

THE KOREAN SHOESHINE TEAM: AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

This is an investigation into an organization which can be succinctly called the Korean shoeshine team.¹ The team is controlled by an underworld or syndicate operation that seems to be based on the paternal Korean familial pattern. In traditional Korea, the direction of authority and respect within the family flowed along the lines of father-son and elder brother-younger brother. There was a paternalistic, iron-clad control exerted by the father on the family. Furthermore, due to the rule of primogeniture, the eldest brother was trained to one day become the head of the household. The eldest brother gradually assumed more power and authority within the family as he grew older. The gangster element in Korea appears to have made use of this basic familial pattern to maintain discipline, loyalty, and respect within their organization. This familial pattern appears to be applied to not only the higher levels of the syndicate organization, but also to the lower levels of the organization, which includes the shoeshine team.

What enabled me to find out about the shoeshine team and its position within the syndicate was my acquaintanceship with a 14-year-old shoeshine boy whom I shall call Kim. This paper will first deal with the interviewing of Kim. Then a brief description of the physical setting of South Korea and the capitol of Seoul will follow. The main format of the paper will be: a description of the levels of status and power within the syndicate; a description of the operation of the shoeshine team in terms of recruitment, socialization, and social control; and a case study of the shoeshine boy named Kim.

METHOD

The key informant technique, plus informal inquiries to acquaintances, was the primary method of eliciting information. There were two reasons for using this technique: lack of available time in the field and the somewhat dangerous nature of the work.

Selection of the key informant occurred in the

following manner. A friend of mine owned a business in one of the multi-storied buildings in the alley where the study was conducted. He was familiar with the shoeshine boy, by sight. My friend often had tea where the boy collected shoes and, occasionally, he had shoes polished by members of Kim's shoeshine team. Furthermore, I frequented the tea room for two to three weeks with my Korean husband and our friend. We became friendly with the boy and had our shoes shined. Finally, I asked him if he would talk to us over dinner after his workday was done. Although Kim was shy, he seemed interested in talking about himself and so, consented to the interviews. He did not show up for the first two appointments, however. The tea room girls told me that the boy was probably getting permission from his superiors. Finally, the boy did show up for the third appointment.

The first interview took place in a restaurant in the same alley as the shoeshine stand. The restaurant had individual private rooms so that we could be alone with Kim. My husband and I treated the boy to dinner, and my husband acted as my interpreter. The interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes. The interview technique was semi-structured. Three or four days before the interview, I had written several questions which would be useful guides to stimulate conversation. These questions dealt with the boy's home, his jobs, the structure of the organization, the life of the shoeshine team, recreation, and goals or aspirations. I memorized the questions as aids in covering a range of material and the list was never shown to the boy. At the start of the interview, the boy seemed nervous, so I reassured him by saying that these interviews were part of a study involving people in lots of jobs and he would remain anonymous. I also told him that if he felt any pressure from his superiors or that any trouble arose because he was talking to outsiders, he was free to stop the interviews at any time. He shook his head yes and said that he did want to talk. The boy seemed to relax. Once over his initial nervousness, he spoke freely so that I was able to ask him questions about what

he was telling us. I did not write notes in the informant's presence, but I went home and wrote the material immediately.

After I wrote down the interview material, I wrote a list of questions which would fill gaps in the material. Then, a few days later, I went back to the tea room to see the boy about doing another interview. The shoeshine boy had disappeared. The tea room girls said they did not know where he had gone. Every other day for one week, I went to the various tea rooms in the alley of the shoeshine stand hoping to casually run into the boy. Finally, I did run into Kim in the hall by a bottom floor tea room. He said that shoeshine collectors take turns working the various areas in the alley and it was his turn to switch from the top tea room to the bottom one. This was his reason for not being at the usual tea room, where our meetings always took place.

The boy consented to do another interview, so we agreed on a date. He did not show up for the appointment, but he finally did keep an appointment at a later date. My husband and I treated the boy to dinner at a restaurant three or four blocks away from the shoeshine alley. On the way to the restaurant, I asked him the following questions, the purpose of which was to attempt to discover why he had been avoiding us.

Q: Has there been any pressure on you from your superiors?

A: No.

Q: How come you didn't show up the last meeting time?

A: I thought that we were supposed to meet outside the tea house or something. I came in to look for you but couldn't see you.

