

# Two keys to Pyongyang's past and future : moral center and Korean war

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen  
Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société  
Suisse-Asie**

Band (Jahr): **74 (2020)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **27.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-905710>

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## Two keys to Pyongyang's past and future – moral center and Korean War

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2020-0005>

**Abstract:** Pyongyang has been described as a center of evil that threatens the world with nuclear weapons. The city is perceived as both aggressive and controlled. This study explains those particularities of Pyongyang utilizing Wagner, Rudolf (2000) (“The moral center and the engine of change. A tale of two Chinese cities”. In: *Peking Shanghai Shenzhen. Städte des 21. Jahrhunderts. Beijing Shanghai Shenzhen. Cities of the 21st Century*. Vöckler, K and Luckow, D (eds.). Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, Edition Bauhaus, vol. 7, 452–459) theory of the Northeast Asian city as a moral center under the ongoing Korean War (although a ceasefire has been called, the war has not officially ended). This study starts by drawing similarities between Pyongyang and Hanyang, the capital of the Joseon Dynasty, which was established as a moral center according to the Rites of the Zhou Dynasty. I also look at the influence that the Korean War had on Pyongyang and find that Pyongyang was constructed to express the North Koreans socialist Juche ideology (self-reliance, subjecthood), while Hanyang expressed Confucian ideology. Pyongyang is more than just a moral center; it is “the Holy Land of Revolution” according to the “Administration Act of the Capital City Pyongyang”, where the war still takes place to defend the Juche Ideology and its supreme leader. The Korean War justifies the control in North Korea. The country utilizes the five-family control system inherited from the Joseon Dynasty. Its origin is legalism during the Warring States period (770–221 BC) in China. Control in Pyongyang has been strengthened because of the need for military operations in the unfinished Korean War, compared to Hanyang. Having relaxed political tensions in 2019, North Korea offers a vision for the future of Pyongyang as a “socialist fairyland” (*seongyeong* 仙境), which is related to Korea’s own Taoism (*sinseon sasang* 神仙思想). Developing Pyongyang with the Juche ideology from a Confucian tradition in the war, the city now reveals a unique means of cultural entanglement.

**Keywords:** Hanyang; moral center; Pyongyang; the Korean War; transculture

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# 1 Introduction

The Western world has perceived North Korea as part of an “axis of evil”.<sup>1</sup> Pyongyang is seen as the center of an evil state, the major stage of the “theater state,” the “Negara” of North Korea.<sup>2</sup> The present study provides two other explanatory factors to understand Pyongyang: the city as a moral center, and the Korean War.

In a theater state, power is maintained by assuming the power-to-beholder relationship as an actor-audience and by mutual participation in symbolic rituals and spectacle.<sup>3</sup> The theater state disregards conventional political goals such as welfare and focuses on the performance of drama and ritual. This makes the West suspicious of the reality of North Korea. Although North Korea sought to change its policy toward the USA and become more open to the world, the West remains skeptical and continues to make efforts to understand the reality of Pyongyang in North Korea and the extent to which North Korea is engaging in camouflage tactics.

Visitors to North Korea have criticized the fact that they are not allowed to look freely at Pyongyang and other places. Moreover, they see that Pyongyang is not even open to its own people. Only selected and privileged citizens are even allowed to live in Pyongyang. The city is adorned with slogans that are aggressively anti-American and strongly encourage North Koreans to follow their supreme leader. The city appears to be quite unsociable, aggressive,<sup>4</sup> and strongly controlled.<sup>5</sup>

Pyongyang’s particularity has been explained by the theory of the theater state.<sup>6</sup> Westerners who have visited Pyongyang and watched the astounding mass gymnastics *Arirang* performance, in which more than 100,000 people participate, agree that Pyongyang is a great theater that promotes its own system.<sup>7</sup> Selected citizens live as actors playing in the theater. According to this theory, the aggression against the USA has been mainly created through the performances, where the USA plays the role of the villain and the main culprit of North Korea’s poverty and neediness.

However, theatrical elements of politics have existed since ancient times, both in the West and the East.<sup>8</sup> The performances of Greek theater cannot escape the paradigm of the theater state. The model of the theater state was also applied to

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1 Miller / Sokolsky 2017; Kang / Cha 2009.

2 Geertz 1980; Kwon / Chung 2012a.

3 Geertz 1980: 13–17, 21.

4 Choi 2009.

5 Byman / Lind 2010.

6 Kim 2017; Yang / Kim 2016; Lee 2003; Yook 2013; Kwon / Chung 2012a.

7 Voice of America 2009.

8 Yook 2013.

France in its crisis of transition from the Ancien Régime to a modern nation.<sup>9</sup> Japan invented modern nationalism by positing the emperor, the central axis of feudalism, and pageantry together at the center of the “official culture of state” through performances,<sup>10</sup> with the theatrics belonging to the general characteristics of the state. This theory does not deduce the particularity of Pyongyang and North Korea. The answer is sought not in the theater itself, but in the reason why the theatrics are so persuasive for the people of North Korea. They have been powerful enough to persuade the people to be faithful to society, even in the “Arduous March” (*Gonan-ui haeng-gun*) in which many people starved to death. To find the answers, this study offers other explanatory factors – moral center and the Korean War – to understand Pyongyang.

I attempt to explain the particularities of Pyongyang by applying Wagner's (2000) theory of capital cities in Northeast Asia. Wagner argued that most of the features that are traditionally used to identify a “city” have been extracted from European or North American evidence. However, Chinese cities and cities following the Chinese Tradition do not fit those features. Capital cities in the Chinese Tradition are set up as the ritual centers for the worship of the imperial ancestors and the god of the soil. These cities are “the place from which orthodoxy emanated”, “city of the moral order”, or “sacred space with cosmic order”.<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese tradition was directly transferred to the capital formation of Korea in the era of the Joseon dynasty. An example is Hanyang, the capital of the Joseon Dynasty, where the Rites of the Zhou Dynasty (*Jurye, Zhouli* 周禮) were applied to its establishment.<sup>12</sup> I advance the hypothesis that Pyongyang's characteristics will be explained by Chinese characteristics of capital city according to Wagner (2000). So, I propose the three following hypotheses: (H1) The city of Pyongyang was, enforced by the tradition of Hanyang, ideologically designed according to morals and orthodoxy; (H2) the citizens of Pyongyang and Hanyang consist of ideological and political supporters of the regime; and (H3) the control and management of cities and citizens also follows the method of cities in the traditional of Northeast Asia.

However, the East Asian characteristics of the North Korean capital are modified with their own historical social conditions. I argue that the Korean War mainly provoked the particularities of Pyongyang. Von Clausewitz explained the nature of the war as “physical violence,” “confrontation with the enemy,” and

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<sup>9</sup> Friendland 2002; Yook 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Fujitani 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Wagner 2000; Wheatley 1975.

<sup>12</sup> Yang 2005.

“political tools”.<sup>13</sup> This is an act involving aggression and control. The control is the coordination and regulation of military units and battlefield functions to accomplish missions according to the commander’s intent.<sup>14</sup> I argue that North Korean aggression against the USA was deduced from the war. Pyongyang was designed during the war and constructed not in the peace but in the truce – while technically still at war. The control inevitably becomes the social system of war. The experience of war has raised hatred of the USA in North Korea, which has rejected the American style of social and political development.<sup>15</sup> This leads to three more hypotheses:

(H4) North Korea remained in the East Asian tradition of capital city formation as “the moral center” and the characteristics of moral center became extreme due to the war.

(H5) Citizens who are allowed to live in Pyongyang are not only privileged, but also militarized and armed with ideology. They should be ready to be revolutionary combatants.

