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**THE CULTURE OF SCIENTIFIC WORK:
PHILOSOPHY AND EXPERIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

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The modern Korean culture of scientific work has been formed for at least the last century and a half – since the beginning of modernization processes in this country. It is determined by the peculiarities of economic development in the Republic of Korea, as well as its national traditions. Korean scholars put forward a two-culture model to explain the public understanding of science, but this model can also be applied to understanding the Korean culture of scientific work. The philosophy of self-restraint and dedication to national interests has produced the effect that in Korean society in general and in Korean science in particular, harmony is achieved in certain issues where conflicts and misunderstandings continue in Western science. Thus, in the economic, political and cultural plane, a combination of elements of the limited access order and the open access order, which were conceptualized by Douglas North and co-authors as incompatible, is consistently traced. A developed culture of critical thinking does not degenerate into unlimited skepticism about science due to trust in science as the main source of acceleration of national modernization and growth of social well-being. Strict executive discipline at work, due to the thousand-year tradition of resistance to external aggression and the relatively recent semi-military rule of the third president of the Republic of Korea, General Park Chung-hee, does not turn into excessive authoritarianism in the economy thanks to the developed general democratic culture in the Republic of Korea and the reduction of the dominant influence of the chaebols in the economy. However, even today's K-pop youth culture has some characteristics of chaebol corporate culture with its extreme commitment to shared values. The cultural gap between generations, which is inevitable during accelerated social modernization, does not develop into permanent political revolutions, because it is mitigated by the influence of religions and national traditions.

Keywords: culture of scientific work; chaebols; national traditions; philosophy of values; Republic of Korea; two-culture model

Introduction

The Republic of Korea is known for the fact that at one time it was able to effectively adopt many technologies and achievements of modern science from the West. However,

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in recent years, this country itself has shown high scientific achievements – it is enough to mention Samsung’s successful competition with Apple. The reason for this can be considered the special culture of work in general and in particular the special culture of scientific work, which is a synthesis of the thousand-year-old cultural traditions of Korea with the modern culture of the West. This postmodern synthesis can provide useful data for the most economically developed countries of the world and can clearly serve as a model for the development of the culture of scientific work in Ukraine.

Researchers from the Republic of Korea, however, see a certain problem in the development of the culture of science in their country: “the two-culture model of public understanding of science, which posits that a shift from an industrializing to a post-industrial society is accompanied by a transition from a culture of idealized science to a culture of skepticism” [Kim et al. 2023]. But this problem probably does not so much signal a crisis in the development of Korean science, but rather gives a key to understanding the superiority of the Korean way of scientific work. We assume that the two-culture model is pervasive for Korean science not only in the dimensions of skepticism/belief, industrialism/post-industrialism, but also in the dimensions of generations, political systems, etc.

Korean philosophers themselves doubt about modern Korean philosophy identity – especially compared to the great history of world philosophy [Jeong 2014; Kim 2019; Lee 2012; Lee 2018; Park 2018; Yoo 2020]. Ralf Beuthan noted that “the current situation cannot be understood solely in terms of history of philosophy or research-historical contexts, but that the specifics of Korean philosophy in research and teaching can only be adequately explained against the background of far-reaching and partly global political and cultural-historical contexts” [Beuthan 2020, 289]. He mentioned “the particularly pluralistic character” of Korean philosophy and “the direct influence of global axes of conflict and the resulting accelerated dynamic of cultural changes on philosophy” [Beuthan 2020, 289]. So we try to trace this influence, but in parallel taking into account the dominant economic impact on the development of science in South Korea. We take the South Korean philosophy as some kind of practical philosophy par excellence.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate on the example of South Korean science that the two-culture model of scientific work is a culture of overcoming contradictions.

To demonstrate the strong and weak sides of the two-culture model of scientific work we turned to such methods as institutional analysis, the structural approach and the philosophy of values. The institutional approach was based on the principles of neo-institutionalism, which reveal the possibilities of organized influence on institutional changes – including in the field of science. This approach has been demonstrated in particular by Douglas North and his co-authors, as well as by Daren Acemoglu and James Robinson [North et al. 2009; Acemoglu, Robinson 2019]. The structural approach makes it possible to correlate the institutional influence with its social results, in particular to reveal the connection between various manifestations of the culture of scientific work and the results of state policy regarding science. This approach, in particular, is found in the study of Joe Studwell [Studwell 2013]. Finally, turning to the philosophy of values is of crucial importance for understanding the foundations of Korean culture, namely, finding out in which way Korean science reflects a postmodern synthesis, a respectful inheritance of Confucian traditions and a weighted borrowing of the best achievements of Western modernization.

