

## Original Paper

# I am a Part of China, and China is Always in My Heart: Korean

## *Huaqiao in Abeojiwa Tanghuru*

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### **Abstract**

*Abeojiwa Tanghuru is a pioneer work in the history of ethnic groups' literature in Korea. The publication of this book not only signifies that the views of the ethnic groups have been accepted by modern Korean society, but also suggests the important role played by the literature of the Chinese in diversifying Korean literature. This paper, taking Yu Meiling and her book Abeojiwa Tanghuru as the object of study, reviews the history of Chinese immigration into Korea and their cultural memories and discusses the identity of Chinese in Korea, providing more literary perspectives and materials for historical and social studies.*

### **Keywords**

*Yu Meiling, Abeojiwa Tanghuru, Korean Huaqiao, collective memory, identity*

### **1. Introduction**

From 1882 till today, Korean *Huaqiao* (Note 1) have experienced different historical periods in both China and Korea. China has witnessed the governance of the Qing Dynasty, and the Republic of China, and the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949; the Korean Peninsula also witnessed multiple governments, including the Choson Dynasty, the Korean Empire, Republic of Korea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Consequently, Korean *Huaqiao*'s lives have always been influenced by the power discourses of both China and Korea. For the first few years after the Chinese community was formed in Korea, the Chinese were treated as honorable people from a country which enjoyed the dominant position in the suzerain-vassal relations. But during the Cold War, the Chinese in Korea were marginalized and forgotten by both China and Korea due to the difference in the ideologies of the two countries. This situation has been improved in some ways since the Sino-Korean diplomatic ties have

been established and China's voice has been increasingly heard. Nevertheless, *Huaqiao's* social status has not been improved substantially in Korea (Cheong & Lee, 2008, p. 147).

Against such a social background, both Chinese and Korean academia have been analyzing Korean *Huaqiao's* life, identity and behaviors from social and historical perspectives. A number of monographs have been published in China such as *The History of Overseas Chinese* by Yang Zhaoquan and Sun Yumei in 1991, *History of the Chinese in Korea* by Choe Seung-Hyeon in 2003 and *The Past and Present of Overseas Chinese in Korea* by Wang Shuling in 2013. Macro historical and sociological analyses have been made in these monographs on how Chinese community was built in the Korean Peninsula and how Chinese population was distributed there as well as their economic situation and education, though neglecting the endeavors that Chinese individuals made in Korea in different historical periods. In contrast, both macro studies and micro studies have been integrated in Korean academia. Li Yulian reviewed the historical and cultural development and changes of *Huaqiao* community in Korea in her doctorate dissertation in 2005. Later on, Korean academia made continuous efforts to draw a whole picture of history of Korean *Huaqiao* until Lee Jeong-Hui published in 2018 his monograph *A Country without Chinese* which makes a comprehensive analysis of the historical changes of Korean *Huaqiao*. In addition, in-depth analyses were made about the development of organizations founded by Korean *Huaqiao*, of the relations between Korean *Huaqiao* organizations with mainland China and of the relations between such organizations with Taiwan province of China (C. Lee, "Political Organization", 2011, pp. 41-85; K. Kim, 2016, pp. 157-189); these studies have also expounded on the life changes and identity of Korean *Huaqiao* by employing the cases of *Huaqiao* families and individuals residing outside Seoul (J. Kim, 2007, pp. 111-115; Kim et al., 2012, pp. 179-202). The multifaceted and in-depth research can not only advance the development of multicultural Korean society and Korean *Huaqiao* community, but also facilitate the construction of academic history of *Huaqiao* research in Korea.

It is noteworthy that since 2010, the Korean academia has been referring to the concept of transnationalism to elaborate on Korean *Huaqiao's* identity, and argue that Korean *Huaqiao* tend to change their attitude towards motherland as the history and political situation evolve so as to create more favorable conditions (K. Kim, pp. 172-179); and the second-generation Korean *Huaqiao* would particularly adjust their cultural identity to the changeable global economic development and political environment (C. Lee, "The Meanings", p. 34). Such conclusions have been made on the basis of the concept of imagined communities proposed by Benedict Anderson and have been made in the context of global immigration. However, such viewpoints are overemphasizing Korean *Huaqiao's* blurred awareness of national borders and worldwide mobility of Korean *Huaqiao*, understating Korean *Huaqiao's* approval of and attachment to their "roots". Nevertheless, as foreigners living in Korea, have the second generation of *Huaqiao* been divorced from their awareness of homeland and ethnicity? Yu Meiling, as a Chinese writer, is writing in Korean to inform the readers of *Huaqiao's* awareness of

national borders.