Q: How do your superiors and the five other members of your shoeshine team feel about these interviews?

A: Well, they know you are a foreigner and it probably wouldn't do any damage to talk about their business. Besides, they know I can't get away from them and I have to stay with them for some time to come, so they have to trust me. They don't feel threatened by the interview at all.

These answers, as well as other impressions given by the boy made it evident to me that there had been considerable discussion within the organization about the previous interview and whether any more interviews should be allowed. My husband and I had been watched by the fellow in charge of the shoeshine team during the week of search for the boy. They evidently decided that I was harmless and did not intend to stay in Korea, so the interview was allowed to proceed.

The second interview lasted for one hour at the restaurant. We occupied a small room by ourselves, which could be completely closed off by sliding doors. The interview technique was identical to

that of the first interview. However, the boy was much more relaxed and informative than in the first interview. This was fortunate because the next day we left Korea for the United States. When the last interview was completed, we paid the boy. He refused to take any money for "just talking about myself and my job." However, as we parted, I stuffed the equivalent of \$20 in his shirt pocket and he seemed very pleased. That night, I went home and wrote the interview.

The remainder of this paper is based on the material from these two interviews, plus background information from Korean acquaintances in Seoul. To give an overall view of the setting in which this study was conducted, I shall proceed with a description of the physical setting of South Korea and Seoul.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Korea—Land of the Morning Calm—"thrusts from the northeast Asian mainland to within 120 miles of Honshu, the principal island of Japan, on the east and the Shantung Peninsula of Communist China on the west" (Smith, et al. 1958/1964:45). The peninsula separates the Yellow Sea from the Sea of Japan. Over much of the land, there is an alternating pattern of mountains and its terrain is so rugged that an early missionary described it as a "sea in a heavy gale" (Smith, et al. 1958/1964:45). The mountains range from 5,000 to 9,000 feet high, and much of the rugged terrain of the peninsula is found on the eastern side causing a concentration of settlement in the west and south coastal plain and inland river valleys (Smith, et al. 1958/1964:2, 45). The total land area of Korea and its islands is 85,285 square miles; South Korea controls about 45 percent of the territory or 38,175 square miles (Smith, et al. 1958/1964:45). The population density of South Korea is 827.7 persons per square mile, with a population of 31,469,132 as of the 1970 census (Golenpaul 1972:235).

This study was done in the city of Seoul, the capitol of South Korea. Seoul is set in a valley surrounded by granite mountains. The climate in this region is temperate and gives an "average January temperature of 23°F and the average summer temperature is 77° to 80°F. Late June to early August is the rainy season with 30-40 inches falling per year" (Blechinger 1967:179). Seoul is ranked the 11th largest city in the world and has a population of 3,794,959 (Delury 1972:623). It has an area of 237 square miles, which means that the population density of the city is 16,012.4 persons per square mile (Nehmer and McCune 1968:462).

Seoul is the sophisticated educational, cultural, and business center for all of South Korea. It has

a long history of attracting all those who seek the fame, fortune, variety, excitement, education, and bright lights of the city. In fact, the people of Seoul joke at anyone without a Seoul accent for being a country bumpkin or non-sophisticate. The population in the city—true to the pattern of Korea—is quite homogeneous. There is a small minority of Chinese in the city and they are discriminated against. The Chinese have their own slum section of town, their own schools, and tend to be among the very poor. The Korean class pattern is especially evident in Seoul. There are two major economic and social classes: a large mass of very poor and a small elite of very rich.

Transportation in the city is typically by bus and bicycle. Trucks of all varieties are usually tri-wheeled and they are fairly numerous. There are few individually owned cars but many taxies. A subway is under construction down the center of the main street of Seoul. Except for three or four major arteries within the city, the streets are extremely narrow and are of loose cement tile construction as the sewers are open. Many alleyways are so narrow that cars cannot enter. Within these narrow streets and alleys, shops, stands, pushcarts, pullcarts, and beggars line the way. In fact, the crowded conditions of the city are extreme.

The shoeshine organization operates best in this type of urban setting. Shoeshine boys in areas outside Seoul or other large cities hardly make any money, so gangsters do not care about controlling or organizing them. In order to have a successful shoeshine outfit, you have to have several public places such as restaurants, theaters, and tea rooms clustered around the shoeshine stands. Outside the city centers, you rarely find such places.