The study of Korean science by Sei-Hill Kim [Kim 2016; Kim 2017; Kim et al. 2023] as well as some studies of the Korean way of doing things by other Korean, Western, and Ukrainian researchers became the guiding thread in our assessment of modern Korean science.

Skepticism and Faith in Science

The growth of the culture of skepticism appears as an unexpected consequence of the growth of the general culture of critical thinking, characteristic of the modern West in general and modern Western science in particular [Kim et al. 2023]. Some experts note

that Korean academic system is similar to European in the orientation on cultivation of critical thinking: “The Scandinavian and South Korean educational systems hailed as the best in the world focuses highly on critical thinking and analysis”¹. The new generation perceives science no longer as an achievement, but as something self-evident and appropriate in modern society, but also as a source of increasing demands on an individual to respond to rapid technological changes that do not always look useful and necessary. This gives rise to a skeptical attitude towards science as something somewhat intrusive and not always friendly to the individual. Moreover, science not only does not solve some environmental, economic, political problems, but also contributes to their multiplication. The role of science in the recent Covid-19 pandemic is ambiguously perceived in society.

Democratic Style and Strict Discipline

The opposition of political regimes in South and North Korea is obvious, but social criticism according to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno [Horkheimer, Adorno 1998] obliges us to consider any mass society, including a democratic one, as being threatened by totalitarianism. And accordingly, South Korea had to perform some political tasks, inevitably similar to the tasks in North Korea – first of all, the implementation of social modernization. The ways of its implementation must be different in a democratic and a totalitarian society, but the goals of achieving the desired success turn out to be quite close. From 1963 to 1979, the third president of the Republic of Korea, General Park Chung-hee, ruled in a style very similar to a dictatorship, but he guided Korea with a firm hand along the path of national modernization [Studwell 2013]. We now see much more democratic elements in Korean economic culture, but Koreans’ memory of possible state pressure is still fresh and doing its job of underpinning democratic freedoms with the executive discipline of conscious citizens.

Korean science is an integral part of Korean economy and Korean science culture is an integral part of Korean economic culture. So, post-war Korea had the same democratic and at the same time mobilization goal – to carry out accelerated national modernization. Sei-Hill Kim stated that “Korea has a long cultural tradition that envisions science and technology as tools for national empowerment” [Kim 2017, 317].

Any efficient economy and successful political system must motivate its citizens to actively participate in important national development projects. In the 1940s and 1950s, this was also the goal of the post-war democratic countries of Europe and the USA. And some social policies in these countries formally looked like populist policies in totalitarian regimes [Horkheimer, Adorno 1998]. This was dictated by the need to accelerate and deepen the modernization of the economy and society as a whole.

Sei-Hill Kim notes that “many dictatorial regimes in the twentieth century were deeply committed to modernizing their nations, albeit in their own ways, going beyond the top-down subjugation of a victimized population” [Kim 2016, 81]. The success of such regimes was due not only rough coercion and totalitarian ideology, but Kim demonstrates that “twentieth-century dictatorships were able to garner mass consent or voluntary participation through a set of modern practices and institutions that aimed to fulfill the collective yearning for social renovation and allowed the possibility of self-empowerment from below” [Kim 2016, 81].

Kim argued that mass dictatorships were starving to strengthen their own national states and scientists often helped them to achieve this aim.

“First, modern science and technology served as potent symbols and markers of national strength and unity. Second, science and technology were actively mobilized by the state, with considerable support from below, to materialize the vision of a self-reliant political economy. Third, science and technology formed the basis of a technocratic logic of authoritarian governance, through which major political economic decisions were made. Finally, science and technology were also integral to biopolitical projects that sought to discipline the masses and to create a healthy and productive nation” [Kim 2016, 82].

So, in contemporary Republic Korea the country's leadership democratic style goes hand in hand with the strict self-discipline of its citizens.

Chaebol Structured Industry and Liberal Social Media of Pop Culture

President Park Chung-hee ruled in a style very similar to a dictatorship, but he provided state support, which was the impetus for the birth of leading Korean corporations – Hyundai, Lucky-Goldstar (LG), Samsung and some others [Studwell 2013]. Leigh Dayton wrote for *Nature* that “Crucially, strong support for R&D was central to his first Five-Year Economic Development Plan in 1962 and manifest in his establishment of the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) in 1966, and the Ministry of Science and Technology the following year” [Dayton 2020].

The Korean name for this multi-industry corporation, which has become something like a family for millions of Koreans, is “chaebol” – industrial holding/conglomerate owned by a family clan. State protectionism and tight management within the chaebols created the so-called Korean economic miracle [Amsden 1992].