Yu Meiling is a second-generation child of *Huaqiao* (Chinese expatriates) in Korea, possessing the passport of the People's Republic of China. She is the first *Huaqiao* writer who has gained entry to the Korean Society of Men of Letters. She published the collection of essays, *Abeojiwa Tanghuru* (Dad and Candied Haws Lollipop), in 2016. As the first literary work by a Chinese writer in Korea, this book is categorized as ethnic groups' literature and has gained recognition in the Korean literary world. As an essayist, Yu Meiling, by describing her and her family's intercultural experiences and emotional conflicts, has highlighted how Korean *Huaqiao* identify themselves with their "roots" and how they think of their ethnic identity. Kim Elaine, an Asian-American scholar, argues that the role of the literature created by overseas Chinese goes beyond the literary and artistic realms, in that the literature functions as a community's voice and historical records (34). The overseas Chinese literature usually focuses on identity issues, narrating the overseas Chinese's experiences in residing countries, their acceptance of the culture of their motherland and the cultural changes. *Abeojiwa Tanghuru*, likewise, presents the immigrating experiences and cultural identity of *Huaqiao* in Korea. Yu Meiling has declared to both China and Korea through her literary creation: "My homeland is China", highlighting the ethnic and cultural attributes of the Chinese in Korea (119).

Never have I felt sorry for being a Chinese; at least I don't like to be called a Chinese-Korean (49).

They were born in mainland China; however, their passports indicate that they are from Taiwan Province of the Republic of China, and they like the life in Korea so much that they do not want to leave this country. ... They have been living in this country as outsiders, but they have never abandoned their national pride, and have not forgotten their Chinese descent, either (19).

Yu Meiling stresses the difference between *Huaqiao* and *Huaren*: "*Huaqiao* refers to a person with Chinese citizenship who lives in a country rather than China, while *Huaren* refers to a person with Chinese descent living outside China who has got the citizenship of the country of residence, and has been assimilated by the local culture of where he or she lives" (47). This indicates Yu Meiling's recognition of her identity and the culture of her homeland. She believes that *Huaqiao*, as an ethnic minority, is different from Korean people in that wherever a Korean *Huaqiao* is and however confusing the identities are, the ethnic traits a Chinese has will never be changed. Piao Hua, a Chinese poet, describes in his poem—In This Land of China—the relationship between the poem narrator and China: "I am a part of you, and you are always in my heart". This description can also exactly show the ethnic identity Yu Meiling has been cherishing: I am a part of China, and China is always in my heart.

Yu Meiling thinks it is difficult for ethnic groups to write in Korea society, but she also admits that her ethnic identity gives her inspiration for literary creation, for she is able to record various emotions and experiences only owned by *Huaqiao* (149-150). Focusing on the identity issue of *Huaqiao* in Korea, Yu Meiling chooses essay-writing and attempts to shed light on their puzzles by integrating history and

literary narratives, revealing Korean *Huaqiao*'s historical and cultural memories and the way they co-exist with Koreans, and in this way *Huaqiao*'s consciousness of Chinese culture can be reconstructed. When writing an essay, a writer can employ different rhetorical devices to express his or her own views and feelings. And the language in an essay is flexible, vivid and acceptable for readers. Therefore, the Korean essays written by Yu Meiling, in a sense, are on behalf of the Chinese writers to state their national consciousness and historical stance. In this paper, Yu Meiling and her work have been chosen as the object of the study to analyze the history of Chinese immigration into Korea and their cultural memories and to explore Chinese writers' identity and awareness of national borders; in this way can the study present the immigration experiences and efforts of the Chinese in Korea, enriching the social and historical studies of Korean *Huaqiao* and providing reference for the research on population mobility between China and Korea and the research on the awareness of a community with shared future.

## 2. Commemoration and Historical Memory

The historical memories shared by a community underlies the community members' sense of belonging and collectivity. Such memory can usually be presented through museums, memorial halls and monuments, or through rituals and anniversaries. In literary narration, it is the leaders and heroes in a community who are always commemorated. Yu Meiling, in her narration, starts with the commemoration of historical figures and unfolds the collective memories of the Korean *Huaqiao*. Firstly, she offers the background in which Incheon Chinatown was built while telling stories to pay respect to Wu Changqing, so as to trace the legitimacy of her identity. Secondly, she pays her tribute to Chinese soldiers by narrating the wartime experiences and traumatic memories of her father's generation, and in this way, she has unveiled the memories of the Korean War that have been overlooked by both Chinese and Korean literary narration. Her book, therefore, is not only presenting a writer's thinking of the history of Korean *Huaqiao* and exploring a historical issue together with readers, but also showing the writer's national identity and sentiment. Essays are not like novels that use grand narratives to reproduce history, and do not express intense emotions and strong feelings like poems either. Instead, essays tend to present historical events in plain language and show writers' insights into history. With essays, Yu Meiling is able to reproduce people's experiences and historical events that have been forgotten, to convey her views and to tell Korean *Huaqiao*'s national consciousness. Individuals' narrations cannot cover the whole history, but they are the fragmentary pieces to reconstruct historical memories, supplementing the stories the grand historical narrations have neglected, making the various historical events more dynamic.

### 2.1 Commemoration of Wu Changqing and Memory of Incheon Chinatown

It has been widely acknowledged that the history of Chinese immigration to Korea dates back to 1882. Qin Yuguang argues in his memoir in 1983 that the earliest Chinese immigrants were the forty or so merchants who went to Korea together with 40 soldiers headed by the military Commander Wu Changqing. The following studies have come to the same conclusion as Qin's. Consistent with the consensus reached in the academia, Yu Meiling's narration also traces the stories of *Huaqiao* from 1882 when Wu Changqing successfully quelled the Im-O Military Revolt.

