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Cultural Invasion 2021

The Warning

"History repeats itself, but in such cunning disguise that we never detect the resemblance until the damage is done." - Sydney J. Harris.

Breaths held, hearts pounding, 17 million viewers from across the globe cried in rejoice as the Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka lit the Olympic cauldron. Yet, even just a week before the Tokyo Olympics started, 80 percent of the Japanese citizens held up signs of opposition against the hosting of the Games.

"Can you believe this? They're doing this, and everyone is against it. So why are they doing this?" said Ema Ryan Yamazaki, a filmmaker for the official Tokyo 2020 film.

As the opening day crept closer, Covid-19 cases skyrocketed to nearly 2,000 cases per day. Only worry and tension filled the once joyful streets of Japan. With the breaking news of no spectators, vaccination rate below 20%, and Japan entering its fourth national state of emergency, absolutely nothing seemed possible to revive the lost Olympic joy.

But we were wrong; the mere evilness of the virus could not stop the exhilarating Olympic spirit. Even when more than 15,500 stands were bare and silent, cutting-edge digital and social platforms helped trigger the air of excitement and festivity.

Smiles and laughter shone across the globe, breaking through the dark clouds that once hung over the world.

All was well until two words tainted the headlines of the internet: Chinese Taipei.

Despite being a democratic country of 23 million people, Taiwan's status as an independent country remains heavily debated. More than 70 years have passed since China claimed supreme authority over Taiwan. And over the course of the long yet short period, Taiwan slowly lost its identity as an individual nation.

Unlike the other country athletes who proudly marched waving their national flag, the Taiwanese athletes flew their "Plum Blossom Banner." The plain white flag was miserably decorated with the Olympic Rings instead of their vibrant blue and red national flag.

Throughout the Tokyo Games, the words "Taiwan" or "Taiwanese" and even the national anthem of Taiwan were unheard, disheartening the spirit of the Taiwanese athletes. Genuine smiles of joy and pride never blossomed on the faces of the 68 Taiwanese athletes as they competed under the given name "Chinese Taipei," completely stripped from their true glorious title.

Sporadic controversies sprouted up here and there but soon died down as more thrilling news dominated the flashy headlines. When the last Olympic firework blasted its final goodbye, no one could remember the name Taiwan.

The Next Target

“Which country will be China’s next target?”

“Xiaomi has surpassed Apple to become the world’s second-biggest smartphone maker for the first time ever...” CNN reported.

On July 16, 2021, news of Apple’s defeat to Xiaomi in global smartphone sales dominated the media with heated debates. With an alarming annual growth of 83%, the Chinese company took 17% share of worldwide smartphone shipments, while Apple, the usual sales dominator, took 14% of the market.

Modifiers such as “fastest-growing business” and “hottest vendor” were placed in front of Xiaomi. However, ever since Xiaomi entered the global competition in the digital technology market, there was one adjective that they could never get rid of: Apple’s copycat.

Lei Jun, Xiaomi CEO and co-founder, firmly denied the allegations pointed toward Xiaomi. Nevertheless, voracious web surfers were able to excavate plenty of evidence that flagrantly showed the similarities between Xiaomi and Apple products. For instance, Xiaomi’s Mi 8 phone, released in 2018, was named as the “most blatant ripoff and clone” of Apple’s iPhone X, which was released eight months prior. The only significant difference between the two devices was the price; Mi 8 cost \$425, while iPhone X was over double Xiaomi’s price.

“I’ve said on many different occasions that if I had been called the ‘Steve Jobs of China...’ However, I don’t want to be considered second to anyone,” Lei Jun stated.

China will not end as a mere “copycat nation,” but will extend to become a global dominance with their tactics of stealing technology, manipulating their currency, and exporting pirated products from the West. China has fired the first shot with its economic encroachment, and no one can predict where it will strike next.

On the Frontlines

China, Japan, and South Korea. For the past two thousand years, this trio of Asian countries has each developed shared yet distinct cultures. Many foreigners tend to generalize these three countries as the infamous “East Asian countries,” but the prominent and exceptional characteristics of each nation are unmistakable.

China and Japan are usually distinguished by their key features and cultures. Images of delicate cherry blossoms and ancient samurais immediately flash through one’s mind when asked to describe Japanese culture. Similarly, crimson Chinese dragons, crispy fortune cookies, and colorful paper lanterns flicker in people’s memory at the hearing of the word “China.”

However, South Korea is never truly noted for its special characteristics that developed through the rich period of four thousand years. The beauty of Hanbok, succulent persimmon, and the traditional Korean martial art taekwondo is hardly mentioned. Frankly, what could you ever expect for people to know when the first two related search terms for Korea are “Is Korea in China?” and “Is Korea a country or state?”