(H6) The city is strongly controlled, like a quasi-fortress. It is protected against enemies and freedom of travel is limited. This makes images of Pyongyang unique, aggressive, and controlled from the Western perspective.

Thus, the future of Pyongyang will depend on whether the war is officially completed or not. However, I argue that Pyongyang will maintain its East Asian city character if North Korea maintains its own political system. The Juche Idea will be involved in reviving the traditional virtues of Korea. If the war finishes through declaring an end to the war and a peace agreement, North Korea will pursue an open policy like that of China.

Most studies of North Korea have focused on political, military, and diplomatic fields in response to North Korea’s nuclear development. Pyongyang has become notorious for its massive military parade, war-torn ceremonies, as the center of aggressive mass performances, and its exaggerated display and spectacle to the outside world. North Korea was predicted to collapse due to food and energy shortages that caused from the collapse of Soviet and Eastern socialism and China’s pro-market economic policy shift, and natural disasters. However, the country seemed to have overcome these challenges. This source of the power from

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<sup>13</sup> Clausewitz 1981: 101.

<sup>14</sup> Jo 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, Youngran 2017; KBS 2017.

the West's point of view cannot be the dramatic spectacle in the theater state. As the contribution to the North Korean studies, the present paper provides a new angle from which to understand North Korea by analyzing Pyongyang through the lens of the Confucian tradition and the Korean War.

To test the hypotheses advanced this paper, I find the commonness of Pyongyang with Hanyang, the capital city of the Joseon Dynasty, and interpret the two cities' similarities in terms of their formation as moral centers. I then study the Korean War, focusing on how it made morality more extreme. I also examine Pyongyang's development under the truce. Lastly, I look at the future of Pyongyang through the change of North Korea in the era of Kim Jong-Un. In this way, this study attempts to find the reasons why Pyongyang is unique and peculiar.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section critically reviews whether Pyongyang and North Korea could be a theater state, according to Geertz (1980). The following section describes Hanyang's establishment process, along with its history, founding ideology, residents, and control thereof. The sections that follow investigate the war influence and the development of North Korea. Then, the formation of Pyongyang is analyzed from the aspect of moral center under the ongoing war. The discussion section interprets Pyongyang related to my arguments and on the evidence of findings. The final section concludes the paper.

## 2 Theater state and North Korea

The book "North Korea beyond Charismatic Politics" by Kwon and Chung in 2012 defines the contemporary North Korea as a theater state. The term theater state was coined by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1980) in his book "Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali." Negara literally means palace, capital, state, or town. In the context of that book, Negara refers to the world of the traditional city, the high culture that the city supported, and the system of superordinate political authority centered there.<sup>16</sup> Following Geertz's interpretation, Pyongyang is a modern Negara of North Korea. Pyongyang defines not only the capital of the state, but also the sacred place of revolution according to Administration Act of the Capital City Pyongyang of Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Article 1.<sup>17</sup> It is the sacred symbol of the entire state of North Korea.

Geertz observed the state of Bali in the nineteenth century shortly before the Dutch invaded in 1906. He argued that the pre-colonial Balinese state was an

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<sup>16</sup> Geertz 1980: 4.

<sup>17</sup> Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly 1998.

organized spectacle.<sup>18</sup> “The expressive nature of the Balinese state was apparent. [...] it always pointed [...] toward spectacle, toward ceremony, toward the public dramatization of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture [...]. It was a theatre state in which the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, and the peasants the supporting cast, stage crew and audience.”<sup>19</sup>

In this state, kingship was less a matter of governing and more of performing.<sup>20</sup> The more successful a king was in imitating the divine, the more cut off he was from the day-to-day activity of politics; that is, controlling people and things. In traditional Bali, nearly everything we associate with government was in the hands of villagers, and was not the concern of kings at all.<sup>21</sup> Geertz pluralized the concept of political power, challenging the classical Weberian definition of state power as the monopoly of the forced power. He advanced the semiotic theory of culture and the rhetoric-based theory of power.<sup>22</sup>

Kwon and Chung argued that the North Korea’s origins as a theater states are found in the opera revolution that began in the 1970s, when the country’s economic growth had started to stagnate being after the post-war reconstruction period.<sup>23</sup> The 1970s is also the time when the international socialist solidarity was experiencing a crunch caused by the Sino-Soviet split. The détente between the United States and China led North and South Korea to confusion in setting their political and ideological direction. North Korea, which regarded the United States as a natural enemy, felt betrayed by China’s political change of course regarding the US. North Korea reinforced its own socialist identity.<sup>24</sup> In terms of ideology, the Juche idea, which began to appear in the 1950s, was defined as the official ideology of North Korea in the 1972 Constitution.<sup>25</sup> In 1974, Kim Jong-Il was announced as Kim Il-Sung’s political successor. Kim Jong-Il started to create successful revolutionary operas that helped strengthen the political and ideological unity of North Korea facing economic and political difficulties for the first time after the Korean War.<sup>26</sup> Kwon and Chung argued that North Korea switched to a theater state, governing the state using aesthetic power.

The opera revolution used the history and heroism in the anti-Japanese struggle of the 1930s as the moral exemplar. On the ideological base of its history,

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**18** Geertz 1980: 302.

**19** Geertz 1980: 13.

**20** Inglis 2000: 161.

**21** Gellner 1983.

**22** Kwon / Chung 2012a: 45.

**23** Yang 2015.

**24** Kwon / Chung 2012b.

**25** Ministry of Unification 2007: 29.

**26** Kwon / Chung 2012a.

legends, and symbols, the opera revolution led North Korea to become a partisan family state. The supreme leader, Kim, Il-Sung, was identified as the father of the political family. Deeply combined with the Confucian tradition in Korea, North Koreans dedicated the filial piety for parents to the political leader, Kim, Il-Sung.<sup>27</sup> This raised the loyalty to the state to the level of filial piety and maximized the loyalty to the supreme leader. This political familialism forms the fundamental force of the hereditary succession of power to the descendants in North Korea, which is not achieved in any other socialist state.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1990s, North Korea's "military first" policy emerged in the diplomatic isolation and external security threats that resulted from the economic crisis and the collapse of socialist countries. The "military first" policy internally utilized the military's resources and capabilities to restore the economy, and complemented the party's degraded social control functions through military organizations to maintain social political order. Externally, it served to strengthen the military's role in the negotiations on nuclear and missile issues. Under the military first policy, the military surpassed the Labor Party and served as the central body to defend the leader and the socialist system of North Korea.<sup>29</sup>

The political familialism and the military first policy are turned into art in the Arirang performance, which is based on group gymnastics.<sup>30</sup> The spectacle of Arirang performance symbolizes North Korea's status as a theater state. Kwon and Chung's theater state in their study is characterized the disregard of economic welfare of the people in the process of creating and maintaining power through spectacle and performance. They argue that North Korea, under the ideology of the military first policy, obsessively concentrates on the military power and political security of the state. Prioritizing military power, North Korea carried out its cruel and immoral economic policy and neglected the survival and livelihood of the people according to Kwon and Chung.<sup>31</sup>

In my view, Kwon and Chung illuminate North Korea's politics from their perspective of the modern theater state, where the cultural spectacle is placed at the center of politics and people's lives, neglecting the welfare of the people. However, Kwon and Chung do not consider several political acts of the North Korean government to have been for the country's economy and social welfare, and regard it as absent. In doing so, Kwon and Chung matched Negara's superlatives of governing – to imitate the divine and to keep a distance from day-to-day

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27 Kwon / Chung 2012a: 63.