I had been attending Korean schools, and there has been no record of Wu Changqing in my history textbooks. Wu, a hero worshiped by Chinese immigrants in Korea, is only remembered in Chinese community. ... Empress Myeongseong turned to the Qing Imperial Court for assistance. Wu, in command of a warship, was dispatched to Korea together with more than forty merchants, and this is how Chinese community began to take shape in Korea. With the support of the Qing Imperial Court and Wu Changqing's assistance, Chinese merchants were able to build their commercial basis in Korea. Although it was for only two years that Wu was stationed in Korea, his manners and spirit scent like red roses with rich fragrance lingering on in Chinese community (21-22).

In 1883, Incheon Port was opened, and a branch office of the Qing's Commercial Commission was established in Incheon according to the clauses of the "Pact of Chinese Merchants' Concession in Incheon". A large number of Chinese merchants came settling down in Incheon and built two-story houses in Chinese architecture style. Most of these buildings were the offices of the administrative institutions, thus named as the "Qing Consulates" which we today call Incheon Chinatown (76).

From the two cited paragraphs, it can be concluded that Wu Changqing initiated the history of the Chinese migration to Korea in the modern times. The forty or so merchants who went to Korea turned out to be the earliest *Huaqiao*. In 1882, after Wu Changqing successfully quelled the Im-O Military Revolt in Korea, the Qing Imperial Court and Korea signed on the "Qing-Choson Sea and Land Trade Pact". This pact signified the suzerain-vassal relations to be maintained between the two countries and a prospect that the trade between the two countries would flourish, and more importantly it provided the legal ground for the Chinese to reside in Korea. The Qing Imperial Court and Korea later signed on the "Pact of Chinese Merchants' Concession in Incheon", which made it legitimate and more convenient for Chinese merchants to conduct trade in Korea. Yu Meiling argues that with the protection of the Qing Imperial Court and Wu Changqing's proactive assistance, Chinese merchants had a venue—Incheon Chinatown—to conduct business in the Korean Peninsula, and formed the Chinese community and built up the prestige of the Chinese. Incheon Chinatown witnessed the commercial prosperity and featured strong Chinese cultural atmosphere, but such prosperity dwindled with China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, and even vanished due to the Wanbaoshan Incident

and the Korean War.

In 1931, Wanbaoshan Incident took place in Jilin Province, China ... The immediate consequence of this incident was the Chinese exclusion movement in Korea. Incheon Chinatown, unfortunately, also witnessed the bloodshed that happened to the Chinese. Later on, Incheon Landing Operation caused severe damage to the houses owned by the Chinese and great losses of their properties. The Korean War ended finally, but the Chinese who failed to return to their homeland during the war had to continue their life journey in Korea (76-77).

In Yu Meiling's view, those who remained in Incheon Chinatown "were regarded as savages in Korea because the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (hereafter, CPVA) then went to North Korea's aid to defend against Korea and the U.S., and ended up being marginalized by the Korean society as outsiders" (24). Since then, some rumors continued to haunt Incheon Chinatown: "There live the *Doe-nom* ("Chinks"). They are smugglers, opium addicts, hard labors with lice crawling all over their bodies, horse-riding bandits dashing all around, barbarians (who used to live in the North of China in ancient times) who would devour enemies' livers, and idlers who would make steamed stuffed buns with human flesh" (Note 2). Consequently, the positive images of the Chinese built by Wu Changqing turned out to be a vain attempt. The Chinese, who used to be regarded in Korea as people from the country that stood at the apex of the international hierarchy, were reduced to barbarian outsiders. Accordingly, Wu Changqing was also abandoned by history and sank into oblivion. Every year, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the fifth lunar month, Korean *Huaqiao* would organize a memorial ceremony to commemorate Wu Changqing, the Chinese Marine Commander in Guangdong Province in the Qing Dynasty, so as to review the history of *Huaqiao* in Korea.

At present, Yu Meiling, as the first *Huaqiao* writer in Korea, is able to reproduce the forgotten period of history in plain and simple language, attempting to trace her own ethnic traits. The essay *Jangmiui hyang* is undoubtedly extolling Wu Changqing, and the essay *Incheon Chinatown* provides a historical space for Yu Meiling to reconstruct the collective memory of Korean *Huaqiao*.

## 2.2 A Tribute to Chinese Soldiers and Traumatic Memories

Some historical events are of significant values, though leaving no trace behind; the Chinese fighting in the Korean War, for instance, is one of such events. The Korean War is known in China as "the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid North Korea", and in this context the historical records kept in China are highlighting the contribution that the Chinese in North Korea made in the war. In contrast, the traumatic memory that the same war imposed on the Chinese in Korea was forgotten by history. There is some historical research conducted by Chinese scholars on the Chinese involved in Korean War. For example, the monograph *The History of Overseas Chinese in Korea* elaborates on the contribution the Chinese in North Korea made in the Korean War (Yang & Sun, 1991, pp. 327-349). But in this book there is no record about the Korean *Huaqiao* who were also involved in the war; instead, this book focuses on such features of Korea *Huaqiao* as their demographics, native places, geographical

distribution, occupations, social communities, economic situation and education. By commemorating historical figures and telling the stories of common people in history, Yu Meiling has uncovered the memory that the Chinese have about the Korean War.