The following is a description of the syndicate organization and its operation in Korean urban society. Then, a description of the shoeshine team will be presented.

THE ORGANIZATION

The entire organizational network is diagrammed below. The levels descend in status, power, and economic position.

Starting at the top level of the entire organization, there is *Wang Cho*. The term *Wang Cho* is a specially invented Korean word which means "head of gangsters." He is the top level of the chain of command. *Wang Cho* are quite wealthy and live in the best sections of town. Their wealth comes from legitimate business investments as well as illegal business interests. In this respect, *Wang Cho* is a syndicate head who ultimately owns, controls, and protects territories in the city.

Each *Wang Cho* employs several *Daejang* (Gen-

erals) and *Hyung Nim* (Elder Brothers) who are personal bodyguards and enforcers. *Daejang* are the most trusted confidants, enforcers and right-hand men of *Wang Cho* and they occupy a higher status than the *Hyung Nim*. The *Hyung Nim* act as errand boys, bodyguards, and enforcers. These two types of attendants, plus *Wang Cho*, comprise the top level of the organization and they occupy the highest status in the framework.

Wang Cho's permission must be obtained by *Oaji* (Father) before transactions involving selling or buying a territory can be made. *Oaji* buy and sell territories among themselves but they are ultimately responsible to *Wang Cho*. First, the *Oaji* must get permission from *Wang Cho* to sell the territory. Then, the person who wishes to buy the territory also has to get *Wang Cho's* permission before the deal can be completed.

The *Wang Cho* collects money, regularly, from *Oaji*. In return, *Wang Cho* protects his *Oaji's* territories against rival *Oajis* by providing protection with threat of force; that is, "if you violate the territory, I won't stand still" kind of force. Backing up this threat or force are the *Daejang* and *Hyung Nim* of *Wang Cho*. Another important function of *Wang Cho* is that he deals with top police officials to protect the interest of people working in his areas. The presentation of money and gifts—that is, liquor, nightclub entertainment, and free vacation trips—to police officials of high rank is done by *Wang Cho*. In return for these favors, the police spot intruders coming into the territories and force them out.

In short, we can characterize this level of the organization as that of a syndicate boss who controls several broad territories and business enterprises, alongside liaisons with the police.

The next major level of the organization is that of *Oaji* (Father). *Oaji* is the man who owns shoeshine territories and other investments within the territories. These include boarding houses, tea rooms, restaurants, and inns of prostitution. To be an *Oaji*, one has to be *Kung Pae* (of gangster background). In other words, besides having a lot of money, an *Oaji* should be tough. It takes large sums of money to purchase territories from other *Oajis*. For this reason, few *Oajis* have risen from the lower ranks of the organization.

A good indication of the type of income that an *Oaji* generates is the price he pays for a territory. The territory where this study was done sold for 800,000 *won* or \$2,000. Some territories have been sold for \$10,000 or several million *won*. The price of a territory depends on the size of the business. *Oajis* have estimates of the number of customers in different territories and the price is based on these estimates. For example, the price for this

particular territory was based on an estimate of approximately 600 shoeshine customers per day.

Oaji has a retinue of at least three men who accompany him everywhere. There is one *Daejang*, who is a lieutenant of *Oaji* in much the same manner as *Wang Cho's Daejang*. *Daejang* has the confidence and trust of *Oaji*. He has had several years' experience in the shoeshine business and acts as an enforcer. His job is to give protection to *Oaji* and control the shoeshine boys and rough characters in the alleys, physically if needed. Secondly, *Oaji* has two personal *Hyung Nim* who assist him. They are not as important as *Daejang*, and they occupy a slightly lower status. These *Hyung Nim* serve much the same function as the *Hyung Nim* of *Wang Cho*.

As was mentioned earlier, *Wang Cho* protects his *Oaji's* territories. A peace-keeping arrangement as well can also occur between *Oajis* within the region of Seoul controlled by *Wang Cho*. Two or more *Oajis* can make agreements or contracts stipulating that they will not violate each other's territories. This is done in the presence of *Wang Cho*. The *Daejang* and the personal *Hyung Nim* of *Oaji* are always around to enforce the agreement. Breaking this type of contract would result in bloody conflicts and none have occurred in recent history.