28 Kwon / Chung 2012a: 188.

29 Ministry of Unification 2009: 28.

30 Jeon 2002.

31 Kwon / Chung 2012a.



activities – with that of North Korea. However, even in the Kim Jong-Il era, when governance as a theater state became the center of North Korea's politics, according to Kwon and Chung, several economic policies pursuing social well-being were carried out in North Korea as follows:

After the official opening of the Kim Jong-Il era in 1998, the North Korean government began to remedy internal social turmoil – especially the outbreak of the black market – caused by the economic crisis and the great famine in the mid-1990s. They began to restructure the system. Internally, practicalism and practical socialism were introduced. On July 1, 2002, the July 1st Economic Measures (7.1 *Gyeongje gwanli gaeseon jochi*) of North Korea, which are different from the planned economy and have strong market economic factors, were implemented. North Korea's economy, which crashed drastically in the 1990s, also showed a slight improvement in the 2000s, when the Arirang performance was started. According to the Bank of Korea's estimates in South Korea, the North Korean economy recorded positive growth for seven consecutive years between 1998 (when the economic situation was at its worst) and 2005. Growth was again positive for four consecutive years since 2011. This positive growth occurred during Korea's 5.24 sanctions<sup>32</sup> when harsh international economic sanctions had been imposed. Since 2012, North Korea is reported to have been piloting a new economic management system called Our Economic Management Method (*Ulisig gyeongjegwanlibangbeob*), in which the state grants management power to companies rather than wielding it itself.<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Negara, which retained power by imitating divinity and keeping distance from the day-to-day management of politics, North Korea continues to engage in concrete, everyday life interventions called Field Supervision (*Hyeonjijido*) that offers guidance, management, and control to improve social welfare.

North Korea's Field Supervision is one of the Supreme Leader's instruments of government for solving economic problems politically. In the early days of socialist construction, North Korea used Field Supervision to mobilize scarce labor for the strategic projects and encourage people more to produce. Thus, Field Supervision was evaluated by the efficiency with which it contributed to solving economic problems. It was also used to explain and implement the party's policy to the masses.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The May 24 measures are the sanctions imposed by the South Korean government in 2010 in response to the Cheonan-Warship attack. The contents of the May 24 measures are as follows: Do not allow any North Korean vessels to operate in the southern seas, Inter-Korean Trade Suspension, South Koreans are not allowed to visit to North Korea, Ban on new investment in North Korea, Principles withholding Support Program for North Korea.

<sup>33</sup> Yang 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Hwang 2001.

After the death of Kim Il-Sung, Kim Jong-Il's performed 1,258 public activities from 1994 to 2009, 966 of these between 2000 and 2009. Among them, 261 cases of pure field supervision were conducted, not including inspection, watching, interviewing, etc. The regular field supervision takes between two and 15 days, and an occasional or irregular field supervision takes one or two days. Since 2000, the characteristics of Kim Jong-Il's field supervision have mainly been the implementation of the Juche farming method, the land readjustment project, and the encouraging production of food factories. Field supervision spreads to fish farms and ranches for military units. The supervision has also stood out as a feature in the economic recovery of industrial sectors such as the (electric) power, coal, and mechanical and metal industries. In particular, field supervision in power plants is highly important for generating electrical power.<sup>35</sup> In my opinion, North Korea's governing system has not neglected the people's lives, social welfare and economy, although North Korea's policies and political instruments were not enough effective in preventing or dealing with the Great Famine.

So what then were the causes of the devastating the Great Famine in North Korea in the mid-1990s? There are two dominant approaches to the analysis of North Korean famine: the food availability decline approach (FAD) and the food entitlement decline approach (FED). Further, there is a balanced analysis between FAD and FED: The combination of the problems of the innate external environmental factors addressed by the FAD and the governance issues addressed by the FED results in the famine. According to this combined approach, the reasons for the famine are as follows. First, North Korea has many mountains and a shortage of arable land, and its high latitude means that frost comes early. Therefore, the time available for farming is short and it is difficult for North Koreans to produce the necessary amount of food using general farming technologies. That is the inherent constraint. Second, within this constraint, it needs intensive investment in farming management. However, North Korea's scarce resources were divided between the unfinished war and the welfare of the people. As a result, the national security involving North Korea's food production and distribution has weakened. Third, under these circumstances, changes in the external economic environment caused by the end of the Cold War and sustained natural disasters resulted in a sharp drop in food production. Fourth, this drop in food production caused people to suffer differently. There were different food triages based on one's origins and region. The limitations of governance that blocked coping strategies by restricting the movement of people to buy or borrow food caused the famine in North Korea, according to Moon et al.<sup>36</sup>

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35 Park 2010.

36 Moon et al. 2015.

Many studies of the causes of famine in North Korea have considered it to be a result of a combination of external environmental factors and internal policy and governance problems.<sup>37</sup> The North Korean famine cannot be attributed only to the limitations of North Korea's policies, governing ideology, and methods. It is even more difficult to point out that the great famine was caused by not caring for public life as a theater state.

The present study does not consider Pyongyang to be comparable to Geertz's Negara. Instead, I attempt to explain the particularities of Pyongyang by its tradition of Confucianism, applying Wagner's (2000) theory and its modern history. The following section starts to look at Hanyang, where this Chinese tradition was directly taken over in its formation.

## 3 Pyongyang

### 3.1 Hanyang as a moral center

Hanyang is the name of the capital city of Korea during the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). It was designated as the capital in 1394, in the third year of Taejo, the first king and the founding father of Joseon. The new kingdom was established by the emerging Confucian elite against feudal power at the end of the Koryo Dynasty (918–1392).<sup>38</sup>

On August 13, 1392, King Taejo commanded the state councilor (*Dopyeong-uisasa*) to plan to transfer the capital city to Hanyang. The state councilor was the highest governmental authority between the end of Koryo and the early Joseon Dynasty. In April 1395, the Royal Ancestral Shrine (*Jongmyo*) and the new Gyeongbok Palace (*Gyoengbokgung*) were completed. Hanyang was geographically divided into five sections (*Bu*) – the East, the West, the North, the South, and the Center – and 52 subsections (*Bang*) as the administrative districts. Administratively, Hanyang was also named Hanseong. Hanyang was officially founded as the capital city of Joseon Dynasty.<sup>39</sup> Since that time, Hanyang (now 'Seoul') has been the capital city of Korea (South Korea since the establishment of the Korean government in 1948), which represents Korea's historical change since the fifteenth century.

The ideological designer of Hanyang was Jung Do-Jeon (1342–1398), a bureaucrat who served between the end of the Koryo and the early Joseon

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<sup>37</sup> Kim 1994; Kim, Ungeun 1997; Kim / Seong 1996; Kim, Sunghun 1997; Nam 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Ko 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Ko 2005.

Dynasties and has been described as a Confucian revolutionary who encouraged Neo-Confucianism at the end of Koryo. He also claimed the need to be diplomatically friendly with the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) in China. His political and ideologically position led to him being repeatedly dismissed and reinstated in his post at the end of Koryo dynasty. In 1383, he met Lee Seong-Gye, who later became the first King of Joseon. The two men were politically and ideologically aligned. Jung Do-Jeon denied the Koryo Dynasty and led the birth of a new dynasty, then established the ideological basis of Joseon.<sup>40</sup> The Rite of Zhou showed the heyday in the Ming Dynasty after the fall of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). As the capital of the Ming Dynasty, Beijing was built according to the city model of the Sage Kings of the early Zhou over 2,500 years ago.<sup>41</sup> This rite had a direct influence on the construction of Hanyang, as explained below.

The guiding idea behind the choice of Hanyang as the capital city was the geography of Feng Shui (*Pungsudochamseol*).<sup>42</sup> Hanyang was constructed according to the Construction Guideline of the Rites of Zhou (*Zhouli*, *Kaogongji* 周禮考工記). In accordance with this construction guideline, the city was arranged where the palace, the Royal Ancestral Shrine (*Jongmyo*), the Altar of Land and Grain (*Sajigdan*), government offices, as well as markets, roads, and castle/city gates were situated. The Rites of Zhou suggested that the Royal Ancestral Shrine should be placed on the east side of the palace and the Altar of Land and Grain on the west side. The government offices should be located on the front side of the palace and the market on the back side.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with many European cities, where markets are placed in front of the city hall.