In 1957, decorations were awarded by Korean government to 17 Chinese, including Wu Zhongxian, Wei Xufang, Jiang Huilin and Ding Guibin. Wu Zhongxian was a soldier from the 4863 series of Republic of Korea Army, also known as Seoul Chines (hereafter, S.C); Wei Xufang was from a “Chinese Scouting Squad”; Jiang Huilin and Ding Guibin lost their lives in the Gwacheon Battle (Choe, 2003, p. 136). Furthermore, Korean government had Jiang Huilin’s remain reburied in Seoul National Cemetery in 1964 and Wei Xufang’s remain was reburied here in 1989. Such practice undoubtedly suggests that Korean government has admitted it as a truth that Chinese participated in the Korean war in defense of Korea, though failing to arouse wide attention of the public in Korea. On May 15, 2012, Korean Government had the remains of Jiang Huilin and Wei Xufang reburied together in Seoul National Cemetery and held a grand burial ceremony so as to honor the contribution and achievement foreigners had made in Korea. To commemorate this day, the Korean *Huaqiao* community have decided to hold a memorial service on every May 15 (Yu 42).

In order to demonstrate to the natives and foreigners in Korea the determination to build up a stable multicultural society, the state government repaired the monument in commemoration of all the Chinese soldiers who fought defending Korea in the Korean War. In a multicultural social context, the Korean government has adopted a few political measures to assure the social stability. For example, a few laws and regulations have been enacted, including the Act on the Treatment of Foreigners in Korea and Support for Multicultural Families Act. Support centers for multicultural families have been established and operated nationwide based on laws and regulations. Such efforts have been made to construct a supportive system for multicultural families and foreign spouses of native Koreans. Based on the development of a multicultural Korean society, Korean scholars have conducted case analyses of the *Huaqiao* policies the Korean government has issued and of *Huaqiao*’s current and future life, and have made suggestions to the government concerning how to integrate ethnic groups (Lim & Piao, 2006, pp. 1-34; Song, 2010, pp. 163-200; Jeon & Jin, 2012, pp. 333-357; Park, 2017, pp. 257-289; Cheong Su-Yeul, 2003, pp. 31-43). In this paper, the state government rebuilding the monument to honor the deceased Chinese soldiers in the Korean War is also counted as a political effort to stabilize the multicultural society. The *Huaqiao* community in Korea have named the memorial day for those soldiers only because the deceased soldiers have gained the recognition from the government. Whether it be Korean government or the Chinese community, both tend to hold the memorial service out of their own interests, seemingly overlooking the historical significance of the Chinese soldiers’ involvement in the war. Regarding this, Yu Meiling makes her comment:

What makes me rather sad is what the young Chinese soldiers in Korean army were confronted with: fighting with soldiers from the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army. They had not freed

themselves from the traumatic memory of the Chinese Civil War between the Communist Party of China and Kuomintang, yet they had to continue the tragic story by fighting with their brothers and sisters of the same descent, which hurt so much that it really went beyond any word (43).

Wei Xufang's family were arrested in Pyongyang for his engagement in anti-Communist campaign. Fortunate enough to escape death, his family fled to Sariwon (which is now a part of North Korea's territory), but failed to leave North Korea. Since then, Wei Xufang and his family had been apart from each other. The Korean War not only divided the Korean Peninsula, but also put the Chinese into the agony of being separated from family, which unquestionably are the consequences and trauma caused by wars (44).

Three major messages are conveyed in the two cited paragraphs above. First, the Chinese joined the Korean army voluntarily; second, those soldiers and the CPVA were enemies killing each other during the Korean War, which reproduced the trauma caused by the Chinese Civil War; third, the Korean War made the Chinese in the Korean Peninsula apart from their families. From Yu Meiling's point of view, the Chinese in Korea participated in the Korean War on a voluntary basis. Some other scholars, however, argue that "the Chinese should not be deemed to volunteer for the war; instead, it was closely relevant to Kuomintang. The key figures of S.C and the Chinese Scouting Squad were former Kuomintang military officers, and S.C was a Chinese-Korean cooperative force affiliated with the U.S. army" (Choe, 2003, p. 136). Be it voluntary or forced, it is an undeniable historical fact that the Chinese in Korea participated in the war. Yu expresses no interest in investigating the political backgrounds of the Chinese involved in the Korean War, but her lament for this historical period of wars when people with the same descent ended as enemies, highlighting the trauma the war brought to the Chinese.

Yu Meiling thinks that the Korean War brought to the Chinese the agony of being forcefully separated from their loved ones. Wei Xufang and his family were parted from each other as a consequence of the Korean War, which was typical of the pain suffered by the whole Chinese community in Korea. Yu Meiling, in the essay *Wangseobang Yeonsoo* (Wang's Love Letters), tells a story of her uncle who did not manage to return to China due to the Korean War and had to bear the agony of being unable to reunite with his wife, son and parents in Shandong, China. It was not until 1983 that he was able to legitimately go back to China, only to find that her wife had aged while awaiting his return and his son had grown into a middle-aged man (Yu, 2016, p. 194). Therefore, it was not only Korea, as a single ethnic group, that was divided by the Korean War, but also Chinese families. The ideological difference between China and Korea disconnected the *Huaqiao* and their homeland in the aftermath of the Korean War. The homeless Chinese had to accept Taiwan as their native place. With huge political pressure, they were confronted with separation from their native country, homeplaces and families.