People have been oblivious of Korea and its true history. And as mentioned above, many still to this day legitimately believe that Korea is either a part of China or another offshore island that belongs to Japan. And it infuriates me, a faithful Korean citizen, that Korea has been diminished to nothing but a trifling neighboring country of China and Japan.

Unfortunately, though, those Google surfers who have this ignorant knowledge of Korea cannot be blamed. Korea, in fact, *has been* losing its cultural identity— or to be accurately worded *thieved* of its unique culture.

In December of 2020, fierce internet wars shook the Korean and Chinese media when China claimed that kimchi, a traditional Korean staple food, was *Chinese*. This baseless argument sparked the inferno of belligerent comments that viciously blazed through various online platforms. Chinese users argued that *pao chi*, a Chinese dish of pickled

vegetables, was equivalent to Korean kimchi; therefore, claimed that kimchi was *theirs*.

“If China plagiarizes the fermentation process of kimchi in the future, then South Korea’s traditional culture may disappear,” one apprehensive user wrote on Naver, a popular Korean online platform.

To these worrying Korean comments, Chinese users on Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter, replied with comments such as “Even the pronunciation of kimchi originated from Chinese, what else is there to say?” and “South Korea’s version [of kimchi] is merely pickles.”

China, however, did not end with the kimchi controversy. Two months later, the Chinese targeted Korea’s traditional clothing, Hanbok.

In February of 2021, the hashtag “thief country” was viewed over 805,000 times on Weibo, a Chinese online platform. The Chinese stated that their traditional clothing, Hanfu, was copied by Koreans, and thus, Hanbok rightfully belonged to *them*.

"Even ants on the roadside would be shocked at how shameless the Koreans are," wrote a Chinese Weibo user. "Actually what she really wanted to say was that Korea belongs to China," another wrote.

The Chinese are claiming that Koreans, the obvious victim to this baseless argument, are the ones being “the thief country.” Koreans are now more than merely irritated— they are genuinely *concerned*. Hanbok and kimchi are one of the most prominent and unique symbols and representations of Korea. However, now, China, with its growing antipathy towards Korea, has attempted to *steal* our culture.

A citizen of any nation would become enraged if their country’s culture is stolen. In fact, even little children get angry when another child steals their toys. China is not blatantly carrying out a territorial nor economical invasion; China is usurping Korea’s culture and values. Our citizens will not stand by and let a mere copycat nation thieve our culture.

Final Request

Korean society has experienced an immense amount of change throughout the span of history. In a short yet long period of the past 100 years, Korea has lost territories to China, been annexed by Japan for almost 40 years, and divided into two separate countries. However, despite all the conflicts and struggles, we, Koreans, have always protected our nation’s culture.

We are in our final war with China. Wars in the 21st century are not much about the territory and power struggle anymore, but about the cultural security of one’s nation. Malicious comments *are* the nuclear bombs and dissemination of false information *are* the military tactics China use to deliberately destroy and dismantle other nations’ culture.

We never know if we will become the next Taiwan and be unable to proudly present our Taegukgi for the future Olympics. No one truly knows how long Korea might have to resist China’s wrongful attempts to invade our cultural territory. But we will win this war and protect our nation’s culture.

Letter from the Author

I am not sure if this letter is a great match for my essay, but I felt the need to address this topic nevertheless. As a sophomore in high school, I honestly don’t understand why absolutely *no one* is taking responsibility for this mass murder of 5 million people. Everything in this world starts with a cause, so this virus must have originated from somewhere by someone or something at some point. But as of now, we’re stuck in a loophole regurgitating the same question: how did this virus start?

The majority of the people have accepted the fact that, yes, this virus started in Wuhan City, China. However, do we really know who or what started this terrifying virus? Was it created by a supernatural being or was it a mere result of unsanitary animal markets? We might never know, but one thing is for sure: if China had alerted other foreign

countries of this major issue promptly without just shushing it, the Covid-19 virus might not have become a global panic; the lack of accurate communication was the initiator.

And our ongoing war with China is just like the spread of Covid-19.

Clueless Google surfers read uncorroborated, inaccurate information about so-called “Chinese” cultures, believe what they read was absolutely right, and spread their knowledge to the next clueless google surfer by writing a comment saying “Kimchi is Chinese! Cool!”

The truth is, this virus of misinformation will not stop spreading unless the voracious Google surfers quarantine themselves from the internet.

Yes, I am just one person out of 7.9 billion people on this planet; I *am* nothing more than a typical high schooler. I *am* a lunatic 15-year-old who dares to criticize the great and mighty nation of China: fearless and daring.

I have a burning passion in my heart to protect my home country. Absolutely nothing can or ever steal my courage, not even China.