The city wall connected the four mountains (Baegaksan, Naksan, Namsan, and Inwangsan) that surrounded the city. Therefore, it did not have exactly the same shape as the rectangle that the Rites of Zhou guided. The wall had a height of between 5 and 8 m and was 18.6 km long. The capital city, Hanyang, has four main gates and four auxiliary gates. The gates were built in 1396. The main gates are Heunginji gate, Donui gate, Sungye gate, and Sukjeong gate, while the auxiliary gates are Hyehwa gate, Soui gate, Gwanghui gate, and Changui gate. The gates were named based on the idea of Yin and Yang.<sup>44</sup> Jung Do-Jeon thoroughly designated every building in Gyeongbok Palace and every street in Hanyang according to Confucian ideals. Jung emphasized that the people of Hanyang should live based on the basic ideas of Confucianism: benevolence, righteousness,

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40 Ko 2011.

41 Wagner 2000.

42 Oh 2007.

43 Yang 2005.

44 Seoul Metropolitan Government 2014.

propriety, wisdom, and sincerity.<sup>45</sup> The Joseon Dynasty called the map of Hanyang Suseon-Jeondo (首善全圖). The word Suseon (首善) is derived from a saying of the Chinese literacy classic *Shijing* (詩經), which states that the deed of building the utmost form of good begins at the capital, while Jeondo (全圖) means the whole map.<sup>46</sup> It means that the capital is the place from which orthodoxy emanated; that is, the moral center.

Who were the inhabitants of Hanyang? In the third year of King Taejo, residents of Kaeseong, the capital city of Koryo, and those who helped establish the Joseon Dynasty, migrated to the new capital, Hanyang. For those who migrated from Kaeseong, the King distributed lands to build houses. The residents who had originally lived in Hanyang were forced to move out of the capital city to Yangju-district near Hanyang. Only the bureaucrats who originally lived in Hanyang were allowed to remain in Hanyang.<sup>47</sup>

One of the reasons for abandoning the capital city of the old dynasty and constructing a new capital city was that there were still many supporters of the Koryo Dynasty in Kaeseong. The third king of the Joseon Dynasty, Taejong (1367–1422), promoted the relocation of Kaesong residents to Hanyang. To do this, Taejong banned the market in Kaeseong for five years. Most Kaesong residents were urban citizens who had to buy their daily necessities in the market. They suffered from the lack of such necessities and many decided to migrate to Hanyang, where the market was open. The market control policy in Kaeseong was lifted when the population of the city decreased day by day. In five years, the policy of attracting people to move to Hanyang had a considerable effect. At the time of fourth King of Joseon, Sejong (1397–1450), there were 17,015 households in Hanyang, and 1,779 others within 4.2 km of the capital. This meant a total of 18,794 households were registered as households of Hanyang. On the other hand, the number of households in Kaeseong decreased to 4,819 households and the population to 8,372. Over the 20 years from establishment of Joseon, the population size in Kaeseong dropped by nearly three-quarters.<sup>48</sup>

Also, the new dynasty governed the residents between the capital city and the villagers differently. The villagers were obliged to provide military service, taxes on agricultural land, duty to pay tribute, and a duty of compulsory labor, while the residents of the capital were exempted from military service, tributes, and taxes on agricultural land. Instead, they provided labor for maintenance of the city and were obliged to pay rents and a housing tax was imposed. In this way, the status of

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45 Bae 1995.

46 Seoul Institute 2013.

47 Ko 2005.

48 Ko 2005.

the villagers and the citizens in the capital were different in Joseon. The inhabitants of the capital in the pre-modern era were the privileged class. In a nutshell, the identity discrimination based on blood was being carried out simultaneously with spatial discrimination in the pre-modern society.<sup>49</sup>

To control the population of Joseon, the dynasty issued identity tags (*Hopae*) and the five-family control law (*Ogajagtongbeob*). The identity tag was a plate that any man over 16 years of age had to wear. The purpose was to collect statistics concerning the population by determining the composition of each family and clarifying their occupation and class. The most important point was to gather data for military duty and compulsory labor. The five-family control law was adopted by a leading politician, Han Myeong-Hoe (1415–1487) in 1485. This law was stated in the *Gyeongguk Daejeon* (1394), which was the highest law in the Joseon Dynasty. According to this, Hanyang's population was assembled into groups of five families, called Tongs. A group leader was appointed for each Tong. Tongs were further organized by Bang, the local organization above a Tong. In the countryside, five families were combined into a Tong, and five Tongs made one Yi, which was again a unit of Myeon. The Myeon was directed by a government officer promoting agriculture. This system was utilized as a mutual monitoring system to control residents, identify criminals, collect taxes, and mobilize compulsory labor. At the time of King Hyeonjong (1641–1674), the five-family control system was also used to detect and repress Catholics. It originated from the Legalism of Shang Yang (about 395–338 BC), who was a legalism politician in the era of the Warring States period in the Qin Dynasty in China.<sup>50</sup>

From 1394 to 1910, Hanyang remained the capital city of Joseon. With the capital in Hanyang, the Joseon Dynasty lasted for around five centuries, the longest Confucian dynasty in all of East Asia. How far does Pyongyang differ from Hanyang? What makes the two cities different? Does Pyongyang maintain the role of Hanyang as the moral center? How did that role change? Section 3.3 and 3.4 attempt to answer the questions raised in Section 3.1.

### 3.2 Korean War and North Korea under the ceasefire

Pyongyang is the capital city of North Korea, otherwise known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The abbreviated name of North Korea is Chosun. This name comes from the Joseon dynasty, which also originated from the old Joseon (year unknown–108 BC). Pyongyang was the capital of Goguryeo

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<sup>49</sup> Ko 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Academy of Korean Studies 2010.

Dynasty (37 BC–AC 668) and the west capital city, Seogyong, in the Koryo dynasty.<sup>51</sup>

In the late Joseon period, foreign powers paid a lot of attention to Pyongyang. The main reason for this was the city's geographical aspect, located between the Daedong River and the Botong River. It is easy to access from the city to the good harbor, Jinnam Port, through the Daedong River. Close to mainland China, Pyongyang was regarded as the main base for the continent.<sup>52</sup> For that reason, the Western culture was introduced relatively early. In the mid-1890s, the diplomatic Christian mission was rapidly expanded in Pyongyang. Protestantism spread so quickly that Pyongyang became known as the “Jerusalem of Joseon”. During the Japanese colonial period, Pyongyang was one of the major cities, along with Kyeongseong (Hanyang was called Kyeongseong under the colonial period), Incheon, and Busan, and was a colorful liberal city.<sup>53</sup>

After liberation from Japanese colonial power, Pyongyang was designated as the provisional capital of North Korea, but the city was ruined by the Korean War (1950–1953). The conduct of the war was beyond the rules of war, such as the Geneva Conventions, accompanied by extensive destruction and killing of civilians, although the war was triggered by Kim Il-Sung.<sup>54</sup>

Three years of air strikes totally destroyed North Korea. North Korean cities that were affected including Jinnampo (80% destroyed), Chungjin (65%), Haeju (75%), Hamheung (85%), Heungnam (85%), Hwangju (97%), Kanggye (60%), Gunuri (100%), Gyomipo (80%), Sariwon (95%), Sunan (90%), Wonsan (80%), and Shinanju (100%). Seventy-five percent of Pyongyang was destroyed.<sup>55</sup> Large buildings such as Pyongyang City Hall and Pyongyang 2 Department Store only

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**51** Jun et al. 2015.