Oajis also give money and gifts, like liquor, to lower level police officials, that is, to the police at the precinct office and to people in charge of peddlers at police headquarters. In return for these favors, the police will spot outsiders coming into the territory and force them out—this would include stray peddlers, gangs, beggars, pushcart people, stray shoeshine boys, and prostitutes. In other words, when *Oaji* buys a territory, he buys a protected territory. This is why the police are important in spotting those outsiders who come into the territory.

One of the businesses which *Oaji* operates in his territory is the shoeshine organization. At least once or twice a day, *Oaji*, *Daejang*, and his personal *Hyung Nim* visit the shoeshine location to make sure that the business is running smoothly. However, they seldom fraternize with the shoeshine boys. They prefer to lounge in tea houses in the shoeshine alley, rather than sit near the shoeshine stand. Furthermore, unlike the poorly dressed shoeshine boys, *Oaji*, *Daejang*, and the personal *Hyung Nim* are all dressed immaculately in business suits, ties, and hats. This is in keeping with the higher status and respect accorded to members of the *Oaji* retinue compared to the members of the shoeshine team.

The lowest level of the organizational chart consists of the shoeshine team or unit. The basic unit which operates the shoeshine stand has from five to seven boys—four full-time boys, plus one super-

visor. Occasionally, there are two part-time boys. The top member of the shoeshine team responsible to *Oaji* is the *Hyung Nim*. It should be emphasized, however, that the personal *Hyung Nim* of *Oaji* are different from the *Hyung Nim* of the shoeshine team. This is true not only of the job they do but also the status accorded. Personal *Hyung Nim* of *Oaji* have a much higher status because they are attached to the *Oaji* retinue.

The *Hyung Nim* of the shoeshine team is an experienced shoeshine boy placed in a supervisory position by *Oaji*. Each shoeshine team has its own *Hyung Nim*. His job is to oversee and control the unit on a day-to-day basis. He supervises the boys, controls all the money, and polishes shoes. Generally, he has been in the shoeshine business for years and has a close relationship with *Oaji*. Beneath *Hyung Nim* in the team are the polishers and at an even lower level are the collectors. The polisher's job is to sit at the stand, which is always located outdoors in the alley, and polish the shoes that the collector brings. Two full-time boys sit at the stand and polish. The collectors number two full-time boys and any of the part-time boys. The shoeshine boy called the collector asks customers in tea houses or restaurants if they want their shoes shined. If so, he gives them a pair of sandals to wear, takes their shoes to the stand outside, and has the shoes shined. A short time later, he reappears with the polished shoes for the patron, recovers the loaned pair of sandals, and collects the fee. The price of a shoeshine is 20 *won* or 5¢ per pair.

The salaries of those in the shoeshine team reflect their status. *Hyung Nim* receives 18,000 *won* (\$45) per month, polishers earn 12,000 *won* (\$30), and collectors are paid 6,000 *won* (\$15) per month. These salaries, however, are much lower than the amount of money actually collected by the shoeshine boys. There are always two collectors working and an active shoeshine team will collect on the average of 600 pairs of shoes per day. A team should be able to gross about 12,000 *won* (\$30) per day or 360,000 *won* (\$900) per month. As an example, a collector receives $\frac{1}{4}$ of the 20 *won* per pair of shoes that he collects and each collector will bring in approximately 300 pairs per day. This means that a collector would be able to make 1,500 *won* (\$3.75) a day or 45,000 *won* (\$112.50) per month. However, as is noted above, a collector receives only 6,000 *won* (\$15) per month.

All of the above salaries for the team are earnings after *Oaji* deducts the rent for a room and the cost of meals. Most *Oajis* own boarding houses in their territories and require that the shoeshine team live in one room at the boarding house. The

Oaji of the territory where this study was done owned three territories and owned a boarding house in each territory. He deducts 500 *won* per month from the gross earnings of each boy for the cost of the one 8 x 10 room in which all five or seven boys stay, plus the cost of the meals which consist of rice with a few pickles. *Oaji* also deducts the general expenses of running the shoeshine business, which includes the cost of the shoepolish and rags, money to bribe police officials, money to associate with other *Oajis*, and money given to *Wang Cho*.

In short, the *Oaji* makes substantial money from the gross earnings of those boys who work in the shoeshine unit. How he is able to successfully exploit these boys will be discussed in the next section which analyzes the shoeshine team in regard to recruitment, socialization, and social control. The focus will be on the collector since promotions occur within the team—from collector to polisher to *Hyung Nim*—on the basis of length of service, faithfulness, and trustworthiness.