New York Times journalists Victoria Kim and Daisuke Wakabayashi stated that “the total sales of the five largest conglomerates have consistently made up more than half of South Korea's gross domestic product in the past 15 years”, so that the dominance of chaebols is beyond doubt.

“For decades, South Korea's economy has been dominated by a handful of family-run conglomerates that hold outsize wealth and influence and factor into nearly every aspect of life in the country... The Lee family of Samsung, the Koos of LG, the Cheys of SK, the Shins of Lotte and the Chungs of Hyundai are household names that have tightly held the reins of the companies that are some of the country's largest private sector employers” [Kim, Wakabayashi 2023].

Korean science is not exception from this rule. Researchers are usually employees of big corporations and are deeply incorporated in chaebol culture. New scientific organizations like POSTECH are not only the research centers, but think tanks too and the communicator between chaebol and consumers of scientific production all over the world.

“Ever since its establishment in 1986, POSTECH has endeavored to achieve excellence. POSTECH eventually became recognized as a top national academic institution offering one of the best Science and Technology programs within the Asian region in a short time... POSTECH was able to develop a wide range of innovative technologies and applications through seeking synergies that were available between industry and academia” [Cho 2014].

Many authors insist that the economic crisis of 1997/1998 and subsequent economic development forced economic reform in the Republic of Korea and reduced the role of the chaebols and raised the importance of middle and small businesses as a flexible and helpful addition to the big corporations [Aghion et al. 2021; Tomeczek 2023].

If chaebol exemplifies formal culture, the world-renowned Korean pop culture (K-pop) creates countless informal networks for young people [Lee et al. 2019; Rocha Nayelli, Ryzhkov 2023]. But obedience to pop idols is very similar to corporate culture, so K-pop looks like a mirror image of chaebol. Liberal social media has K-pop as a guide to a conflict-free coexistence with the strict politics of the state and chaebol.

Generation Gap and Confucianism

For the last 150 years in Korea there is situation of permanent social revolution, which is accompanied by a soft cultural revolution.

“As Korea was forced to open its doors from 1876 onward, however, a significant number of intellectuals and bureaucrats began to realize that the adoption of ‘things Western’ was unavoidable. Moderate reformists embraced what historians now term the ideology of tongdosōgi (東道西器: Eastern ways, Western technology) – i.e., mastering Western technology while retaining the Confucian social and moral order” [Kim 2017, 320].

During this period every new generation in Korea experienced a cultural gap with the previous generation.

But the cultural gap of generations did not lead to a permanent revolutionary situation: it is some kind of social contract between authorities and citizens – contract on national modernization. Unlike many Western countries, where state protectionism of private business was perceived as an opportunity to save costs as much as possible by reducing the quality of work, using the mafia tradition of weakening state checks for “friendly wards”, – Korean business, while receiving help from the state, also received increased state control. But what was even more important and perhaps even decisive – the state-supervised companies themselves and their employees considered it an honor to have state support and were ready to limit their own profits for the sake of the development of a common cause.

The provident role in such loyalty is played by four main religions in modern Korea – Confucianism [Gao and Chung 2023; Kim 2022; Lee 2023], Buddhism [Putro and Pamungkas 2017], Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) [Santiago-Vendrell, Im 2023; Yang 2020], Korean folk religion (Taoism and local Korean traditions) [Lim 2022]. Even if many contemporary Koreans declare their non-religious position, they demonstrate recognition of the authority of religion in Korean society.

Discussion

We suggest that the skeptical view of science is an external view of science: scientists themselves are not inclined to idealize science, but neither do they doubt its power. But that outside view is important when we need to fund research. So scientists need to coordinate the culture of scientific work with a culture of public understanding of science. This is especially important in a democratic society, if scientists work in the interests of civil society, and not individual elite groups, as in totalitarian societies. It is in industrial societies that political and economic elites seek to gain control over the social masses with the help of science. For this, they create hierarchical organizational structures in society and in science, other systems of strict social control and separation of the scientific elite from public access to their research. Inevitably, sooner or later this leads to the growth of authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies both in society and in science.

American researchers stated another problem – the presence of large remnants of the modern culture of science: “hierarchical structure, intense competition, excessive workload expectations, and lack of adequate financial support create an unhealthy work environment... underpaid and underappreciated students and postdocs” [Burns et al. 2023, 146]. These symptoms are typical for contemporary scientific workplace and cause the “toxic workplace culture” [Burns et al. 2023, 146]. These researches from Hawaii and University of Arizona suggest that one of the main problems lies in ineffective “organizational structures and operational mechanisms” and see diversity in STEM as the key to solving this problem. Perhaps this can help prevent some researchers from feeling “underpaid and alienated in academic research culture” [Burns et al. 2023, 146].