In addition, as the Korean War ended, such issues as nationality, land ownership, residence qualifications, and educational systems made the Chinese in Korea caught in ideological confusion,



identity ambiguity and difficult lives. A Chinese student in Seoul Overseas Chinese High School integrates such identity ambiguity and complexity into an original poem:

A small school yard like a desert in Israel  
Is not new to me.  
Does it mean  
Pain of a forgotten child of the empire turns unreal?

Driven as a barbarian,  
And excluded for faith in red,  
I drifted in the southern direction and the eastern,  
Departing Shandong, mom and dad.

Whether I can carry on right here  
Worries me and makes me sad.  
Souls of ancestors, somewhere  
in the flourishing homeland.

Like earth and river in yellow,  
They flow to my side.  
But out of school and onto the gray road,  
I am still an outsider, nameless and alone. (Choe, 2003, pp. 207-208)

Nameless as outsiders, *Huaqiao* pride themselves on being Chinese, endeavoring to preserve and maintain their national culture and customs.

Before the diplomatic relations were established between China and Korea in 1992, Yu Meiling noticed such wording on the tombstones of some passed Chinese: “XXX County, Shandong Province, the Republic of China”, and she further explains that what are put on the tombstones demonstrate the wish of the deceased to return to their homeland even after they died (195). The words on the tombstones actually suggest the emotions and attitudes of the Chinese in Korea towards mainland China; although they possessed the passport issued in Taiwan Province and got the Taiwanese education, they spoke in Shandong accents and observed the customs of the mainland China. As narrated by Yu Meiling in her book: “My father had never forgotten his homeland, always telling us how proud he was of the long history and brilliant culture of China. Some other *Huaqiao* at his age did not get the same education as him, but they were as proud as him for being the descendants of Chinese” (164). The first generation of *Huaqiao* attach much significance to their national character, attempting to pass their perception of

Chinese culture to next generation. Hence, their children have been speaking Mandarin with Shandong accent (Yu, 2016, p. 16), indicating their identity and cultural attributes. Korean *Huaqiao* have been trying to preserve and pass their native language and culture so as to internalize Chinese cultural values and raise cultural consciousness, despite bearing complex identity and political albatross.

### 3. Nostalgia and Cultural Memories

Homesickness, for immigrants, is always blended with their attachment to and memory of their homelands, effectively developing collectivity among immigrants and sense of belonging and constituting their cultural specificity. Immigrants would show their identities through maintaining the original cultural features, and meanwhile, they are also open to accept the cultures of their countries of residence. It was nearly 140 years ago that Chinese began to migrate to Korea, and they have developed Korean characteristics, thus approving of both Chinese and Korean cultures (Choe, 2003, p. 176). The close social interaction in Korea has shaped *Huaqiao*'s lifestyle and constituted a part of their memory. Yu Meiling admits that she identifies with both Chinese and Korean cultures; meanwhile, she also reveals her concern that Korean *Huaqiao* will abandon their native language and customs and will be completely assimilated into Korean community within a few generations to come (19). Out of such concern, Yu Minling tries to construct the cultural memories of Korean *Huaqiao*, and to show how Korean *Huaqiao* are co-existing with Koreans. She introduces the food culture and expresses *Huqiao*'s nostalgia, and in this way she is able to construct the nostalgia that both *Huaqiao* and Koreans are harboring. In addition, she tells the origins of such words as *jjang-kwe*, *jjang-kkol-la* and *gaolibangzii*, revealing the estrangement between *Huaqiao* and Koreans and expressing the wish for the friendliness and harmony between the Chinese and Koreans. Yu Meiling's narration can also inspire readers to think more about the symbiosis in the post-pandemic world with great population mobility.

#### 3.1 Food Memories from Chinese Nostalgia and Koreans

In the essays *Manteou* (Steamed Bun), *Worbyeong* (Mooncakes), *Abeojiwa Tanghuru*, and *Jjajangmyeongwa Yet Chueog*, *Geurigo Episodeu* (Memories and Stories of Jjajangmyeon), such traditional Chinese food as Manteou, Jjajangmyeon, mooncake and candied haws lollipop constitute Yu Meiling's memory of her childhood and unfold *Huaqiao*'s memory of diet culture. Manteou was the regular breakfast for Yu Meiling, who also ate it as a snack when hungry. Jjajangmyeon offered Yu Meiling's father and other Chinese immigrants a means for making a living in Korea. Mooncake and candied haws lollipop were what Yu Meiling's father and all the other *Huaqiao* always think about when they missed their homeland. Yu Meiling says in her book the older she gets, the more she misses things uniquely Chinese (61). Such attachment and memory inherited from generation to generation in Chinese community have evolved into the common cultural memory of food co-constructed and shared with Koreans, with regard to which Yu Meiling has such a recollection:

Jjajangmyeon is a typical food that relates to the modern times of Korea. Many years ago, Jjajangmyeon, made of thick and chubby noodles topped with Chinese bean paste and cooked vegetables, was the cheap and convenient food for the Chinese hard laborers working in the wharfs of Incheon. After the Korean War ended, Jjajangmyeon, as a kind of foreign food, was affordable and popular. ... I still remember the days of primary school and it had been more than thirty years since the Korean War ended. There was a Chinese restaurant next to my school. ... Every day, a delivery boy was taking Jjajangmyeon placed in a large steel box to school teachers at noon. Every time when sports meetings, orientation ceremonies or commencement ceremonies were held at school, the restaurant was full of diners, with many others lining up outside and waiting for tables (80-81).