**52** Kim / Jung 2013; Kim / Seo 2009.

**53** Ok 2018; Pang / Kang 2015.

**54** Weathersby 1993. According to documents from the USSR, the US Fifth Air Force, which operated in Korea, had 2,437 airplanes of various types. Regarding General Mark W. Clark's command to launch massive air raids on 78 cities in North Korea, the US Air Force was conducting air raids with 30, 50, and even 100 airplanes in a city at the same time. Clark took over as commander of the United Nations Command on May 12, 1952 and remained in that position until the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. The US military was bombing not only the city, but also remote rural areas. In Pyongyang, the US Air Force systematically bombarded rail and arterial roads with a bombardment density of 20 rounds per 0.5 km of road. Most bombs were 450, 250, and 100 kg (National Institute of Korean History 2006). On November 8, 1950, the US Air Force attacked Shinuiju (area of 180 km<sup>2</sup>) with 70 B-29 combat planes and dropped 550 tons of incendiary bombs. A week later, Hoeryong (area of 1750 km<sup>2</sup>) was burned down with napalm bombs. In March 1951, US Navy Commander Smith bombed Wonsan (area of 314.4 km<sup>2</sup>) for 41 days (Halliday / Cumings 1988: 117, 158).

**55** Kim, Taewoo 2013: 377.

had their walls remaining. The Central Plaza, Stalin Street, and Mao Zedong Street were totally destroyed. According to North Korean data, more than 8,700 factories and enterprises were destroyed throughout the Korean War, along with more than six million residential buildings, 5,000 schools, 1,000 hospitals and clinics, 260 theaters and cinemas, 670 scientific research institutes and libraries, and thousands of welfare facilities, among other things.<sup>56</sup> There were no more targets in North Korea. As Deane put it, "Actually there was a near infinity of additional targets which occupied the air war until the truce as the overall purpose came to include destruction of villages and decimation of the civilian population."<sup>57</sup> In the ruins of American bombardment, North Koreans were mentally panicked due to the lack of food, clothing, and housing.<sup>58</sup> Throughout the war, hatred against America remained in the heart of the North Korean residents and deep grudges were held.

Pyongyang, which had once been the most prosperous Christian cities and the most US-friendly city at the time under Japanese Colony, had been transformed into a center of anti-Americanism. Through the war, the American method of development was strongly rebuffed in North Korea. The war justified the control over the residents in order to improve the efficiency of social control. The aggression is caused by the unresolved conflict (the lack of a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War) and, following from this, the militarization of North Korean society.

North Korea, which identified the tremendous military strength of the United States through the Korean War, came to recognize the United States as the greatest security risk. North Korea pursued a strategy to guarantee the regime the support of China and the Soviet Union. Thus, under the Cold War, Kim Il-Sung, with the support of the Soviet Union and China, prevented military threats from the United States and South Korea maintained tensions on military operations.<sup>59</sup>

However, with the collapse of Eastern Socialism and the Soviet Union in the late 80s and early 90s, Kim Il-Sung lost his mechanism to defend against external threats. The country also faced food and energy crises. This was a threat to the socialist system in North Korea, and undermined the foundation of Juche ideology, which made economic independence a policy. After the end of the Cold War, a new international order led by the United States, which North Korea had considered as an enemy for the past 50 years, was formed.<sup>60</sup>

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56 Lee 1993; Chang 2005.

57 Deane 1999: 145.

58 Glennon 1984: 469.

59 Huh 1994.

60 Brzezinski 1990; Nye 1992.



The economic power of South Korea in the 1970s was the opposite to that of North Korea. South Korea outpaced North Korea in all aspects, including political economy. In particular, South Korea normalized diplomatic relations with Russia, China, East Germany and Eastern Europe, while North Korea was diplomatically isolated.<sup>61</sup>

Kim Il-Sung devoted himself to the development of nuclear weapons, which began in 1956, as a major means of restoring unfavorable dynamics and resolving the security crisis. In addition to nuclear development, North Korea began developing missiles in the mid-1970s. In the late 1980s, it starting building long-range missiles targeting the United States and Japan. This was intended to curb the war by threatening that if the United States or the US-Japan allied forces took military action against North Korea, North Korea could also attack US bases stationed in Japan, and also mainland Japan, with strategic missiles. In addition, North Korea tried to increase its bargaining power by developing missiles to secure economic benefits and security guarantees.<sup>62</sup>

Geopolitically, the Korean peninsula has been frequently invaded by neighboring countries as a strategic hub between the continent and the ocean. Korean leaders have traditionally taken a defensive strategy through diplomatic rather than military means. The experience of the Korean War brought anti-Americanism to North Korea and led the country to emphasize the military offensive as part of its security strategy. After the end of the Cold War, the US-led world order was established. Since then, North Korea's security strategy has been amended into a defense strategy. North Korea seeks to curb US threats and maintain the security of its system by developing nuclear weapons and missiles. Through negotiations with the United States, North Korea would like to establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula and institutionalize the security of the North Korean regime from the United States. This change in strategy reinforces the theater-state factor in which North Korea shows off its missiles and nuclear power. However, these theater-state elements can be found, to varying extents, all over the world.

### 3.3 Construction and formation of Pyongyang

Restoration of the ruined Pyongyang during Korean War was an urgent issue for North Korea. During the war, on January 21, 1951, Kim Il-Sung gave a speech on the basic direction of Pyongyang restoration. Like King Taejo had done during the Joseon Dynasty, the supreme ruler was going to plan Pyongyang by his will.

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<sup>61</sup> Mack 1993.

<sup>62</sup> Hong 2000: 33–39.

He dismissed the old decadent way of constructing the city under Japanese colonialism and asked to “build the democratic capital city of Pyongyang more brilliantly, beautifully, and grandly modern than before”.<sup>63</sup> In the postwar era, North Korea wanted to demonstrate the excellence of socialism through successful restoration. Pyongyang extensively mobilized the patriotic enthusiasm and creative labor of people. In particular, it tried to show its victory in the war over the United States, who had turned Pyongyang into ashes, by speeding up urban construction through standardization of design and mechanization of construction. On December 1951, the City Construction Bureau was established systematically to guide the restoration and reconstruction of Pyongyang.<sup>64</sup>

The motivation for the construction of Pyongyang was to show the superiority of ideology and system against the United States after the war, while the construction of Hanyang was intended to build an ideal Confucian city to avoid the pro-Koryo dynasty power rooted in Kaeseong, the old capital city of the Koryo dynasty.

Following the truce in 1953, North Korea organized the Pyongyang City Recovery Committee (*Pyeongyongsibogguwiwonhoe*) and started to rebuild the socialist city of Pyongyang. With its past having disappeared, the city had the perfect opportunity to rebuild itself into an ideal socialist city. In particular, the principles of socialist urban planning were actively applicable to the structure of the city. Architect Kim Jung-Hee (1921–1975), who had studied architecture at Moscow University, proposed the “Pyongyang Master Plan” in 1953 and led the reconstruction of Pyongyang. Today's Pyongyang is basically framed by him.<sup>65</sup> While the Confucian capital city of Hanyang was built according to the “Construction Guideline of the Rites of Zhou” from the early days of Zhou (twelfth century BC), Pyongyang was rebuilt according to socialist urban planning introduced from the Soviet Union.

The idea of socialist urban planning is based on the following four measures of the Manifesto of the Communist Party.<sup>66</sup>

- Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
- Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
- Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

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63 Kim 1980: 278.

64 Kim 1980: 276; Kim 1995: 59.

65 Yim 2011: ch. 3.

66 Marx / Engels 1884: ch.2.

- Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, through a more equitable distribution of the population across the country.