We can guess that this underrated scientific class is made up of many different minorities, but at the same time, a large part of the next generation of scientists. Because exactly young scientists are the first victims of “paucity of financial support... and the hierarchical framework that promotes unhealthy competition” [Burns et al. 2023, 146]. Therefore, the next generation of scientists looks like the main skeptic in science, but for the same reason also as the main scientific revolutionary.

Korean researchers demonstrated in sociological investigation that “perceived importance of economic development, scientific knowledge, ideology, uncertainty of scientific risks, and formal education mediated the link between age and perceived contributions of science” [Kim et al. 2023] with a certain increase in indicators and in a certain combination caused the growth of skepticism towards the importance of science. Probably, religious tolerance and respect to national traditions.

Some researchers suggest that it is some kind of generational conflict [Cho 2014], but one can easily read here rather the opposition between Northern and Southern Korean societies as an opposition between industrial and postindustrial types of culture, military and democratic style in management, two types of social order – according to Douglas North [North et al. 2019].

Novelty

However, science cannot but be an elitist enterprise: high scientific achievements are not available to everyone – both for their achievement and even for their understanding and adequate assessment of their significance. Therefore, modern science requires a well-thought-out balance and balanced combination of general social democracy and classical scientific elitism. We recognize the Korean experience of critical self-direction in combination with respect for traditions and persistent and dedicated work as worthy of study and reproduction. Respect for the values of the family, work, homeland combined with the granting of broad liberal rights to the individual is the worldview and methodological foundation that helps to identify the way in which scientists in the Republic of Korea manage to achieve the harmony of public demands and scientific interests in creating a special national culture of scientific work.

In culture of scientific work, as well as in political culture in Republic of Korea in general, we can trace different variations of an organic point combination of those two components that are considered incompatible in the West – limited-access type of social order and open-access type of social order. This combination is an integral result of a unique national design based on Korean traditions, perseverance and commitment to the national idea.

Conclusion

The development of the culture of scientific work in Korea is closely related to the economic development of Korea and Korean cultural traditions. The Korean two-culture model in scientific work has its economic, political, religious dimensions. Moreover it is two-culture model that reconciles the conflict between limited-access order and open-access order of social life. So Korean culture of scientific work is based on practical philosophy of common cause and personal responsibility.

¹ Sridhar G. (2020), “Critical Thinking, Or The Rise Of Benevolent Scepticism”, available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/critical-thinking-rise-benevolent-scepticism-dr-sridhar-g/> (accessed January 31, 2024).

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**Культура наукової роботи:
філософія і досвід Республіки Корея**

Сучасна корейська культура наукової роботи формувалася щонайменше останні півтора століття – від початку процесів модернізації в цій країні. Вона зумовлена особливостями розвитку економіки в Республіці Корея, а також її національними традиціями. Корейські науковці висувають модель двох культур для пояснення публічного розуміння науки, однак цю модель можна застосувати також і для розуміння корейської культури наукової роботи. Філософія самостриманості і відданості національним інтересам породила ефект, коли в корейському суспільстві загалом і в корейській науці зокрема досягають гармонії в окремих питаннях там, де в західній науці тривають конфлікти і непорозуміння. Зокрема, в економічній, політичній і культурній площині послідовно простежується поєднання елементів порядку лімітованого доступу та порядку відкритого доступу, які Дуглас Норт та співавтори концептуалізували як несумісні. Розвинена культура критичного мислення не перероджується в необмежений скептицизм щодо науки завдяки довірі до науки як основного джерела прискорення національної модернізації і зростання суспільного добробуту. Суворі виконавська дисципліна на роботі, зумовлена традиціями тисячолітнього протистояння зовнішній агресії та порівняно недавнім напіввмільтарним правлінням третього президента Республіки Корея генерала Пак Чон Хі, не переростає в надмірний авторитаризм в економіці завдяки розвиненій загальній демократичній культурі в Республіці Корея та зменшенню півного впливу чеболів в економіці. Втім, навіть сучасна молодіжна культура Кей-поп має деякі ознаки корпоративної культури чеболів з її граничною ангажованістю спільними цінностями. Культурний розрив між поколіннями, який є неминучим під час прискореної соціальної модернізації, не переростає в перманентні політичні революції, оскільки його пом'якшує вплив релігій та національних традицій.

Ключові слова: культура наукової роботи; модель двох культур; національні традиції; Республіка Корея; філософія цінностей; чеболи

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