about ritual practices like returning favors. In fact, he was the son of a landowner and a minor officer of the Nationalist Party and participated in the anti-Japanese war too, but because of the time when one’s fate was determined by the individual’s identity, he had to live an inhuman life.

The story, *Neighborhood In the Spacious Yard* (Jeng-nun Liu, 2016) in a humorous and witty way centers on the prototypical temperament and personality of the Han through the customary scenes. This work portrays in depth the economic discernment and diligence of Jang gombo, which is kind of different from the characters of Korean-Chinese villagers. Jang gombo makes money by raising pigs as well as chickens and ducks in a wide enclosure. In addition, his family do farming as well, which the Korean-Chinese do not even care, and finally becomes the richest in the village. It is the topic of his family how to earn money even while having meals. Jang gombo grows up a boar and earns money through its running with the sows from other families. Through the daily life of Jang gombo and his family, this work vividly portrays the temperament and personality of the simple and diligent Han people free from ostentation.

Despite the above meaning, the symbolization of the Han Chinese in the Korean-Chinese novels still seems hard to get rid of the social collective imagination of our nation. The collective imagination of our nation against the Han and China is generally characterized through the tendency to demonize the Han, while it has undergone several stages of change. The Hans are often described as those who are either lechers or misers who know nothing but money just like the image of the “Wang Seo-bang”, or of Kim Dong-in’s “Potato” in the 1920s, as well as the image like “A. Q”, who acts like a fool. In today’s Korean-Chinese novels, idealized characters begin to be created, but the depiction of their externalities still does remain in the limits of the above-mentioned collective imagination. In other words, we not only need to look deeper into their prototype image but also to explore their inner world, which has changed with their temperament and personality.

The images of the Hans and China recently described in the Korean-Chinese novels are mainly presented through the depiction about the Han-Chinese people living in rural areas. It is necessary to widen the viewpoint both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, with the view of the anti-Japanese fighters who carried on the dual mission of liberation of China and the liberation of the motherland after the Revolution of 1911, and through the communication with the highest elites from different fields, it’s available to create the image of the elites from the highest level of Chinese society and also advisable to deal with the image of both Chinese citizens from various levels and urban citizens who live an active life in large cities. In other words, we should open up new horizons of recognition of various Han Chinese by the means of visualization of individual characters