Soviet urban planning was characterized by eclecticism of urbanism with dis-urbanism, which are derived from the Manifesto of the Communist Party, for the Stalinist ruling era. This eclecticism led to the linear city planning introduced by Milyutin in the late 1920s.

The basic principles of urban planning in North Korea are the balanced development of cities and rural areas, the suppression of urban growth, and the establishment of self-sufficient planning units (micro districts) in the city. The balanced development between urban and rural areas is to remove the gap between the two and to balance the city into urban and rural areas. In Pyongyang, the administrative district consists of 18 urban districts and four rural districts. In addition, while Hanyang had a high wall built for the defense of the city, the boundary between the city of Pyongyang and the countryside is not clearly separated. Restraining the size of urban growth also embraces Marx–Engels' view that some of the problems of capitalism stem from having large industrial cities. Therefore, satellite cities were built around the metropolitan area in order to keep the city scale below a certain level. The best implementation of the idea is the linear city by Milyutin. A linear city is a model of a socialist city that equally distributes the accessibility of mobility, the representative public goods of the city, and prevents the city from growing excessively. The city also consists of micro districts. In order for the gap between regions to be eliminated and the urban and rural areas to be developed evenly, each city-based spatial planning unit must be self-sufficient. The establishment of self-sufficient planning units is shown in the Moscow master plan. According to this, the center of each region has been given the function of the center of the city to restrict the movement to the old city center, and green wedges are installed between each region to provide amusement spaces, at the same time as restraining the movement between regions. Similar planning techniques were introduced in North Korea so that large cities such as Pyongyang have such a hierarchical structure.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the symbolic function was added to the socialist city. This is not an element of the early socialist planning city based on Marx Engels's ideology. However, after the socialist revolution, socialist political leaders wanted to show the superiority of the system by setting up a square for mass rallies and a huge statue of the leader in the center of the city. The city became a symbol of the socialist ideology and space superiority.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Kim 2004; Kim 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Yim 2011: 50; Kim 2004.

This symbolic function of socialist urban construction has become a key factor in North Korean urban construction, especially in Pyongyang. This trend was concentrated in the 1970s, after the post-war recovery and Kim Jong-Il became the successor of power. In 1972, the Joseon Revolution Museum (*Joseonhyeogmyeongbagmulgwan*) was built in Pyongyang, and in 1974, the Geumsusan Capitol (*Geumsusan-uisadang*), the People's Culture Palace (*Inminmunhwagungjeon*) and the 2.8 Cultural Center (*2.8 Munhwahoegwan*) were built. In 1975, the Mansudae Art Theater (*Mansudaeyesulgeugjang*) was established.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, as I have argued, Hanyang and Pyongyang were both built to substantialize their own ideologies. They did not spring up in an evolutionary manner, intensively constructed by a political decision of the ruler. Pyongyang became the sacred place of the socialist revolution beyond the socialist moral center and the space of socialist ideological education. Concerning the idea of establishing Pyongyang, Article 1 of the Administration Act of the Capital City Pyongyang of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (*Joseonminjujuuinmingonghwagug sudo pyeong-yangsi gwanlibeob*) defines Pyongyang as follows:

*Article 1: Pyongyang City is the holy land of revolution and the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. (제1조: 평양시는 혁명의 성지이며 조선민주주의인민공화국의 수도이다).*<sup>70</sup>

Kim Il-Sung declared that Pyongyang is “the heart of the Korean people, the capital of the socialist father land, and the origin of our revolution”.<sup>71</sup>

Kim Jong-Il (1995) emphasized that construction of the city is “a matter of ideology and philosophy”.<sup>72</sup> Pyongyang is the cohesive body of North Korea's ideas and ideological systems. Kim Il-Sung argued that Pyongyang should be fully embodied in the socialist Juche architectural ideology.<sup>73</sup> The Juche Idea has been included in the North Korean Constitution since 1972.<sup>74</sup>

According to the Principle of Constructing the City of Juche, the center of the city contained the Kim Il-Sung Statue and the Revolutionary History Museum to display the superiority of the system.<sup>75</sup> The center of the city contains symbolic public buildings and plazas where people can hold rallies, protests, parades, and celebrations. The main arterial roads and the high-rise-style houses spread widely from the city center. North Korea stated that the greening of the city was a

<sup>69</sup> Kim HS 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea 1998.

<sup>71</sup> “[평양은] 조선인민의 심장이며, 사회주의 조국의 수도이며. 우리 혁명의 발원지” (Kim 1981: 622).

<sup>72</sup> Kim 1995: 61.

<sup>73</sup> Kim 1992: 3.

<sup>74</sup> Seo 2001: 3–4, 63.

<sup>75</sup> Park et al. 2016: 27.

cultural revolution that created a new socialist culture and living environment according to the principle of socialist urban planning. Pyongyang has 48 m<sup>2</sup> of green area per capita. It is about twice the OECD average.<sup>76</sup> However, parks in Pyongyang have applied the concept of Our Own (traditional) Style, reflecting the idea of Juche. So, these are not a park in the socialist cities in its design. The parks are based on a combination of natural beauty and artificial beauty; they emphasize the beauty of mountains and streams. In parks, feel they are linked to the beauty of nature according to the aesthetics of Korean traditional park architecture.<sup>77</sup> “Characteristics of Pyongyang urban planning as capital city are [...] that constructs Pyongyang as the symbol of whole country and as the condensate of ideology and thought of North Korea.”<sup>78</sup>

Like the construction of Hanyang, Pyongyang arranged buildings, statues, and plazas to express its ideology. Moreover, Pyongyang was built as “the Holy Land of Revolution.” The term Holy Land usually refers to a city or region that is religiously sacred. For North Korea, Pyongyang is the place where the sacred war took place to defend the Juche Idea and the supreme leader, who is incorporating the idea.

According to Article 2 of the Administration Act of the Capital City Pyongyang, Pyongyang was built magnificently and gorgeously by the patriotic enthusiasm and creative efforts of the people. The country strengthens its achievements in capital construction and increases its investment in Pyongyang’s management.<sup>79</sup> Pyongyang and Pyongyang’s citizens are in a special position because they still live in the most critical conditions: the Korean peninsula has not yet concluded the peace treaty from the Korean War. In the 1972 North and South Korean Red Cross talks, Kim Il-Sung stated that US nuclear warheads are constantly aimed at Pyongyang, where the talks were held. In 1986, Kim Il-Sung told foreigners who participated in the Pyongyang International Conference for Peace and Democracy in the Korean Peninsula that citizens living in Pyongyang are required to be elite members of the revolution. They are living in the region that would be the most important target if war was to occur. Therefore, Kim Il-Sung ordered the citizens of Pyongyang to be ready to mobilize at any time. Their sacrifice in the reconstruction and their readiness to defend the critical city justifies the privilege of being a citizen of Pyongyang.<sup>80</sup>

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**76** Lee 1989: 518.

**77** Lee 2018.

**78** Jun et al. 2015.

**79** Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea 1998.

**80** Kwon 2009.

Article 30 of the Administration Act of the Capital City Pyongyang requires citizens who intend to live in Pyongyang to register. Article 32 states that residents aged 17 or older who live in Pyongyang will be given a Pyongyang citizenship card. Pyongyang citizens should always carry their citizenship card, have a noble mental and moral character, strictly abide by the state's legal order, and set an example in terms of policy practices to honor their citizenship. Pyongyang citizens must return their Pyongyang citizenship card in case of severe violation of the state's legal order.<sup>81</sup>

The social control system has remained under the truce. Here, control refers to the means and processes by which a group or society makes its members conform to the normative expectations of the community.<sup>82</sup> Under the truce, the North Korean system has developed as “socialism under war”. The social control was justified by the risk of war. The society has accepted the control, sharing the damage and painful experience from the war. In particular, the loyal class builds a vertical consensus structure through strong ties with the supreme leader from the war.