THE SHOESHINE TEAM

Initially, the boys are happy to be recruited into a shoeshine job because, in most cases, it means a substantial increase in salary—at a restaurant job they might make about \$8 a month, but in the shoeshine business they would make about \$15 a month as a collector. They are attracted to the shoeshine business because of the money and also because of the inducement by a man called *Bangbum* (way of reducing crimes—translation).

Bangbum are men who watch public buildings like railroad stations for the possible occurrence of petty crime or for North Korean spies. They are paid by the police for this type of work. At the same time, however, the *Bangbum* are controlled by *Wang Cho*—*Wang Cho* controlling various illegal businesses. The *Bangbum* are non-licensed, illegal employment agents who take young girls off the trains and put them into tea house-prostitution jobs and take young boys and put them into restaurant, shoeshine, and other jobs. *Bangbum* uses his position to literally snatch farm people coming to Seoul to get jobs, or unattached, run-away children from the trains, and to put them in places of employment for the fees paid by the prospective employer. All employment agents must be licensed by the government. However, the non-licensed *Bangbum* does not get arrested because he is connected to the police and to *Wang Cho*. In order for *Bangbum* to increase his income, he relocates some children from one job to another. He gets paid a fee from each new employer. However, once a boy is located by *Bangbum* into the shoeshine business, there is no way to move or relocate without permission of *Oaji*.

Oaji pays the agent about 3,000 *won* (\$7.50) for each shoeshine boy. Since there is always the danger of boys collecting shoes and running away with them, *Oaji* and *Bangbum* draw a formal letter of agreement in which the agent guarantees the trustworthiness of the boys. If the boys run away with the shoes, the *Bangbum* has to pay the costs. This is enforced by *Daejang* and the personal *Hyung Nim* of *Oaji*. For these reasons, the boy that *Bangbum* places into the shoeshine business has usually been placed previously by that agent into another job. The agent can then check the trustworthiness of the boy before placing him into a shoeshine position.

Socialization into the shoeshine team is accomplished by a rigid work routine and by confining living conditions. The full-time shoeshine boy works from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., seven days a week, every week of the year. They only stop if they are sick or it is raining. The team works all day and into the evening together. As was mentioned earlier, the team is also likely to room together in *Oaji's* boarding house. All seven members of the shoeshine unit share one room in the house. They also eat their meals together. Essentially, then, the only people that the members of the shoeshine team associate with are each other. There is some occasional contact with members of the *Oaji* retinue, but there is simply no time for friends outside of the organization. In a sense, the shoeshine team is an isolated primary group.

Oaji arranges for the room and board of the team, and he ties the team to him by a judicious use of rewards. Some of the rewards, besides salary, are favors, such as taking the team out to movies (he gets so-called complimentary tickets), buying the boys inexpensive dinners occasionally, and holding one or two picnics a year for all the shoeshine boys. *Oaji* also promotes those within the shoeshine team. Emphasis in promotions is on faithfulness to the group, trustworthiness, being tough, having experience in the business, and gaining a close relationship with *Oaji*.

The fact that the work routine and confining living conditions limit a shoeshine boy's exposure only to shoeshine activities is an element of social control in itself. Nearly all of his social contacts are within the shoeshine team, so he does not have the connections to be able to get into a better job. His ability to find a different occupation is also restricted because he does not have time or money to learn a trade. Given these factors, it is not likely for a shoeshine boy to find employment outside of the shoeshine milieu. This is a type of de facto social control. If a boy returned home or found a job completely outside of any type of shoeshine occupation, he would be able to move without fear of reprisals from *Daejang* or personal *Hyung Nim*

of *Oaji*, however.

In terms of the shoeshine milieu, the shoeshine boys must stay only within their own territory. They are not allowed to engage in shoeshine activities in any other territory nor seek shoeshine employment in any other territory. This is enforced in two ways: by the police and by the *Daejang* and personal *Hyung Nim* of *Oaji*. The police, in return for favors given by *Oaji*, spot stray shoeshine boys coming into the area and either advise them to return to their home territory or, more directly, turn them over to the *Daejang* and personal *Hyung Nim* of the invaded territory. If the latter is done, the boys are beaten quite severely by the *Daejang* and personal *Hyung Nim*. Secondly, as was mentioned earlier, two or more *Oajis* may make agreements not to enter each other's territories. The followers of *Oaji* (*Daejang* and personal *Hyung Nim*) are always present to enforce this agreement. If they hear a rumor that one of their shoeshine boys is planning to run away to another territory, they will beat him or cut him with knives. The *Oajis* do not want to risk a bloody conflict between *Oaji* camps, so they keep strict control over the members of the shoeshine team.