It can be seen from the cited passage above that Jjajangmyeon was originally the home-made food of the Chinese workers in Korea and later developed into goods sold in market. After the Korean War ended, the Chinese made their living by selling Jjajangmyeon, and they also spread Chinese food culture at the same time, setting up the basis for cultural exchange between China and Korea. Besides, eating Jjajangmyeon could remind Koreans of the happiness and sadness of their life in the aftermath of the Korean War, making this food a symbol of their bittersweet memory. Yu Meiling calls Korean *Huaqiao* the descendants of Jjajangmyeon in the essay *Jjajangmyeonui huyedeul* (The Descendants of Jjajangmyeon). Some Chinese perform public service activities in nursing homes on May 8 annually and make a donation of Jjajangmyeon, making a joint effort with Koreans in building a better society. Obviously, Jjajangmyeon not only carries the memories of the difficult days the Chinese and Koreans have experienced, but it also symbolizes the friendly exchange between the two communities after war. Jjajangmyeon, therefore, helps both *Huaqiao* and Koreans preserve their permanent memories of a special period of time, and represents their nostalgia for this special historical moment shared by the two communities. Such feelings and memories are gathered in Gonghwachun Restaurant in Incheon Chinatown. The first Gonghwachun Restaurant was a Chinese cuisine restaurant run by a Chinese immigrant, and it was later taken over by the Incheon government which has turned the original building of the restaurant into a Jjajangmyeon Museum open to global visitors. This museum integrates Korean cultures while displaying Korean *Huaqiao*'s life and experience, enabling visitors to feel the nostalgia the Chinese and Koreans share for the old days. Jjajangmyeon has forged the bonds between the Chinese and Koreans since the modern times, and mooncake represents the culture that two countries have been sharing since China and Korea established diplomatic ties in 1992.

Since Koreans could travel between China and their own country, they were gradually used to the Chinese custom of sharing traditional food while spending the Chinese festivals. ... Young Korean girls and boys were listening in the moonlight to the song *The Moon Represents My Heart* by Teresa Teng while enjoying mooncakes. I saw this pleasant view in 1995 when I was studying in Mainland China (154-155).

As put by Yu Meiling, the feelings that Koreans had in China while eating mooncakes were similar to the feelings conveyed in Teresa Teng's song which expresses the attachment to homeland and the loneliness people suffer in foreign countries. Such emotions that Koreans developed in China were precisely the same as what *Huaqiao* felt about mooncakes in Korea. Yu Meiling says "My father would take home the round and flat mooncakes on the Mid-autumn festivals. These cakes were in exquisite packaging, looking like precious treasures" (153). As a child, Yu Meiling could not understand why her father was so fond of mooncakes (155); when she became a grown-up, she came to realize that mooncakes symbolize the lives of the Chinese in Korea. *Huaqiao*, with an ambiguous identity, were not counted as Chinese in Korea, though they intrinsically were Chinese; however, they strictly observed their cultural norms, thus being unable to integrate into the local society easily and making their life as hard as the mooncake crust (Yu, 2016, p. 155). Korean *Huaqiao* had been troubled by the issue of nationality, and transferred their feelings of isolation and loneliness to the traditional food from homeland. Mooncakes, for them, were the carriers of the homesickness and the loneliness they suffered as "Asian orphans" (Note 3). At present, the Chinese in Korea who can speak in very good Shandong accent make and sell softer mooncakes that cater to Koreans' taste (Yu, 2016, p. 156). The changes in the texture of mooncake crust have proved the cultural integration of the Chinese community and Koreans, which is particularly noticeable in Incheon Chinatown.

Incheon Chinatown not only displays Chinese style, but also blends with Korean cultural elements. *Huaqiao* now cannot separate themselves from Korea, and Koreans come visiting Incheon Chinatown and reminiscing about the past. This is, perhaps, what we share in common (Yu, 2016, p. 79).

Having witnessed the glory and oblivion that Korean *Huaqiao* have experienced, Incheon Chinatown portrayed by Yu Meiling records how *Huaqiao* and Koreans have achieved common prosperity, thus undoubtedly being a symbol of the integration of Chinese and Korean cultures. Needless to say, Incheon China town epitomizes the historical memories possessed by Korean *Huaqiao*, and constitutes a cultural space co-built by them and Koreans. However, what should not have been overlooked is the emotional barriers caused between *Huaqiao* and Koreans during the cultural co-construction process.

### 3.2 The Traumatic Memories of "jjang-kwe" and "jjang-kkol-la"

*jjang-kwe* and *jjang-kkol-la*, two Korean words, are derived from a Chinese word *zhanggui* 掌柜 ("a shop keeper"). But the two words are used in a wrong and derogatory way, with a similar meaning with the word *Doe-nom*, and all of them are demeaning terms Koreans used to refer to Chinese people. Yu Meiling unfolds her painful memories concerning such words:

I went to primary school in 1978 when there were much fewer foreigners in Korea. The state government then was propagandizing the notion that Korea was an ethnically homogenous nation or Bae-Dal nation, and was involved in a Chinese exclusion campaign. Such terms as *jjang-kwe* or *jjang-kkol-la*, though unable to be found in dictionaries, were used to address and demean

Korean *Huaqiao* (67).