Following the truce, Kim Il-Sung replaced the five-families control system (*Ogajagtongje*) that had applied during the war with a five-family supervision system (*Ohodamdangje*). In 1958, Kim Il-Sung instructed that one party officer on the payroll would supervise five families and guide the principle of life and proper ideological and economic activities. This system was abolished in 1973, after which groups of 20–30 families, rather than five, were politically controlled.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, the Workers' Party of Korea, the National Security Agency (*Guggabowiseong*), the Military Defense Agency (*Gunbowigug*), and the People's Security Agency (*Inminboanseong*) also inspected the population. All residents were obliged to join various social organizations, such as the Vocational Alliance, the Youth League, the Agricultural Workers Alliance, and the Chosun Socialist Women Alliance, which are outside the Workers' Party. Residents in Pyongyang and North Korea are controlled systematically and in a multilayered manner. The social organizations hunt down anti-party and anti-revolutionary forces and rebellious elements, investigate the personal identity of residents, and maintain social order. For military reasons, citizens can only visit Pyongyang and the border areas, such as Sinuiju, Yanggang Island, Hyesan, Kaeseong, and Goseong after receiving approval from military and security organizations.<sup>84</sup> This control became stronger as the social risk increased; for

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**81** Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea 1998.

**82** Cohen / Scull 1983: 6.

**83** Lee 1996.

**84** Ministry of Unification 2018a.

example, during the difficult economic situation of the Arduous March in the mid-1990s because corruption connected with market activities, travel, college admissions, and even with escaping from North Korea became widespread.<sup>85</sup> Since 1997, under the Arduous March, North Korea has issued the Citizenship Certificates specifically to residents living in Pyongyang. If a citizen of Pyongyang violates the laws of the state, his or her Pyongyang citizenship is revoked.<sup>86</sup>

Article 4 of the Regulation of Travel in North Korea stipulates that the areas around military demarcation lines, military bases, military industrial districts, and national security-related areas are restricted. Permission is required to travel to the rest of the country and the government insists that such permission is obtainable without restrictions. The permission system is said to be necessary to ensure national security and to prevent the activities of spies and agents. Furthermore, common residents are not allowed to visit Pyongyang, purportedly to protect the supreme leader.<sup>87</sup>

The inhabitants of Hanyang, the capital of Joseon, were political and ideological followers who contributed to the birth of Confucian Joseon. They are also privileged as residents of Hanyang. The inhabitants of North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, have been selected ideologically and politically. Under the conditions of the truce, they are obliged to defend the Workers' Party of Korea and their supreme leaders when war breaks out; this strengthens the privilege of Pyongyang citizens.

### 3.4 Pyongyang in the era of Kim Jong-Un

In 2010 and 2011, at the end of Kim Jong-Il's era, North Korea's economic policies moved away from promoting heavy and war industry towards promoting light industry. Since 2012, when Kim Jong-Un took power, North Korea has shown a relatively sound economic performance.<sup>88</sup> Kim Jong-Un completed the construction of the Mansudae district residence (Changcheon Street) in Pyongyang in 2012, which had been started at the end of the Kim Jong-Il's era. This district contains 20–45 floors of high-rise apartments, a cylindrical public theater, a children's department store, schools, kindergartens, day-care centers, and various convenience facilities and parks. Kim Jong-Un then constructed several

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**85** Kim BY 2010.

**86** Kwon 2009.

**87** Ministry of Unification 2014.

**88** Hong 2017.

high-rise houses in the city center of Pyongyang. In 2015, the Future Scientist Street was completed. The Future Scientist Street Residence Galaxy Tower is 53 stories (210 m) high and contains 19 complexes and 2,500 apartments.<sup>89</sup>

The model of such “urban beautification” projects in Pyongyang is the “socialist fairyland” and the “socialist paradise on Earth”.<sup>90</sup> The expression of fairyland (*Seongyeong* 仙境) that Kim Jong-Un highlighted is the place where a Taoist (hermit) with miraculous powers (*Sinseon* 神仙) lives. The fairyland is an expression based on traditional Korean Taoism. A Taoist in Korea is a person who has a transcendent power and health through training to achieve spiritual enlightenment. He/she enlightens the ordinary people and makes them live peacefully, diligently, and healthily. Unlike Chinese Taoists, Taoists in Korea emphasize social duty and have a duty to benefit people widely (*Honggigangan* 弘益人間).<sup>91</sup> North Korea is looking at the future of Pyongyang as an example of a socialistic city following the Northeast Asian perspective. This perspective is more precisely based on the traditional idea of Korea. It is the *Sinseon* Ideology; that is, the Taoist Ideology in Korea. In this way, North Korea embodies the *Juche* Idea with a unique ethnic ideology in the future of Pyongyang.

The *Juche* Idea is the core governing ideology of North Korea; it serves as the normative guide and leads the program of the North Korean political system. The idea spreads its influence across all national areas, including political, economic, social, and cultural, and the values and lives of its citizens. With the *Juche* Idea, North Korea seeks to achieve relative independence, departing from Marxist-Leninism and from the ideological program of the early North Korean regime. By modifying the materialistic view of traditional Marxism that the understructure determines the superstructure, *Juche* Idea emphasizes that human consciousness, the main constituent of the superstructure, plays an active role in the process of social change. It suggests the logic that economic structure, society, and history are changed by human conscious and subjective thoughts and actions.

The deeply projected nationalist heritage in the *Juche* Idea is based on the experience of Japanese colonialism; fear and resentment of the Western world, including the United States, created after the Korean War; and the asymmetric cooperative relationship with allies such as the Soviet Union and China. On the other hand, in addition to nationalism, another decisive variable that separates the *Juche* Idea from Marxist-Leninism is the projection of Confucian thought. The Confucian tradition that has dominated Korean society since the Joseon Dynasty is

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<sup>89</sup> Jeong 2015.

<sup>90</sup> Kim 2012: 1–4; Kim, Jong-Un 2013: 1.

<sup>91</sup> Kim, Kyunghee 2014. The ideology of *Honggigangan* has been also adopted as South Korean educational ideology since 1945.



regarded as a significant contributor to the establishment of a patronistic governance system by a powerful ruler of absolute power in North Korea. North Korea's suggestion for the ideal future of Pyongyang according to Korean Taoism is the attitude of seeking the future path through the virtue of national culture according to Juche Idea.

On November 29, 2017, the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un declared the completion of the country's nuclear armed forces through the successful launch of the inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) "Mars-15." Through nuclear armed forces, it seems that North Korea has completed its ability to defend itself.<sup>92</sup> In 2018, North Korea presented its new strategic vision. Kim Jong-Un announced a breakthrough in revitalizing the economy in 2018, the third year of the five-year strategy implementation of the national economic development of North Korea.<sup>93</sup> North Korea participated in the Pyeong-Chang Winter Olympic Games, held in February 2018, and proposed a dialogue with the South Korean government, which required peaceful and stable management of the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Internationally, North Korea began actively promoting dialogue with the United States while taking about economic reform policy internally, although its political outlook remains uncertain.<sup>94</sup>

Pyongyang will maintain its East Asian city character if North Korea maintains its own political system. The Juche Idea will be involved in reviving the traditional virtue of Korea. This idea makes North Korea unique.

## 4 Discussion

Pyongyang has been shown to be the main stage of the theater state of North Korea. According to this theory, antagonism from Pyongyang against the USA is caused by the performances of theater. It also explains why North Korea controls its residents and travelers so that they cannot discover the country's fake stories and plays.