It would be possible to move into another shoeshine outfit with the consent of *Oaji*. This is unlikely, however, because of the investment that *Oaji* has in the boy. *Oaji* has paid a fee to *Bangbum* for the boy, housed him, fed him, and generated a good deal of money out of the boy's salary. The *Oaji*, generally, does not switch boys from one of his units to another. He prefers that the boys become well known in their area so that the police become familiar with each boy. Furthermore, he wants the team to develop a mutual bond because of the extensive time that they must spend together. For these reasons, shoeshine boys tend to stay locked into one shoeshine system for years.

CASE STUDY

My principal informant was a Korean shoeshine boy whom I shall call Kim. Kim was a handsome 14-year-old runaway from the countryside of Kwangju, near the southwest tip of South Korea. He had been working in the shoeshine business for about one year and his job was that of collector. The following is his own description of his life and occupation:

I'm from Kwangju city and Cha La province. We lived there for about eight years and then moved to a place called Kwangjin. I lived with my family in Kwangjin until the time I left home [must be about six years]. My father is a farmer there, and for the countryside, we had a pretty good size house: three rooms, a little kitchen, and a hallway. The place had a thatch-

covered roof. My family is not well-to-do, and the size of the farm is small.

Five years ago my mother ran away to a convent. You see, several years ago—before my father was married—he had a favorite mistress and she gave birth to his first son. When father married, he brought this first son—my step-brother—to his own house. My mother bore two children—me and my younger brother. Then my father started to see that other woman again, so my mother ran away. The mistress then moved in with us, five years ago, and from her there is the one older step-brother and two younger step-sisters. The older step-brother helps my father farm and the other children are going to school.

I don't want anything to do with my step-brothers and -sisters or my step-mother. They all have been nasty to me and my younger brother. I love my younger brother and I feel sorry for him that he is living with my step-mother. The way that step-mother treated younger brother and me was real lousy. She would give better food to her own kids—that kind of thing. Trouble got so bad between her and me and younger brother that we stopped talking to her. So, I decided to move out. I didn't leave any forwarding address and I didn't let them know where I was going.

Then, I took the train up here to Seoul to look for some kind of job. A *Bangbum* immediately spotted me getting off the train at Seoul Railway Station. He found me a job working for a restaurant, which happened to be located in the railway station. My job was to stand outside the door, dressed in black pants with a white shirt and bow tie, and invite customers into the restaurant. This is the lowest kind of job at a restaurant; waitress, waiter, kitchen help, and cooks are all paid better and are more respected. I only made 3,000 *won* there.

Well, I worked at the restaurant for two months and after working for this time, the employment agent saw that I was trustworthy. He approached me with the proposition to place me in the shoeshine boy job. So, with his suggestion and the fact that I would earn twice as much as at the restaurant, I decided to become a shoeshine boy. I've been working as a shoeshine boy for about one year now.

The territory of our shoeshine stand is, mainly, the four many-story buildings in this alley [see map of alley]. In these places, we get the most customers at the three restaurants, two tea houses, one shoestore, and one movie theatre. The bottom tea room is the most lucrative area and I can get more customers there. The other collectors and I take turns working each