Yu recalls that such Korean terms as *jjang-kwe* and *jjang-kkol-la* were nonofficial words used by the masses to respond to the government's attempt to promote the homogenous-nation view and build a state government. After the Korean War ended, Korean government meant to build a nation state, thus highlighting the mono-ethnic nationalism, intensifying the anti-Communist ideology and working out a series of Chinese exclusion acts. Of those acts, the Foreigners' Land Acquisition Act, in particular, led to the economic meltdown of the Chinese community. Korean government "issued the Foreigners' Land Acquisition Act in 1962, depriving foreigners of their land ownership and keeping the Chinese from acquiring property. In 1968, the government worked out an amendment to the act, which strictly limited the foreigners' ability to acquire property by prescribing that the area of the land that foreigners would acquire for residence and commerce should be no more than 200 pyeong (1 pyeong=approximately 3.3 square meters) and 50 pyeong respectively. Severe penalties would be imposed if there was a slight excess of the area of the acquired land specified in the act, thus forbidding the Korean *Huaqiao* to enlarge their stores or perform large-scale commercial activities. It was not until 1999 that this situation came to an end" (J. Lee, 2018, pp. 205-206). This act deprived foreigners of land ownership, making *Huaqiao* a group of unwelcome guests in Korea (Note 4). The economic attacks by the Korean government made *Huaqiao* community unable to be integrated into the mainstream Korean society. Such derogatory words as *jjang-kwe* and *jjang-kkol-la* started to be spread among the Korean locals. The *Huaqiao* community, however, came up with humorous ways to respond to such insulting languages.

Koreans would refer to Jjajangmyeon as *jjang-kwe* on purpose. There spread such jokes as "Let's go to *jjang-kwe* restaurant for *jjang-kwe*", or "I'd like a bowl of *jjang-kwe*, please". ... The way the word *jjang-kwe* was used caused discomfort among Chinese. ... However, sometimes people could get some fun out of *jjang-kwe*. If a seemingly rich Korean used the word *jjang-kwe* while ordering food, the restaurant owner would serve up such expensive dishes as sea cucumber soup; and if it was a common person, such cheap food as rice topped with vegetables would be offered. In such cases, the restaurant owners would exclaim: "Well, your *jjang-kwe*, please", and those Korean guests had to eat whatever was served and pay for it. There was another anecdote: A Chinese owner running a restaurant in an alley was so irritated by a Korean guest who ordered *jjang-kwe* that he just seated himself on the guest's table, saying: "I'm the *jjang-kwe*. Enjoy!" ... Today, though the word *zhanggui* is rarely used in China, *jjang-kwe* can still evoke the *Huaqiao*'s bittersweet memories of the past (Yu, 2016, pp. 82-83).

Apparently, the social function of the words *jjang-kwe* and *jjang-kkol-la* was for Koreans to show their repulsion and deride the Chinese. According to Jacques Derrida, foreigners are all xenos in terms of hospitality, asylum, border, norm and safety that are all prescribed explicitly by laws. That is why xenos are always examined from the perspective of ethos and in a country-centered or

civil-society-centered way (Derrida, 2004, pp. 64-83). It can be seen from Yu Meiling's writing that Korean *Huaqiao* were excluded by Korean laws, thus having entirely become the xenos in Korean society. As Yu Meiling recalls, *jang-kw* and *jjang-kkol-la* were used by Koreans to name *Huaqiao* or the whole Chinese community, while the original and real name for this group were abandoned. And in this way Koreans and *Huaqiao* were in unequal positions since the former gave such derogatory names to the latter, which made *Huaqiao* nameless and totally marginalized in Korean society.

It should be noted that such derogatory expressions were not only used by Koreans, but also by the Chinese who would refer to Koreans as *gaolibangzi* 高丽棒子 ("a derogatory means to address Koreans") to show their aversion. Yu Meiling still remembers that her mother could make Manteou and Shandong cuisine skillfully and managed to build a harmonious family and assimilate into it, but her aunt still called her mother *gaolibangzi* in daily life. As a matter of fact, the mixed-blood Chinese like Yu Meiling are very often addressed as *gaolibangzi*, though they have received family education of Chinese style and are able to talk in authentic Shandong accent (Yu, 2016, p. 198). As Jacques Derrida notes, even though foreigners can speak fluently the local language or they share all the cultures that the locals have but the language, they are still regarded as xenos. The half Korean half Chinese group are still xenos in Korean *Huaqiao* community. The eldest sister of Yu Meiling ended up marrying a Korean man because she could not bear the way she was treated, and broke away from the Chinese community in Korea. She feared that because of her identity, her children would be discriminated on grounds of mixed blood in both *Huaqiao* community and Korean communities (Yu, 2016, pp. 198-199). The sister of Yu Meiling was more inclined to Korea where she was born and grew up. Although she got Taiwanese education, the social climate made her separate from where she truly belonged. However, this has generated another problem that half-Korean *Huaqiao* have to receive the names given by the Korean society and *Huaqiao* community. Such words as *jjang-kwe*, *jjang-kkol-la* and *gaolibangzi* suggest how half-Korean *Huaqiao* are named by Korean society and *Huaqiao* community. Such expressions as *jjang-kwe*, *jjang-kkol-la* and *gaolibangzi*, on the one hand, indicate the awkward situation the mixed-blood *Huaqiao* are faced with due to their identities; on the other hand, such terms also posed the cultural barriers between the *Huaqiao* and Koreans. Koreans hoped to demonstrate their pride in founding a sovereign state after shaking off the status of being a vassal subordinate to China in the premodern times, while the Chinese tried to conceal their disappointment of being reduced from people of a country of supremacy to outsiders in Korea, clinging to the China-centered hierarchical view to show their cultural superiority.