Moreover, the theater state is characterized by the disregard of economic welfare creating and maintaining power through spectacle and performance according to Geertz (1980). Kwon and Chung (2012a) defined North Korea as a theater state. They argued that North Korea, under the ideology of the military-first politics prioritizing military power, carried out a cruel and immoral economic policy and neglected the survival and livelihood of its people. They also argued that the great

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<sup>92</sup> Asan Institute for Policy Studies 2018.

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Unification 2018b.

<sup>94</sup> Jang 2017.

famine in North Korea in the mid-1990s was caused by North Korea's failure to take care of social welfare in pursuit of a theater state.

However, the North Korean government has introduced practicalism and practical socialism. The July 1st Economic Measures and Our Economic Management Method led North Korea to economic growth. North Korea's supreme leader has intensified his efforts to enhance economic difficulties by mean of Field Supervision. North Korea has not disregarded the economic welfare of the people, regardless its success. Many studies consider the famine in North Korea to be a result of a combination of external environmental factors and internal policy and governance problems.

It is true that North Korea's governing system places more importance on maintaining its political system than on the welfare of the people. It is too much of a stretch to find that cause from the theater state theory. It makes more sense to find a connection with Confucian ethics that prioritize political morality rather than one's own well-being.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, Confucianism does not ignore the economy; instead, it emphasizes the equity and fairness in the economy according to *Analects of Confucius* (*Non-eo* 論語).<sup>96</sup>

To understand Pyongyang, this study applied the theory of cities in Northeast Asia according to Wagner (2000), which states that the capital cities in Chinese tradition are set up as the ritual and moral centers. I have argued that Pyongyang succeeded the Chinese tradition in its establishment. The city was ideologically designed according to its morals and orthodoxy. I added another key for understanding Pyongyang: the experiences of the Korean War. Pyongyang was designed during the war and constructed under the truce, while technically still at war. Since the Korean War, North Korea has strongly denied the American style of development. During this development, socialist North Korea has had two options for city development: the socialistic city and the city of its own culture. Pyongyang has become a socialist city, maintaining the Chinese city tradition as "the moral center." However, the war has modified the Northeast Asian style of cities.

Compared to Hanyang in the Joseon Dynasty, which was built following the Confucian ideology, Pyongyang was planned and established to express the Juche

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<sup>95</sup> Stories such as the biography of Boyi and Shuqi in the Basic Annals *Biographical Records of History* written by Sima Qian (145–86 BC) are commonly considered to be the lesson originated from Confucian political ethics in Korea. In the story, righteous brother Bo Yi and Shu Qi starved to show their loyalty to the monarch. Boyi and Shuqi's personal and moral virtue, loyalty, and pacifist idealism are still used to guide people's attitudes regarding state and king. Several stories emphasize Confucian political ethics, righteousness and the loyalty in Korean tradition.

<sup>96</sup> Confucius argued "I worry about uneven distribution rather than worry about little wealth, and I worry about anxiety rather than worry about poverty" according to Section 16 of the *Analects of Confucius*.

Ideology. Hanyang was structured based on the Constructing Guideline of the Rites of the Zhou Dynasty. The location of palaces, the Royal Ancestral Shrine, the Altar of Land and Grain, government offices, as well as markets, roads, and castle/city gates, all embody the instructions of the Rites of the Zhou Dynasty. Pyongyang has realized the “socialistic Juche Ideology.” In order to effectively realize the ideology, symbolic public buildings and landmarks, such as the Kim Il-Sung Statue and the Revolutionary History Museum, were placed in the center of the city. The main streets and the skyscrapers all radiate out from the center of the city. All over the city, Korean-style parks have traditional beauty. Hanyang and Pyongyang are both moral centers, Wagner (2000) argued. The differences between two cities are the leading ideologies: Confucianism for Hanyang and the socialistic Juche Ideology for Pyongyang. However, Pyongyang is not only the condensed body of ideology and thought of North Korea; it is the “Holy Land of Revolution”, where the sacred war still takes place in order to defend the Socialist Party, the supreme leader, and those who represent their ideology. I have argued that the war has led the moral center to possess a more extreme form.

The war has justified the control over the city’s residents. To do this, North Korea organized the “five-family control system”, succeeding from the Joseon Dynasty. Since the truce in 1953, the North Korean system has been fixed as “socialism under war” and social control was justified based on the risk of war reigniting. North Korea succeeded with the five-families control system from wartime, although the name was modified to the five-family supervision system. Since 1973, the number of families has been enlarged from five families to groups of 20–30 families that control each other. Because of the war, travels of citizens to areas of Pyongyang, like the border areas, have been limited. This control system is said to be necessary to ensure national security and to prevent the activities of spies. This control system has taken over from East Asian tradition from legalism in China, but the control in Pyongyang has been strengthened because of the need for military operations in the unfinished Korean War, compared to Hanyang. Pyongyang residents must be loyal to the ideals of the state. The power of city is granted to contributors to birth of the country like Hanyang. To defend the new states, residents of the capital city in Joseon and North Korea commonly have a duty to defend the regime and enjoy the corresponding privileges. In the on-going war, the duties and privileges for residents of Pyongyang have expanded compared to those of Hanyang. The high privilege of residents in Pyongyang was justified by the risk of warfare and their readiness to defend the North Korean system.

At the end of Kim Jong-Il’s era, North Korea’s changed its economic policies, focusing on improving people’s lives and developing light industry. Efforts have been made to beautify Pyongyang. The model of the urban beautification project in Pyongyang is the “socialist fairyland”, an expression related to Korean traditional

Taoism, based on the Honggigan ideology, in which social elites should bless humanity extensively. In this way, North Korea fills the future of Pyongyang with a unique ethnic ideology of Korea.

The findings of this study support its main hypothesis, that Pyongyang is the moral center in North Korea. However, the city's development has been influenced by the war. North Korea defines Pyongyang as the Holy Land of Revolution, where a sacred war has taken place to defend the Idea of Juche. The city has been controlled and fortified to block attacks by North Korea's enemies. From a Western perspective, this makes images of Pyongyang appear aggressive, unsocial, and controlled.

What makes Pyongyang unique is the Juche Ideology, which is based on self-reliance and subjecthood, and states that Pyongyang is looking for its own cultural way of socialist development. What makes Pyongyang peculiar is that it remains affected by a long and still-unfinished war.

## 5 Conclusion

This study has found that the keys to understanding Pyongyang are viewing the capital city as the moral center in Chinese tradition and as a city that is still involved in an on-going war. The West has forgotten the Korean War. For South Korea, the war is a torrid and painful memory, but it ended with the truce in 1953. The one side that is still fighting the war is North Korea. Western visitors come looking for a free Pyongyang and complain and criticize the North Korean government for not being free. They ironically look for comfort, peace, and openness in North Korea, which does not consider the war to have finished. From the view of transcultural studies, Pyongyang and the Juche Ideas show a new style of cultural entanglement. It is interesting to study how the culture lives, changes, and is reborn in this style of cultural stance. It would be interesting to research the effects of the Juche Idea on cultural fusion. In East Asian Studies of cities, one can also trace the effects that the Construction Guideline of the Rites of Zhou have had on the cultural formation of cities over time and space. In the waves of globalization, this tradition would be a driving force to create cultural variety in East Asian cities, not to generate cultural uniformity, where a dominant culture covers the world. Two ideas are especially helpful for understanding the particularity of Korean culture: the Ideas of Sinseon and the Idea of Honggigan. These concepts define the social elite and the duty of social elites in the Taoism in Korea, and the ideas permeate into Pyongyang. In conducting this study, I could further advance several hypotheses. A survey of Pyongyang's citizens and political leaders of North Korea would certainly provide more support for this study, but this was beyond the scope of the present study.

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