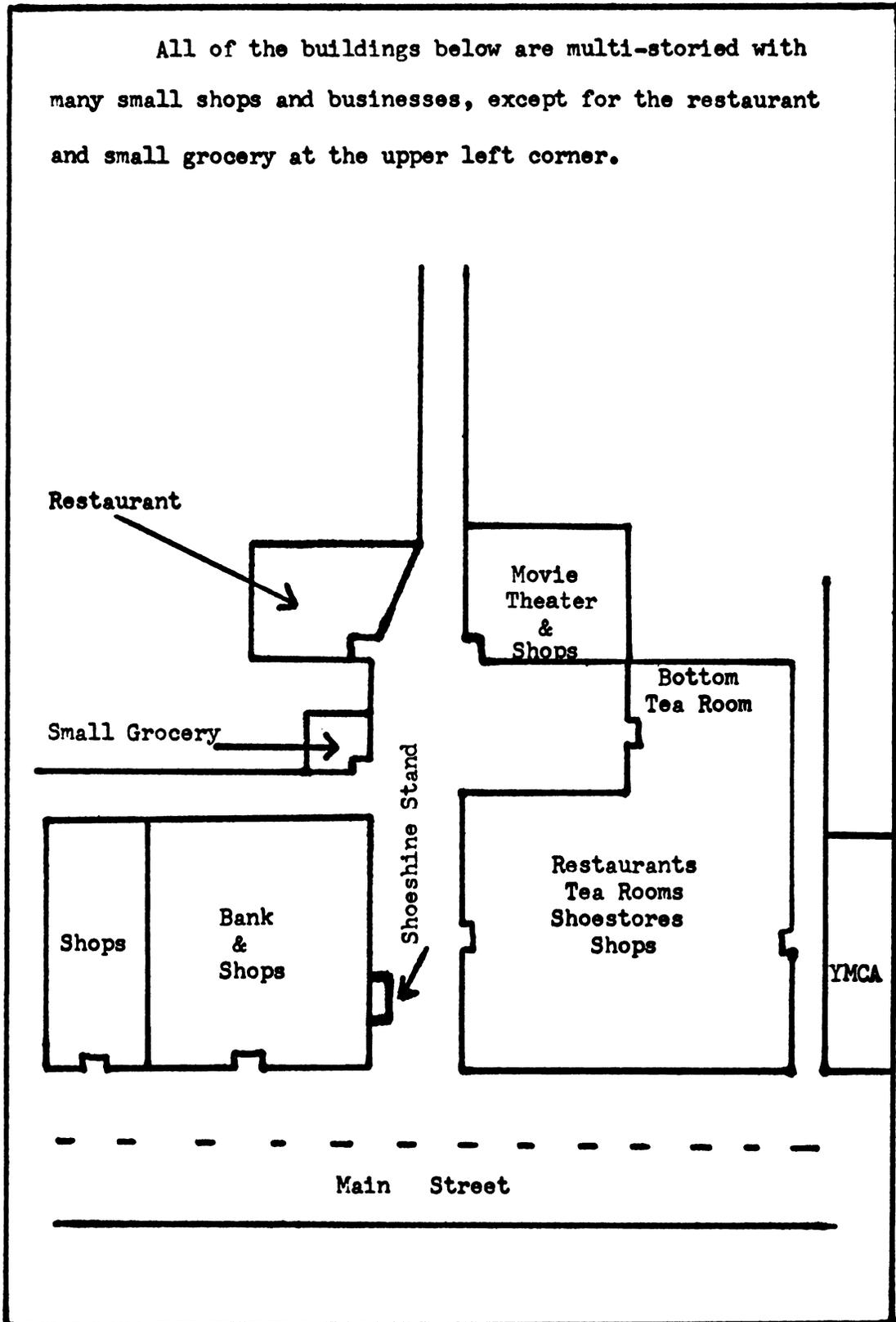


Figure 1: Map of the Alley Complex

area and now it's my turn to switch from the third floor tea room to the bottom one.

We are supposed to charge 20 *won* per pair of shoes but the people in my business usually like to brag about conning customers. Sometimes we gyp foreigners; that is, we learn the English words for units of money and ask 200 *won*—ten times the regular price. Mostly, the foreigners paid the money but the police got tough on that stuff—too many complaints from tourists. It's funny, even more gullible than the foreigners are the people from the countryside. You can force the country people to have their shoes shined and charge 1,500 *won*, with threat of force, and they usually pay. I heard the story that one guy charged 2,000 *won* for shining a pair of shoes. He ended up in jail, though. Now-a-days, police control is much too tight to do this. The police seem to get upset over this kind of petty stuff. We have orders to keep on pretty good terms with the police and any patrolman stopping by gets a free shine.

I live two blocks from where I work. It is a huge boarding house owned by my *Oaji*. All the shoeshine boys of our team stay there and the seven of us live in one room of the house. We seldom stay in the room because we have to work all day. Another room is used by *Oaji* and his new wife. The rest of the house is where the ordinary renters with families live. The ordinary boarders include some students and people from rural areas. The people from the rural areas pay for their own share of rice, as well as paying for their room, and they pay for *Panchum* (things eaten with rice, like pickles).