In retrospect, though feeling sorry about the traumas left in memories, Yu Meiling is inspired by *Huaqiao*'s optimistic attitudes toward life even when they are confronted with cruel reality in Korea. Meanwhile, she also feels grateful to her mother who, as a Korean, approves of Chinese culture and integrates herself into a Chinese family to which she has devoted her entire lifetime (Yu, 2016, pp. 70-74). Her narration involves two aspects: Firstly, she elaborates on the multicultural features of her

family; secondly, by revealing the common cultural memories co-constructed by the Chinese and Koreans, Yu Meiling expects to dismantle the emotional barriers between Chinese and Koreans and strengthen the friendly ties between China and Korea. At the same time, Yu Meiling uses plain language to show how xenos (foreigners) or half-Korean *Huaqiao* face up to reality and co-exist with people who designate them in a way they do not want.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper takes Yu Meiling's essays as the research object to analyze the history of Chinese immigration into Korea and their cultural memories that have been reconstructed by a *Huaqiao* writer, and to tell *Huaqiao*'s experiences in Korea and emotions towards their motherland. Personal narration is unable to represent the Chinese community as a whole, but the collection of essays, *Abeojiwa Tanghuru*, is the first attempt by a Korean *Huaqiao* to use literature to reflect on her national identity, it is also the first time that a Korean *Huaqiao* has written a literary work in Korean to clarify her historical insights and her consciousness of social responsibility. Yu Meiling is writing in Korean to repeatedly emphasize the contribution the *Huaqiao* has made to Korean society and the situation of how they have tried to live with Koreans harmoniously in the same country. A *Huaqiao* writer uses Korean, other than her mother tongue, to write, with an attempt to convey *Huaqiao*'s national consciousness, social cognition and views of life, and behind this attempt there lies *Huaqiao*'s desire to be accepted by the local society. Such psychology can reveal the fact that the *Huaqiao* has not been incorporated into Korean society, and *Huaqiao*'s position as a marginal group has not entirely changed yet. Based on such social condition, Yu Meiling also shows the positive attitude of *Huaqiao* in Korea and their sense of social responsibility in *Abeojiwa Tanghuru*, providing a good example for the interaction between the *Huaqiao* group and multicultural Korean society, and also instilling positive power into the construction of a healthy and multicultural society.

In general, Yu Meiling, the *Huaqiao* writer, writes in Korean, and for the first time a *Huaqiao* has demonstrated her historical perspective and awareness of borders to the Korean society. In order to present the views that *Huaqiao* have about borders and the changes of their views in a more wholistic and dynamic way, the future effort should be devoted to further study of *Huaqiao*'s writing and more works of Yu Meiling's.

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## Notes

Note 1. According to the Article 2 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Returned Overseas Chinese, "*Huaqiao*, also known as Chinese expatriates, refers to Chinese citizens residing in countries other than China; they are lawfully authorized to live permanently in the countries of residence, of which they are not citizens. Residence herein includes both lawful permanent residences granted by the government and the factual residence admitted by the government" (Mao & Lin, 255-256). In accordance with this law, *Huaqiao* or Chinese expatriates in Korea means the Chinese citizens who reside in Korea. At present, Korean *Huaqiao* include both old generation and new ones. The old generation of *Huaqiao* refers to the Chinese who migrated from mainland China to Korea from 1882 till 1949 before the People's Republic of China was founded and their offspring. At present, the population of the old generation is no more than 20,000, including the third and fourth generations. The new generation means the Chinese who have been migrating to Korea since 1992 when Sino-Korea diplomatic relationship was established (J. Lee 34-38; Wang 3). Yu Meiling, as a child of the old-generation *Huaqiao*, mainly presents the stories of the old generation; accordingly, "Korean *Huaqiao*" herein refers to the old generation in particular.

Note 2. This description of Incheon Chinatown is from the short fiction *Jungguin Geori* (Chinatown) written by O Jeonghui (1979).

Note 3. In the essay *Meihwa* (Plum Blossom), Yu Meiling calls the Chinese expatriates in Korea the "Asian Orphans". Legally speaking, the Chinese in Korea hold the passport issued in Taiwan Province, thus being Taiwan compatriots. But in reality, they are regarded as Koreans in Taiwan, and as Kuomintang members in mainland China (33).

Note 4. According to Derrida's philosophy of hospitality, if a person doesn't have the ownership of the land on which his or her home is built, he or she cannot feel the hospitality in traditional sense (Derrida 89).