Since I work all day with the members of my shoeshine unit and we room together, I don't have any time left for associating with anyone else. I did make friends at the restaurant place where I used to work, but the shoeshine job is so demanding and the restaurant job was so short, that I never see anyone I used to see when I worked there. There is not much time for any kind of fun, unless it is raining or a special holiday. I just don't have any time or money to do anything but go to a movie; my *Oaji* gets complimentary tickets. The movie house is in my alley and I see the same movie three or four times, as it changes every ten days. The guys sometimes go out to game rooms for pinball but that's a treat because it's expensive. Sometimes, *Oaji* will take us out to dinner.

We stay close to our territory, when we're out on the town. As far as the shoeshine business goes, we never go to someone else's territory. We all know our own territory and stay inside it. If I tried to move to another shoeshine outfit on

my own . . . well . . . *Oaji* has ways of finding out about where you are located, and I heard the story that anyone who tries to do that gets severely punished. *Oaji* and his *Daejang* and *Hyung Nim* are rough, tough bunches. You just don't know what they could do—beat you to a pulp, cut you to pieces. All these men could beat you to death or cut you to pieces like nothing. They all have knife marks. You should see my *Oaji*—you'd be scared to death to just look at his face—so many scars. My *Oaji* says he has killed a couple of guys.

Once in awhile, I go up to Eui Chang Bu or Tang Du Chang where army camps are located. At times, G.I.'s for whom I polished shoes here ask me to come up and work for them a few days. I only go there with permission of *Oaji* and *Daejang*. As I told you, they have ways of knowing where I am and they would break every bone in my body if I tried to leave them for another shoeshine post. They would beat the hell out of me.

None of the shoeshine boys seem to like the job. The only thing important to keep them in the business is money. The thought of promotions doesn't do much to keep us in the business. You see, my *Hyung Nim* of our unit is 22 years old. He started in the shoeshine business when he was nine years old, and he has only been a *Hyung Nim* for two years now. *Daejang* is twenty-six and he has had over ten years of shoeshine experience. So, chances of promotion are kind of lousy.

I don't know, really, what I'd like to do but I do know that a shoeshine boy's job isn't respected and I don't want to be a shoeshine boy all of my life. I will try to save up enough money and finish my education. I only finished the third grade and I want to go to high school. I guess my chances of finishing high school are almost next-to-none because of the lack of money but I do realize that education is the only way to move ahead. At any rate, as soon as I can find a better job, I'd like to move out of the shoeshine business. When I get older and more education, I'd like to get a desk job. [He did not know what kind.] This is no kind of life for a boy.

CONCLUSION

The shoeshine organization seems to operate within a pseudo-familial framework. The gangster element in Korea appears to have made use of the basic paternaistic Korean familial pattern to maintain discipline, loyalty, and respect within their organization. They have even borrowed familial terms for certain levels of the organization,

i.e. *Oaji* (father) and *Hyung Nim* (elder brother). *Wang Cho* is like a father to *Oaji*. He commands great respect and allegiance and *Oaji* is directly responsible for his actions to *Wang Cho*. At the second level of the organization—*Oaji* level—we have seen how *Oaji* controls the members of his shoeshine team. They are living in *Oaji*'s house, receive their support from *Oaji*, and must ask his permission in order to travel outside the territory. *Oaji* rewards and controls them through a pseudo-father role. At the third level—the shoeshine team—the *Hyung Nim* of the team is respected and in charge; he is like an older brother to the rest of the boys. The members of the unit all sleep, eat, work, and play together as brothers of a family.

Without taking the analogy too far, it should also be noted that every effort is made to maintain peace and stability within the family. *Wang Cho*, with the aid of top police officials, attempts to maintain peace for his territories. *Oaji*, with the aid of lower police officials, also keeps peace in much the same way as *Wang Cho* and *Oaji*s make contracts or agreements of a peace-binding nature among themselves. Finally, the *Hyung Nim* of the shoeshine team maintains order and peaceful relations among members of the team.

From what little I could gather, this paternalistic pseudo-familial structure is evident in other low prestige or illegal occupations in the city. Investigation into the organization of such units or teams as prostitution rings, bar girls, tea house girls, and peddlers would furnish additional necessary evidence. It would then be possible to clarify whether this paternalistic familial syndicate pattern is, indeed, a unique Korean adaptation to an urban environment.

NOTES

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